

2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

The Office of Clement Mok Award

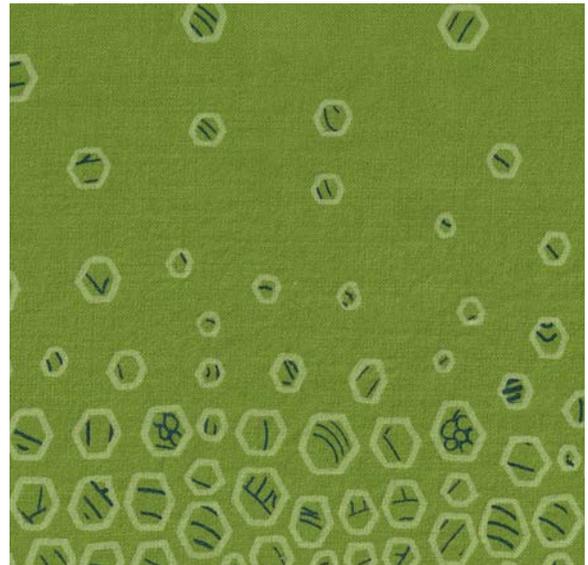
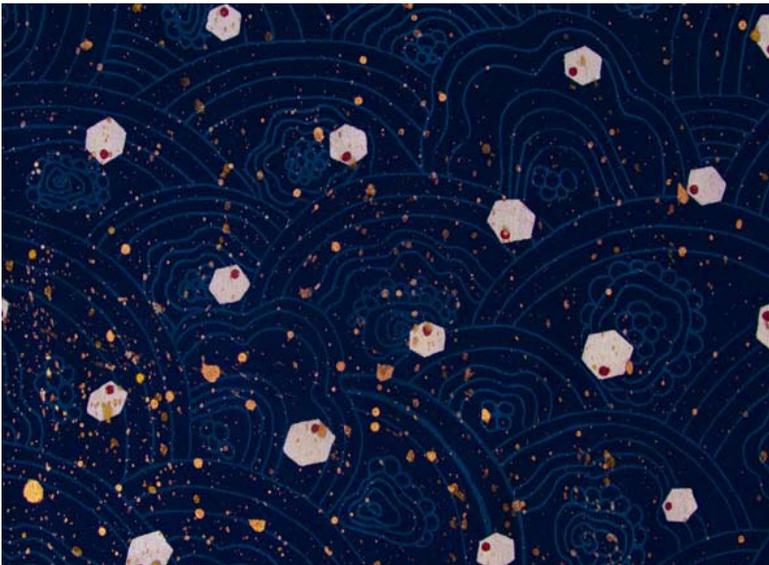


AMY CHIN

Surface/Textile design
Graduate student
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Does a gene exist predetermining why a person gravitates to patterns and fabric? This may explain my appreciation of textiles originating from within my family's story, first through my grandfather's coat and later, my mother's dresses.

The coat is a traditional men's Chinese coat in rich, emerald-colored wool, lined with long sheep hair and decorated with black embroidery. It was tailor made for my grandfather, at the time a successful businessman in 1930s China. When Japan invaded China in 1937, my grandfather and his family, including my 14-year-old mother, were forced to flee, leaving behind many of their possessions. With no pictures of my grandfather remaining, this precious coat is all we have to remember him. After her exodus, my mother had to work in Macao as a seamstress to support the family. Sometime thereafter, she fashioned my grandfather's coat into a coat of her own. She also made her own cheongsams beautifully crafted from embroidered silks and wools.



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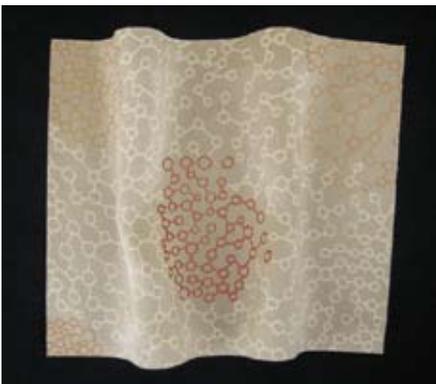
Surface/Textile design



Thus, I began to understand not only how textiles can express identity, but also how by acquiring skills one can transform them into heirlooms of exquisite beauty. These garments represent my history and cultural context, inspiring me to further explore and create my own unique textiles.

While pursuing a marketing career to appease my family's expectations, five years ago, I finally started taking classes part-time in anything sewing or textile-related. Soon, I was making my own garments, but felt limited by the fabric selections in stores. I began to embroider fabric myself, to quilt together different fabrics, or to hunt for kimonos to repurpose into garments. It became clear that fabric and pattern were inspiration points for my garments.

I found that I gravitate to the muted colors in the natural dyes of historical textile carpets and rugs and to the gold leaf found in the Heike Nokyo's Japanese paper sutras. I also use red-orange, taking a cue from my surroundings, such as my appreciation of the Golden Gate Bridge at sunset. I am fascinated by the symmetry of Islamic design, the metallic reflective embellishments in Indian patterns, the vibrant texture of Chinese silk brocade, and the contemporary geometry of Japanese hand-block fabric and papers. I also continue to explore fractals in nature and geometric shapes in life forms and architecture.



I have grown in both my technical skills and my ability to express myself creatively through my part-time studies, but I want to continue to push my creative limits and expand my skill-set by entering a full-time program in textile design.

The beauty in traditional hand-made textiles has also inspired me to learn about the history and culture of the people who make them. In addition to the design classes, I have also attended seminars at the Textile Society of America in traditional textiles and have contributed to Aid to Artisans, an organization that helps artisan groups become self-sustaining. I believe that preserving traditional and historical textiles is a responsibility, as they have been so important in my work. By melding my cultural psychology with my marketing and design experience, I plan to work with traditional artisans to help them make their textiles more market-ready. I would like to collaborate with these artisans, while being mindful of preserving their own culture by keeping their aesthetics of their craft untouched by my own aesthetic influences. By attending a full-time graduate program in textile design and taking additional anthropology classes, I hope to hone a sustainable creative process that will encourage me to explore my individual point of view and inform my work with crafting communities.