

[Teaching Designers Network]

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The Wallpaper-Project

Rachel Mahler

TDN-Projekt No. 4

Assignment

The goal is to create a wall piece / wallpaper for a site defined by the student. In its thematic and stylistic expression, this piece must be appropriate to its site and its anticipated users.

Assignment for one student or a team of two.

Time Period: The project should be finished in August 2007.

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Background:

Since the 19th century, wallpaper has been a traditional and widespread means used in interior design. It serves as a decoration and, at the same time, conveys a visual message. Subjects, pattern and colours of the wallpaper lend a certain character to the room and disclose its intended usage or the aesthetic preferences of its user.

While wallpaper was hardly fashionable anymore in modern age, there seems to be a revival nowadays. Artists such as Robert Guber or John Baldessari, who have given a lot of attention to wallpaper, make it presentable again at the limits of art, design and graphic.

For Rachel Mahler, artist and teacher at the University of Art and Design Basel, this was reason enough to turn wallpaper into a topic. Her students were given the task to design a wallpaper for a room of their choice. The aim was not to create the draft for a series product which could be used anywhere, but to achieve an artistic intervention comparable to the concept of **Kunst am Bau** (*Percentage for Art*). The initial stage of the project was to select a (*publicly accessible*) room. The analysis of its function, architecture and public helped define a theme for which different pictures or subjects had to be invented. The next step was to choose a subject from a wide range of visual representations and picture languages for further processing.

The ornamental character of the wallpaper is created by regular repetition of patterns containing subjects or subject sequences. A workshop which was planned together with Mario Guidici, Jan Schmocker and Katja Spörri conveyed the basics of creating a repeat of pattern and the techniques used with it, such as halftoning or mirroring. After this workshop, the prerequisites for drafting an attractive composition had been established. The last steps, before the physical production of the wallpaper in a scale of 1:1 was started, included the selection of the subject size and the colours, the composition of a pattern as well as the laying-down of a repeat of pattern. The (*virtual*) wallpapering of the rooms chosen formed the end of the project.

Text:
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First Steps

- 1 Written **definition** of **site/space** and **anticipated users**,
e.g. museum café, haute couture boutique, 70s bar, disco, internet café.
Photographs of the space.
- 2 **Research on the theme** (libraries, internet) and determining of 2 to up
to 5 objects that embody this theme. Collection of objects or illustrations
that can be used as preliminary models.
- 3 **Finding the style/the language of transposition.** Within the theme
defined, the widest possible palette of transpositional forms
should be presented. For the choice of style, the first definition should
be taken into consideration.

Final Steps

- 4 Composition bearing in mind media-specific characteristics
(repeat, repetitions, grid, mirrorings).
- 5 Finishing of a 53 x 125 cm wallpaper design. Photomontage of the
wallpaper in its setting.

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TECHNIQUE AND WORK MATERIALS

Transposition of objects (brush, black and white poster paint, pencil, colored pencil, kneadable eraser, ballpoint pen, computer, etc.).
The computer, photocopier or lighttable can also always be used for further transposition and inspiration. The integration of color is important (A4 loose-leaf notebook for sketches).

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FORM

Transposition of ideal on paper (or print) or cardboard.

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PRESENTATION

During the process, presentations should take place within the group. These presentations serve to formulate ideas and reflect upon them.

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REFERENCES

Examples from books and documents.

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The Wallpaper-Project

was a brief by Rachel Mahler at:
Visuelle Kommunikation/Interaktion/Bild/Typografie
Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst
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