

B B C BITESIZE

All patterns start with a motif. A motif is a singular element that, when repeated, creates the pattern. Pattern is inherent in wallpaper and textile design.

This example by John Henry Dearle shows a regular pattern. Although the flower shapes he used are organic, they are repeated in the same way over and over again. This regular pattern allows you to decorate an entire room seamlessly.

John Henry Dearle took inspiration from nature. He stylised flowers and plants in order to create motifs and regular patterns.

But left raw and untouched, nature doesn't work like this. The photography of Ansel Adams didn't try to perfect nature. This image of a desert draws our attention to the irregular pattern created by ripples in the sand. They may not be precise or geometric but there is a similarity in the line, size and shading of the rippling shapes.

The Ardabil Carpet, made in North West Iran in the late 1530s is an example of a radiating pattern: one which is arranged around a central point. The design radiates in all directions from a central medallion. This is surrounded by a ring of pointed oval shapes and then a series of shapes lead that out to the corners which mirror the central medallion and ovals. This creates the idea that these shapes could go on radiating out beyond the frame of the carpet.

A motif doesn't have to remain constant. In this silkscreen print Andy Warhol used a self-portrait as his motif. As in many of his works, the motif is repeated in a regular grid pattern. But each time he changed the colours. Varying a pattern in this way is called gradation.

Pattern isn't always present in art and design but it can add interest and structure to a piece. A regular pattern might repeat a motif to create a seamless effect. A radiating pattern can spread out in all directions. Irregular patterns can draw our attention to their differences as well as similarities. And gradation can take a regular pattern and turn it into something that is always changing.