

PATTERNISM

In this essay, an art strategy will be deployed through four works of art. The art strategy is called Patternism, and a piece of art belongs to the strategy when the art piece in itself seems nice at first view, but hides a deeper meaning; a pattern that is revealed only when carefully inspecting the art piece. For some art works, this means that, without context, the pattern would be difficult to extract (as can be seen in the first discussed art piece). For other art works, the pattern can be extracted a bit more easily through detailed examination of the artworks' aspects (as can be seen in the three other art pieces). First, I will introduce the four art pieces, followed by a discussion in which the differences and similarities of each art piece are reviewed in light of the Patternism strategy.

"Sugar Plum Fairy" by A.S. Klein

The first piece of art that will be discussed is the painting called "Sugar Plum Fairy" by the artist Autumn S. Klein¹. The painting by itself looks quite calculated, with smears and smudges of different colours grouped together at different positions on the canvas. Even though the title might slightly give it away, what the viewer might not know is that these smears are not made at random. Klein created her art piece by putting on her pointe shoes to perform a ballet dance. For this work, she danced to the composition "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" from the Nutcracker ballet by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. While dancing on the canvas, her pointe shoes are dipped in different colours of paint to expose the dance pattern.

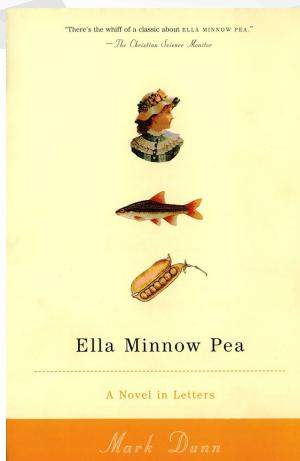


"Ella Minnow Pea" by M. Dunn

The second piece of art is the novel called "Ella Minnow Pea" by the writer Mark Dunn. The novel is a "progressively lipogrammatic epistolary fable"², meaning that the novel is made of written letters where more and more letters become

¹ [Sugar Plum Fairy \(Original\)](#)

² [Ella Minnow Pea - Wikipedia](#)



restricted, leading to a creative way of writing words to make the story comprehensible. The novel exposes a pattern of shrinking words by losing letters to use, simplifying the English language to small and little words used to communicate a story. The story talks about a small village where the creator of the pangram³ "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" is deeply honoured and buried. From his grave, which is decorated with the letters of the alphabet, letters start falling down, which is seen by the government as a sign: the fallen letters may no longer be used on the island, in both spoken and written text.

"Cello" by S. Orlando

The third work of art that will be discussed is the "Cello"⁴ photography series by photographer Stephen Orlando. He often uses coloured lights and a long exposure technique, which is visible in the ongoing lit-up pattern seen in his photographs. In "Cello", a cello being played is depicted followed by a waterfall of gradient neon-coloured light lines. At first sight, a viewer may only see the lights, as the cello player is not highly contrasted against the background. But, once the cello player is spotted, the viewer may guess that the lines represent a music piece, as they come from the bow used to play the cello. The music piece is called "Cello Suite No. 1 in G major" by Johann Sebastian Bach⁵. A pattern of a classical music piece is exposed by attaching light to the bow of the cello player and capturing it with a long exposure photograph.



"Origami" (2011) by K. Yamashita

The fourth artwork is made by attaching creased Japanese paper to a wall, called "Origami" by Kumi Yamashita⁶. At first sight, the viewer may see different coloured

³ [Pangram - Wikipedia](#)

⁴ [Motion Exposure | Cello](#)

⁵ [Cello Suites \(Bach\) - Wikipedia](#)

⁶ [Light & Shadow — Kumi Yamashita](#)



squares of paper, where each of the papers has a different pattern of crinkles. However, on closer inspection, the importance of the light source and the specific creases can be noted and profiles of faces can be perceived. It is also only with the light shining from the right that the faces can be made out, without the light or shone from a different angle, the pattern would be lost.

Discussion

Even though the pattern is more evident in the novel and photograph series than in the other two artworks, all four artworks fall within the Patternism strategy. In all four artworks, the (hidden) pattern is its main focus. However, I want to clarify that the art pieces have different approaches to the strategy. Whereas the pattern in "Ella Minnow Pea" is explicitly stated and worked towards within the book, and in "Cello" the colourful patterns capture the attention of the viewer at first sight, the patterns in the other artworks are more implicit. For "Origami", the viewer may overlook the shadows created by the creased papers, as the attention is not necessarily drawn to the shadows. The pattern of profile faces is therefore a bit implicit. In the "Sugar Plum Fairy", it is the most difficult to see the pattern, as the painting could be an artwork of random paint brushes, without the knowledge of it being a result of dance. Without some background information, the viewer remains unknown to the technique used. For me, after finding out the context, the splotches of paint were no longer mere splotches, but carefully placed dance steps, and this added value and appreciation to this artwork.

In addition, some of the artworks could gain a new meaning after the context has been revealed. For the "Cello" photographs and the "Sugar Plum Fairy" painting, the knowledge that they were made using a different art discipline may change the perception of the viewer. This hints that the dance with the paint-covered shoes could be an artwork in itself (disregarding the painting). The same counts for the "Cello" photographs, the live performance of the composition and the lit-up bow could be an artwork in itself. In contrast, the other two art works are made using only one kind of art discipline, and, in my opinion, are therefore less complex. The pattern can be seen only in one way for the novel and the shadow-light art, and knowing the context does not add a new dimension or meaning to the art piece.

A big difference between the “Ella Minnow Pea” novel and the three other artworks, is that the book has a sense of progression. At the start, not a lot of the pattern can be seen, but as the story moves forward, the pattern becomes more and more evident. For me, it helped in my engagement with the artwork, both at the moment I occupied myself with it as well as long after I had finished it. This progression - and the physical time it took to fully complete my involvement - combined with the intricate pattern gave me a bond with the book, which makes me remember it even though I read it a couple of years ago. The other art pieces are quite static. Even though I was awed when I discovered them, my amazement seemed to last only for a short while after my attention went to other matters. I find the three other art pieces very nice, regardless, but the patterns that made an impression on me are less overwhelming than with the patterns of the “Ella Minnow Pea” novel.

Conclusion

All with all, each artwork has a different approach to the Patternism strategy, both in execution and intention, yet they all express patterns that are unusual to their discipline. Moreover, as some art pieces are multidisciplinary, such as the “Sugar Plum Fairy” painting and the “Cello” photograph series, various meanings could be attached to the works when the background information is known to the viewer. For the artworks that are unidisciplinary, such as the “Ella Minnow Pea” novel and the “Origami” artwork, it is unlikely that a new dimension or different pattern can be found when the context is revealed. A last difference is that all of the artworks are static except for the “Ella Minnow Pea” novel, which shows a progression in the pattern that makes it stand out from the other artworks in this aspect. Nevertheless, each exposes a pattern in their own way which makes them unique and intriguing to explore. I hope you will give them a chance to expose their patterns to you and engulf you in the story they tell.