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Oil Painter and Pattern Designer.

I started out with my grant proposal by my side as I made my way from one step of the path to the next. I appreciated my proposal's guidelines as I explored a course that was unknown and unfamiliar to me, and occasionally, outside of my comfort zone. Although a bit nerve-racking at times, I appreciated this new experience as it gently pushed my work and me to new levels and proved to be, both artistically and personally, rewarding and exciting.

Where did I begin? Prior to the Jerome Fiber Artist Project Grant, through the utilization of digital scans of my original oil paintings, I had discovered and started exploring a line of surface designs (patterns) that emerged from the layers, forms and colors present in my original paintings on wood.

And where did I want to go? I envisioned and strove to have a firmer foundation to explore options of licensing my surface designs so that the fiber world at large would be able to use and enjoy them in their own creations.

I had an ideal. . . I wanted to have my patterns printed locally (within the United States) on natural or recycled materials, thereby contributing to the betterment of our environment while offering a unique product to the upholstery and garment industries on both a national and international level.

And along the way I learned. I sought to work with a fabric that was approachable and user-friendly; I imagined cotton, since it is a fabric we see and use everyday. As an added incentive, cotton has organic origins that mirrors my paintings' canvas and is of the plant world, which is the source of inspiration for my work. But keeping within my ideal, it needed to be eco-friendly. I learned through Harmony Arts (an organic cotton fabric company located in California), "Just because a fabric may be grown organically, it does not necessarily mean it has been processed thoughtfully and properly."

Harmony referred me to Adaptive Textiles, a company that prints upon certified organic cotton fabrics. They use sustainable practices like water-based inks in their printing and they print only the amount of fabric necessary. I chose to work with this Pennsylvanian company and to print my designs on their 100% organic cotton denim. I liked this fabric's weight and texture and proceeded to reupholster my chairs and pillows with it. I also created, using this fabric, swatch books of my newest collections.

And I became more aware. Through my education process, I became even more aware of the importance and significance of my choices in creating work in today's world. Yes, I could choose a different route in printing my patterns, one that provided a more affordable option for everyone involved. The short-term savings may seem 'worth it', but long-term these choices would be detrimental to the environment and everyone worldwide. By abiding by the requirements of the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), textiles are guaranteed to be environmentally and socially responsible. As Gandhi once said, "There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness."

As I continued researching I found it necessary to see what ideas and thoughts were out there on a national level. In May I pursued another part of my grant proposal to travel to New York to the Surtex Trade Show (selling and licensing art and design) and The International Contemporary Furniture Fair. Both events proved to be very fruitful. I walked away with much inspiration, a great deal of knowledge, and some key contacts – all of which would never have been gained if I hadn't attended. The company who uses UV curable inks in their production of work, the importance of creating a website and logo unique to my surface designs and separate from my fine art, and effective methods of presenting my portfolio are a few of my New York findings shown in this gallery.

Today I proudly share with you the result of the last eight months, which include my latest collections of patterns utilized in a variety of ways while all keeping in line with my ideal. From reclaimed chairs, windows and wood, to UV curable inks, to the fabric itself, I am continuing the path I had started not too long ago, making an environmental difference for generations to come. It is my pleasure to invite you to come along.

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