Cultural Pattern Design Project

Overview

In this project, you will research and create an original pattern design inspired by a cultural tradition of your choice. Patterns have been used across cultures throughout history to decorate objects, tell stories, and express cultural identity. This assignment will help you understand how patterns reflect cultural values while developing your own design skills.

Materials Needed

- Sketchbook or drawing paper
- Pencil and eraser
- Ruler or compass (if needed for geometric designs)
- Fine-tip black marker
- Colored pencils, markers, or watercolors
- Access to research materials (books, internet)

Instructions

Step 1: Select a Cultural Pattern Tradition

Choose one cultural pattern tradition that interests you. Some suggestions include:

- Islamic geometric patterns
- Celtic knot designs
- Maori koru patterns
- Mexican Talavera tile designs
- Indian mehndi patterns
- Native American Navajo designs
- Japanese Seigaiha wave patterns
- Ghanaian Adinkra symbols
- Ukrainian Vyshyvanka embroidery
- Greek key patterns
- Moroccan zellige tile patterns

Step 2: Research Your Chosen Pattern Tradition

Research your selected cultural pattern tradition and collect information about:

- The origins and history of the pattern style
- The meaning behind common motifs and symbols
- Traditional color schemes used
- How the patterns are typically applied (on textiles, pottery, architecture, etc.)
- The cultural significance of these patterns

Find and print or sketch at least 3-5 examples of authentic patterns from your chosen culture.

Step 3: Analyze the Pattern Structure

Carefully examine your reference patterns and identify:

- The basic shapes and elements used
- How elements are repeated or arranged
- The use of symmetry, rotation, or reflection
- Color relationships
- How the pattern creates visual rhythm and movement

In your sketchbook, practice drawing some of the basic elements and arrangements found in your chosen tradition.

Step 4: Design Your Original Pattern

Create an original pattern inspired by your chosen cultural tradition:

1. Begin by sketching the basic structure and elements of your pattern in pencil
2. Refine your design, ensuring that patterns connect and repeat properly
3. Consider the meaning behind your design choices - what story or symbolism does your pattern convey?
4. Outline your final design with fine-tip black marker
5. Add color using traditional color schemes from your chosen culture

Your final pattern should fill a page in your sketchbook or a sheet of paper (minimum 8.5" x 11").

Step 5: Apply Your Pattern

Choose ONE of the following options to apply your pattern:

- Design a functional object (bookmark, greeting card, folder cover)
- Create a border for a mirror or picture frame
- Design a textile pattern (for clothing, cushion covers, etc.)
- Create a decorative panel or wall hanging

Draw or construct your chosen application and apply your pattern to it.

Step 6: Create an Artist Statement

Write a short artist statement (150-200 words) that includes:

- Information about your chosen cultural pattern tradition
- The meaning or symbolism in your pattern design

- How you maintained authenticity while adding your own creative elements
- What you learned about cultural patterns through this project

Step 7: Submit Your Work

Hand in the following items:

- Your pattern design
- Your applied pattern project
- Your artist statement
- Copies or sketches of your reference patterns

Assessment Criteria

Your project will be assessed on:

1. Understanding and authentic representation of your chosen cultural tradition
2. Technical skill in creating a cohesive, well-executed pattern
3. Creativity and personal interpretation while respecting cultural elements
4. Craftsmanship and presentation of your applied pattern
5. Thoughtfulness of your artist statement and research process

Tips for Success

- Choose a cultural tradition that genuinely interests you
- Spend enough time on research to truly understand the patterns
- Practice the basic elements before creating your final design
- Focus on quality rather than complexity
- Consider the meaning behind traditional patterns, not just their appearance
- Be respectful of the cultural significance of the patterns you study
- Ask for help if you need guidance with specific techniques