

Pattern Design Secrets

A guide for lovers of art, craft and design who are wanting to create successful pattern designs



with Rachelle Holowko

The Design Process is the essence behind great pattern designs and collections

If you are wanting to start creating successful pattern designs then there is a design process that you should follow in order to be able to consistently create beautiful designs and collections.

In this guide we are going to be breaking down the design process step by step so that you have a good understanding of the foundations behind successful pattern designs and collections so you can start creating yours.

Creating a story
for your collection

Collecting Inspiration

THE FIRST STEP IN THE DESIGN PROCESS IS FINDING INSPIRATION

It's really important to take the time in the beginning to research and gather lots of inspiration as this will be the jumping off point for creating lots of amazing ideas for your pattern designs and collections.

So, where do you find inspiration?

Inspiration can be found anywhere. As a designer, you should always be looking at your surroundings and noticing the beauty around you. You may find a beautiful texture in a brick wall you pass by or a gorgeous colour combination in a garden. You never know where you'll find the concept behind your next design.

To get started, here are my top tips for finding inspiration:

I. WANDER/MEANDER

It's important to teach yourself to be observant and to notice your surroundings. What better way to do that than by going for a wander. It could be in your local neighbourhood, parks, city streets or if you don't have much time you could look in your own backyard.

Take your camera or sketchbook with you and open your eyes and see what beauty you can find. It may be a crack in the pavement, a beautifully shaped leaf, petals that have fallen to the ground, shadows created at different times of the day or new flowers blooming. The list is endless but the beauty of noticing and observing your external surroundings is that they are ever changing with the seasons.

Also, remember that inspiration doesn't need to be only 2 dimensional. You may find an interesting leaf that you'd like to print with, stick you'd like to draw with or a flower you'd like to draw. Collecting beautiful and interesting objects can be just as inspirational.

2. VISIT GALLERIES/MUSEUMS/EXHIBITIONS

One of my favourite ways to be invigorated as a designer is to see what other designers and artists are creating. Visiting galleries, museums and exhibitions is nourishing and inspiring and will give you a rich source of inspiration and motivation. Be open and see as many exhibitions as you can. Don't limit yourself to a particular art form as you may find an interesting technique that you'd like to try or an interesting colour combination etc.

3. DESIGN BLOGS/WEBSITES

Your favourite blogs and websites are great to explore and are usually rich with images that you may find inspiring. Make sure you have a folder of bookmarked blogs and websites that you love so you can find them quickly when you need to.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to keep up to date with the latest trends. Pinterest and Instagram are particularly great places to find lots of visual inspiration. Make sure you follow designers you love so that your feed is constantly filled with inspirational images. Pinterest boards are a fantastic way of collating your ideas into categories which allows you to easily find inspiration when you need it.

5. BOOKS/MAGAZINES

We are often guilty of spending so much time on our computers or devices that we forget to take the time to look at books and magazines, both of which are rich sources of inspiration.

Online magazines are great for keeping up to date with the latest trends and to see what's happening in the current world of design.

Books can be used as a rich source of history. Don't disregard looking to the past and reinventing old ideas into new ideas. Visit your local library with an open mind.

6. PHOTOS

Taking photos is a great way of recording inspiration that you find so next time you go on holidays make sure you keep your mind open and take lots of photos. I often look back at old travel photos as a source of inspiration for my designs. Having camera phones makes it so easy to be able to capture beautiful things that we find unexpectedly. Even though it's lovely taking photos with a good quality camera, it's not always convenient.

7. OTHER SOURCES

There really are no limits to the places that you may find inspiration. Always keep your eyes open wide to any possibility. You may find an interesting business card, postcard, vintage jar label or be given a lovely birthday card that could form the basis of your next design.

Use your imagination, have fun and enjoy the process!

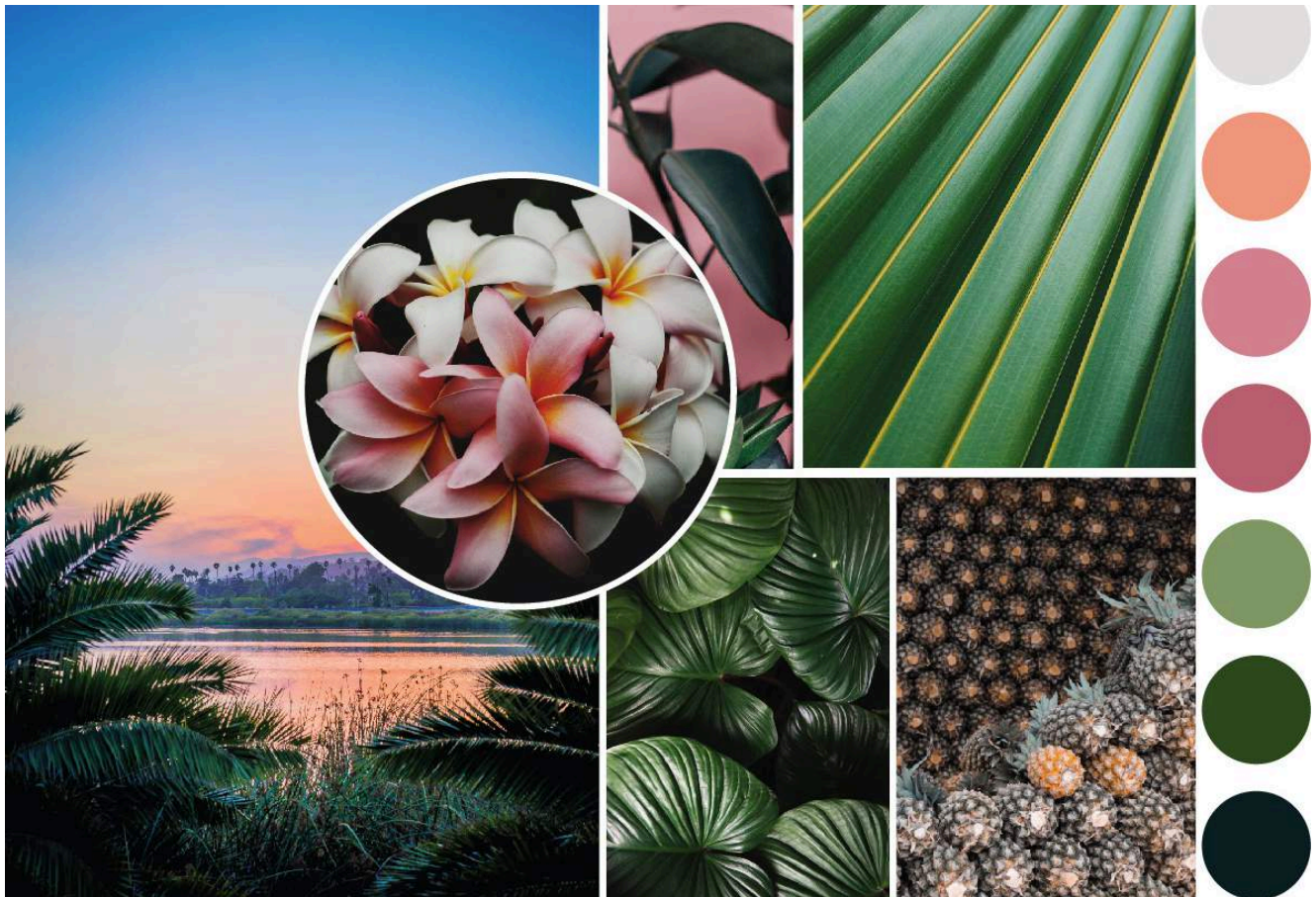
What do you do with all
the inspiration that you
collected?

Develop Your Story into A Mood board

Once you've spent the time collecting lots of inspirational images, you're going to use it to create a mood board which will inform your designs and collections.

SO, WHAT IS A MOOD BOARD

A mood board will visually communicate your ideas by allowing you to collect and collate all of your inspiration together in one place before you start designing. There are no rules for creating a mood board but its main point is to clearly communicate a story or mood through your use of colour, theme and design direction.



WHY CREATE A MOOD BOARD

Mood boards are an invaluable reference point for starting your surface pattern designs. By researching and creating a well informed mood board you will have firm guidelines in which to adhere to while designing.

Your mood board should be continually referred to during the design process to ensure you stay on track while designing.

If you are working for a client a mood board allows them to get a sense of your design direction so they can check if you are on the right track from the beginning stage. This will help avoid any misunderstandings and will allow you to make changes so that your visions align and you don't waste time creating designs that don't fit their needs.

WHAT TO INCLUDE ON YOUR MOOD BOARD:

Here is a list of different items can you include on your mood board.

Choose what's relevant to the look, feel and outcome you are wanting to achieve. You don't need to include them all.

I. Images

Using images is the most obvious way to visually communicate your ideas.

You can use:

- Photographs
- Magazine images
- Images from books
- Postcards, cards
- Images sourced on the internet (blogs, websites, social media)

Make sure that any printed images or material is at a high resolution and a decent size.

If you are using your mood board for anything other than your own personal use make sure you consider copyright issues. You should always credit the creator, ask for permission and link to the original source.

Keep in mind that simply using Pinterest or Google links is not suffice. You need to link to the original source.

2. Objects

Using 3 dimensional/found objects can add an element of texture and interest to your mood board. Example of elements you include are:

- Fabric
- Yarn
- Accessories

3. Colour

Your mood board should show a strong sense of the colour palette you intend to use. This could be shown through the images you choose or you could include colour chips.

If you wanting to add a 3D element to your mood board you could also show your colour palette through yarn wraps or fabric samples.

4. Text

You may choose to include text on your mood board such as a title, quotes or short relevant phrases.

Be careful to limit the amount of text used (don't use sentences) and think about the fonts you use e.g. if your theme is Art Deco then an Art Deco styled font would work best with your mood board.

If you are using text then limit the number of different fonts to 2 or 3

5. Sketches

Hand drawn sketches or illustrations can also be added to your mood board. If you've created some hand generated ideas that convey your theme and mood, it can be a great way of showing your design direction.

6. Patterns/Design Elements/Motifs

Your mood board should reference what sort of patterns/design elements/motifs that will inspire your designs. For example, if your theme is florals then you should include some examples of the types of florals that should influence the designs.

ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING A MOOD BOARD

1. Orientation:

You can choose to create a vertical or horizontal mood board. This will depend on the images that you choose and what you feel best conveys your ideas. There's no right or wrong!

2. Positive and negative space:

It's important to consider not only the images or items you are displaying on your mood board but also the background space.

The negative space is just as important as the positive space.

Not every area on your mood board needs to be filled. Experiment with leaving some background areas unfilled to give some breathing space around your images.

3. Focal Point:

Having a focal point on your mood board is important. An example of how this can be created is through image size or colour. It's important for the eye to be able to initially focus on one element and then be led around the board. If there is no focal point, your mood board will appear cluttered and will make it harder for the viewer to coherently understand your theme.

4. Balance:

Make sure all elements on your mood board are well balanced. Think about how colour, shape, and size all work together. For example, you don't want all the decorative and colourful items on one side of your board and on the other side have only plain, simple items. Also, keep in mind that heavier items always look better when they're placed at the bottom of the board. It will help your mood board feel grounded.

5. Theme:

Your theme, colour and motif direction should be clear. Anyone looking at your mood board should have a good sense of your design direction.

e.g. If your theme is pretty, pink florals then it wouldn't make sense to have strong, graphic geometrics images.

6. Size:

I would recommend that you create your mood board A3 in size. A3 size is a good, general size for being able to clearly see your images when you print out your mood board. If you're presenting your mood board to a client this is the minimum size I would recommend.

7. Layout

You can be creative and expressive with the layout of your mood board. There are no rules! You can choose a formal or informal layout and you can experiment with how you display your colour chips.

Here are a couple of examples:





Tips:

One of the hardest parts of making beautiful and successful mood boards is selecting the 'right' imagery that best conveys the mood and feel you are after.

You will probably have collected a large number of images, ideas etc. but only a small portion will make it onto your mood board.

So how do you choose what makes it and what doesn't?

Less is more. If you have 3 images that tell the same or similar story then you should choose one image to use on your mood board. You don't need all 3

Having too many small images can feel cluttered and confusing. You need to use enough images so you can convey your message but not too many that your mood board looks busy and is difficult to read.

Remember, when you are designing you can still refer to images that don't make it onto your mood board that you find inspiring.

Place those extra images in your visual diary or you could even create a second mood board to refer to during the design process.

Other things to consider

You can create your mood board in Illustrator or Photoshop if you have the digital skills but if not, mood boards can be created just as beautifully by hand.

You could also choose to create your mood board on the computer and then print it out and add physical elements to it.

Clearly communicate
a story or mood
through your use of
colour, theme and
design direction

Develop A Well Considered Colour Palette

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED PUTTING YOUR DESIGNS INTO REPEAT, YOU NEED TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER COLOUR BY CREATING A WELL CONSIDERED COLOUR PALETTE

Colour is one of the most important elements in a design.

Learning to work with and having a good eye for colour is imperative in your role as a surface pattern designer as it can make or break a design. Your choice of colour will determine the mood and feel of your design and your choices will most often be determined by your target market and the season you are designing.

Consider these examples:

If you're designing a fun girls design for ages 2-5 years, the colour palette will be very different than for a sophisticated design for women aged 40-50 years.

Also, in terms of seasons, if you're designing for Spring/Summer your colour palettes will generally be lighter than if you're designing for Autumn/Winter.

When people see colour they automatically have an emotional response so learning to select colours that work well together is an important part of being a surface pattern designer.

Colour is arguably one of the most important elements within a design so learning to work with and developing a good eye for colour is really important to the success of your designs.

We are going to look at some tips to help get you started creating successful colour palettes as the next thing you need to do is create an inspirational colour palette that you'll use within your collection.

Once you've finished creating your mood board you may already have a strong sense of the colours you'd like to use within your collection but whether you do or don't, you now need to spend the time selecting a really well resolved colour palette that you will use within your designs.

There isn't a set number of colours to use within a colour palette. The number of colours within will vary according to the brief.

However, if you're just starting out I recommend not including too many colours as this can make it harder for you to keep your collection cohesive.

As a general guide around 6 to 8 is probably a good starting point.

Keep it well balanced and with depth

You want to create a colour palette that is well balanced and has depth. You can do that by including a range of different tones e.g. some light colours and some dark.

CORE COLOURS AND HIGHLIGHT COLOURS

You also need to consider which colours will be your core colours (the ones you use in larger areas) and which will be highlight colours (used more sparingly).

Overall, you want to create a palette where the colours work well together and fit in with your story.

INSPIRATIONAL IMAGES

Coming up with colour palettes can be quite challenging so a great way of creating a colour palette if you're feeling stuck is by using inspirational images.

The best way to start this process is by collecting reference images that you love for their use of colour and from these images you can then create a colour library that you can use whenever you're feeling stuck.

It's a very similar process to when you were gathering inspiration for your mood board but this time you want the focus to be on colour. These can be any sort of images you find including photos you've taken or images you've collected. You just want to be drawn to them for their use of colour. You'll then be able to use those images as inspiration to create your colour palettes.



You may create a colour palette that is beautiful and well balanced and looks absolutely gorgeous but the way you use the colours within the palette can change the whole look and feel of your design.

The proportion of colour, colour placement and how different combinations of colour work when placed next to each other will really impact your design.

You may create a palette where there are certain colours that don't work when placed side by side yet the palette works really well as a whole. So, you may have to limit how those colours are used within the design. You may have to use them sparingly or even make sure there is no point within the design where they are side by side.

Also, the amount you use of any one colour can really alter the entire look and feel of the design. For example, a design with a white background is going to have a completely different feel to one with a black background.

Placement and Proportion

So now it's time to create a really beautiful resolved colour palette that fits in with your story and mood board.

Once you've created it, stand back and look at it objectively and if anything's not working, make sure you change it.

You can then take your colour palette and place it onto your mood board.

Tone

Balance

Placement

Proportion

Highlights

Core Colours

Design Development

It's now time for the fun part!

You've created your inspirational mood board and well resolved colour palette.

What's next?

The next step is the design development phase. This is a really important step in the design process and I encourage you to allow yourself lots of time to explore and experiment with different ideas and techniques.

This is where you're going to begin developing your motifs and design elements that you will use within your designs and collections.

Where to begin?

You should start by referring to your mood board and inspirational images to create marks, textures and develop lots of different potential motif ideas.

This should be a free and experimental process. You should consider that any mark or sketch you create has the potential to form part of a successful surface pattern design so you shouldn't disregard or throw away anything you create.

You can use any type of media you like. e.g. wet media, dry media, collage, mixed media, or you can digitally create your design elements. There are no rules so you can be as experimental as you like during this phase.

Try not to overthink the outcome and come up with as many ideas as possible.

Once you've developed lots of different initial ideas you can further refine and develop them into motifs or design ideas that you could potentially use within your patterns and collections

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

When you're developing your design elements and motif ideas there are a few things you need to consider:

Firstly, you need to make sure that your ideas are in line with your initial story. In order to do this you want to be constantly referring back to your mood board and colour palette while you're developing your ideas.

This will help you keep on track with your mood, colour and theme direction.

There should be clear links from your developmental ideas to your mood board so all of the work you create should relate back to your initial mood board.

The design development phase is so critical in the overall success of your collection so make sure that you really spend the time developing your ideas.

Tips

In my experience of working with students one of the biggest mistakes I see is people only creating a limited number of design elements that they can potentially use within their designs. This often results in their designs lacking depth and interest.

I recommend giving yourself lots of options to work with. You don't need to use them all but the more you have, the more choices you will have.

For example, if you were creating a design that included rose flowers, you could draw that rose more than once so you could have greater variety within your design e.g. create it from different angles or with different sized petals. etc.



For the best resources including my coaching and guidance that compliment this book so that you can start designing successfully go to www.patterndesignsecrets.com

Grow

Develop

Nurture

Let Yourself Shine

Pattern Repeats

Now that you have developed lots of sketches and motif ideas you can start turning them into pattern repeats and collections of designs.

Let's first get a good understanding of what a pattern repeat is.

WHAT IS A PATTERN REPEAT?

One of the most important skills a surface pattern designer needs is to be able to create seamless pattern repeats.

A repeat pattern consists of design elements such as images, shapes, textures, and colours that are arranged and recur at regular intervals.

A seamless surface pattern repeat should be able to form a continuous length without showing a seam i.e. you shouldn't be able to see where the pattern starts and finishes.

Therefore, in a good repeat, you should have to search to find the repeat unit. It shouldn't be obvious.

In the example below you can see spaces in between where the design starts and finishes making the repeat unit obvious. This results in the design not flowing as it should.



The green lines in the example below highlights the 'tram tracking' within the design

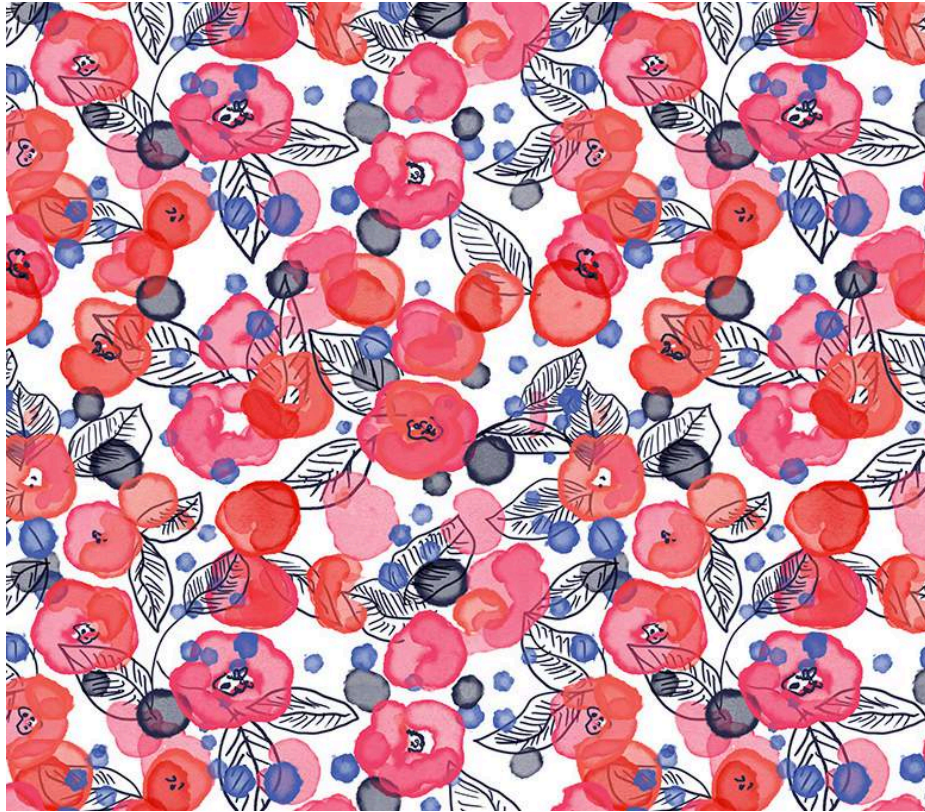


In order to see if there are any unintentional gaps within your design, you need to put together several units of your repeat pattern together.

Once you have done that you need to check if your design is seamless. This is easiest done by standing back from your design.

If you do spot any 'tram tracks' then you should alter your design to remove them. You could do this by adding elements, enlarging elements or moving elements around.

In the example below, you can see how the design is now seamless.



Tips to help you create seamless surface pattern repeats:

1. Make sure you repeat your elements out at the beginning stage of designing. It may take more time initially but will save you time in the end.

You should start by repeating one motif and then gradually add in more motifs. This gives you greater control over your design and allows you to objectively make decisions about what to add or remove.

3. Play with the size and direction of the motifs. You could try rotating, mirroring, enlarging or reducing them.

4. Select a repeat size that is large enough to add in a range of elements.

5. Try joining some elements together to help the design flow and so the motifs don't appear as separate islands.

6. Think about both the positive and negative space. The negative space can be just as powerful as the positive space.

7. Consider the spacing between each of your motifs

8. Try different repeat systems. If one isn't working then try another. Half drop, brick, and random repeats are often easier to disguise seams in your repeat designs.

9. Experiment with layering motifs and textures to create depth to your design

Pattern Repeat Systems

Before you start putting your designs into repeat, it's important to have an understanding of the different types of repeat systems and how they're created.

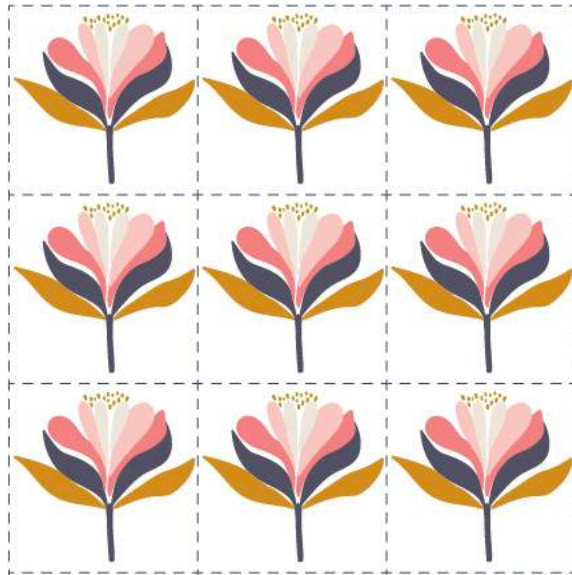
There are many different repeat systems you can use. The repeat system you choose will depend on what you're designing and the look and feel you're after.

To get an understanding of how each repeat system works, the following pages will show examples of the most common repeat systems.

Pattern Repeat Systems

1. Full drop/Block repeat

The full drop or block pattern repeat is one of the most common and simplest of all repeat systems. The repeat unit is created by stacking the original repeat block in a grid format. Although often treated as a square unit, full drop repeats can also be rectangular:



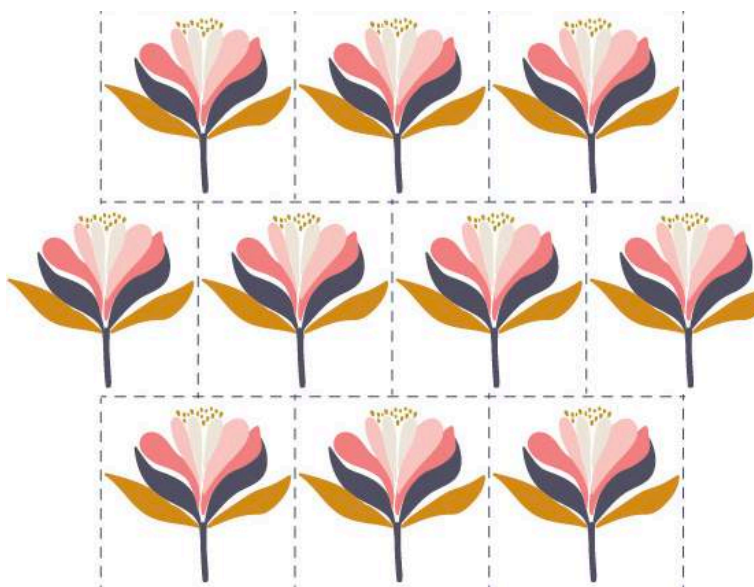
2. Half drop repeat

The half drop pattern repeat unit is very commonly used in surface pattern repeats. It consists of the repeat unit being stacked vertically in a column format which is then offset by half in the next vertical row. Half drop pattern repeats are a great way of quickly allowing the design to look less formal.



3. Brick repeat

The brick repeat unit is also very commonly used in surface pattern repeats. It's very similar to the half drop pattern repeat except instead of the repeat unit being stacked vertically in a column format, it is stacked horizontally. It is then offset by half in the next horizontal row resembling a brick wall. Like half drop pattern repeats, brick repeats allow a design to look less formal.



4. Diamond repeat

A diamond pattern repeat is simply created by repeating a diamond shape. This results with the elements being arranged in diagonal rows.



5. Ogee repeat

An ogee pattern repeat is similar to the diamond repeat except it has rounded edges at the sides and points at the top and bottom much like an onion.



6. Tossed/random repeat

In a tossed/random pattern repeat, the elements of the design are scattered within the repeat unit. This results in a very organic, informal and nonlinear



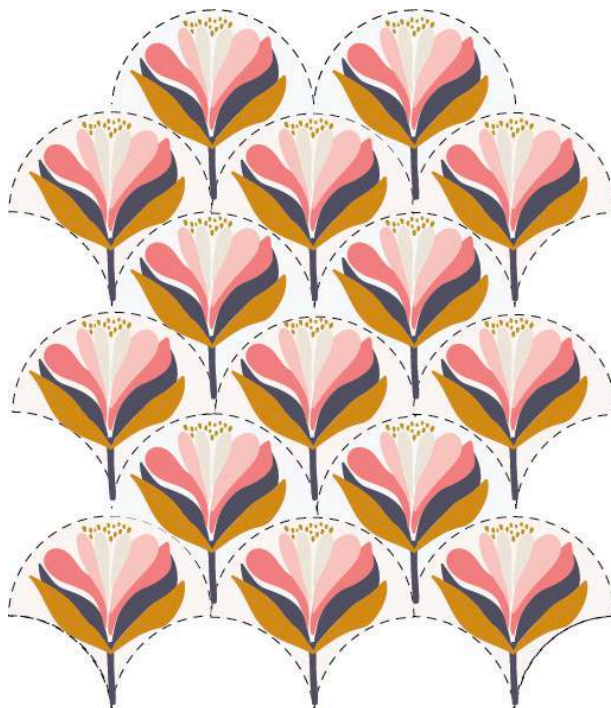
7. Stripe repeat

The stripe repeat pattern is a layout that has a strong vertical, horizontal or diagonal format. The stripe does not need to be made up of only filled lines. It could be made up of a repeated motif, texture or pattern.



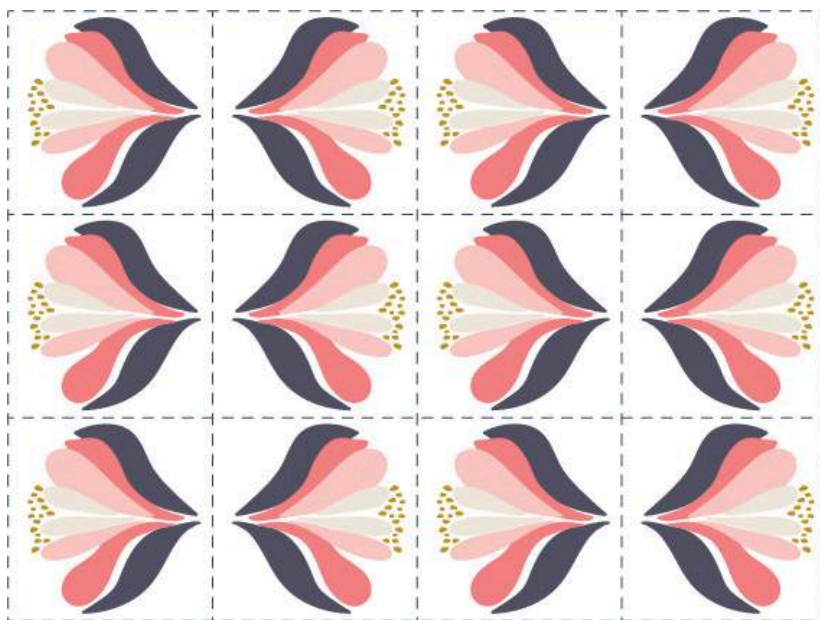
8. Scale repeat

A scale repeat is created with a repeating fish scale shape which is based on a circle or oval shaped that is repeated as a half drop.



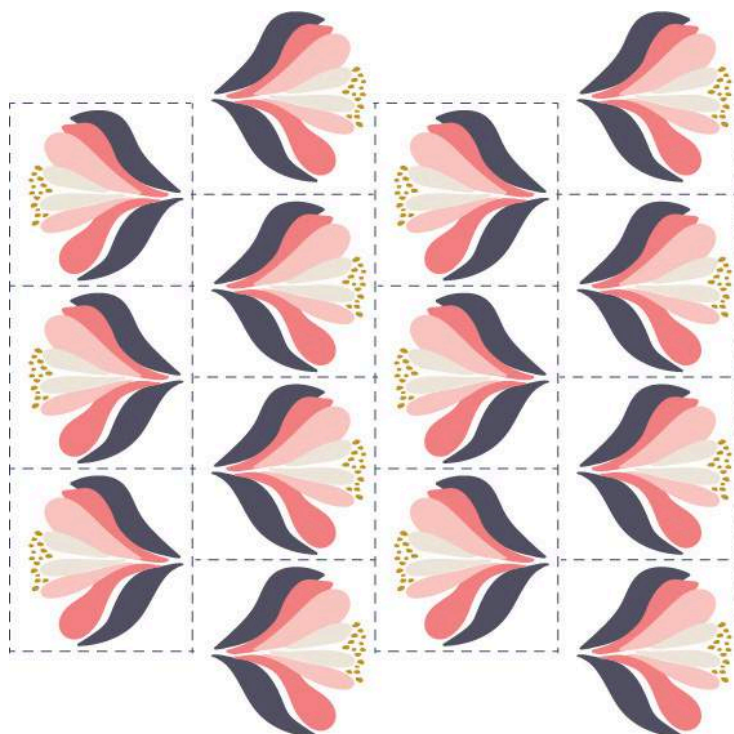
9. Mirror (Full drop) repeat

The mirror pattern repeat helps to create seamless designs by stacking your repeat unit in a vertical column, mirroring it in the adjacent vertical column and then repeating it as per a full drop repeat.



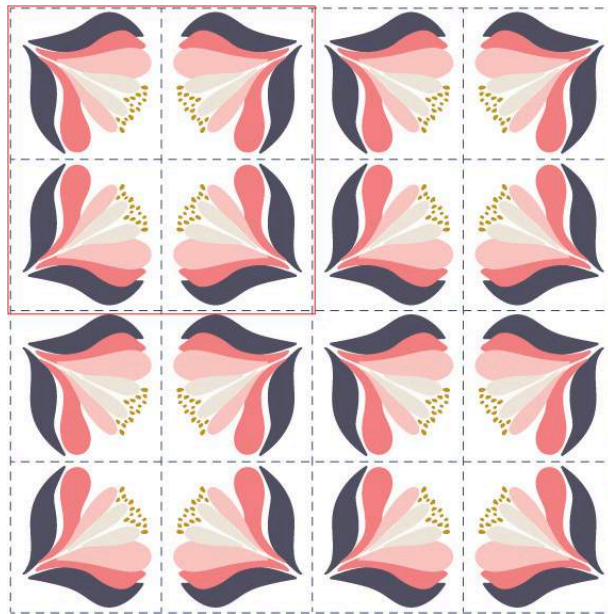
10. Mirror (Half drop) repeat

A mirror pattern repeat can also be repeated as a half drop repeat. It consists of the repeat unit being stacked vertically in a column format



11. Turnover/4 way mirror repeat

A turnover or 4-way mirror repeat is created by repeating and mirroring your repeat unit horizontally and then duplicating and mirroring both repeat units vertically. These 4 repeat units essentially create 1 larger repeat unit which can then be repeated as per a full drop repeat pattern.



12. Border repeat

A border repeat is generally a narrow design that runs along the edge of a product e.g. along the edge of a garment. Border designs normally repeat only from side to side and therefore don't need to repeat up and down.



Design elements
such as images, shapes,
textures, and colours that
are arranged and recur at
regular intervals.

Pattern Repeats

Pattern Collections

Another important role of a surface pattern design is being able to create pattern collections.

You can create stand alone designs that are not within a collection however working in collections helps you to be able to sell more than one design and it can also speed up your designing because you're designing using the same mood board and story idea.

WHAT IS A PATTERN COLLECTION?

A design range or collection consists of a group of designs that work cohesively together. The designs within the collection should tie together through the use of colour, style, theme and concept.

It should show direct links back to your mood board and should be consistent in theme.

If you lay all of your designs side by side together with your mood board, they should all sit together beautifully and tell the same story.

The number of designs within a collection can vary and will be dependent on a number of factors including your initial brief and what or who you are designing. Your collection can have just a few designs or many designs.

The very first design that you want to create in your collection is your Hero Design

The hero design should be the 'wow' factor of the collection- a real stand out and it should tell the story of your whole design range.

It will be the most complex and detailed of all the designs within the collection and it will inform the rest of the designs within your collection.



Hero Design



Secondary Hero Design

Following on from your hero design you'll start creating a range of coordinating designs. Before we talk about the different types of coordinating designs you can include, let's talk about what coordinate is.

What is a Coordinate?

Coordinates are designs that are created to complement the main design. They are intended to be used together with the main design to create a design range or collection.

Most importantly coordinate designs should retain the original design concept so that the main 'hero' design and coordinates work together as a whole story. The easiest way to tie the designs together is by theme, colour and style. Remember you're going to do this by constantly referring back to your mood board.

The way you go about creating your coordinate designs will be dependent on two main factors:

- If you are creating a range of designs for your own product line or for one client who is going to be selling those designs across a number of their own products.
- If your coordinates are part of a design collection in which you are selling each design separately to different clients.

- If you are designing patterns that are going to use on one product line you can use and adapt elements from your hero designs in different ways to create your coordinate designs. So for example, you could take a small leaf out of your main design and create a stripe with it

Alternatively, if you are using one story to create a range of designs but your plan is to sell them to different clients. For example, if you were selling your design at a trade show then your coordinate designs should tie back to your main design however each design will need to use different elements.



Coordinate Design



Coordinate Design

WHEN CREATING YOUR DESIGN COLLECTIONS CONSIDER:

Scale:

Changing the size of the main elements in each of the designs within your collection e.g. a small sized motif in one design versus a large scale motif in another

Direction:

Make changes to the direction of the design or the way the motifs are placed. So some designs may be multi-directional or tossed while others can be two-directional.

Texture:

Select a texture that complements or is used in the main design to use as a component of your coordinate

The proportion of colours:

Change the numbers of colours used or the proportion of each colour

Colour combinations

Change the combinations of colours that you use

Repeat/layout:

Use a different repeat system for the coordinate e.g. a tossed repeat with a small motif or a placement print.

Background colour:

Change the background colours throughout the range so you have a range of different background colours from your colour palette

Design collection example

Homewares are one of the biggest markets for coordinates.

Bed linen is a great example where coordinates are widely used. A bed linen range usually consists of the main design on the front of the quilt cover and pillowcases, with coordinate designs often used on the back of the quilt cover and on the sheet sets. Placement prints or coordinate designs will also be used for throw cushions and coverlets. The important thing to remember is that the design story works together as a whole.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

The most important thing to think about when designing your collection is that your story remains strong and that all of your designs work cohesively together as a whole.

By creating a strong and cohesive collection of designs you'll be able to bring your designs to life through a consistent story which will allow your customers and clients to fall in love with your entire collection, not just one design therefore increasing your opportunity for more sales.

Creating successful designs that you can sell involves creating great designs and collections and the way you are going to do this is by making sure you really spend the time developing and nurturing your ideas.

The more you practice the better you'll get!



Ensure your
story remains strong
and that all of your designs
work cohesively as a whole

Signature Style

One of the questions that often gets asked and something that new designers often struggle with is 'how can you develop your own signature style or voice?'

SO, WHAT IS A SIGNATURE STYLE AND WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?

Your signature style is your own unique handwriting that is evident in the work you create. Basically, it's what sets you apart from everybody else.

Having your own signature style allows potential clients and customers to recognise your work and know what to expect from you. This is where you can gain your loyal following of customers or clients will want to buy your products or designs because they love what you create.

Your signature style or handwriting will separate you from other designers as your work will reflect your unique personality and way of designing

DEVELOPING YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE

Developing your own signature style can be quite challenging when you're new to designing. Even if you have one, it can sometimes be difficult to recognise in your own work but if you want to create your own unique point of difference then it's really important to spend the time developing your own unique voice.

So how do you do that?

I. Be authentic

When you're trying to develop your own signature style, authenticity is key.

You need to develop who *you* are as a designer and not base yourself on what everyone else is doing.

Although part of developing who you are as a designer is researching and discovering other designers and their work as this will enable you to get a feel for what you like, what you don't like and what you are drawn to, you should not let yourself be influenced or change your own way or working in order to try to emulate what others are doing.

You want to develop your own unique style that is authentic to you as it will be the reason why someone buys or is attracted to your work over someone else's.

You want to aim to be individual and create a style that you do well and become known for.

Base it on YOU, and not what everyone else is doing.

2. Experiment

In order to discover how you like to work you need to experiment with different styles, techniques and ways of working.

Make sure you're open to new ideas and start by creating lots and lots of different concepts.

Discover how you enjoy working the most and what you're most passionate about.

As you explore and create you will begin to see a pattern emerge in the types of work you are creating.

It should be something that comes easily to you, something that you enjoy and flows out of you.

3. Practice

Once you've discovered how you like to work it's time to practice, practice, practice.

Developing your own personal and unique way of working will take time, effort and practice.

For some it may happen quickly while for others it could take longer to discover and refine.

Most importantly when developing your signature style, it's important that you let it evolve and develop naturally and authentically.

DIFFERENT ELEMENTS THAT MAY EMERGE AS YOUR SIGNATURE STYLE INCLUDE:

1. Colour Palette

You may have certain colours that you use consistently within your work or a certain type of colour palette that you are drawn to and like to use.

For example, you may love bright bold colours that you use in different combinations consistently within your designs.

Eventually your colour palette can become something that people associate with you and your designs.

You should allow yourself space to explore and develop how you work with colour and in time you will find you will naturally be drawn to certain combinations or colour types.

2. Media

Once you start experimenting with different media, you will find that you will most likely be drawn to a particular medium that you consistently like to work in.

That could be cut work collage, flat gouache painting, watercolour, pastel drawings etc.

This will form part of your signature style.

3. Theme

You will naturally be drawn to particular subject matters and themes that you enjoy designing the most. For example you may like to create floral designs, abstract designs, or illustrative designs etc.

4. Production Method

If you are creating a product with your designs on it then the way that your design is applied to the fabric or product could form part of your signature style.

For example, you may create hand printed fabric or printed fabric with embroidery detail etc.

5. Design Elements

The way in which you create your design elements can form part of your signature style.

You may like to use texture in your work, bold blocks of colour or line work etc.

6. Design Layout

You may also find that you regularly use a particular design layout.

You may create designs that have lots of elements that fill the space, you may like to overlap your elements in a certain way or there may be a particular repeat type that you use consistently.

As you spend the time developing and practicing creating your designs and design elements, your own unique and signature style will begin to emerge. It's all about expressing you and your work and finding how you like to work.

Some tips:

Avoid copying the latest trends.

Make sure your work is unique and different to others and not a carbon copy of other people's work.

Know your audience or target market. This could influence the type of work you do

Create lots and lots of work.

Make sure there's continuity in your work. This will be conveyed through your colour palette, design style and feel of your work.

Keep in mind:

As a side note, it's worth keeping in mind that if you work as a freelancer, the clients or companies that you work for may need you to adapt your own personal style to suit their brand so while creating your own signature style is very important, it's also good to have the skills to be able to create pattern designs that fit a set brief.

Be Unique
Be Authentic
BE YOU



In order to develop yourself into a successful designer or artist, you need to take the time to develop your craft. That is setting time aside to practice and develop your skills, experimenting and trying new ways of working so you can develop your own personal workflow.

Sometimes it can be really challenging when you have time set aside to be creative yet when you sit down you don't know where to start or you're feeling uninspired.

Here are a few ideas to help you get started.

Studio space

Take the time to clean and clear your space before you start. If your space is clean and organised, it will help clear your mind too. If your space is cluttered, then it can result in your mind feeling cluttered also.

Inspiration

Having inspiration around you will help make your space somewhere you want to be. For example pictures on the wall, plants, photos or anything else that is inspiring you at the moment. You want a creative space that you connect to.

I know not everyone has the luxury of their own unique space that they can work in, but even creating a small corner for yourself that is inspiring to work in, really does help.

Where you can, give yourself both the mental and physical space to exclusively create without distractions - no emails, or other business tasks to worry about

Rituals

Rituals or habits that you regularly do before you start being creative can be a really great way to clear your mind allowing you to start your practice in a productive way.

Here are some ideas you could use either on their own or you do a combination of a few:

You could go for a walk to clear your mind and get some fresh air

You could start by journaling, even for 5 minutes.

Ideas for this process could include writing down any negative thoughts or struggles and turn them into positive affirmations or you could just remove the clutter from your mind and allow yourself to be centred.

You could do meditation or self-hypnosis to help centre yourself

Give yourself a mantra or positive affirmations to say before you start
e.g.

Today i am open to creating beautiful work
I allow my creativity to flow
I am creative, inspired and full of new ideas
My art skills are improving every day.

Put on some inspirational music or audio book that inspires you

Having a ritual that will help clear your mind before you start will help you feel calm and centred before you begin rather than starting from a place of fear or insecurity

Sketchbook

When you're starting your day's practice, it's great to start from a place of curiosity and exploration rather than jumping into creating a finished design.

That is allowing yourself to enjoy the process of developing your ideas by sketching and allowing yourself the time to 'just create' for a little bit before you start.

Having a sketchbook or a visual diary is a really great ritual to have as part of your daily design or art practice. Even the smallest amount of time drawing or developing your ideas will really help you grow as a designer.

A sketchbook by nature is a place to experiment, practice, do exercises and just create without limitations. It is a place for you to grow not only your ideas but also yourself and design sensibility. You can follow your heart and dive into what attracts or interests you without overthinking the outcome.

If you put pressure on yourself to create, it can make you feel stuck but by trusting and putting time into the process of allowing yourself to develop your ideas without limitations your brilliance will begin to shine.

The more you create, the more you will grow as a designer and artist both in your work and your design eye. You will learn what works, what doesn't and how to move forward to creating successful outcomes.

Keep in mind that mistakes are a great thing and should be embraced. Not only can you learn from them but they can be the greatest gift because you may discover something you had never thought of before.

When you're developing yourself as a designer and artist and stepping into developing your design practice whether that's daily or a couple of times a week or whatever you can manage, make sure that you lead with curiosity and exploration rather than pressure and judgment.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT....

For the best resources including my coaching and guidance that compliment this book so that you can start designing successfully go to www.patterndesignsecrets.com



Rachelle Holowko
Surface Pattern Designer,
Artist and Coach

Hi, I'm Rachelle an Australian surface pattern designer; artist and coach who has a bit of an obsession for creating florals and anything to do with nature.

I'm the founder of Pattern and Design where not only do I get to create gorgeous pattern designs for clients all around the world but I also get to help other creative people do the same.

My love of colour, pattern and design was developed while studying a BA in Textile Design. Since then I have worked as a surface pattern designer, creating designs for lots of amazing products such as homewares, fashion, stationery and accessories.

My aim is to be able to add joy to the world through beautiful patterns!