

# The Courtauld

## Repeat Pattern Design and the Omega Workshops

Devised by Toya Walker



↑ Omega Workshops, Pattern design, 1913-14, gouache and pencil on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust) © The Courtauld



↑ Omega Workshops, Rug design, 1913-15, gouache and pencil on paper, The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust) © The Courtauld

### Introduction:

Omega Workshops was an experimental design collective set up by painter and art critic Roger Fry in 1913. The collective aimed to bring some of the excitement of modern art to domestic interiors; from furniture, rugs and linens to ceramics and clothing. It also served to give another means of income to member artists who were not allowed to individually sign the work produced.

The pieces of surface design produced by the Omega Workshops link to the developments in art at the time but have a planned practical application. When you look at them you might start to wonder about other applications they might have. Would you wear a t-shirt with that print? Would you like a duvet cover that used that one?

Designing, printing and repurposing your own fabric and then using this to make garments allows you to express yourself through your clothing whilst having more control over the environmental and ethical impact of the materials you use.

## Discussion points:

- Is it important for artists to have individual ownership over their design?
- How would you feel if your designs were credited to a collective rather than you?
- Lots of artists have teams of craftspeople who produce or help produce their work. Does this change how you feel about the value or ownership of those works?

## Visual Music:

In its aim to bring the avant-garde to everyday products, bold abstract designs were favoured by the workshop which Fry described as intending to create a 'visual music'.

Look closely at the designs. Is there anything in them that helps you understand the idea of visual music? When we talk about the different elements of music we might talk about pitch, texture, volume, rhythm or form. How might those terms relate to these images? Can you see rhythms in them? What might equate to pitch? Music also has a powerful emotive effect, do these patterns produce any emotional response? What colours and shapes might you find in a pattern that would make you feel peaceful? What might you find in a pattern that made you feel tense or agitated?

The following activity takes you through the steps to designing a simple pattern that can be repeated seamlessly and used on a duvet cover, curtains, wallpaper, clothing or other application of your choice.

## Materials:

- Pencil crayons in a few colours of your choice.
- A square of paper. Any size can work but 15cm<sup>2</sup> is a good scale to start with.
- Rough paper for sketching and collecting ideas.

## Step 1

Take your square of paper and fold it in half taking care to match the corners carefully. Unfold it and fold in half in the other direction. Unfold it again.

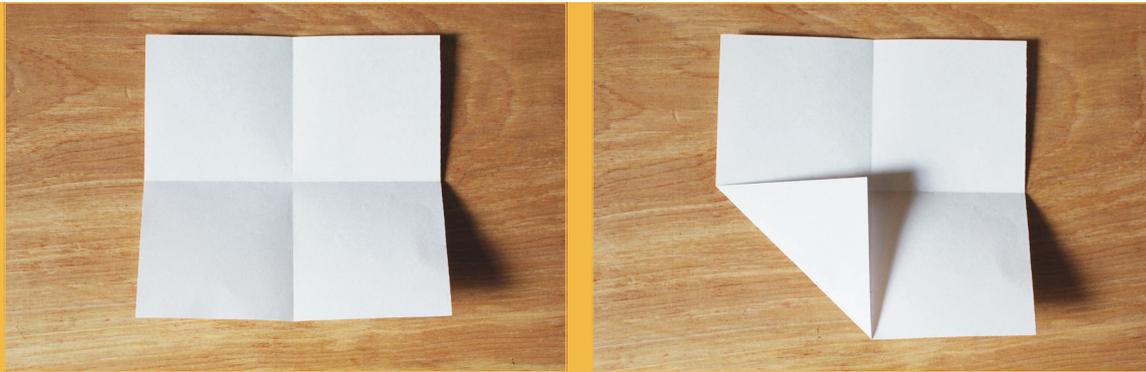


## Step 2

Now take each corner and fold into the middle.

Again, take care to do this step as accurately as possible.

2



## Step 3

Open the square out again and turn over.

3



## Step 4

Look at the images of the Omega Workshop designs for inspiration.

Are there shapes that you particularly like the rhythm of, do you want your design to have loud elements or quiet moments? Use your rough paper to sketch some and test out size, colours and combinations.

## Step 5

Start to make your design.

Remember it helps to use different contrasting shapes and colours, some smaller shapes, some larger ones. Make sure all your shapes are complete and do not go over the edge of the paper at any point. Leaving some white space near the corners of the square is also helpful.

5



## Step 6

Turn your piece of paper over again and fold the corners back into the middle. Now fill in the empty space in the centre with some of your design elements. These shapes should go right over the edges of the paper, which now meet in the centre.

6



## Step 7:

Unfold the square, turn the paper back over and colour in your design. Your design is now finished and could be repeated seamlessly.

Look around the room you are in, can you see other examples of repeat design. How many different uses can you find?