

Locus Artis

Places of Craft as Spaces
for New Designer Practices

Center for Research of Fashion and Clothing
Zagreb, 2017.

Nama Zagreb, from the book *Nama – 25 Years*,
Published in the magazine *Zagreb*, 1968



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02

Introduction



Visoće, Žumberak, Dec 2015
PHOTO: René Pronk

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03

Does locus make things located, keeping them in place, visible in their fixed form, in a kind of slowness? Is it merely slowness in relation to the centre, or is it also a kind of resistance that allows for sustainability in those issues that emerge from the keywords of new considerations of the value of traditional forms of handicraft, which is at the centre of a new paradigm proposed by Richard Sennett in his book *The Craftsman*?

Is our focus on specific places and micro-production strategies just a temporary glance toward alternative practices, or does it imply seeking balance in contrast to the highly technologized reality? And what is it that defines and affirms another, though familiar, possibility of situating material culture today? The problem arises already in the naming, which presents a particular obstacle in the Croatian language. With a lot of caution, however, we can term this linguistic inadequacy “craft” (*obrta*). When we say craft, we must bear in mind a much broader term, one that includes the specifics of working in a particular place, methods and work processes, the social and temporal context, the economy and meaning itself, as well as micro-production as a form. In Western cultures, the artisanal way of working, unlike the industrial model, is stigmatized and marked by a separation from art and design. This, in turn, has led to the differentiation between “having an idea” and/or “making an object,” as Alan Peter states in *The Culture of Craft* (Dormer, 1997, 18). Nevertheless, on this other side there had been enough of those who practiced such a separate, artisanal method of working so as to develop and grow

knowledge through the evolution of handiwork and craftwork. When we talk about craft, suggests Peter Dormer in *The Culture of Craft*, then “this knowledge expands and its values are expressed not through language but through practice” (Dormer, 1997, 217).

A.T.V.



Going to the market,
from the magazine
*Fotografische
rundschaу*,
1.4.1940, Zagreb City
Museum Archives
PHOTO: Ignjat
Habermüller

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Project *Locus Artis*



Couple, 1985
PHOTO: Vladimir Šimunić

The project *Locus Artis – Places of Craft as Spaces for New Designer Practices* builds on the research initiated by CIMO – Centre for Research of Fashion and Clothing in 2016 entitled *Fashion Micro-production – Space for New Designer Practices*, and is now continuing in the direction of focused research of craftwork practices in suburban and rural areas using the case study of the stereotype of “the auntie” (*kumica*) and implementing the design-versus-craft conceptual framework.

Locus as the topos and context of localized thinking: space, location, mapping, indexing, informing, transferring and recording material, verbal and visual documentation, accompanied by the analysis of the theoretical approach and individual cognitive experience through critical reflection;

Ars, artis as a skill, mastery, experience, craft techniques and technologies, organization, (micro)production, marketing, (micro)market reflections, with an emphasis on the whole conceptual and production process;

The project explores the presence, forms and methods of crafts and handicraft micro-productions characterized by the “traditional” methods of working, from handiwork to crafts technologies that are used for individual rather than serial production, and where the relationship to work and the object affirms the hand, the integral work process, and the symbolic power of the individualized creative approach. Thereby, a specific place (*locus*) and specific work (*ars, artis*) are problematized and placed in a close relationship in the sense of the horizontal (space) and the vertical (production) aspects. Aside from production, this study also examines various practices of trade and exchange in the local context.

“Traditional” crafts production represents a production potential, preserves and affirms “the human measure”, presenting a potential space for new design practices, a vital space that offers a transformation of the relationship between design and craft. Building on contemporary clothing theories and practices, the focus is on examining traditional and local values (as opposed to globalizing tendencies) and on individual and ethical approaches to clothing beyond the fashion system, with a tendency towards slow fashion and sustainable design.

The aim of the research was not to establish and quantify the presence and potential power of such practices, but to localize and juxtapose several individual case studies. The final image is formed after all the views from different perspectives have been put together in the spaces of critical and theoretical texts, documented narratives and creative responses from textile design students (TTF, Zagreb, Graduate course in Textile and Fashion Design). One might say that Zagreb is a place on whose margins and in the surrounding rural area certain artisanal practices have survived in the form of workshops, with the tools and practices associated with the contemporary notion of slowness, i.e. the places where a slowdown is present. Sometimes there are clear boundaries between tradition, fixed thinking, and the contemporary impact of new practices, but more often than not these boundaries are almost invisible and thus less intelligible. In the spaces of micro-production, we also often encounter a fusion with appropriated forms of technological innovation, which appear not as the main tool but an aid: the hand is still the main mover, practitioner, and appraiser of the value of such work. The hand is constantly training and progressing. The persistence of craftsmanship is a matter of skill, of craft, of the way it differs from the industrial method of fragmenting a conceived product and its subsequent assembling into a complete product. The awareness of the work process and the nature of thusly created product, of the value of the local, and of the skilled hand that produces “handicrafts,” is part of the artisanal notion of daily work and the unique value of such products.

The research of appearance and clothing practices refers to the stereotype of “the auntie” as a protagonist who had (long ago) discarded the folk costume, devising a utilitarian style that combines the “traditional” rural and urban aspects of clothing. The figure of the auntie serves as a case study through which one can explore identity, representation, and traces of cultural practices in contemporary rural space. This study focuses specifically on textile as text, as a rich depository of signs whose echoes extend from the distant past and whose transfer, regardless of the pressures of “fashion”, remains preserved, visible, present, and pregnant with the power of symbolic speech, awaiting new interpretations informed by new cultural practices. Even though we have faced the fact that the consolidation of this stereotype speaks to its gradual mythification, the rural and suburban contexts remain spaces of significant cultural capital, both in terms of research/academic and creative challenges.

A.T.V.

Reaffirmation of the Logic of Space and Place



The Market on
Jelačić Square,
Zagreb, around 1930
Zagreb City
Museum Archives
PHOTO:
Vladimir Horvat

Recent academic and research approaches that aim to reaffirm the critical spatial perspective in contemporary social theory and analysis start from simultaneous relations and meanings linked by both spatial and temporal logic. They all aim to deconstruct the conventional historiographical narrative in order to generate insights and devise strategies that would allow one to enter the narrative at almost any point or place for the purpose of achieving the general objective: creating a deeper engagement with the issues of (dis)continuity, sequentiality and simultaneity, space and place, city and region, memory and (con)temporariness. In that sense, to deconstruct is “to reinscribe and resituate meanings, events and objects within broader movements and structures; it is, so to speak, to reverse the imposing tapestry in order to expose in all its unglamorously dishevelled tangle the threads constituting the well heeled image it presents to the world” (Eagleton, 1986, 80). The spatial interpretive strategy “against the grain” foregrounds a spatial imagination that shows that the “life stories” of individuals, groups or communities have their own cartographies and provocative locations/positions of “situating” that affect both thinking and action. In this respect, place/locus is a “stage” for contextualizing social life and the performative contingency of individual “empirical events and facts”.

Generally speaking, the notion of space localizes (determines the place) and encodes specificity and difference, discontinuity and hybridity, movement and transformation, as opposed to the rigid and hierarchical structures of territoriality and subjecthood. It enters the world of locus so as to highlight differences and their stories, fragmentation and heterogeneity, in a word, the multiplicity of situations and happenings in a polymorphic system of unstable relationships and connections, at points of intersection and merging,

mixing and ceaseless creative media movement, with an unpredictable effect of the configuration of traces, signs and meaning. Multifocal research approaches and their intersections lead to an understanding of the interrelationships between identity, place and cultural tradition, offering answers about the spatial specificities of/in “the look of things” (John Berger) and reflecting on why things in different locations happen in the same or different ways (as a performative act/locution). Projects related to a critical consideration of the spatial production of knowledge rely on different theoretical and activist positions, so it is not possible to delineate a separate scientific territory. Since hierarchical knowledge and the Western appropriation of “universal truths” have been called into question, the question arises, particularly in projects that are split between the centres of academic excellence and the supposedly marginalized locations, of how to bridge the gap between theory and research practice and, at the same time, “expand the limits of each individual place” (Elaine Baldwin).

Approaches that link critical concepts and “fields of meaning” to the material or social world present not only representative (artistic) practices, but different practices of creation and the ways in which social groups and individuals engage in their “craftsmanship”, how they construct their place in the social practice, and how they conceptualize and enact identity, belonging, pleasure and differences in “the social production of space” (Henri Lefebvre) as places of practice itself.

S.B.U.



Tailoring Salon,
Marulić Square 14, Zagreb
PHOTO: A.T.V.

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Craft — Skill and Practice



The workshop of the
tailoring salon Šabić,
Ilica 58, Zagreb
PHOTO: A.T.V.

Richard Sennett’s *The Craftsman* reminds us of the suppressed places where the human measure is still possible, where concrete work takes place, as well as the possibility of concrete action. Divided into three parts – Craftsmen, Craft, and Craftsmanship – the book invites new reflections on the fate of man as *Homo faber*, as a subject occupying a particular place, the place where s/he works.

For Sennett, craftsmanship is “an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (Sennett, 2008, 9), encompassing a far wider range than skilled manual labour. He explores the various dimensions of skill, but also commitment, because what is at stake is “the intimate connection between hand and head. Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking” (Sennett, 2008, 9). He does not suggest that we resuscitate the idea of the “return to nature” or an homage to Morris’s Arts and Crafts movement; rather, he offers a complex sociological study that analyses the issue of man and work today in the field of material culture, i.e. the relationship between man and objects, and the very means of production. His analysis incorporates a much broader perspective than the existing analyses of craftwork, so his views should not be perceived as contributing to romantic, anti-technological movements, but as an invitation to practise a holistic approach to work and the work process as a space of everyday practice in terms of the new cultural paradigm.

In Part 2 of the book, entitled Craft, Sennett presents his study of the hand in a similar way that Henry Focillon praises the hand in his book *The Life of Forms*, because “he had golden hands”: “The hand is not the mind’s docile slave. It searches and experiments for

its master's benefit; it has all sorts of adventures; it tries its chance" (Focillon, 1992, 180). For Sennet, the hand is "intelligent", it possesses virtues that enable not only concrete work, but knowledge. Through experience that is gained through the hand, one both develops skill and heightens one's consciousness. The hand and the tool act in unity, each time generating a new work as a wholesome result tested by the touch, as a lasting trace, the act inscribed into a concrete product. Namely, "[c]ontact and usage humanized the inert object and more or less set it apart from its classification as something unique" (Focillon, 1992, 165).

The artisanal mode of work itself should be seen as a mode of action, something that happens in a particular place but not necessarily as a static, once-and-for-all mastered principle. What knowledge, reflection and contemplation are to design, skill, craft and work which results in experience-based practical insights are to handicrafts.

Such experience contains a specific dimension of progress that is "not linear" (Sennett, 2008, 238). Since it is possible to check the hand during the process, it is also possible to make corrections or encounter irregularities and even workarounds that lead to developing and achieving the production level as a new insight. Thusly gained experience is the result of a continuous practice and refinement of skill, which leads to a lasting vital experience of work as a meaningful act.

Sennett's aim is to humanize work, especially handiwork, which represents the vertical idea of ethical "pride" of the one who works: "Pride in one's work lies at the heart of craftsmanship as the reward for skill and commitment". (Sennett, 2008, 294) And the reward shall become greater over time in terms of developing one's skills to perfection, to creation itself. "Craftsmen take pride most in skills that mature. This is why simple imitation is not a sustaining satisfaction; the skill has to evolve. The slowness of craft time serves as a source of satisfaction; ... [such s]low craft time also enables the work of reflection and imagination" (Sennett, 2008, 295). Here we can once again agree that the artisanal mode of work implies a wholesome, physical, concrete, meaningful work on the material with one's hands, whose reflections cultivate a new imaginary lasting symbolic dimension that is constantly open to new interpretations.

A.T.V.

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 Focillon, Henri 1992. *Life of Forms*, New York, Zone Books

Štefa, Bara, Jalža, Rezika, Julka...¹

Two aunties in the traditional Šestine dress.
 PHOTO: unknown
 ARCHIVE: A.T.V.



Statue of auntie Barica, by Stjepan Gračan, Dolac Market, Zagreb
 PHOTO: A.T.V.



Historian Marija Karbić has found a mention and description of the auntie (*kumica*) as early as the 15th century, wherein a provision on the amount of fees for various goods includes products "that cover the head, worn by women". This is clearly an allusion to the appearance of the auntie as a peasant woman who comes to Zagreb from one of the neighbouring villages to sell primarily eggs and dairy products (Karbić, 2006, 197). A contemporary narrative has developed around the figure of the auntie, and it is particularly interesting to trace it through a series of top-down initiatives.

Ten years ago, the figure of the auntie was purposefully used in branding the farmers' market Dolac in Zagreb, when a bronze statue of "auntie Barica" was placed at the top of the stairs leading up to the market. Made by the sculptor Stjepan Gračan, the statue was inspired by an actual auntie, Đurđica Jančec, who had been selling her products at Dolac for 54 years. At the presentation of the statue to the public, the Mayor of Zagreb pointed out that Zagreb may be going to Europe, but Barica would enrich Europe as a symbol of our culture.² The media soon dubbed Barica a Zagreb landmark. "The statue of the auntie is just the starting point of our plans for the design of our most popular market. Not only is the cultural and economic value of the statue incontrovertible, it is also a must-see attraction for the tourists visiting our capital," said Branka Šeparović, the initiator and author of this project.³ It is evident that this initiative casually toys with the visual identity of the auntie, which is presented as an appealing tourist product, without reflecting on and communicating its social and economic context. The figure of the auntie also raises issues such as the culture of trade, women's role in domestic

economy, daily migrations of the aunties, but also a series of meanings⁴ that are inscribed into the term “the auntie” in practice.

Several years after the statue was erected, the Zagreb Tourist Board launched a project called “Aunties from Dolac” (*Kumice s Dolca*) which takes place every Friday and Saturday at Dolac, when women dressed as aunties, in traditional clothing from the Prigorje region, sell their fruit and vegetables. The project was initiated in collaboration with the City Office of Agriculture in order to *revive the memory of thousands of women that fed the people of Zagreb for centuries*.⁵ It generates economic gain primarily through the folklorization and simulation of the actual presence of the auntie. The strong emphasis on the tourist potential contributes to the growth of destination marketing which aims to create an image, a stereotypical impression of the city.⁶ The stereotyping and simplification of the role and position of the auntie is manifested as a key effect of her branding and forced marketing to tourists.

L.V.



The market on Jelačić Square, an auntie in traditional dress, 2017
PHOTO: A.T.V.

A contemporary auntie, Dolac Market, 2017
PHOTO: A.T.V.

REFERENCES:

¹ Next to the statue of the auntie, who was still nameless when it was erected, there is a list containing traditional names such as Štefa, Bara, Jalža, Rezička, Julka, etc. so that people could select the name for the statue themselves. See: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/zagreb/dolac-dobiva-statuu-kumice/2848019> (12.11.2017)

² See: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/arhiva/zagreb-na-dolcu-postavljen-kip-kumice-barice/3390362/> (12.11.2017)

³ See: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/zagreb/dolac-dobiva-statuu-kumice/2848019/> (12.11.2017)

⁴ “The words uncle and auntie can refer a number of things. The auntie may be a godmother or a bridesmaid (meaning witness), but also a harridan, a simpleton, and a peasant. And a saleswoman! Some people use this word in a derogatory sense, while others use it affectionately (one auntie even got her own statue at the market). Read more: <http://tmac.net/2014/04/05/kak-je-daleke-od-kumado-kumice> (12.11.2017)

⁵ See: <http://www.infozagreb.hr/novosti/kumice-s-dolca> (12.11.2017)

⁶ See: https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/21829/URN_NBN_fi_jyu-200910073971.pdf (12.11.2017)

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A young woman in a traditional skirt and urban coat PHOTO: UNKNOWN ARCHIVE: A.T.V.



A woman from Podravina, Koprivnica, 2009
Ethnographic Museum Archives

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INFORMANT

Vlado Čehulić (50)

Ethno Workshop Čehulić for hand weaving of fabrics and production of folk costumes

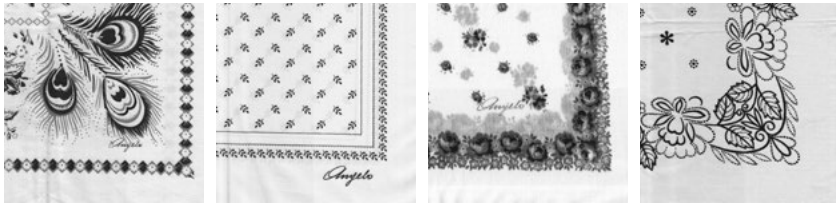
“Nowadays, the auntie is a woman in her 50s or older, who lives in the countryside and who’s never been formally employed. She’s been working on the farm her whole life, and she sells any surplus of her home-produced goods on the market. This is the real essence of the auntie [...]. They wore a headdress, a scarf (*rubec*), [...] that could be made of cotton, but it could also be made of diolen, they wore these so-called English (*ingleški*) scarves that were printed on fine batiste and cotton fabric [...] and imported from abroad, which is why they were called English. They also had silk jacquard scarves called *krunaši* because they cost 1 kuna [...]. They would wear these in the winter, around Christmas and St. Stephen’s Day. On more solemn occasions, when you visited your godchild [...] then you would wear a headscarf called *peča* [...] we call it *šestinska peča* [...]. As for the Turpolje or Sesvete region, it was all the same except *poculica*¹ was of a different type, embroidered with silk [...], it had crocheted lace [...] on organdie fabric, machine-embroidered [...] it was very fine work...artisanal work. When the winter was rough, they would don *gunjače*, which are still used today, in Šestine the woollen scarves were white or light brown [...] and they also had *surke*² [...]. In the early 1960s, when traditional costumes started disappearing, people started wearing white knitted sweaters. They were still worn until the 1950s [...], reportedly, around 1955 there was a shift, a change in clothing, they discarded the old costume, from Šestine, [...], so *rubača*³ was replaced by urban-type clothing that was worn at the time ... Perlon was in fashion, and another type of fabric that is good for pleating, for skirts, which was called *plisirke*. She had a colourful apron and wore a shirt when she could afford it [...] but the headscarf remained, not red but whichever she could buy here at Dolac [...] these were, as they said, ready-made scarves made from a wool fabric but had to have silk lines every 10 centimetres. As they were manufactured, they were in pastel colours and light brown and black for those who were in mourning. And so it remains to this day [...]. Later, synthetic scarves appeared, but women are wearing them less and less nowadays. [...] The auntie is gone, she’s disappeared from everyday life. The American culture has prevailed, I mean, street culture.”

¹ *Poculica* is a type of headdress traditionally worn by married women in this region.

² *Surka* is part of traditional dress in the wider Zagreb area, a short richly decorated coat made of *sukno*, a heavy-duty woollen cloth.

³ *Rubača* is one of the essential parts of the traditional women’s costume.

Habčić Headscarves — A Story of Continuity



Headscarves for aunts, contemporary
production by Sitoteks, Habčić, 2017

The craft workshop Sitoteks, specializing in hand-printed headscarves for folk costumes, made a significant contribution to the production of textiles and women's scarves in the 80 years of operation in this area. The scarves made in this workshop have adorned many women who dress traditionally (most of them belonging to the older generations). Since the beginning of production, these scarves have been available on the markets in Croatia and the entire region. Today, using the same technique and patterns, they have become part of the creative industries, including the fashion brand Dezen Dezen founded by Marco Cernogoraz in Trieste.

"It was a headscarf worn in the countryside, coloured white or black and everything in between," recalls craftswoman Jagoda Habčić. This scarf was a mandatory headdress that served practical, aesthetic and symbolic functions in rural women's everyday lives, and the aunts had long preserved it as a distinguishing visual sign of the countryside in the markets of Zagreb. Its origins can be traced back to 1938, when the mother, Jagica Habčić (née Kos), opened a workshop for printing and dyeing textiles in Zagreb. The scarves made in this craft workshop reached the countryside by means of trade networks and later the national trade network (Nama, Tekstilpromet, Robni magazin...). These scarves had a particularly functional role: "There are ceremonial headscarves, although they are used primarily in work situations [...] a woman must cover her head, she cannot go into the fields bareheaded." Exposed to the sun and sweat, headscarves had to be replaced relatively regularly, they would only last one or two seasons, and their everyday use called for high quality in terms of fabric, colours and patterns. This is why they were made using fine cotton poplin produced by the Textile Factory Zagreb (TKZ) and later a more affordable fabric known as *Ines* – a cotton-polyester blend – produced by the Textile Factory Maribor (MTT). This material was particularly suitable for everyday use: "This scarf was light, breathable and adaptable, it washed well and didn't even

need to be ironed, it was amazing." The rich range of colours and patterns was achieved through a painstaking process of hand dyeing, boiling and steaming the colours, and then screen-printing the patterns, which ultimately adhered to the traditional rules of the village. For example, the peacock feather pattern is characteristic of the Dubrovnik area, even though there are some regional overlaps. Individual artistic elements from Czech headscarves, which appeared around 1900, were used for making stencils. Additionally, within this workshop the workers would sometimes "invent" patterns by copying them from the existing traditional scarves. When making the stencils, the workers were careful to use symmetrical patterns in accordance with the strict composition which stipulates that their "[...] frame must have the same pattern as the middle." These ornaments shaped the visual typology that would become acceptable on the market. Women sought them and named them after their patterns: "[...] roses, wheat ears, twigs, seducer's gaze, clover. These are called *ingliš* (English) scarves, and these are *šestinski*." Later, when the general market model was adopted, amid the plethora of imported scarves (especially from Trieste in the 1960s) these scarves could be recognized by the label "Angelo," which implied good-quality scarves in terms of material, long-lasting colours, and clear patterns. Despite the rich range of colours such as yellow, blue, white, pastel pink, brown, red, black, and geometric and floral patterns, black headscarves were the most sought after. Ranging from all black to black with different patterns in blue, they were usually accompanied and marked the emotional phases of mourning, but they were also worn as part of work clothes. Oftentimes, the aunts did not economize, but bought several scarves. "Let the price of a scarf be that of a dozen eggs, it wasn't a problem for her to set the money aside [...] She could afford it. [...] she could show she had a new scarf." The production of headscarves has been in gradual decline since the 1980s. The depopulation of the countryside and the full acceptance of the modern way of dressing, even among older women in rural areas as well as the aunts, are the root of this change. Today, Habčić headscarves are primarily made-to-order, and a special cultural and design value is provided by the fact that the third generation of this family business continues to affirm the visual value of these patterns. They are displaced from their primary space so as to endure in another context as part of the new material and cultural reality. The traditional women's headscarf thus appears as part of the fashion discourse in the fusion of tradition and contemporary demands as a contribution to the general dress culture.

i.č.



T-shirt with a pattern from Habčić headscarves, Dezen Dezen, Trieste



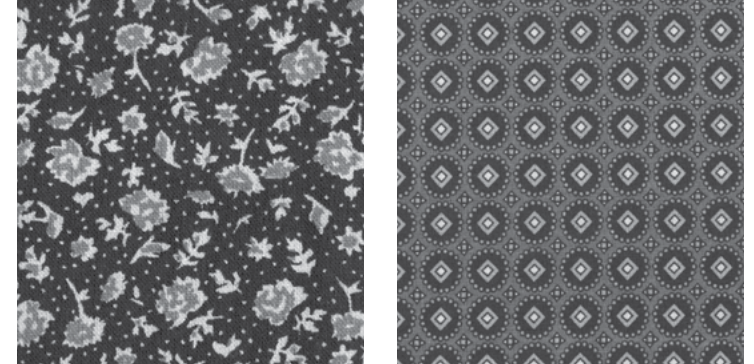
INFORMANT

**Marco Cernogoraz,
Dezen Dezen,
Trst, Italija**

“From an early age I’ve been fascinated by the various patterns that we printed, each of which had their own name. Some were simple and straightforward, such as polka dots, rice grains or tiny circles, and my parents used them when communicating with the clients. Other, more creative ones were invented by my sister and me as we lay in our hiding place under the printing desk in the workshop. Some of those included: TVs, snails, rockets, labyrinths, trains, Indians, and all sorts of characters that emerged from the colourful pudding (as we called the dye) in the form of patterns on headscarves, which our imagination would transform into fantastic stories. Now that I’ve taken over the family screen-printing tradition and we no longer print just scarves but also other clothing items (Dezen Dezen Studio based in Trieste), but with the same patterns and stencils, it is precisely that moment when a new design has to be named that takes me back to my childhood, and I immediately see Indians on televisions on rockets racing snails on trains in a labyrinth.”

Cotton as White Gold in “Minor Expressions”

Samples of the Katarina (cica) fabric, Cateks, 2017



Despite belonging to the so-called “minor expressions”, remaining on the margins of the “great” history, textile objects and their mobility have always been an important link in the communication between cultures and civilizations, and a motivating force behind big processes that changed the face of the world, thereby partaking in the most significant currents of global history. The role of silk roads in forming the network of trade routes that connected the East and the West is well known, but even more important is the network of routes inscribed into the world map by the cotton industry. While silk was a symbol of luxury, cotton became the most widespread and most accessible material for the production of fabrics due to its properties. Originating in India, it started arriving by sea routes into European ports in the 17th century, and, especially since the 18th century, the raw material has been extracted in the US (Louisiana) and the Antilles, thus enabling the intertwining of countries and continents. The implications of the increase in demand were manifold: slavery, market competition, struggle for prestige, development of technologies that drive the industrial revolution, exploitation of workers... The issue of cotton, this “white gold”, is complex: it is a cultural, civilizational, economic, political, and social phenomenon.

Indiennes, cotton fabrics imported from India, dazzled Europe with their lightness and especially their floral motifs. The fascination with and demand for these fabrics prompted the establishment of manufactories in France and England, which would give way to industrial production in the late 18th century. While England was at the forefront of technological development, France dominated in creating motifs and designing patterns. The basic motif is floral, inspired by *indiennes*: different flowers, dispersed or tied into

bouquets, realistic or stylized, multicoloured or monochrome, usually dainty, demonstrating extraordinary possibilities of variation. Pattern books are circulating, exceeding local boundaries; they are available to workshops not just in Europe, but beyond, becoming an important medium of the transfer of ideas and their intertwining. For example, in the late 18th century, when the representatives of an Indian company in Pondichery were asked to have their artists create drawings of Western flowers they had never seen before by using pattern books, the result was “an unusual hybrid of Indian and Western motifs”.¹ It was an example of surpassing spatial boundaries through a medium belonging to the “minor expressions”. And the durability of floral motifs and their countless variations, from the 17th century to this day, has drawn a line of temporal continuity. Therein lies the greatness and import of the “minor expressions”: their perseverance in both time and space.

M.C.Č.

¹ Jacques Anquetil 1999. *Les routes du coton*, Paris, J.C. Lattes

INFORMANTS

The Story in Front of a Store

Two elderly women are standing at the entrance to the Centra Store at Dolac 9 and commenting on the dresses which are hung above the entry so they can be seen from afar. They are feeling the fabric, which is soft, velvety and warm to the touch: “As it got cold outside, I came to see these winter dresses. I buy at least one at the beginning of every winter because they are warm, long-sleeved, and practical since they have two pockets, and I especially like that they can be buttoned along the entire length – it would be difficult for me to pull the dress over my head”. Next, they started describing patterns. The fabric is dark blue with densely scattered tiny flowers. “Even though I already have one, I see this one has a different pattern, the colours are somehow fresher, I don’t like looking like a maid in the house. Besides, these flowers remind me of my younger days, when I would buy this fabric called *Cic* and do my own sewing. I don’t do it anymore, the sewing machine is locked away, and I do the patching by hand. I never throw away the fabric, it is pure cotton, good for aprons, patches, and even as a handy kitchen towel”. Their descriptions of patterns took a long time, occasionally resembling a time machine: their “readings” of these patterns had brought back memories of their mother or grandmother and of their favourite motifs and cuts.

Cotton (*cic*) dresses on offer at Centra, Dolac 9
PHOTO: A.T.V.

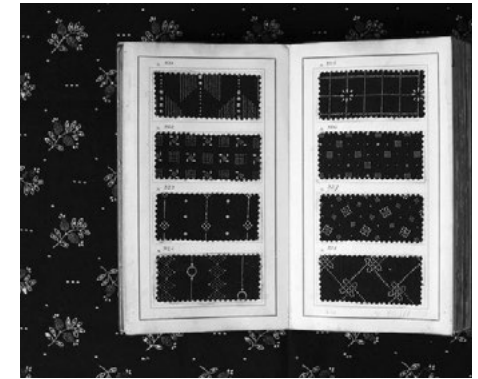


LOCUS ARTIS

Textile as Text



Swatch books and stencils for indigo blue dyeing and blue-dyed fabrics
PHOTO: Damir Prizmić



Swatch book — book of swatches for blue dyeing and a blue-dyed fabric sample
PHOTO: Damir Prizmić

Textile and text are directly etymologically and metaphorically related in that textile is constructed as a letter that can be interpreted as a sort of depository of signs that build the narrative in the material. Following the development of weaving, the techniques of textile printing enabled the visibility of colours, patterns and motifs wherein the language of textile appears as a special visual and cultural document. Thus, a woven multi-layered story is born, in which the fabric appears as a structured textual record. Every year, like a visual glossary or a textbook, the manufacturers offer new collections of textile suggestions, neatly arranged into swatch books, into analogue sentences, all in the spirit of an autonomous language.

Every season, the world gets flooded with countless textile patterns that have a wide use and a global destination so they can reach all of us. We comment on them and appropriate them without wondering about their genealogy, message and meaning – despite the fact they represent real semantic wealth.

The creators of these new patterns mostly remain invisible, or what Susan Meller and Joost Elffers in their book *Textile Designs: Two Hundred Years of European and American Patterns* rightly call “the ghost artist”. Generally, we do not know whose hand created those patterns, by hand or tool or some other means used for such “inscriptions” (Barthes, 2004, 74), and whose letter reaches us as an important visual *novum*, cultivating “the empire of signs” (Barthes, 1983) and building a sort of library of signs that we (culturally) appropriate. To look at a shop window, magazines, photographs, swatch books, means “to undo our own ‘reality’ under the effect of other formulations, other syntaxes” (Barthes,

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1983, 6). If, in “the cabinet of signs” (Barthes, 1983, 107), these flowers and motifs always (re)appear in a repetitive rhythm, i.e. rapport (repeating the pattern is a key feature of textile printing), then this story engulfs us as a big single text, so a textile-clad body is actually a “pillow book” (film by Peter Greenway). A text that is read anew every season. But all these “patterns and designs”, whether in a shop window or our wardrobe, deconstruct old stories and create new ones, which we are constantly reviving, as if they had been inscribed onto our skin. But so it is with signs, this time on our skin, where they settle time and again. Tirelessly, they emit different and always novel meanings, which we use to communicate and reach a social consensus. “With or without inscriptions, textiles convey different kinds of ‘texts’: expressing loyalty, making promises [...], whose value is entirely conceptual, preserving memories, suggesting new ideas. Many anthropological and ethnological studies of textile aim to teach us how to read these languages of cloth.” (Schoeser, 2009, 7).

A.T.V.

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Centra textile store, Dolac 9
 PHOTO: A.T.V.

INFORMANT

Ms Jadranka Cvetko
saleswoman, Centra, Tekstilpromet
Dolac 9, Zagreb

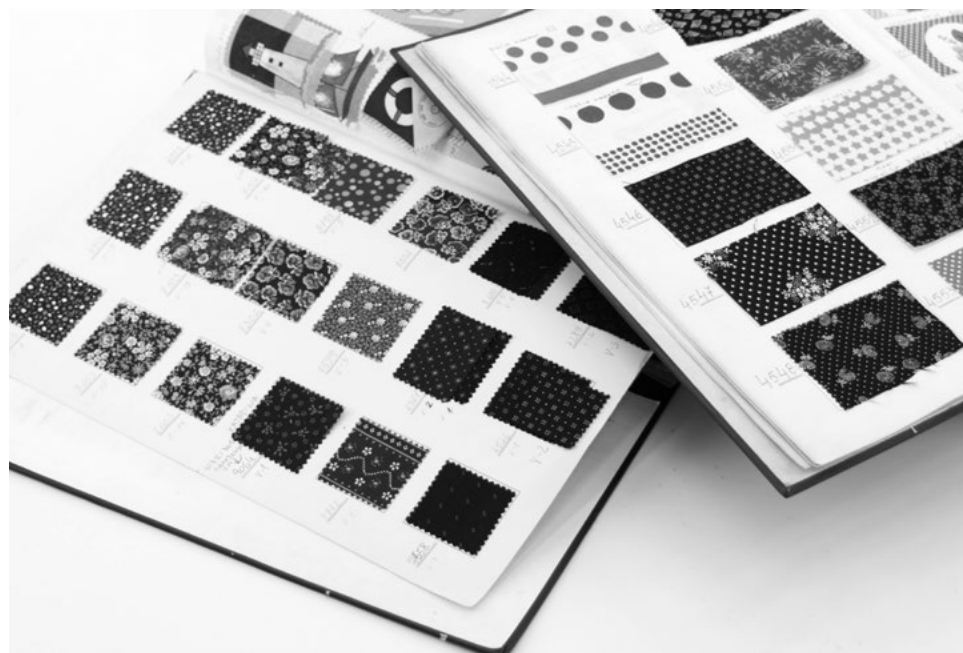
“I have worked at this store for 28 years. These textiles, which are produced by the company Čateks from Čakovec, we keep them at the entrance so that people can see them right away. Even though we have other goods, decorative textiles for the home and ready-made stuff, somehow everyone gravitates toward them. The aunties from the market used to be our most loyal customers, because we are the closest store, but today we also get middle-class and rural women. In that sense, the store is quite unique and renowned, we have a lot of regular customers from the surrounding area of Zagreb. A woman from Mičevac near Velika Gorica came yesterday, she comes every year. Her grandson brought her, she is 92 years old, she came to buy some flannel for a nightdress. She also bought cretonne (*kreton*) or *Cic* for her apron, a sleeveless housedress which she still sews herself. Sometimes they buy 2-3 designs. Nowadays, in the winter, they prefer to buy these warmer, softer materials, but after Easter they opt for the lighter ones. Older women immediately go for the dark materials, making sure both sides of the fabric are dark or black. There’s also this typical red pattern which they buy for traditional costumes or for the Christmas period, but also for decorating the house. Here by the door, we always hang a few sleeveless dresses with a series of large buttons in the front, they have two practical pockets that are useful both at the market and at home. I think women wear them as work clothes in their home. At Čateks, such garments are called *Arbet*, meaning work clothes, I guess it has to do with the German word for work, *Arbeit*. The term *Cic* was generally used, though not by all aunties and grandmothers – they would just ask for the dark cotton material for aprons and housedresses. Younger people also like these materials, they comment on them, some of them would like to sew something more modern, but then say they’d look like aunties. They don’t know it’s called *Cic* or, more often, cretonne. It can be funny sometimes because we also have a joke version of the term, so when someone says *cretin* (*kreten*) instead of *cretonne* (*kreton*), we all have a good laugh.

INFORMANT

**Production (Čateks) – A Story of the Material Known as Cic
Conversation with Ms. Bernarda Pintarić,
designer, Čateks, Čakovec, 2017**

Čateks was founded in 1874 as a textile dyeing workshop, owned by Samuel Neumann and his family. Čateks built its reputation on printed textiles of different functions and design, including the well-known patterns with tiny “graphic” (geometric) or colourful floral motifs. “I’ve worked at Čateks as a designer for 31 years. Apart from the stories that have been passed on from generation to generation, I have a lot of memories, as well as a long experience in textile design, which includes the item entitled Katarina.

As for the design and production of a typical cotton material with a delicate printed pattern, popularly known as *Cic*, the tradition perseveres to this day. It is a 100 per cent cotton fabric produced in two basic versions: summer and winter. Even though it’s always the same fabric in terms of weight, the winter version is produced through the mechanical process of raising (on one side) which makes it flannelly and warm to the touch. The visual appearance of the material depends not only on the pattern, but on the method of dyeing and printing. Some materials are dyed in a dark, usually black or dark blue, colour, followed by applying a delicate pattern in a light colour, usually white. This is because the majority of older women don’t want to have a light colour on their apron. The other kind is simply covered with printed patterns, geometric or floral, which fill the background. This is possible thanks to eight-colour textile printing. There are new patterns every season; though long-standardized, they are not subject to changing fashion trends, but every year we design 5-6 new patterns, each of which has five colour variants. The printing technique: on the basis of hand-



Swatch book — book of textile swatches, Čateks, 2017
PHOTO: Bernarda Pintarić

drawn patterns, we create stencils for rotogravure with nickel cylinders. At this time, we have four designers who are creating patterns. For us, this material will always be called Katarina, but is popularly known as *Cic* or *kreton*. Piece goods are sold locally or shipped abroad, but we also produce ready-to-wear clothes, mostly sleeveless, button-front dresses with two practical pockets. Winter dresses made of the raised, flannelly fabric have long sleeves. We also do ready-to-wear aprons, both with the chest part and with a single pocket.

We’ve been working with this material for many years, but each new design represents an entirely new story. I also think our customers can tell the difference, and they respond well to these new designs even though the patterns are fairly similar. We always think that we are making these patterns for women who’ve been our long-time customers, that it is not bought as a fashion material, but in many ways, it defines the appearance of elderly people, of the aunties or rural women, mostly as an everyday garment, a utility material. It should be stressed that the material is 100 per cent cotton and contributes to a healthy way of dressing. I think this popular material, *Cic*, is still relevant today and, having an affordable price, it enables people of different social and economic positions to continuously modernize “the traditional way of dressing” whereby these persons also maintain and preserve a particular clothing style. *Cic* has thus become an identity mark for a large group of women.”

INFORMANT

Sales (Nama) – Our Daily Cic
Ms. Marina Majić (55)
Nama, saleswoman, Furnishings
and Curtains Department

“I’ve been working at Nama for 29 years. I remember that women used to buy headscarves in the women’s ready-to-wear section, and I used to buy them for my mother-in-law. Textiles for aunts and older women were also in demand. Women from Dalmatia would always buy black *glot*,¹ the apron was supposed to be black, like in mourning. There was also a colourful material for aunts and older people, mainly from the countryside, called *Cic*. We immediately knew what they wanted. It was always 100 per cent cotton, printed. They also bought ready-to-wear aprons, which are available even today in our Furnishings and Curtains Department. These aprons come from Čateks, it is their material. They have a chest part and two pockets, for a handkerchief. They have to be black with a tiny pattern, but they also have to be black on the reverse, because if the reverse side is white, they won’t buy it. These aprons were sold primarily on Saturdays – we used to call it the Fair Day because the aunts would come after the market. Right now, we have only 5-6 pieces and they will sell off in no time: Saint Barbara’s Day is on December 4, when they are given to women named Barica as a gift. They come here and ask for *Cic*. But we don’t have it anymore. In former Yugoslavia, as far as supply was concerned, we had a centrally planned economy, each region was producing some artefact, for example, I know that big knitted winter scarves (*plet*) came from Serbia and they were produced by a knitwear factory from Slovenia. It’s good that we still have Čateks, all the aunts know they produce such materials, I mean *Cic*, for them. They inquire about headscarves, but I only know that somewhere in Opatovina² someone sells them in those kiosks, but more like a souvenir, and our aunts can’t locate them, they’re not used to it. There is this textile shop that has such materials on offer. It saddens me that older women can no longer find materials for themselves because, for them, it is an important part of everyday clothing. These days the aunts have somehow become more fashionable and they’re buying modish things. I think the auntie as a figure is going to disappear, it’s not like we see them as many as we used to.”



Bales of *cic* on offer at Centra, Dolac 9
PHOTO: A.T.V.

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¹ Glot (from German *glatt* - smooth), a densely woven, smooth, shiny, cotton fabric.

² A famous old street in Zagreb, close to Dolac.

INFORMANT

Ms. Ana (73)
The village of Bregi, Koprivnica

“I came by train, it takes more than two hours, the train stops in my village, Bregi. I live alone. I only raise chickens, and I come here to sell eggs, walnuts, hot peppers... whatever I have in my garden. I always wear black, or very discrete patterns. I buy it when I come here, at Dolac (Centra), but rarely. I like to mend and patch materials from old aprons...”

We used to buy fabrics more often, now only occasionally.

We would ask for the fabric for aprons, *kreton* we used to call it, but later Travira... yes, I sew myself, I have a sewing machine, but I only sew for myself.

We also used to buy a black fabric called *Glot*... Here, people don traditional costumes for the Feast of St. Nicholas, and for church... but young women no longer embroider (*žlinganje*),¹ these are old costumes, nowadays women don’t have the skills or desire to do it because it requires a lot of sitting down and takes a lot of time. It’s going to disappear, no one is using this technique anymore.”

ZAGREB, DOLAC MARKET, NOVEMBER 2017

Auntie Ana, Dolac Market,
Zagreb, 2017
PHOTO: A.T.V.



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¹ *Žlinganje* – a traditional cutwork embroidery technique used for decorating textile handicrafts.

INFORMANT

Ms. Barica (71)
Stubica

“As an auntie, I couldn’t come to the market to sell goods without wearing a headscarf. Now I’m already wearing these warmer, winter clothes, and in the summer it’s thin, cotton ones. I prefer darker colours, but they have to have at least some kind of pattern. I have a lot of them at home, and I look after them because it’s harder to obtain them these days. Before, you could buy them in these small shops around the market or at Nama, but I don’t think they have them anymore, only in bright colours, probably imported. Luckily, in Stubica we still have our traditional market day, and every first and third Sunday of the month you can buy headscarves there. But it’s never been so hard to obtain such a scarf, my neighbour complained to me. And I keep them in my closet, carefully folded.”

ZAGREB, DOLAC MARKET, NOVEMBER 2017



Two contemporary aunties
in front of Dolac Market
(dairy products), Zagreb, 2017
PHOTO: A.T.V.

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INFORMANT

Ms. Renata Kostibol (43)
The village of Veliki Potočec, Križevci

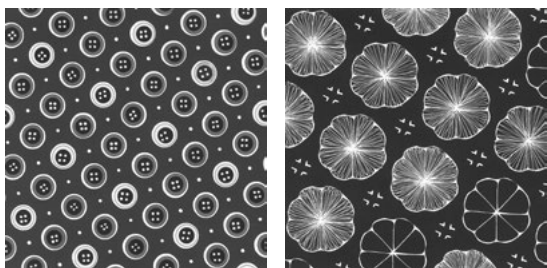
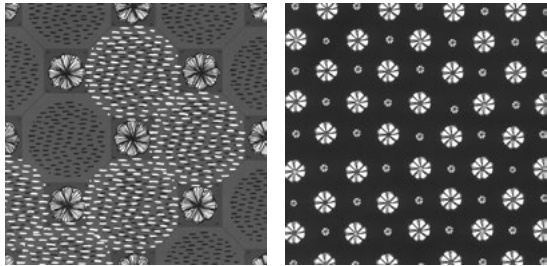
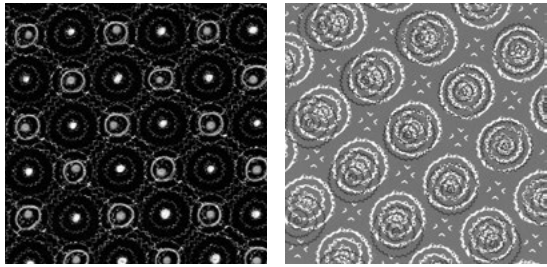
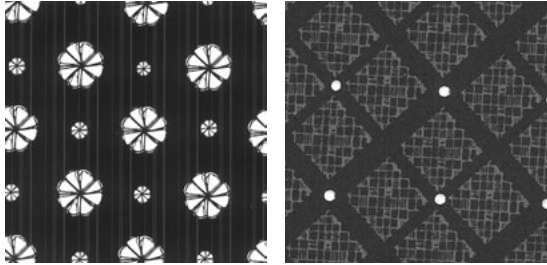
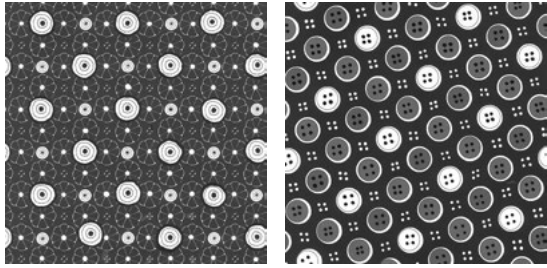
“For me, the auntie is a peasant woman that sells dairy products. To be honest, I don’t think this is the appropriate term for a woman, even though she is from the countryside – I think she deserves the title *Missus*. Until about 10 years ago, the auntie was a woman with a scarf, an apron, and a basket on her head, you knew as soon as you saw her on a train or a tram that she was headed for the market to sell her goods. Today, things are different, the countryside has changed, modernized, women no longer wear scarves, skirts and aprons, so it’s difficult to identify an auntie. They used to wear a wide pleated skirt and up to several petticoats and aprons with pockets: perhaps out of habit, or for keeping money, a pocketknife or some other accessory. Nowadays, I put on a white cotton shirt, jeans or stretch pants so I can bend down and haul all this packaging, and I always have a white apron or smock with pockets because it’s practical to keep my wallet in there and, of course, my cell phone. You can’t be an auntie today if you don’t have a cell phone. I think the term ‘the auntie’ is going to survive, and from what I’ve heard, there is an effort to protect it, that would be very nice for Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia. That way, the rural tradition would be preserved, a symbol of the village. It’s important because there are less and less older women, and the younger women are less and less interested in it. I know that statue, it’s good, it represents the auntie. Well, I fear only the statue will remain, but I’d like to be proven wrong.”

ZAGREB, DOLAC MARKET, NOVEMBER 2017



Contemporary auntie Renata Kostibol
(milkmaid), Dolac Market, Zagreb, 2017
PHOTO: I.Č.

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TEXTILE DESIGN

Lora Holjevac

—
graduate textile design student, TTF, Zagreb

“On one occasion I bought a black fabric with white dots forming some kind of flower. I was very pleased with this pattern so I took it to a tailoring shop to have a dress made, but the woman who was working there looked at me derisively and said: ‘What do you intend to do with this, it’s a fabric for peasant women’. In that situation I felt almost insulted because I think this type of textile can have a much broader use than it does right now. The timelessness of such patterns and combinations allows for multifunctionality and fosters creativity, along with the fact that these materials are always 100 per cent cotton so they contribute to ecological awareness and sustainability.”

ZAGREB, 11 NOVEMBER 2017

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TEXTILE DESIGN

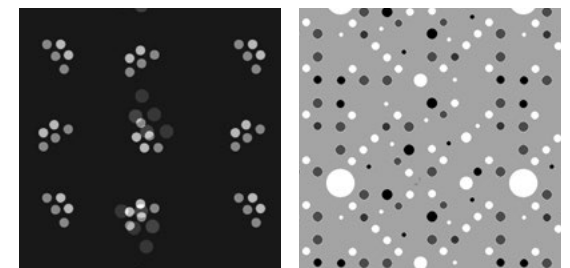
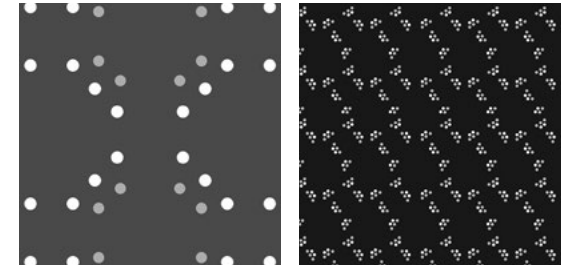
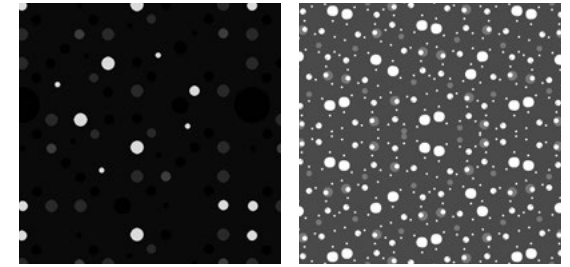
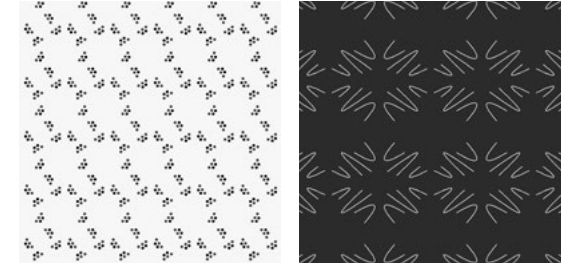
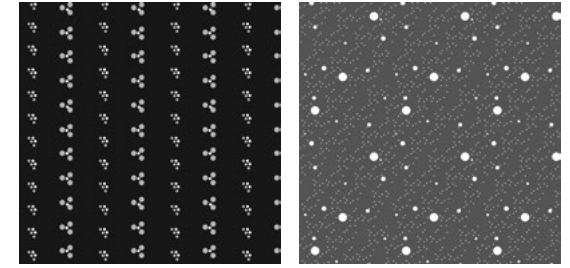
Morana Radočaj

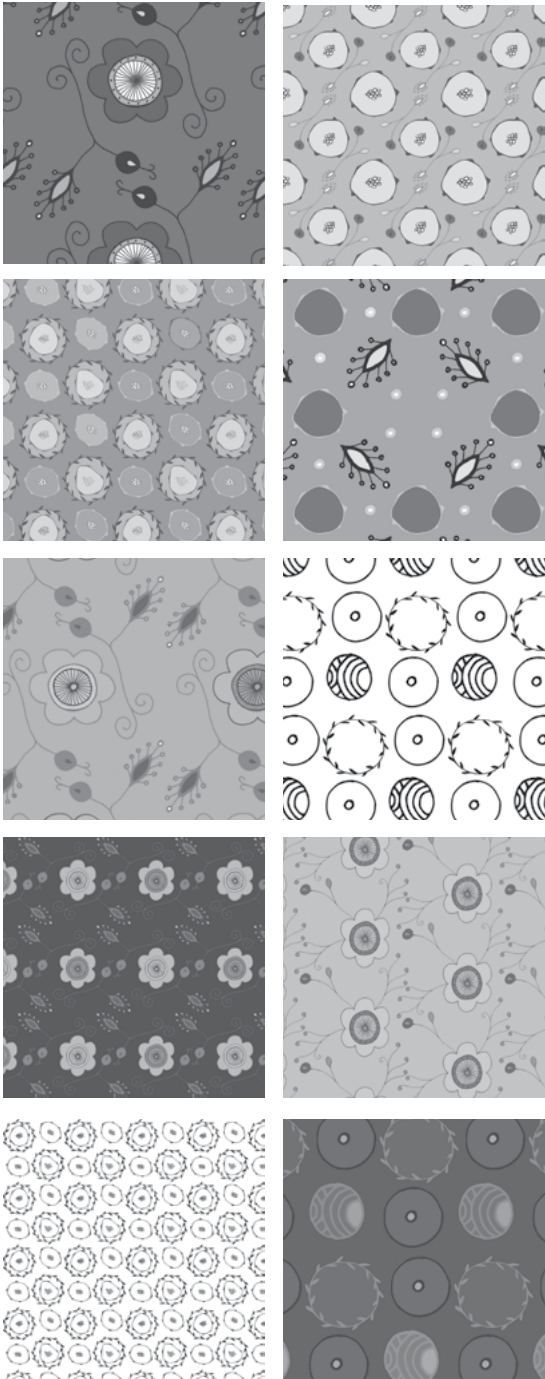
—
graduate textile design student, TTF, Zagreb

“When I first heard about op-art, I had no idea where one could find it. From now on, I’ll be looking for it in the local market.”

ZAGREB, 10 NOVEMBER 2017

LOCUS ARTIS





TEXTILE DESIGN

Andrea Kurtić

—
graduate textile design
student, TTF, Zagreb

“In every work I appreciate the touch of the hand, that special handwriting that no computer can replicate. I love these thoughtful little mistakes that bestow irreplaceable charm to every design... One might call it a perfect mistake.”

ZAGREB, 10 NOVEMBER 2017

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IMPRESSUM

Locus Artis – Places of Craft as Spaces for New Designer Practices

PUBLISHER
CIMO - Centre for Research of Fashion and Clothing, Zagreb, 2017
www.cimo.hr

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DESIGN
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PRINT
Kerschhoffset, Zagreb

PRINT RUN
150

ISBN
978-953-59862-0-1

A CIP record for this publication is available from the electronic catalogue of the National and University Library in Zagreb under 000979276

This publication and exhibition were realized with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia and the Office for Education, Culture and Sport of the City of Zagreb.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR ASSISTANCE, VISUAL MATERIAL AND DOCUMENTS

EMZ – Ethnographic Museum Zagreb

MSU – Museum of Contemporary Art & Tošo Dabac Archive, Zagreb

[BLOK] Curatorial Collective

Čateks, Čakovec

Regeneracija, Zabok

Vladimir Šimunić, René Pronk, Renata Kostibol, Ms. Ana, Ms. Barica, Prof. Stjepan Horvatić, Vlado Čehulić (Ethno Workshop Čehulić), Jagoda Habčić (Sitoteks), Marco Cernogoraz (Dezan Dezen, Trieste, Italy), Jadranka Cvetko (Centra, Tekstilpromet, Dolac g, Zagreb), Igor Jović (Zagreb), Vlado Krížek (Zagreb), Mirza Šabić (Tailoring Salon Šabić)

We are also grateful to the many informants who wanted to remain anonymous.

Exhibition

[BLOK] / BAZA – A Venue for Art and Activism
Božidara Adžije 11, Zagreb

OPENING
06. 12. 2017. U 19.00 sati

DURATION
06. – 15. 12. 2017.

CURATORS
Ante Tonči Vladislavić
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EXHIBITION DESIGN
Ante Tonči Vladislavić

Supported by BLOK Gallery

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