

THE STAR AS A DESIGN MOTIF INTERPRETED
FOR USE IN WALL HANGINGS

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A wall hanging is a decorative object, often made of fabric, which is hung on a wall. It is similar to a picture in that it should have aesthetic value and it may appeal to one's emotions. Wall hangings can be made by anyone who has an idea or design to express and share with others. Different techniques or methods may be used in designing wall hangings. Some of the methods used are stitchery, applique, batik, printing, and weaving.

Wall hangings are among the most rewarding products of the artful use of fabrics. Like a fine painting, a fine creation in fabrics will reflect the individuality of its creator. (18)

Designs for wall hangings may be derived from limitless sources. The star design, which is found both in nature and in geometry, was the design selected for this study and used in making the seven wall hangings that are the basis of the thesis. No sharp line can be drawn between natural and geometric forms of design, because many forms combine both, and natural ones often become geometric (1). The main difference between the two is that geometric forms are not representational; when a star is formed from a geometric figure it has distinct points and it looks like a star. While design based on natural forms represents actual objects; if one would draw the stars in the sky, he would probably let dots with lines radiating from them represent the stars.

Stars in geometry can be made from a polygon, a plane figure with more than four sides and four angles. From a pentagon, a five-sided and five-angled polygon, a five-pointed star can be constructed. The star is formed when lines are drawn to connect every other joint of the pentagon. A six-pointed star can be formed in a similar way from a hexagon, an eight-pointed star from an octagon, and a ten-pointed star from a decagon. "In the superb design of even the most delicate flower, the basic plan has sound construction. Often this plan is geometric in form." (11) If, while taking a front view of a daffodil, one would draw an imaginary line from point to point at the tip of each petal, a polygon would be produced. Inside the geometric figure, the petals of the flower form a star.

Stars appear in different forms of nature. Geometric stars, or stars with points, may be seen in such things as flowers, leaves, thorns, and starfish. "The number five in natural growth is predominant;" (19) star forms found in nature often have five points. Other stars visible in nature are those formed by radiation. Radiation can be seen when lines radiate from a single point, from a center line to both sides, or from an off-center line to one side (1). Some naturally radiating stars can be seen as one looks down on the leaves around a plant's stem and as one observes the petals around a flower's center. Others can be seen in snowflakes, seashells, and leaves.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to see if one can create new designs based on different star forms, which are appropriate to use for wall hangings, by studying the star designs of selected designers and the

star designs in nature.

Objectives of the Study

One objective of this study is to determine whether or not aesthetically pleasing star motifs can be created from original star designs. A second objective is to find out whether or not the modified star designs can successfully be used for decorative wall hangings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Stars

Men have always been intrigued by the stars. People of ancient times had no idea what the stars were really like. These people could see both the sun and the stars, yet they were not aware that the stars were other suns. Even though men of early days did not understand the meaning or composition of stars, they continued to watch them. As people watched these heavenly bodies "they thought that the stars made the outlines of animals or persons in the sky and they called these shapes constellations." (12) The constellations were named after animals or persons, and "these animals and persons became part of legends and folk tales that have come down to us through thousands of years." (12)

Before people lived in houses, they slept in caves or tents or out-of-doors without anything to shelter them. Legends suggest that as darkness closed in about these people, their children wanted to hear a story. Since almost everyone is awed by the beauty and mystery of the stars, and because these heavenly lights were visible, there undoubtedly were many stories told about the stars. Palestinian mothers told their children about the magnificence of the sky. They taught them that the glow of a single star was more stimulating and enjoyable than the

carving and gilt-work which was displayed on idols (16). For many years children have been told that there were gods above the sky who lit the stars every night and placed them in the darkness.

In the early days the men who studied stars were called Wise Men. They were aware that stars moved, that some were brighter than others and that some "fell." But, during one of their observations they had noticed many stars they hadn't seen before, and they began wondering if a new star appeared every time a baby was born. The idea of each baby being born with his own star intrigued many. Therefore, after a baby was born to a royal household, the King sent for Wise Men to tell him which particular star appeared whenever the baby was born, and what was meant by being born under that star (16).

The Wise Men were learned in other areas besides the stars. They moved from one place to another on foot or by camel, meeting and knowing many different kinds of people and gathering information for expanding their knowledge. During their travels the star watchers had met some Jewish people and they knew that these people were expecting the birth of a Savior. The Wise Men knew that it was foretold in the writings of the Jewish prophets that a star would appear to announce the birth of the Savior.

In Jerusalem on the night of Jesus' birth, Wise Men were asking where the Christ Child was, for they had seen his star in the East and were wanting to worship him. The Wise Men continued to follow the brilliant star until it seemed to stop in the night sky. The star led the Wise Men to Bethlehem and seemed to designate the place of Christ's birth. (2)

People of ancient times were so drawn to and mystified by the stars that they worshiped the twinkling bodies. In Babylonia, gods and stars were closely related. The Babylonian symbol used for a star

was repeated three times to indicate a god. Egyptians believed that different gods controlled the stars; the Japanese believed in star-gods too. One Japanese star-god's name meant "the dread star of heaven," and another one was considered to be extremely evil (12). Old Chinese writings indicate that constellations and the starry sky were among the objects worshiped. The Blackfoot Indians of North America believed that every star had been a person and when the person died his spirit had risen to the heavens to become a star. Worshiping of the stars is being continued at the present time; the Berbers of North Africa use the constellations known as the Big Dipper and Little Dipper in their religious services.

In the early days star watchers discovered that certain stars remained in the same area of the sky, whether they were in the east, west, north, or south. This finding was a great help to people who traveled, because there were no guides or maps. The North Star has helped sailors stay on their course at sea, and desert travelers have used the stars for many years as guides. The stars and other heavenly bodies, moving across the sky as the earth rotates on its axis, have given man a way to check on the passage of time. "Calendars are based on the way the stars seem to move as the earth travels around the sun." (12) Out of man's thirst for knowledge about the stars has come many practical facts. Surveying, as in the days of ancient Egypt, is based upon measurements and positions of the stars, and studying the stars has taught man the process of making the hydrogen bomb (12). Man's study of the stars has drastically affected his way of life and has definitely helped to change the course of history.

The stars have been used for decorative motifs as well as for man's necessary developments. Early design motifs which have come down to the present were created as a means of expressing ideas -- presenting visually certain kinds of knowledge and mystical lore (1).

To man the stars have always been a symbol of high ideals and great hopes. They are often used in mottoes and expressions of hope, in poetry, and in emblems and flags. 'Hitch your wagon to a star' is an often used expression that means a person should set high ideals and work to reach them. (12)

Stars are often used as religious symbols; the Star of Bethlehem is a symbol of Christians and it is often used at Christmas. For many years the six-pointed Star of David has been a symbol of the Jewish faith. "Stars actually are round, but they are pictured many ways" (12). It seems that the five-pointed star is most commonly used, but stars appear in flags and other types of art with six, seven, or more points. Another decorative symbol often called a star is a point with lines radiating from it; this design is often found in nature.

Stars have meant different things to many people. To some they are mysterious, to some -- beautiful, to some -- good or bad omens, to some -- gods, to some -- helpful, to others -- decorative. To the forefathers of our country stars evidently meant hopefulness.

On June 14, 1777, the decision was made that the United States' flag would be thirteen stripes, alternating red and white, and thirteen white stars on a blue field representing a new constellation. (8)

The star designs on the United States' different flags have all been pleasing to look at and quite interesting. Since star designs have been successfully used for flags, it seems that they should work out equally as well in designs for decorative wall hangings.

Wall Hangings

People have tried to enrich their homes for many years by decorating their walls. Among the wall decorations used by the cave men were incised or painted pictures. Ancient Egyptians painted groups of pictures that told stories on their walls. The early Greeks used mosaics to decorate their homes. Other wall adornments which have been used are moldings, paneling, statuettes, gilding, murals, paintings, portraits, and tapestries. Some people continue to use many of these adornments in their homes, but one that is becoming increasingly popular in use is wall hangings.

As one looks at the development of wall hangings, one hanging stands out in the history of Western man. This is the Bayeux Tapestry and it is probably the most celebrated piece of embroidery in the Western world, because it records a historical event rather than a religious story (18). The Bayeux Tapestry was completed in the latter part of the twelfth century, and it portrayed William the Conqueror's invasion of England. This tapestry is 19 inches in height and its length exceeds 200 feet.

Aesthetically and historically the Unicorn tapestries are among the most extraordinary works of art in the world. They are remarkable for design, beauty of coloring and vivid portrayal of episodes in the hunt of the unicorn.
(17)

These hangings were made during the fifteenth century when tapestry weaving was at its height.

The early wall hangings were hand woven, but the technique of the weaving often varied with the different countries. Tapestries may vary from the completely reversible Norwegian *aklae*, without slits or loose

ends showing, to the French Gobelin, woven with slits, which are later sewn together, and with the ends remaining on the wrong side. Some tapestries have recently been woven for wall hangings, but a wide variety of other techniques have been and are being used for this art. Among these techniques are applique, batik, printing, and stitchery.

Wall hangings have been made in different countries throughout the world. Much tapestry weaving has been done in Europe, and some has been done in Peru. The tapestries of Peru in some respects are considered much finer than those of Europe; at times up to 500 weft threads are incorporated in a one-inch area of a Peruvian tapestry (18). During the days of the Chinese dynasties, hangings of embroidery were made in the Orient. In India decorative hangings have been made by several techniques; some are weaving, embroidery, tie-dyeing, and block printing. Bold applique work is presently being done by the women on San Blas Island, off the coast of Panama. The appliqued fabric is for blouses, but tourists who return from these islands bring pieces of the fabric back to hang in their homes (18).

For many years people have used decorative textiles in their homes. Many different countries have contributed to the various techniques which have been and are being used in making wall hangings.

Many techniques used in clothing, household objects, and decorative textiles in past and primitive societies are being reintroduced, and are fast taking an important role in our contemporary world of crafts. (18)

The main purpose of wall hangings is for design, color, interest, and expression. A decorative hanging is an outward expression of its creator, and it should have a message for its viewers. A person makes or buys a wall hanging because the message the hanging conveys coincides

with his interests and expresses part of what he feels or would like expressed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In obtaining the data for this study, the author looked at many star designs. Several of the star designs were selected as a basis for the designs which were drawn for wall hangings. Wall hangings were then made using both types of star designs, the geometric and the radiating.

Some star designs occur in nature, such as in flowers, leaves, and thorns. Other star designs are by designers; they were seen in various objects, as in the bottom of a crystal plate, on a perfume box, and in the decorative motif of an ancient building. The star designs, which were selected from the group of designs observed, were modified for use in wall hangings. These designs were chosen because they were interesting and challenging to the author. Each of the modified star designs was then used in a wall hanging made by the author. The star designs as they appear in nature or by a designer are on the following pages. Each of these designs is followed by a picture of a wall hanging; the hanging portrays the modified version of the design on the page preceding it.

The wall hangings were made by using different techniques. This allowed for experimentation in applying design to fabric. The techniques used were stitchery and applique. When the wall hangings were finished, they were submitted to a group of home economics students who

evaluated whether or not each wall hanging was aesthetically pleasing, whether or not each of the modified designs in the wall hangings appeared to be based on a star design, and whether they personally liked or disliked the wall hangings. The evaluating group was composed of 65 students enrolled in at least one course of Housing and Interior Design. These people were selected as the evaluators, because they had not extensively studied design for houses.

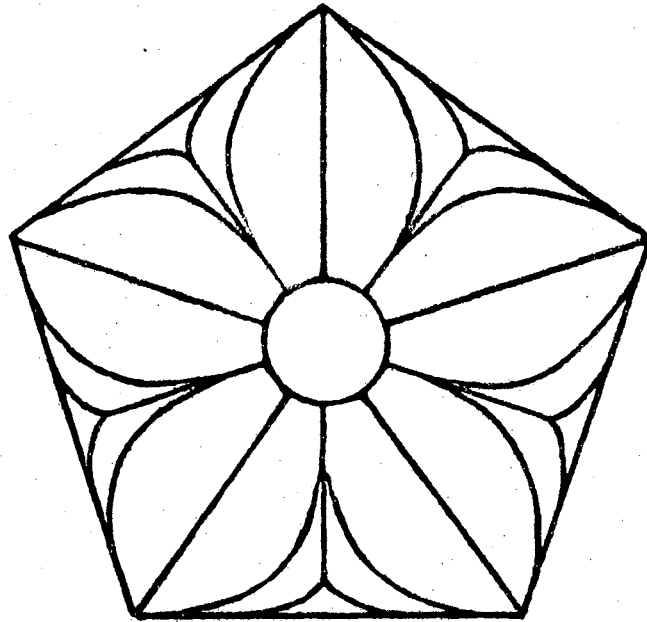


Figure 1. Geometric Design (11)



Figure 2. Wall Hanging No. 1

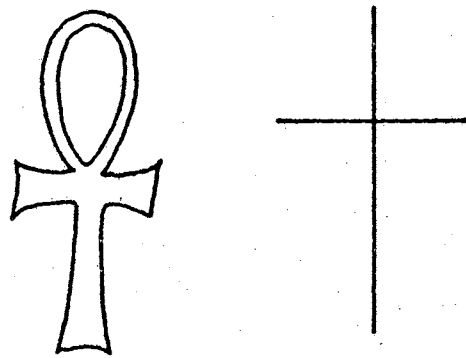


Figure 3. Creative Design (1)

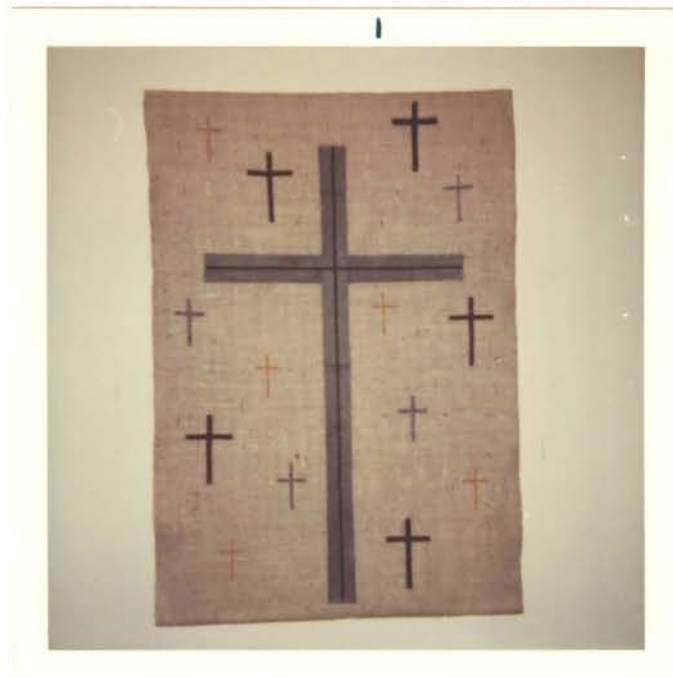


Figure 4. Wall Hanging No. 2

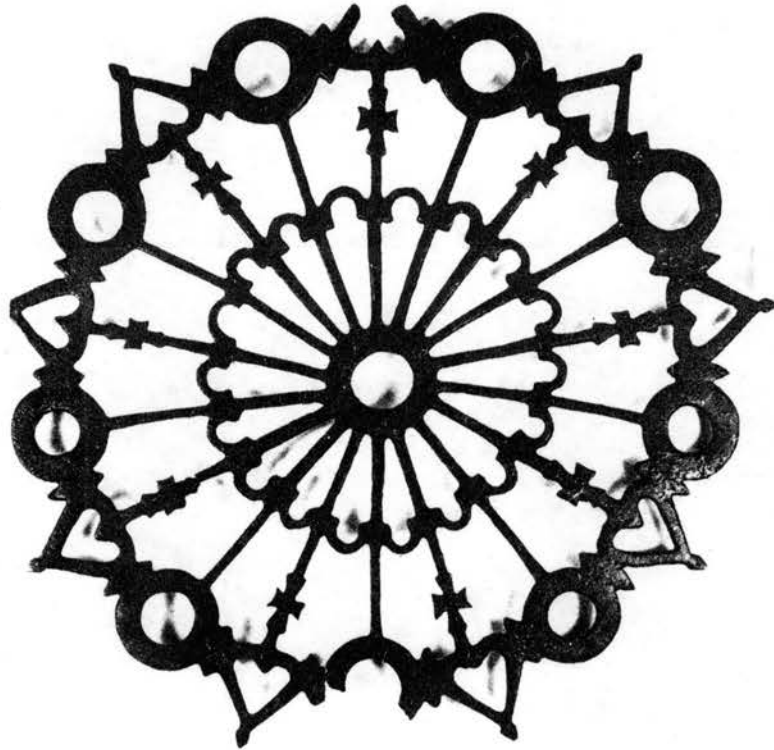


Figure 5. Creative Design (5)



Figure 6. Wall Hanging No. 3

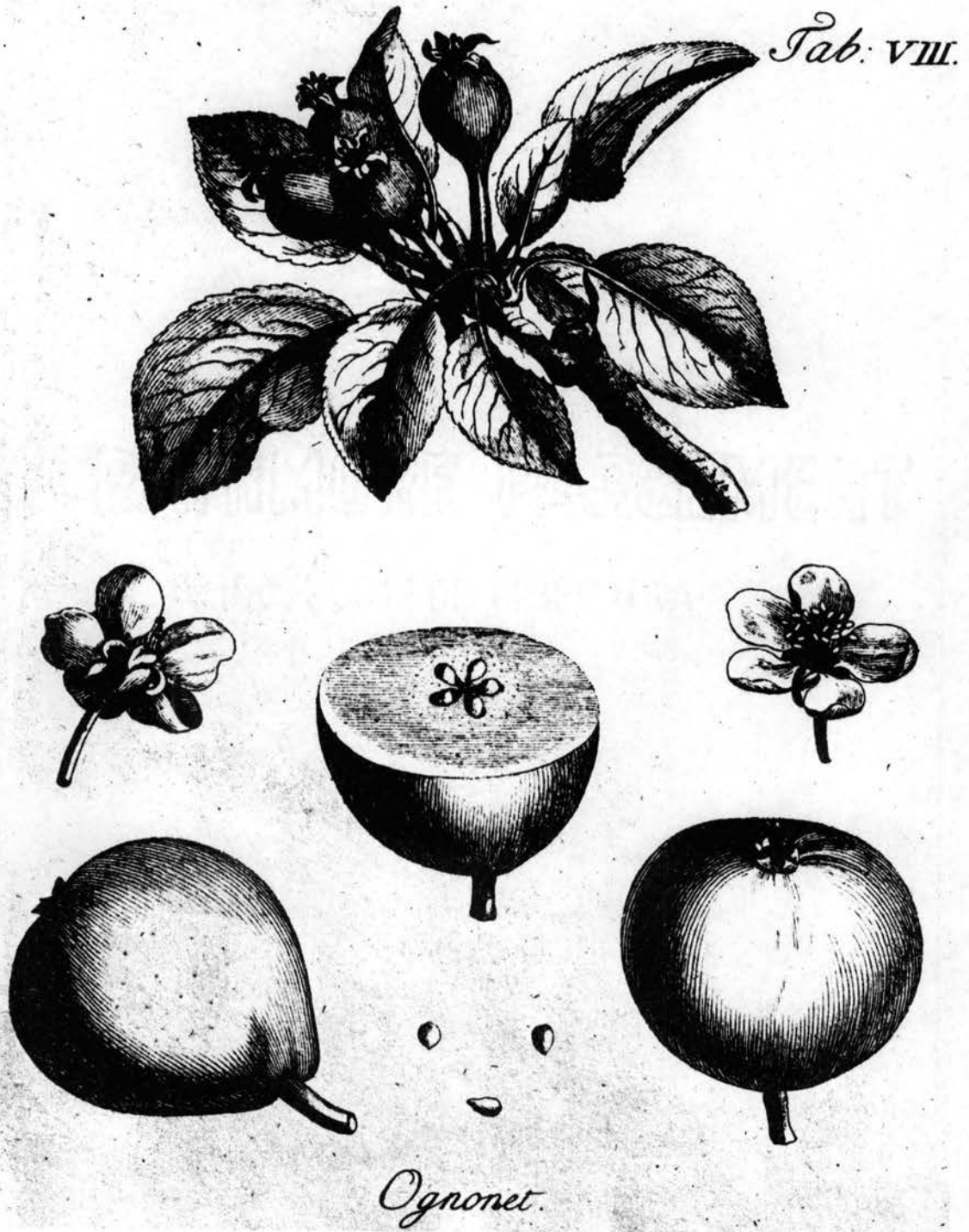


Figure 7. Design in Nature (5)

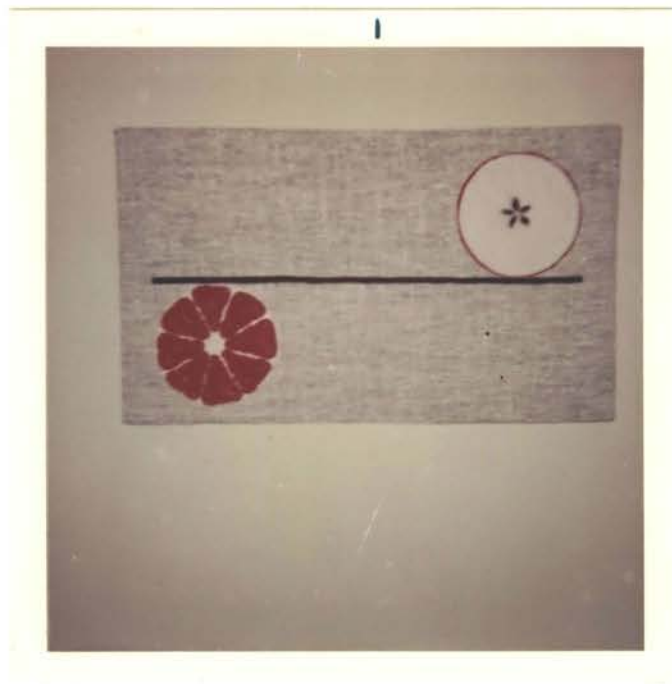


Figure 8. Wall Hanging No. 4

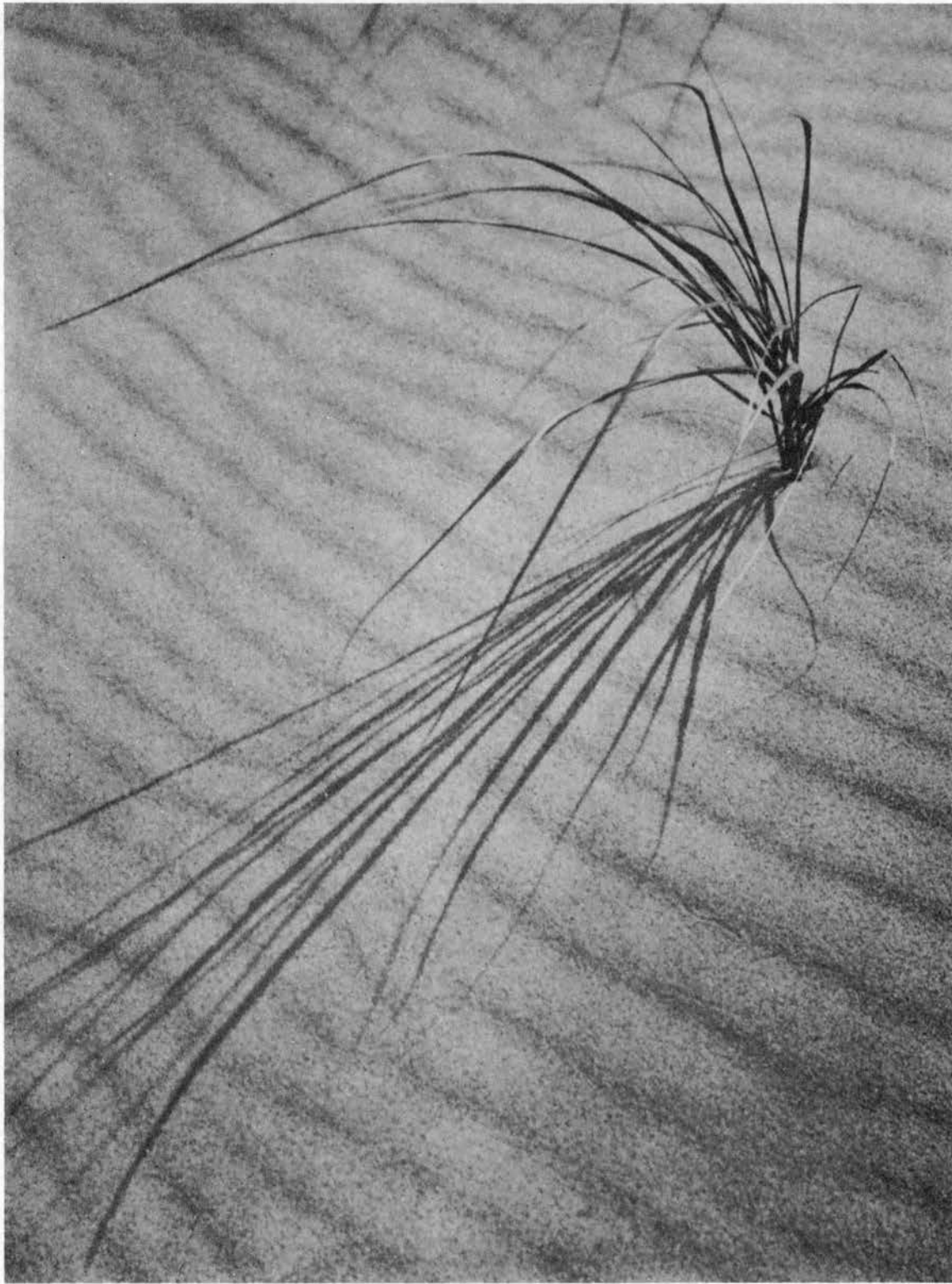


Figure 9. Design in Nature (11)

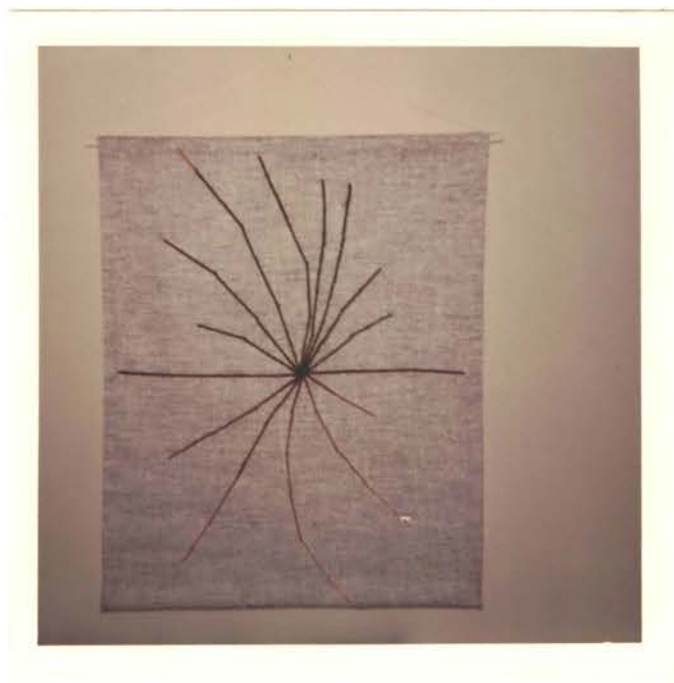


Figure 10. Wall Hanging No. 5

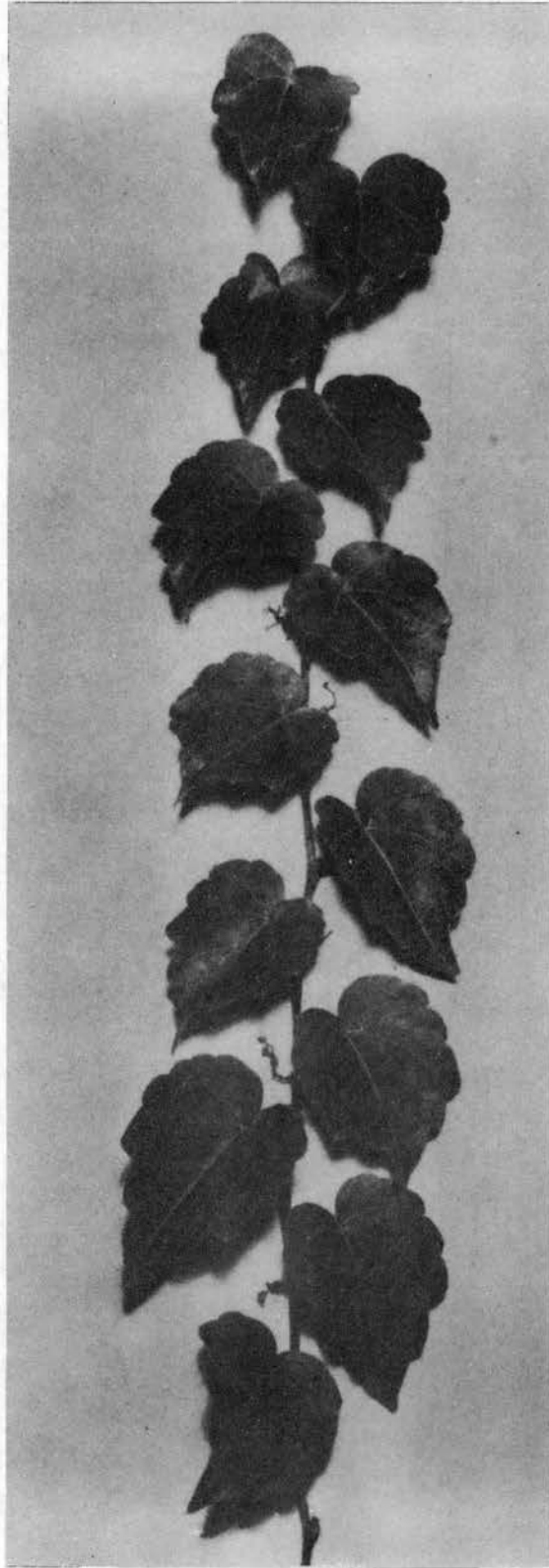


Figure 11. Design in Nature (11)



Figure 12. Wall Hanging No. 6

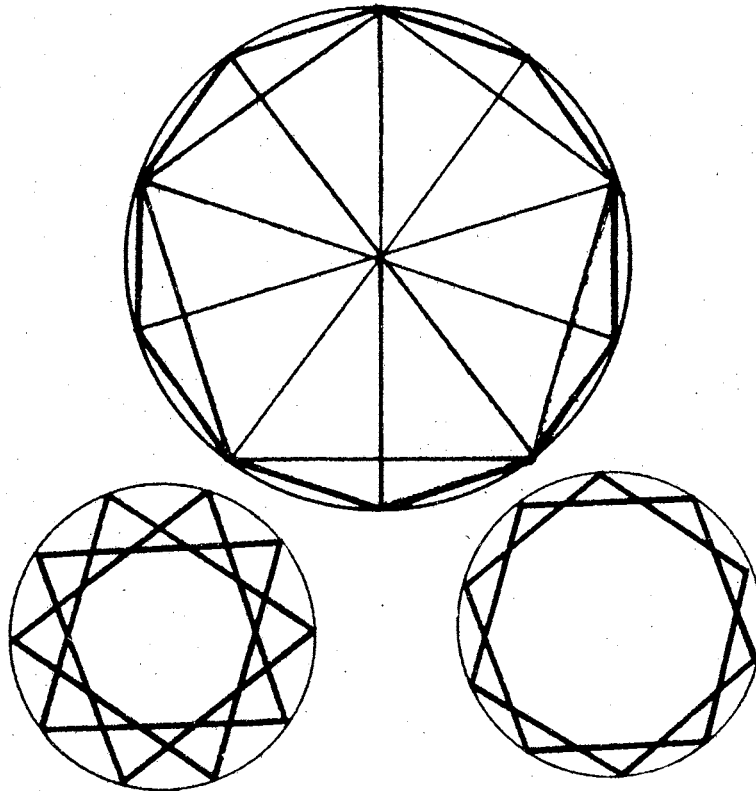


Figure 13. Geometric Design (1)



Figure 14. Wall Hanging No. 7

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Wall hangings have been used as decorative items for many years. People in countries around the world have made them; they have been found in Europe, Peru, China, India, and off the coast of Panama. At the present time, wall hangings are being made in the United States. A number of different techniques have been and are being used in their construction. Among the types of construction used are weaving, applique, embroidery, batik, and printing. Since wall hangings can be made by using any one of several different techniques, anyone with a creative desire can make one. The construction of decorative hangings should be especially appealing to those who enjoy working with fabrics and to those having an idea or design to express.

The design motif selected for this study was the star. It was the basis of the designs used in the wall hangings which were made. The two forms of the star design which were studied and used in the decorative hangings were the radiating and the geometric forms. People have been in contact with different star forms since the beginning of time; some forms can be found in geometry and others may be discovered in nature. Stars have been studied and constellations have been named because star forms have stimulated the minds of people. To some, stars

represent a higher power and they are worshiped as gods. For others they have been useful in serving as a source for telling directions, for telling time, for surveying land, and for making bombs. In this study, stars were used as a source for wall hanging designs.

The purpose of this study is to find out if one can create new designs, based on different star forms, which are appropriate for use in wall hangings. The author studied designs derived from stars; some were by designers and others were found in nature. Seven of these designs were selected to be modified and used in wall hangings. After the modified designs were drawn, seven wall hangings, each displaying a different design, were made. The finished hangings were submitted to a group of home economics students for evaluation. The evaluation was to determine whether or not the wall hangings were aesthetically pleasing, whether or not a star form could be seen in each of the designs, and whether the hangings were liked or disliked by each evaluator.

Conclusions

The survey given to 65 home economics students showed:

1. Fifty-two students felt that wall hanging number one appealed to them aesthetically. Forty-four answered aesthetically appealing for number two, 38 for three, 39 for four, 29 for five, 59 for six, and 42 for number seven.
2. Sixty-one members of the survey group were aware that all of the designs used for the wall hangings were based on a star motif.

3. Fifty evaluators liked the first wall hanging as a decorative object, 23 liked the second, 24 liked the third, 34 liked the fourth, 28 liked the fifth, 57 liked the sixth, and 29 liked the seventh.

The compiled results of the survey, indicate that one can create aesthetically pleasing designs, of which the basis is a star, by studying and modifying different star motifs. The evaluation of the wall hangings also shows that these new designs are appropriate to use in wall hangings.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations relative to further studies in the areas of wall hangings and design:

1. That a study be made on the reasons why people want and use wall decorations in their homes.
2. That a study be made to find out if wall hangings are preferred over other wall decorations and why.
3. That a study be made on another basic design motif, as a shell or circle, to see how it can be modified and to what it may be applied.

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APPENDIX

INSTRUMENT

EVALUATION FOR WALL HANGINGS

I. Which wall hanging appeals most to you aesthetically?
(Answer "yes" or "no" for each wall hanging.)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | |

II. One basic motif should be visible in all of the wall hangings.
What is it? (Select one of the following.)

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. a circle | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. a leaf |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. a square | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. a star |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. a triangle | |

III. Do you like or dislike the wall hangings as decorative objects?
(Answer "yes" or "no" for each wall hanging.)

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | |

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