

MAYA ROMANOFF'S WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION: FOR THEY ARE THE  
MUSIC MAKERS, THEY ARE THE DREAMER'S OF DREAMS. HOW ONE MAN  
MAGICALLY REVOLUTIONIZED WALLCOVERINGS THROUGH HIS RULES OF  
LIFE AND BEAUTY BY

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Maya Romanoff's World of Pure Imagination: For They Are the Music Makers, They  
Are the Dreamer's of Dreams. How One Man Magically Revolutionized Wallcoverings  
Through His Rules of Life and Beauty.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Name of  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Paula, my sisters Stephanie, Heather, and Lauren, and brother-in-law David.

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## **ABSTRACT**

MAYA ROMANOFF'S WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION: FOR THEY ARE THE MUSIC MAKERS, THEY ARE THE DREAMER'S OF DREAMS. HOW ONE MAN MAGICALLY REVOLUTIONIZED WALLCOVERINGS THROUGH HIS RULES OF LIFE AND BEAUTY.

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George Mason University, 2016

Thesis Director: Dr. Elsie Klumpner

Maya Romanoff's unique approach to textiles and wallcoverings culminated in a distinct body of work that spanned several decades. His products are unparalleled in terms of use of innovative materials, construction and manufacturing techniques, and design. Consequently, his accomplishments in wallcoverings and textiles should be included within the study of decorative arts.

## INTRODUCTION

The term wallpaper often conjures a wince and a cringe when mentioned. Oscar Wilde is said to have commented on his deathbed, “my wallpaper is killing me –one of us must go!”<sup>1</sup> Yet, wallcoverings are one of the ways in which we are able to study the history of decorative arts, but also the world around us. Wallcoverings reflect trade and exchange between various countries. They indicate the changes in style and fashion in both the world of apparel and interior design. The wallcoverings industry demonstrates advancements in technological innovations that have affected the entire manufacturing world. While in the past, wallcovering’s popularity has waxed and waned in favor, today, wallcoverings are comparable to a form of artwork, a far cry from the repeat patterns of long ago.<sup>2</sup> They are also a reflection of the designer’s artistic intent, techniques, and vision. Maya Romanoff’s unique approach to textiles and wallcoverings culminated in a distinct body of work that spanned several decades. His products are unparalleled in terms of use of innovative materials, construction and manufacturing techniques, and design. Consequently, his accomplishments in wallcoverings and textiles should be included within the study of decorative arts.

Heralded, as a brilliant and talented artist by his contemporaries, artists, and design gurus, Maya Romanoff, the Founder of the Maya Romanoff Corporation was

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<sup>1</sup> Greysmith, Brenda, *Wallpaper*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Blackley, Lachlan, *Wallpaper*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, Ltd.), 6.

responsible for a multitude of incomparable products, bringing art into the every day by means of his textiles and wallcoverings. Maya Romanoff made important and significant impacts upon the world of decorative arts. With his death occurring on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, he leaves a legacy that will continue to be carried out at the Maya Romanoff Corporation. From textiles and wallcoverings, to art and design, this innovator and the impact of his contributions to fine and decorative arts in terms of wallcoverings and textiles has been diverse and far reaching.

Considered an “icon of industry” within the field of interior design, Maya Romanoff is almost unknown outside of that realm. Examples of his work are absent from the decorative arts curriculum, yet his unique approach to textiles and wallcovering design culminated in a distinct body of work that spanned several decades. However, decorative arts students find few resources with reference to his textiles and wallcoverings. Examples of Maya Romanoff products are rarely found in museums. According to Brenda Greysmith in her book, *Wallpaper*, “Most museums don’t have wallpaper collections...they are dominated by modern reproductions of William Morris designs...indigenous work is more difficult to find.”<sup>3</sup> The Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum has a world-class collection of wallcoverings, while other American museums that do feature wallcoverings, like the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s period rooms, focus on the years of 1680-1915.<sup>4</sup> However, the history of wallcoverings in the United States certainly doesn’t end in 1915. The years that followed are filled with changing fashions, advancements in technology, and cultural developments. Maya

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<sup>3</sup> Greysmith, Brenda, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Romanoff's wallcoverings reflect those changes; it is their unique take on traditional wallcoverings and textiles that makes their products incomparable, but also an essential element of decorative arts studies.

A powerful way to enhance studies in the decorative arts, specifically that of textiles and wallcoverings, is to include the work of Maya Romanoff into the decorative arts course of study. Maya Romanoff is a fantastic example of a modern designer who transformed wallcoverings as we know them today. Someone like Maya Romanoff sensed a stagnant environment in art during the 1960s; he was part of the counter-revolutionary creative generation that sparked change in style internationally.

Incorporating the work of Maya Romanoff provides opportunities for students to develop a greater knowledge of textiles and wallcoverings that are produced and used in ways with which they are likely unfamiliar.<sup>5</sup> Maya took the wallcovering industry to entirely new levels; never before had anyone tried the materials he used or delved into the realms of finish with which he experimented. His textiles and wallcoverings are works of art, a combination of beauty and creative skill from start to finish.

This paper will focus on Maya Romanoff's contribution to the development of modern textiles and wallcovering. I will introduce his early experimentations with textiles, progressing chronologically per chapter, specifically focusing on the concepts for the Maya Romanoff wallcoverings, the way in which they are produced and manufactured, the materials he used, and how his endeavors with respect to wallcoverings and textiles are worthy of inclusion within the study of decorative arts. I

will include other examples of wallcoverings being produced during the same time periods for comparison. Using company records, research materials from books and articles, as well as personal interviews with a variety of experts within the field of design, I will delve into the company's process of production, focusing on their adherence to handcraftsmanship, as their wallcoverings and textiles cannot be made by machine in a point in time that is vastly dominated by modern technology.

## CHAPTER ONE

Maya Romanoff was born Richard Lee Romanoff on June 30th, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>6</sup> Maya Romanoff's early years were spent living in the Belmont Hotel on the North Side of Chicago with his parents and brother in what he considered, "a very bourgeois Jewish home."<sup>7</sup> The son of a metallurgist and a socialite, the Chicago native described how he enjoyed finger painting as a little boy, and how he was also privileged enough to grow up around famous and beautiful works of art in his own home, and that of his friends.<sup>8</sup> Maya characterized his mother as "brilliant and crazy," a philanthropist and former model that was a well dressed and a stylish lady, who, "ran around with decorators he can't recall."<sup>9</sup> His mother's fashion sense and love of beautiful décor is likely one of the reasons Romanoff was first exposed to fabrics and wallcoverings with which he developed a distinct fascination. For instance, he remembered that his bedroom walls as a child were "covered in toile; the floor a checkerboard of simple squares in blue and red linoleum," possibly an explanation for his disinclination toward typical 1950s wallcoverings and textiles.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, *Multifarious: Maya Romanoff's Grand Canvas*, (Chicago: City Files Press), 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Libby Morse, "The Wizard of Wallpaper: Chicago's Maya Romanoff Canvases the World With his Lavish Wallcoverings," *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), Oct. 6, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> June Hill, "Portrait of a Textile Artist with Dyed in the Fabric Ideas," *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



However, without the major contributions to the history of wallcoverings in the 1950s, the results of his work would not be possible. The years following WWII, from 1945-1959 in particular, mark an incredibly important time in the history of wallpaper. It is accurately viewed today as a period when wallpaper design in fact flourished; its designs and accompanying technology were new and exciting. In the United States and the United Kingdom, the 1950s was a decade defined by an economic boom, prosperity, growing suburbs, new technology, and travel; all of these changes were also reflected in wallpaper designs. Weary from the years of war time restrictions, designers took advantage of the new freedoms with which they were afforded by creating patterns whose inspiration was derived from the world unfolding around them: architecture, science, developing art forms, and culturally significant events.<sup>11</sup>

A greater public interest in architecture resulted in the collaboration of many well-established textile and wallpaper companies with prominent architects in both the United States and abroad. F. Schumacher & Co. for instance, partnered with prominent American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, in 1955.<sup>12</sup> The designs that resulted from this collaboration, known as the “Taliesin Line,” appealed to architects and design enthusiasts alike. Wright used abstract geometric shapes mostly in primary or neutral colors in order to maintain a corresponding aesthetic throughout the home.<sup>13</sup> One such example is Wright’s “*Design 706*,” a color screen-print on paper that exemplifies not only his, but the public’s strong interest in architecture in the 1950s (Figure 1).

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<sup>11</sup> Lesley Jackson, *Twentieth Century Pattern Design*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 95.

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, *Wallpaper: The Ultimate Guide*, (New York: Overlook, 2010), 9.

<sup>13</sup> “Frank Lloyd Wright ‘Design 706; Taliesin Line,’” *Victoria & Albert Museum*, Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O75787/design-706-taliesin-line-wallpaper-wright-frank-lloyd/>.

A number of wallpaper lines from the 1950s are now referred to as “Contemporary” or “Mid-Century Style,” which can be identified by the designer’s clever use of abstract shapes, stylized motifs, and clear-cut link to modern fine art and individual artists. The British designer, Lucienne Day, is especially known for her wallpaper designs that display the influences of modern artists like Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso.<sup>14</sup> Day is widely recognized for her praised work in textiles as well as wallpaper. She collaborated with John Line & Sons Ltd. and released several wallpapers like “*Diablo*,” named for the children’s game of Diablo (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> This wallpaper contains the shape of an hourglass in a repeat pattern, which Day used to refer to the two-headed wooden top used in the game.

Katzenbach & Warren, an American firm, capitalized upon the widespread demand for expressive wallpapers and designs that reflected elements inherent in new artistic movements. Notable was their 1954 “American Futures Collection,” which featured the photogravure-printed wallpaper imbued with hints of Chinoiserie, entitled “*Emperor’s Gold Fish*,” significant for its demonstration of innovative technology and outstanding composition of style (Figure 3).<sup>16</sup> The implementation of the photogravure technique in wallpaper was relatively new for the 1950s, gaining rapid popularity thanks to its prolific end-result; texturally superior papers that featured designs reminiscent of collages in harmony with various patterns and subjects.<sup>17</sup> Photogravure, mostly associated with photographers, is a process that uses chemicals transferred to a metal

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<sup>14</sup> Alice Whately, *Modern Wallpaper & Wallcoverings: Introducing Color, Pattern, & Texture into Your Living Space*, (New York: Universe Publishing, 2002), 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Lesley Jackson, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

plate, which are then etched and inked upon, finally pressing the plate to paper for a distinct end result. This design furthermore reflects the 1950s predilection for modern art. Perhaps Maya's aversion to 1950s wallpaper stemmed from his exposure to another popular style from the decade known as 'conationals.'<sup>18</sup> These wallapers are characterized by their whimsical and playful designs. Wallcoverings that embody the amusing and fanciful trend include "Malaga" from the "Palladio Wallpapers" pattern book released in 1955 by Wallpaper Manufacturers Ltd., as it exemplifies the 'conationals' style; to serve as an element of home décor as an interesting conversation piece (Figure 4). "Malaga" displays rows of stylized wine bottles in warm earth tones, while "Bistro," a wallpaper design from the same sample book, encapsulates 1950s society's greater interest in travel, exotic cities and foreign ways of life (Figure 5).<sup>19</sup>

As Alice Whately states in her book *Modern Wallpaper & Wallcoverings: Introducing Color, Pattern, and Texture Into Your Living Space*, "Kitchen wallapers developed their own vocabulary, featuring brightly colored fruit and vegetable motifs, which today appear delightfully kitsch but were then viewed as nothing more than light-hearted and cheerful; a trend that initiated in America and soon spread to Britain."<sup>20</sup> Along these same lines were the quirky and comical wallcoverings that provided a commentary upon the social climate of the 1950s; a reaction against the unimaginative and colorless war years. These whimsical designs were especially present in the work of

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<sup>18</sup> Lesley Jackson, 118.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alice Whately, 17.

American designer Saul Steinberg, whose illustrations bring to life fantastical exaggerations of places on paper. In the early 1950s, Steinberg began to produce designs for Piazza Prints and Greeff Fabrics. Two wallcovering and textile designs in particular illustrate Steinberg's playful and comical side, "*Opera*" and "*Aviary*" (Figure(s) 6, 7). "*Opera*" is a nod to Steinberg's love of travel and music. "*Birds*" or "*Aviary*" depicts various stylized forms of birds, yet it is a playful take on the classic representations of birds in wallpapers (Figure 8). For instance, Chinese wallcoverings made hundreds of years ago depict incredibly life like birds that appear as though they could fly off of the wallpaper into the distance (Figure 9). Steinberg's "*Aviary*" wallpaper conversely combines a contemporary artistic take on such a representation, defying conformity, while still referencing the classical past. Consequently, Saul Steinberg's post WWII designs satisfied the consumer demand for wallpapers that were optimistic, cheery, and interesting.

While the 1950s were a remarkable time of massive cultural changes, advancements in terms of communication and technology, as well as interior design, wallcoverings from this point in time are what one thinks of today as strictly wallpaper as opposed to wallcoverings. Flat and made on paper, these wallpapers provided the impetus for change in this particular field of design in the decades to come. Surrounded by these typical wallpapers as a young boy in Chicago, they lay the groundwork for the wallcovering designs of Maya Romanoff. He stated, "When he was a kid, the only wallpapers available were birds and flowers"<sup>21</sup> Their one dimensionality and

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 52.

what he considered to be old-fashioned imagery inspired him to create wallcoverings and textiles that could transform a room in ways that had not yet been done before. Maya Romanoff sought to create works of art in everyday objects that could be just as valuable in enhancing the atmosphere of a home in the same way that a treasured work of art by Rembrandt could.

Revealing about his future is an account of an exchange he shared with his father while working in his father's junkyard. Maya explained that, as his father was working with metals, his father, and "described the sensation of feeling those things...that's exactly how I felt when I started dyeing fabrics. But what he was feeling I couldn't understand at all. To me, metal is unyielding while fabric is kind of soft, changeable, moving thing."<sup>22</sup> That is not to say Maya didn't share his father's appreciation for metals and lustrous substances, a fact which is to be displayed in his later work, it's important as to what he learned from that interaction. Maya recalled that the memory of watching his father work with metal impressed upon him the fact that he wanted to, "bring joy to my customers, astonishment to the rest of the world, and happiness to whoever worked for me. I meant it to span the globe, to inspire awe in the world around me."<sup>23</sup> This singular observation established Maya's connection with the world's natural materials and their manipulation for a positive purpose; to bring out the inherent beauty of those elements into everyday objects to enrich the world like artwork.

Growing up in a home with wallpapers and luxurious textiles, alongside notable works of art, lay the foundation for many of Romanoff's designs. By all accounts, he had

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 23.

a seemingly normal childhood but one of privilege. Maya retained his appreciation of the arts, following the typical path of a high school graduate as he eventually ventured off to college during one of the most culturally dynamic periods in recent history.

## CHAPTER TWO

If the 1950s is remembered as a time when there was a return to peace, prosperity, and positive growth in the world economy, then the 1960s is equated with dissidence, fragmented societies, and nonconformity. The number of incongruous events occurring simultaneously which shaped the climate of the 1960s resulted in reactionary forms of art and design that are completely at odds with the past.<sup>24</sup> From fine art to architecture to wallcoverings, these mediums are all a reflection of the changing times. The freethinking hippies, revolutionaries, and eccentrics thrived on these transformations and ultimately created an expressionist movement. Art forms in the 1960s were taking off in a new direction, and one that was unlike anything that had been seen before.

In 1961, Maya transferred colleges from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor to the University of California at Berkeley.<sup>25</sup> He majored in anthropology and classical archaeology.<sup>26</sup> It was here during his freshman year in college that Romanoff was able to connect his affinity for the artistic and aesthetically pleasing, in an archaeology course, surrounded by images of the beauty of ancient ruins. The professor J.K. Anderson was a “shy, gentle man who stuttered his way through lengthy slide presentations,” but who had

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<sup>24</sup> Lesley Jackson, “Fab Fash Pop – ‘the look’ of British Design During the Early 1960s,” *Twentieth Century Architecture* no. 6, (2002): 19, Accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41859187>.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Libby Morse, “The Wizard of Wallpaper: Chicago’s Maya Romanoff Canvases the World With his Lavish Wallcoverings,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), Oct. 6, 1998.

a “gift for making ancient art forms come alive.”<sup>27</sup> As Romanoff recalled, “The lights would go out, the slides would go on, and the most beautiful, magical things would come rolling in front of your eyes. He could talk about the whole world, past and present. I took the course three times.”<sup>28</sup>

Following graduation during the summer of 1965, Maya Romanoff headed to Europe accompanied by his young wife, Rebecca.<sup>29</sup> He studied at the London School of Economics, but by 1966, Maya left without a destination in mind or an intention. Instead he and Rebecca lived the life of nomads as they motorcycled through Europe, later hitchhiking, and finally moving south into Morocco as the winter months drew nearer. To survive, Maya sold his paintings.<sup>30</sup> But it was an experience in an African marketplace that would forever change his path. Awestruck by the incredible image of flowing colorful fabrics that lined the open-air markets, Maya exclaimed that the vision was “like walking into the astroplane.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it was the fact that this new viewpoint extended to fine art, as he began to see that its inherent qualities extended beyond the basic belief that art was simply a drawing or a painting to be hung on a wall. Romanoff explained, “I’d never considered baskets, pottery, and textiles as art until I saw the beautiful ones in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. I decided that whatever I created would

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<sup>27</sup> June Hill, Portrait of a Textile Artist with Dyed in the Fabric Ideas,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 27.

<sup>29</sup> June Hill.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Mahaney, “Design Revolutionary,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), Feb. 21, 2010.



have to be functional.”<sup>32</sup> This is one sentiment that is inherent, in fact almost universal amongst the artists and designers studied by decorative arts students.

Experiences of this kind within the continent continued throughout the couple’s trip, with Tunisia proving to be the most influential place in Africa that Maya would visit. In Gabès, the railway station was lined with indigo scarves that had been tie-dyed.<sup>33</sup> Maya was captivated by the local Tunisian artisans practicing the ancient art of tie-dyeing, which he described as, “a swirl of kaleidoscopic color and unpredictable pattern that emerged from all the dripping of hand-spun cloth.”<sup>34</sup> Romanoff relayed his encounter with the locals and stated, “We started fooling around with dyeing in, Gabès Tunisia. The people everywhere were friendly and let us do it. It reeducated us into whole new ideas about how to make things beautiful.”<sup>35</sup> The traditional techniques and his observations of the local people’s practices with textiles became ingrained in him from thereafter.

The couples’ next stop in Agadez, Niger in the Saharan desert would be another adventure in education as Maya watched the native peoples use giant holes in the desert that had been there for centuries with indigo and water in order to dye cotton.<sup>36</sup> Maya watched the incredibly deliberate process take place over many weeks time, as the water had to ferment until the dipping process could take place. The timeframe for completion was one that depended upon the desired shade of color, and consequently could range from an hour for lighter to many more hours for darker.<sup>37</sup> Maya’s observations continued

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Mahaney, “Design Revolutionary,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), Feb. 21, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

to inspire him to work with textiles and did not leave Maya in Africa; in fact it followed him back to Europe where in 1967 he worked fairly basic jobs in Parisian fashion houses, while simultaneously experimenting with textiles as his wife Rebecca modeled. The two moved back to the United States a few months later, only to return to their global travels in 1969 on a trip to India.<sup>38</sup>

This was the occasion in which Maya obtained his unique name, leaving Richard behind. Although he told reporters that it was given to him by a holy man, it really came from the Buddhist tradition, which states that Maya was the weaver of dreams as well as the mother of Buddha.<sup>39</sup> This great odyssey included a visit to the textile centers of India, but it is an experience that neither Maya nor Rebecca ever relayed in detail.<sup>40</sup> It was a journey not unlike the one to Africa, where what they saw around them impacted them greatly, enough to wish to revive what they learned stateside.

After their return to the states, the couple headed to the Woodstock Festival in New York in the summer of 1969 where they made money selling food and helping promoters.<sup>41</sup> What they saw there was amazing, and it was not just the musicians; the tie-dye that they had observed overseas was at that festival. Maya and Rebecca's desire to recreate what they saw and generate the equivalent stateside was commonplace amongst those who had traveled to areas rich in textile arts. In fact, "tie-dye became a major artifact of the new cultural rites of the 1960s."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, *Memory on Cloth: Shibori Now*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2012), 8.

## Psychedelic 60s

Maya and Rebecca returned to the United States during a pivotal moment in the 1960s, when designers began to draw inspiration from the changing world around them, exotic travels, revolutionary pop culture, and past historical styles. In 1969, Elizabeth Good commented upon the current wallpaper design trends in her article, “*Fabrics of Convenience*,” stating, “This year’s sources of inspiration are diverse: the Orient, the Odeon, and the *Yellow Submarine*.”<sup>43</sup> Flower Power also prevailed, partly owing to the coinciding trend of historical revivalism that rounded out the conglomeration of disparate modes of design. However, to counteract the overdramatized, vibrant flower movement that gained increasing momentum at the end of the decade, thanks to the psychedelic hallucinogen infused hippie movement, was the modern rendition of historical styles.<sup>44</sup> This was a wallpaper trend shared by designers in the United Kingdom as well as the United States, with firms like Sanderson and United De-Soto who manufactured respective lines of wallcoverings that retained commonalities yet remained unique.

Floral designs morphed into a reinterpretation of former styles, borrowing from fads of decades past like Art Nouveau, finding inspiration in historical pieces of silver or textiles. Pat Albeck’s Sanderson wallpaper “*Lubi-Lu*,” released in 1966 as part of the Palladio 7 collection, displays a variation on the popular floral motif (Figure 11).<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the overly exaggerated, enlarged floral wallpapers in typical 60s hues, this flattened repetitive design is composed of subdued shades of blue and green; a remarkable deviation from the wallpapers produced simultaneously throughout the

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<sup>43</sup> Lesley Jackson, 135.

<sup>44</sup> Alice Whately, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Lesley Jackson, 159.

decade. Furthermore, “*Lubi-lu*” displays subtle hints of the Far East, and is an example of the preference throughout the decade for floral motifs rooted in a historical style with mind-bending distortions.

Printed during that same year was “*Berkley*,” Sanderson’s wallpaper inspired by the Greek-Revival style with a contemporary Pop infused artistic flair (Figure 12).<sup>46</sup> A wallpaper heightened with metallic, space-age colors typical of the 1960s, the Edward Pond design spoke to his sentiment that, “the Swinging Sixties was...an amazing crash of influences that was simply bewildering.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, “*Berkley*” is a testament to Elizabeth Good’s statement about wallpaper whose inspiration derived from the past as Pond’s design clearly borrowed from elements found in the architecture of ancient buildings like the Erechtheion and Trajan’s Column, monuments which were seen by Maya during his college lectures and travels that influenced him as well.

In keeping with the theme of the old world, Margaret Cannon’s screen-printed wallpaper entitled, “*Ziggurat*,” is a fusion of historic times and styles, which of the Art Deco revival and antiquity, the very name evocative of the Mesopotamian tower (Figure 13). From Sanderson’s Palladio 8 collection, the design is reminiscent of wallpaper that would have been popular in the Great Gatsby era, but is unmistakably a 1960s creation. The trippy wallpaper is emblematic of the psychedelic and historical revival styles typical of the decade.

The 1960s proved to be a somewhat fruitful decade for American designers as they experimented with pattern and technique in new and inventive ways. Many of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Lesley Jackson, 135.

wallpaper designs were modern in design, evidently laden with global travels; wanderlust attributed to free thinking hippies and quintessentially 60s. Although wallpaper companies in the 1960s were at the forefront of popular fads, in vogue fashion, and art movements, they were not looking to the historical past for technique, only design. Rather, their focus was geared towards the most modern technologies with styles adapted to cultural demands. Maya Romanoff on the other hand, was able to use ancient techniques to develop cutting edge wallcoverings. It is this foresight that sets him apart from designers within established firms domestically and abroad, without diminishing the creativity with which they displayed in their work.

The combination of his experiences overseas and stateside inspired Maya and Rebecca to experiment with the ancient techniques and modernize them, something that they had long desired thanks to their overseas excursions and experience at Woodstock.<sup>48</sup> Believing that they could recreate what they saw in Africa on tie-dyed shirts of their own, the couple headed to West Palm Beach, Florida for a Rolling Stones concert with almost two-hundred white t-shirts, Rit© liquid dye, and some rubber bands in hand.<sup>49</sup> Their tie-dyed t-shirts were a total success. There, Maya said, “I had found my life’s work from the moment I saw the first tie-dyed T-shirt. Those feelings returned every time I mixed the dyes, folded the fabric, and finished a shirt.”<sup>50</sup> He also stated, “Every now and then a veil lifts, and you can see into the future. That’s what I had been looking for. That was my medium.”<sup>51</sup> By the end of the decade, a simple tie-dye t-shirt and his fascination with

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<sup>48</sup> Barbara Mahaney.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

the technique changed the way Romanoff thought about textiles and formed his views on how to beautify the world.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Renee Bennett, “Maya Romanoff,” (Maya Romanoff Archives, n.d.a.).

### CHAPTER THREE

The 1970s was considered the end of Modernism, as a great many Modernist artists passed away in those years, including Picasso, Schiaparelli, Rothko, Chanel, Stravinsky, and others, effectively bringing to an end one of the most important cultural and artistic movements in western society.<sup>53</sup> It was also however, a great decade in terms of the continuation of Pop and Op art, the development of the Studio Movement, handcraftsmanship, and the expansion of the High Tech movement. The predominance of paintings and sculpture gave way to newer art forms and experimentation with various media and materials. Disco fever triumphed, punk rock and hip-hop were on the rise; fashion designers refined style, technology improved, and the women's liberation movement gained further momentum. During this time period, wallpaper and its development somewhat languished. A less than ideal period for wallpaper manufacturers, much in the same way that 1970s politics were remembered as a tumultuous watershed, its presence in interior design was minimal at best.

At the beginning of the new decade, the ambitious Maya and his wife Rebecca built a studio called Multifarious and Quinja where they created tie-dyed clothing; what they called "wearable art" which they began to sell in stores.<sup>54</sup> By October of 1970, they

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<sup>53</sup> Dr. Bart Moore-Gilbert, *The Arts in the 1970s: Cultural Closure*, (London: Routledge Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 35.

were tie-dyeing a variety of products, from dresses to leather coats, belts to scarves, ultimately with great success (Figure 14).<sup>55</sup> Major players in the fashion world began to notice, and their pieces were sold by I. Magnin, Henri Bendel®, and chic boutiques all over the country. Moreover, iconic American designer Halston<sup>56</sup> asked them to become his exclusive dyers and Rit® Dye offered them a promotional contract, all of which they declined.<sup>57</sup>

Maya and Rebecca's true dedication remained to their craft, as they decided to study other methods and techniques of working with textiles. For instance, they began learning the art of Japanese dyeing as well as that of quilting to become more proficient with fabrics in order to combine their newly obtained knowledge with the practices they had learned overseas.<sup>58</sup> Of his experiences with dyes and fabrics, Maya recalled the pleasure of experimentation, his love of color and the process of watching it transform as he placed the fabrics in different hot pots of dyes, and lastly, the wonder he felt as he watched the fabric transform alongside the various colors, all of which was like a game of chance.<sup>59</sup>

As the couple continued to tie-dye clothing, they moved into creating tie-dyed wallpaper, upholstery, and leathers (Figure 15).<sup>60</sup> Their leather vest was so popular in fact, that Peter Daltrey of British rock band, The Who, owned one. Even the famed

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Roy Halston Frowick was first recognized when Jacqueline Kennedy wore his pillbox hat design in 1961, but is almost always associated with the 70s. Halston's success during the 1970s is in part owed to his visibility as a permanent fixture at Studio54 and friendships with celebrity clientele like Liza Minelli and Bianca Jagger. His triumphs in fashion in the 70s include the halter dress and top, as well as dresses inspired by ancient Greek and Roman silhouettes that were a staple in the discos.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 36.



textile designer Jack Lenor Larson, with whom the couple met during a trip to New York City in 1971, recalled that he was impressed with their tie-dyed leathers stating that, “Nobody was doing it on leather and it was very interesting.”<sup>61</sup> Maya’s was a viable profession to have during this time period. The “rise of the counterculture of the 1960s” seeped into clothing design, which was a means of expression both personally and politically where the “fashion of anti-fashion” became trendy thanks to people like Maya Romanoff.<sup>62</sup> Tie-dye was one of the fashionable trends at this point in time, as people subscribed to the newfound popularity of ancient craft techniques translated onto the pliable and rich forms of textiles.

Although the Maya Romanoff Company began as a fashion label, manufacturing “Wearable Art” and custom design pieces for celebrities like Elton John and Cheryl Tiegs, eventually, the fashion component of the company began to taper off (Figure 16).<sup>63</sup> Instead they began to move their focus elsewhere.

Maya and Rebecca returned to Chicago with contracts for fabric collections, upholstery lines, wallpaper, rugs, and what they called a “fabric environment.”<sup>64</sup> That term is, according to Maya, “a way of changing the environment through textiles.”<sup>65</sup> The couple took all that they had learned from fabricating clothing and their own dyeing techniques in order to create an interior space entirely covered in cloth. Maya also called these spaces, “indoor parks,” a concept of which he began to conceive at the start of the decade.

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, 88.

<sup>63</sup> Unknown, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation Press Materials, 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

The Romanoff's most personal interior fabric environment was created in 1971 through a joint commission from *House and Garden Magazine*, and Chicago socialite Mrs. Elita Murphy for her daughter's bedroom inside their high-rise apartment building on Lake Shore Drive (Figure 17).<sup>66</sup> The intent for this space was to create a tropical garden in which the girl could live regardless of location, weather, or even mood. His desire was for the feel and beauty of the fabrics to create a secure and enclosed peaceful retreat that was a work of art in which one could not only view, but also occupy.<sup>67</sup> The finished product was a tie-dyed and painted textile enclosed paradise. The floor was a painted green canvas as grass, velvet painted walls featured birds and vegetation, as the silk paneled sky was enhanced with a giant beaming sun.<sup>68</sup> About his bedroom creation, Maya said, "It's an organic thing. There are no hard edges in nature. Man created the hard edge. Softness is the key to what we do. We use soft fabrics and soft colors, even if we do a bright look. Most industrial colors –if they're bright –are harsh. We try to create naturalness. Happiness, too."<sup>69</sup>

In 1973, Baker, Knapp & Tubbs, Inc. commissioned Romanoff to create an enlarged textile environment that was sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts.<sup>70</sup> His work was entitled "*Swan River*," which he deemed to be the first freestanding textile environment. It as composed of over 200 yards of canvas, silk, and velvet that he

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Maya Romanoff and Contributors, *Floating World: Environmental Textiles*, (Unknown city of publication and publisher, ca. 1983), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Unknown, Chicago, Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Unknown.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Maya Romanoff, 7.

stated was “blazing a path for public, municipal art in the form of ‘Interior Parks.’”<sup>71</sup>

Although a different environment, his intent for his work remained the same, which was to create beautiful works of handcrafted art for the public to enjoy.

But by 1974, Maya and Rebecca were no longer happy, and decided to separate.<sup>72</sup> From that point onward, Maya threw himself into his company, dedicated to furthering his capabilities with reference to textiles and dyeing. He turned his small apartment and basement into his factory, where he and his small staff of employees created fabrics for upholstery and textiles for draperies.<sup>73</sup> Moving from beauty that adorns the body to beauty for the home, Romanoff began to create, “custom leather chairs and sofas in the style of Louis XIV” (Figure(s) 18, 19).<sup>74</sup> One of his furniture pieces, a chaise like sofa entitled, “*New Stripe*,” composed of silk and tie-dyed by hand, is another example of Maya’s overall intent to exploit the comfort of a utilitarian object for an aesthetically pleasing end result (Figure 20). Always reliant upon the value of one’s senses, he purposefully draped his carefully manipulated textiles upon furniture so that it would become touchable, visible, and thoroughly incorporated into its surroundings as a notable work of art.

During this time Maya vigorously worked to improve his dyeing techniques, experimenting at all hours of the night to test fabrics and refine his methodologies. Though once viewed as a childhood pastime, Romanoff began to see his experimentations as very similar to his once beloved finger-painting. Combining his

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 40.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>74</sup> June Hill, “Portrait of a Textile Artist with Dyed in the Fabric Ideas,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), 1989.

knowledge of the Ikat tradition he observed in India and tie-dye, he was able to create a unique amalgamation of these techniques and put a modern spin on them, reviving his childhood interest in painting as well. Maya also had to find a way in which he could mimic the primitive techniques like those he observed in Africa of vats that were deep holes in the ground, those 1,000-year-old indigo dye pits in the middle of the Sahara desert<sup>75</sup> somehow adapted for modern technology and production in Chicago.<sup>76</sup> Intent upon bringing the beauty of artwork into the everyday spectrum, Maya practiced his methodologies over and over again in an attempt at perfection, skills that would become an integral part of his success.

The process was not without its difficulties, as Romanoff recalled, “It was dizzying, trying to sort out what we did and didn’t want to do. We were only three or four years into dyeing and we were still learning. In this country there is no tradition in hand dyeing. If you wanted to do something you had to figure it out for yourself.”<sup>77</sup> Maya explained that it was also his goal to improve upon the hand-dyed methods in a modern way in order to appeal to the contemporary designers who would possibly be using his products.<sup>78</sup> However, the products available to him in America were vastly different than those that were used in Africa. The ancient techniques of tie-dyeing, batik and Ikat have always existed in Africa, as the dyes are readily available in the form of local vegetable dyes with easy access to “natural plaited or woven cloth.”<sup>79</sup> The ancient indigo dye pits

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<sup>75</sup> Susan Rogers, “Getting it Down on Fabric,” (Maya Romanoff Headquarters Archives).

<sup>76</sup> June Hill, “A Flower Garden That Never Dies,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), April 18, 1972.

<sup>77</sup> June Hill, “Portrait of a Textile Artist with Dyed in the Fabric Ideas,” *Chicago Tribune*, (Chicago, IL), 1989.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 41.

<sup>79</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, *Memory on Cloth: Shibori Now*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2012), 72.

Maya described previously, utilize a traditional indigo known as *adire*, which is used in the process of the resist technique, something that also had to be replicated.<sup>80</sup> Yet as Maya has stated, “The 60s were the ‘self-taught generation,’” he explained, “Artists simply started working without any formal background and transformed many aspects of aesthetics.”<sup>81</sup> Consequently, Maya continued to experiment.

Simultaneously, he received orders for his fabrics and tie-dyed leathers, a demand that required more employees. As a result, Maya hired refugees from the countries in Asia ravaged by war throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in particular.<sup>82</sup> By this point in time, Maya was more than prepared to increase the production of the multitude of his art forms that were furthermore functional. In addition to utilitarian, the products he manufactured he believed, also had to be consistently well-made and affordable in order to appeal to a wide market.<sup>83</sup>

The only way in which Maya found this to be feasible was to order the textiles from overseas; China, Japan and India supplied him with silk, while leather came from Germany and a few other countries in Europe.<sup>84</sup> Through the variety of fabric he obtained, Maya discovered the fabrics varied from one dye lot to the next and required special individual attention to obtain the desired finished product. Each fabric subsequently demanded careful treatment in terms of technique and design.<sup>85</sup> Regarding

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<sup>80</sup> John Picton and John Mack, *African Textiles*, (New York: Icon Publishing, 1989), 41.

<sup>81</sup> -----“Maya Romanoff Hits 40.” *Wallpaper Magazine*, [www.wallpapermagazine.com](http://www.wallpapermagazine.com), last modified November 27, 2009, Accessed April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012, <http://www.wallpaper.com/design/maya-romanoff-hits-40/4112>

<sup>82</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 41.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

this discovery, he later explained the solution to his quandary, “the key is not to impose a design *on* a fabric, but rather to *collaborate* with the material to create a design.”<sup>86</sup> From that realization, he learned that the tools he used were equally as important as his methodologies, intent upon combining both modern and traditional devices to achieve his desired end results. Maya believed that no tool should be discounted due to old age in favor of another that was newly manufactured, as he claimed, “a jig dyer or a power loom is as worthy a tool as a watercolor brush or handloom; no tool is bad which makes lively and beautiful work,” sentiments often echoed by designers past like William Morris and affirmed by his contemporaries like Jack Lenor Larsen.<sup>87</sup> Now through his endeavors and experiments with devices, as well as cloth and dyeing, he was about to embark upon a new territory for which he had never prepared, wallcoverings.

Having long believed that art was everywhere, and with his ultimate goal of beautifying the world, Maya came upon his idea for outdoor textile installations accidentally:

Many years ago when I was walking down an alley to the street where I lived in Chicago on a dreary and gray winter’s day, my eyes caught a beautiful sight, I saw fabric being left out on the line to dry in the back of a building and I thought it was so beautiful. It was so warm –there was so much color and richness. That’s how I got the idea of draping buildings with fabric.<sup>88</sup>

The installations are noteworthy, as they are indicative of his trials and tribulations with dyes and techniques. Furthermore, they are demonstrative of the way in which many of his wallcoverings are still created to this day. In many cases, Romanoff has utilized the

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 43.

same technique with wallcoverings as he did with the textiles used in his outdoor installations. Instead of covering walls indoors, he began to cover the exteriors of buildings.

In 1977 he introduced a rather spectacular installation, which was small in comparison to his later endeavors. He displayed what he called *Kimono I* on the alley-side of the Richard Himmel Design Pavilion at 219 West Erie Street north of the Loop (Figure 21).<sup>89</sup> Maya gave credit to Christo as part of his inspiration, but didn't hesitate to point out that the two artists differed in their approach; Christo shrouded buildings in different materials such as polyethylene fabric or tarpaulin in order to create discord between the two.<sup>90</sup> Maya on the other hand, strove to complement both textile and architecture; ultimately he wanted to show the world his works of art, his dyed fabrics. His ideas revolved around ideas of happiness, harmony, and stability between human, art, and environment; something with which Maya felt Christos, could not relate.<sup>91</sup> In terms of the talent with respect to his technique and methodology, Jack Lenor Larsen commented, "of all those who have investigated the ancient techniques, Maya Romanoff is the only one who has taken them to their post-industrial implications."<sup>92</sup>

### **Influences from the Orient**

1978 would prove to be one of the most important years in Maya's spiritual and professional life. Although he most likely was exposed to the religions of the East firstly during his travels in the 1960s, Buddhism became a major focus of his at this point in

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 44.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> ----"The Arsenal Exhibition –New York: Maya Romanoff Fabric Impressionist," 1979, 19.

time; partly owing to a trip he took to Japan in 1978 where he attended a Buddhist conference. He visited Japan as a delegate for the World Buddhist Conference with his Buddhist teacher (Figure 22).<sup>93</sup> This was where Maya first encountered traditional Japanese papermaking. He stated:

I'm extremely proud of the process I began learning twelve years ago and that I'm still involved in working with traditional, mainly Japanese papermaking techniques and altering them for contemporary wallcoverings. I was honored to have the Japanese government invite me to work with 200-year-old kimono dyeing company to create contemporary fabric while using traditional Japanese techniques.<sup>94</sup>

While in Japan, Maya was exposed to shibori, as well as papermaking techniques. For this, he visited artist Keisuke Serizawa, who designed textiles and papers, ultimately uniting his love of wallcoverings and fabrics.<sup>95</sup> In *Wallpaper*, Brenda Greysmith explains that paper as we now know it today has its origins in China, "first produced in the early second century, made of bark and linen rags. From China, knowledge of paper-making passed to Japan around A.D. 600."<sup>96</sup> From that point forward, the Japanese have established themselves as the preeminent producers of exceptional papers both in quality and uniqueness.<sup>97</sup> It is the papermaking technologies that have to be addressed primarily in order to understand its unique effects that are combined with shibori techniques in Romanoff's wallcoverings. Papermaking techniques in Japan utilize a paper or sheet

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<sup>93</sup> ---"Maya Romanoff Timeline: 1979," *Maya Romanoff Website*, Accessed May 2013, <http://mayaromanoff.com/node/646>.

<sup>94</sup> Barbara Westlake-Kenny, "Multifarious Maya: Weaver of Illusions," *Haut Décor* (Coral Gables, FL), December, 1990.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 46.

<sup>96</sup> Brenda Greysmith, 17.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



forming process called still and flow forming methods.<sup>98</sup> In their article, “Traditional Papermaking Techniques Revealed by Fibre Orientation in Historical Papers, Yoon-Hee Han, Toshiharu Enomae, Akira Isogai, Hirofumi Yamamoto, Satoshi Hasegawa, Jeong-Ju Song and Seong-Woo Jang, explain this process in depth stating:

In the flow sheet-forming method, a mold is dipped into the vat containing beaten fibers suspended in water with some amount of a viscous substance called *Neri* to disperse fibers for good sheet formation. The filled mold is lifted above the water and then moved back and forth or sideways, so the sheet becomes homogenized and excess fibers are thrown off. Several dips form one sheet, which is then transferred to a pile of paper to be pressed together. This unique Asian method of sheet formation contrasts with the still sheet-forming method where the mold is dipped only once for each sheet.<sup>99</sup>

The shibori technique on the other hand, although just as complex, is traditionally used in the production of textiles as opposed to paper. Shibori is technically defined as:

A Japanese word that refers to a variety of ways of embellishing textiles by klm’shaping cloth and securing it before dyeing. The word comes from the verb root *shiboru*, ‘to wring, squeeze, press.’ Although shibori is used to designate a particular group of resist-dyed textiles, the verb root of the word emphasizes the action performed –the process of manipulating fabric. Rather than treating the cloth as a two-dimensional surface, shibori techniques give it a three-dimensional form by folding, crumpling, stitching, plating, or plucking and twisting. The cloth shaped by these methods is secured in a number of ways such as binding and knotting.<sup>100</sup>

Shibori is similar to tie-dye in that the designs are formed by sectioning off portions of cloth and binding them using thread or string to create a shape.<sup>101</sup> It is the way in which a person spaces or configures the thread that results in the unique patterned effect created

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<sup>98</sup> Han, Yoon-Hee, Toshiharu Enomae, Akira Isogai, Hirofumi Yamamoto, Satoshi Hasegawa, Jeong-Ju Song and Seong-Woo Jang, “Traditional Papermaking Techniques Revealed by Fibre Orientation in Historical Papers,” *Studies in Conservation* 51, No. 4 (2006), 267, Accessed: July 1, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20619463>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, 37.

by how the dye is then absorbed into the cloth.<sup>102</sup> Ultimately, this dye creates a distinct design in the fabric. The shibori and papermaking techniques that Maya Romanoff learned in 1978 would be imperative in the development of his Orient influenced wallcoverings, which amass a significant portion of his collections today.

## **Kimono II**

A year later, influenced by his experience overseas and the techniques he observed, Maya produced his first major outdoor installation in New York's Central Park called "*Kimono II*" (Figure 23). The title was certainly a nod to his trip to Japan, where he visited the atelier of the master craftsman Kako Moriguchi, who specialized in the painting and dying of kimonos.<sup>103</sup> Confirming this assertion is the fact that Maya stated, "It's a 'kimono' in the spirit of Japanese dress; have a wonderful time."<sup>104</sup> The colorful kimono was over 3,000 square feet of fabric that ranged in colors, a result which he explained to be the product of a new set of dye combinations.

Across the Arsenal, the headquarters for the Department of Parks and Recreation in the Park, he draped eight incredibly and perfectly tie-dyed panels made of canvas.<sup>105</sup> The fabric was pleasant to behold, as the heavy material was capable of adapting to the weather conditions, flowing whatever way the day's climate dictated. The piece required, "400 yards of fabric in eight panels, each 80 feet long and six feet wide."<sup>106</sup> Romanoff did not ignore the building's interior space, and thus included what he called a "winter

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<sup>102</sup> Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, 55.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 46.

<sup>104</sup> ---- "*The Arsenal Exhibition –New York: Maya Romanoff Fabric Impressionist*," 1979, 17.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 44.

<sup>106</sup> Lynda A. Bender, "The Colorful, Secret World of Fabric Designer Maya Romanoff / Toolmaker: The Art of Maya Romanoff," *Nit & Wit: Chicago's Literary Arts Magazine*, 1987.

garden” environment within the Arsenal’s Great Hall.<sup>107</sup> This garden consisted of every surface decorated in fabrics with flowing streams of silks and velvets, and a canvas that was painted in order to give the appearance of a floral “wonderland.”<sup>108</sup>

The 80-foot long panels were dyed in shades of rose and yellow, which created a canopy that stimulated what he felt to be a sense of contentedness amongst the general population. According to Maya Romanoff, the public response was gratifying as he recalled, “I was told that people said it made them happy and that was the first time no one complained ‘Oh no, not another crazy project.’ I think that people have had a craving for things that beautify their surroundings for a long time.”<sup>109</sup> Using the same techniques he had learned in North Africa and now Japan, the Arsenal’s draping was well received, as it remained on display for two months and even held out against a five-day long rainstorm.<sup>110</sup> About this outdoors exhibition, Maya wrote, “It begins as one piece and ends as another. It moves in space and time. It’s a kimono.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Multifarious: Becoming the Weaver of Illusions in Wallcoverings**

By the late 1970s, Maya had embarked upon covering outdoor walls, and finally moved more steadily into “traditional” wallcoverings. He was successful in textile production, as his work could be found upholstered on chairs manufactured by Baker and Henredon, and he also was the winner of four Roscoe awards<sup>112</sup>; two for technical innovation in 1977 and 1978, in 1979 for best fabric design, and finally, best wallpaper in

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<sup>107</sup> Barbara Westlake-Kenny, 1990.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 45.

<sup>112</sup> In the interior design world, a Roscoe is the equivalent of an Oscar; the highest industry award designers and manufacturers can receive.

1980.<sup>113</sup> His wallcoverings of the late decades were in response not only to his prosperity in textiles, but a desire to revive the wallpaper marketplace, which Maya considered, “kind of dead.”<sup>114</sup> Maya furthermore stated, “When I started, the only wallpapers available were birds and flowers.”<sup>115</sup> In turn, Maya used what he had learned over the years to fabricate innovative wallcoverings, as he combined materials he believed would publicize his own business, but also display the potential that wallcoverings possessed.

In 1978, the company introduced one of its very first wallcoverings for interior spaces, what is now the retired Medici Fresco Collection™, which is entirely authentic (Figure 24). The faux wallcovering took over five years to develop and, according to Romanoff, “is actually stone, so it feels like stone except that it is not cold and damp.”<sup>116</sup> One of Romanoff’s designs that were influenced by his overseas travels, this wallcovering is certainly suggestive of his years spent in a college classroom learning about and viewing slides of classical archaeological excavations. It also is a reference to one of the earliest forms of wallcoverings, wall painting, including that of frescoes.<sup>117</sup> The wallcovering was available in a few different colorways, one of which was called Pompeian, no doubt a nod to his days in college and later explorations of Europe, and ultimately, the infamous excavation of Pompeii; slides which he would have seen in class. One would think that the name alone would be indicative of this, however, it was the appearance of the wallcovering that is most revealing about the nature of its origins.

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<sup>113</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Markoutsas, Elaine, “World of Fashion Has Its Designs on the Wallpaper,” *Ocala Star-Banner*, (Ocala, FL), July 6, 1991.

<sup>117</sup> Brenda Greysmith, 16.

Its production method was intricate and involved, as it took “layers of pulverized and colored marble and granite laid on grounds and heat blasted to create the look of weathered and aged stone.”<sup>118</sup> The pulverized stones were then laminated to a paper backing. According to Romanoff, the authentic colors that ranged in shades from neutral beige to malachite and patinaed copper were created and aged by programmed blasted of heated air.<sup>119</sup>

Besides creating a unique look of weathered and aged stone, the wallcovering itself was one of a kind. No two designs would ever be alike. According to Barbara Westlake-Kenny in her article, “Multifarious Maya: Weaver of Illusions,” regarding its production, states, “Everything that he and his staff creates has the signature of the human touch. For instance, the heat blasting process that ages his crushed marble wallcoverings is responsible for the random veins and cracks running through the surface. Everything he creates is handmade, and carries the unique random look inherent in nature.”<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, after installation, the wallcovering could be cut into tiles with the remaining space painted in order to give the appearance of grouting.<sup>121</sup> By the time it had gained popularity in the early 1990s, Romanoff is quoted as stating that this collection was:

The biggest thing we’ve ever done. It’s being specified for residential, offices, hotels, and stores everywhere. The Medici Fresco Collection wallcoverings look hundreds of years old. We’ve actually fast-forwarded time, so is it illusion or reality? It looks better than traditional slabs of marble when it’s installed, and it’s a lot cheaper.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Barbara Kenny Westlake.

<sup>119</sup> Elaine Markoutsas.

<sup>120</sup> Barbara Kenny Westlake.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

The wallcovering was multifaceted in its appeal; it added sophistication to a room, was made of real materials, and it was handcrafted in order to give the appearance of a more expensive medium.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Medici Fresco™ afforded interior designers and architects the ability to work with a substance such as marble or a plaster mural painting that was at one time too costly and difficult to install.<sup>124</sup> With Medici Fresco™,

Romanoff was able to achieve one of his aspirations with reference to his wallcoverings. He provided a wallcovering that was available at a lower price than expensive artwork that would ultimately bring the same effect to a room, but operated under the guise of “functional art.”<sup>125</sup> The collection, though now retired, is emblematic of an extraordinary surface material that embodies ideal characteristics, which make the Medici Fresco™ distinctly a Maya Romanoff wallcovering. It was hand crafted using both ancient and modern technologies in an effort to make a beautiful product that would bring a piece of artwork into the home. It is also the first wallcovering that the company exported to Japan, sufficiently expanding the availability of his products.<sup>126</sup>

### **Maintaining Relevancy in the 1970s**

Historically, wallcoverings create illusions.<sup>127</sup> The first wallpaper that created an illusion to plasterwork like the Medici Fresco™ appeared in the late seventeenth century in England, and again the middle of the next century.<sup>128</sup> According to Charlotte Abrahams in *Wallpaper: The Ultimate Guide*, the reason for this revival is that,

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<sup>123</sup> Libby Morse.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> June Hill.

<sup>126</sup> Barbara Westlake Kenny.

<sup>127</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 12.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

“architecturally inspired papers found their place –due in large part to the fact that, while house builders favored rooms with plain walls, house buyers still preferred panels, dados, and moldings.”<sup>129</sup> It is in keeping with Maya Romanoff’s aspirations, with regards to wallcoverings, to take a historically popular wallcovering using ancient techniques with modern technology to create a successful product, much like those seen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was ahead of the times however, as other companies were simultaneously creating wallcoverings that were flat and full of floral and wild psychedelic prints. Flowers have universally been the most popular motif in all of decorative arts, but you will not find a traditional damask or floral sprig pattern in the Maya Romanoff collection.<sup>130</sup>

1970s wallpaper marketplace was almost completely dominated by floral designs, largely considered a “boom-time” for said fashion.<sup>131</sup> Laura Ashley launched its first collection of “country cottage-style papers” in 1973 and 1978.<sup>132</sup> Laura Ashley and her Romantic English designs prevailed alongside women’s fashion for the Gunne Sax fad, complimenting each other throughout the decade.<sup>133</sup>

Another wallpaper company founded in the 1970s and based in the United Kingdom, Coloroll, strategically manufactured their wallpaper to mimic the ever popular Laura Ashley “look” at cheaper prices. In 1978, they released what was known as “Dolly

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 82.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> The Gunne Sax fashion as it is known, is characterized as a 1970s prairie style, infused with elements recalling Victorian and Edwardian clothing. This trend serves as an example of how textiles and wallcoverings, including women’s fashion, have complimented and mimicked one another throughout history, with inspiration borrowed from both sides.

Mixtures,” via their famed designer, Linda Beard (Figure 25). Her designs were smaller scale repeat floral pattern papers that eventually became one of Great Britain’s best-selling wallpaper designs; remembered fondly today, a hit sensation emblematic of 1970s kitsch.<sup>134</sup>

Along these same lines, Florence Broadhurst, for example, was producing incredibly loud floral designs in the United Kingdom and Australia during the disco fever decade. Like Maya Romanoff, she embraced all genres and likewise incorporated modern technology into her work.<sup>135</sup> Yet, she was enthralled with flat wallpapers and revolutionized Australia’s decorative comprehension and sensibilities throughout the 1960s and 1970s, unlike Maya Romanoff.<sup>136</sup> The native Australian designer Florence Broadhurst cornered the wallpaper market in her home country during the 1970s. She established her company in 1959 as Australian Hand Painted Wallpapers Pty Ltd., named later Florence Broadhurst Wallpapers Pty Ltd.<sup>137</sup> By the early 1970s, she had over 800 designs in 80 colorways, eventually monopolizing the Australian wallpaper market in the mid 1970s, exporting her products globally.<sup>138</sup> Her designs seemed to not only embody characteristics of the time period, but equally corresponded to her personality: colorful, vibrant, and bold. Broadhurst’s designs and patterns were unique, but her hallmark was her “hot” and vivid color combinations.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 82.

<sup>135</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 99.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Anne-Marie Van de Ven, Florence *Broadhurst Australian Dictionary of Biography, Supplementary Volume*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 46-47.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 98.



Hardly any genre from history was left unincorporated within her collection. They appeared in some manner, as the designs were comprised of exotic Chinoiserie animals, whimsical and geometric forms and shapes, and of course embraced the abstract florals that typified 1970s chic. Her Chinoiserie influenced designs for example, feature cranes and birds that are reminiscent of antique papers found in wealthy homes throughout Europe (Figure 26). Forward thinking, Broadhurst remained technologically diverse and up-to-date with the rapidly improving methods of wallpaper production.<sup>140</sup> She was very aware of the trend with metallic that she saw on wallpapers in the United States and Europe, and consequently imported the washable, mirror-surfaced paper Mylar to utilize with her own designs, so as to remain on the cutting edge and relevant (Figure 27).<sup>141</sup>

Ever one to remain unique, she found a way to make her wallpapers distinctive. The colors that she implemented in her designs were produced by hand, blended with an old food mixer, ultimately creating colors that were exclusive unto her.<sup>142</sup> Broadhurst's hand-screen printed, factory produced papers, were most certainly a reflection of her international travels, as she simultaneously created designs that were revolutionary in style, but in keeping with contemporary fashions. Though her tragic death in 1977 temporarily put a halt to the production of her wallpaper and textiles, they are currently in production as her designs today are considered to be classic, yet they remain chic and trendy. Broadhurst's contribution to the history of wallpaper is undeniable, and she continues to be influential to designers past and present.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

As both artists expanded within the wallcoverings industry, it is evident that Florence Broadhurst, although revolutionary in her own right and in demand as well, revived historically popular motifs while Maya Romanoff during this same decade, energized wallcoverings in an entirely different manner. He stayed true to the most ancient of craft techniques and pushed technological boundaries, separating him entirely from others manufacturers in the wallpaper industry in terms of his choice in pattern, design and methodology.<sup>143</sup>

### **Weathered Walls™**

The Maya Romanoff Corporation introduced its first line of hand-painted wallcoverings known as Weathered Walls™ in 1979 (Figure 28). Along with the Medici Fresco™ Collection, it is also a part of the permanent collection in the Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt Design Museum in New York.<sup>144</sup> Weathered Walls™ is a “faux” wallcovering that is considered authentic. The wallcovering is made of a special paper and richly dyed to create the semblance of a range of materials. The worn appearance and, “leathery look gives off the feeling of a natural patina, while its process –layering thick lacquer atop paper –makes it an ideal material.”<sup>145</sup>

Harkening back to his long time fascination and preference for handcraftsmanship, its techniques are derived from that of ancient tie-dye. Weathered Walls™ is considered Romanoff's amalgamation of his work with fabrics and

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Note that it is very difficult to obtain images of Maya Romanoff products on the Cooper Hewitt website. A great number are in storage and part of the “wallcoverings collection,” with his more recent products available to view online.

<sup>145</sup> Unknown, Chicago, Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Unknown.

painting.<sup>146</sup> It is a combination of tie-dye methods seen in India, other regions of Asia, and a kind of shibori mutation found in Africa. The artisans also use another technique in which they take clay and pastel dyes to create a very subtle and, what Maya Romanoff Chicago Showroom Manager Daniel Krause described as a, “sueded effect.”<sup>147</sup> This effect, which gives the appearance of varnished leather, is an example of how Maya Romanoff was able to add his own touch of modern practices while remaining true to his mantra of uniting ancient and modern technology. Available in ten different color ways, the wallcovering is still produced in the Chicago studio and is what they call today, “planned randomness.”<sup>148</sup>

To date, the artisans continue to be well versed in its production and it is one of the company’s most easily and rapidly produced wallcoverings. Although it was conceived of in 1979, Weathered Walls™ continues to be a best seller, and exemplifies a product worthy of incorporation into decorative arts studies; a wallcovering designed on an unprecedented scale, beautiful, practical, and superior in quality. Aside from commercial success, this design in particular highlights Maya’s talents as a designer and artist. Although included in the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum’s collection, it’s not discussed in decorative arts studies. The hand-colored paper, which mimics lacquered leather, highlights organic beauty found in nature. Those inherent qualities are transformed into a wallcovering using modern techniques rooted in

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Daniel Krause, “Maya Romanoff Wallpaper,” interview by author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Showroom, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Note that he is no longer the showroom manager.

<sup>148</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 54.

ancient craftsmanship, predominantly tie-dye, which served as the original inspiration that led to the foundation of the textile and wallcovering company.

Weathered Walls™ showcases Maya's knowledge of ancient craft techniques and serves as a representation of his artistry. This wallcovering in particular is emblematic of his goal to create art that is, "...not so much objectified as occupied," but art that is a part of daily life.<sup>149</sup>

### **The Nature of Perception**

Other designers were creating their own idea of art on the walls, but they were devoid of the craftsmanship and use of ancient techniques found in Maya's designs. Many followed the trend of "disco fever" that was a central theme thanks to movies like Saturday Night Fever, which made artist's like Donna Summer and ABBA famous. Like a hallucinogenic hangover from the 60s, distorted imagery inspired by the disco trend appeared on wallpaper in more subdued colors, glowing shades on metallic backgrounds.<sup>150</sup> *Vogue* magazine called this kind of wallpaper design, "a Nickelodeon land of Art Deco with potted palms and mirrored halls."<sup>151</sup> The bold, stylized floral patterns were furthermore inspired by the past; displaying the fact that historical revivalism in wallpaper design lingered on. Design firms often replicated many of the plant and floral motifs that were popularized in wallpaper from styles long ago. William Morris designs were reproduced, such as "*Willow*" from 1975, originally released as a

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<sup>149</sup> ---Maya Romanoff Press Materials, "*Maya Romanoff Celebrates 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & All That is Tie-Dye*," Black Tie International Magazine.

<sup>150</sup> Alice Whately, 20.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

fabric in 1895 (Figure 29).<sup>152</sup> Wallpaper manufacturer Osborne & Little Ltd. found inspiration in an 1895 Jeffrey & Co. design and subsequently produced a revised color, screen-printed wallpaper in 1974 called “*Throstle*” (Figure 30).<sup>153</sup> The leaves and berries are large and colored in a muted gray, while the background is a pale yellow, reminiscent of William Morris type designs, yet the modernized version of the wallpaper retains a kind of 1970s flair and a passion for all things flashy.

In Germany, artists capitalized upon the disco culture as well. The Marburg firm, established in 1845, truly made their mark in European wallcoverings during the 1950s and 1960s with a number of innovative technologies and creative designs. They developed a way of printing known as “Technique without Pattern Repeat” in 1956, a collection with a removable self-cutting edge in 1961, the first fully cut cellophane-packed wallpapers in 1963, and the invention of textile wallpapers made from warp threads in 1965.<sup>154</sup> However Marburg’s most significant accomplishment in the 1970s was a major collaboration with famous artists in 1972, a limited edition line of wallpaper called “*The X-Art Walls Collection of Contemporary Artists’ Designs*.”<sup>155</sup> Marilyn Oliver Hapgood in, *Wallpaper and the Artist: From Dürer to Warhol*, explains, “The response was enlightening, since each artist made this invitation an opportunity for an artistic

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<sup>152</sup> “Wallpaper: Nostalgia and Reproduction,” *Victoria & Albert Museum*, Accessed June 29, 2014, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/w/nostalgia-and-reproduction/>.

<sup>153</sup> “‘Throstle:’ Osborne & Little Ltd. (Image),” *Victoria & Albert Museum*, accessed June 2013, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O192453/throstle-wallpaper-osborne-little-ltd/>.

<sup>154</sup> “History,” *Marburg Tapetenfabrik*, Accessed June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, <http://www.marburg.com/index.php?navID=123>.

<sup>155</sup> Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz, 220.

statement in a personal idiom, at the same time carefully considering the wallpaper format, and to an extent, exploiting it.”<sup>156</sup>

The most well known artist out of the group collaborators, Surrealist German painter and graphic artist widely known for his erotic sculptures, Paul Wunderlich, contributed a design entitled “*Faltenwurf*” or, “*Shadowfolds*” (Figure 31). It is meant to reference popular historical wallpaper trends, while simultaneously exploiting the female figure. The pattern design is that of a trompe l’oeil drapery, which is somewhat of a comment upon established wallpaper manufacturers like Zuber & Cie, who famously produced wallcoverings and wallpapers in a mural format, who often utilized this visual allusion in a great number of their works.<sup>157</sup> It is furthermore an interpretation of past wallpapers that depicted draperies, popularized during the early years of the 1800s.

These designs were often flocked in order to imitate lush fabrics such as velvet, incorporated with images in trompe l’oeil such as women’s precious jewelry, architectural elements, feathers, and other fashionable objects, furthermore linking fashion, textiles, and wallcoverings within the context of decorative arts.<sup>158</sup> Wunderlich implements the element of visual trickery in his design on another level, as the folds in this drapery wallpaper were actually made by means of the impression of a woman’s

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<sup>156</sup> Marilyn Oliver Hapgood, 202.

<sup>157</sup> Visual examples of the firm’s work can be seen in the White House’s Diplomatic Reception Room and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Their wallpaper is an essential component in the history of wallpaper, especially relating to that of France and America. For further academic reading on this topic, Joanna M. Goden’s thesis, “A Republican Mirage: Zuber et Cie’s *Vues d’Amérique du Nord*,” is an excellent work particular to that of graduate students, and art scholars. Furthermore, it is a valid element now a part of the important work to develop this history of wallpaper, which is often neglected.

<sup>158</sup> Gregory Herringshaw, “Like Hide and Seek,” *Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum*, Accessed May 18, 2014, <http://www.cooperhewitt.org/2014/05/18/like-hide-and-seek/>.

chest.<sup>159</sup> This piece is very much a reflection of the taste of this time, pervasively sexual and playful in nature, a humorous commentary upon traditional wallpaper that epitomizes the disco era.

### **Drawing Inspiration from the Past**

As the Modernism trend faded in popularity, a resurgence of interest in historical styles occurred, perhaps picking up where it left off in the 1960s. The fad gained particular momentum in the United Kingdom in the 1970s, displayed by the wallcovering designs within the Palladio 9 Collection by Sanderson.<sup>160</sup> The variety found in Palladio 9 is indicative of the incredibly diverse preferences that prevailed during the decade. Although the collection lacks consistency, it is richly infused with wallpaper designs imbued with character and creativity.<sup>161</sup>

“*Deco*” for instance, is a wallpaper design by Judith Cash, which is representative of the Art Deco revival prevalent in the 1970s (Figure 32). The silver and brown paper, complete with shooting stars, celebrates the Jazz Age in a nonconventional format with a disco flair. Also influenced by the Art Deco revival is a design by John Wilkinson entitled, “*Apollo*” (Figure 33). This wallpaper reflects the importance of current events, as the wallpaper’s name is derived from the *Apollo II*’s landing on the moon in 1969, an event encapsulated in an Art Deco fashion.<sup>162</sup> The wallpaper also displays the fact that the space age fascination from the 1960s extended well into the

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Lesley Jackson, 178.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

1970s, a commentary upon the influence of pop culture and current events as displayed in wallpaper design.

“*Gandalf*” references contemporary culture as well as a historical style (Figure 34). The trippy design by David Bartle contains elements of the Art Nouveau with a modern twist; the colors are entirely of the day, while its sinuous and flowing elements indicate the derivation of design. ICI’s “Vymura” range displayed an equally as eclectic flair. “*Barbarella*” for instance, is a wallpaper design composed of vinyl, produced in 1974 that contains references to pop culture, Op Art, and the growing preference for a return to simplicity or what was termed, “ruralism” (Figure 35).<sup>163</sup> Although they are entirely different themes, their incorporation into a singular wallpaper design reflects the multifarious nature of the decade. The name of the piece comes from the 1968 cult classic science fiction film *Barbarella* starring Jane Fonda, while the black-and-white color scheme and fantastical flowers display the influence of the Op Art movement. The incorporation of flowers is emblematic of the rural movement, and rounds out the examples of wallpaper that were essential to the updated revival styles within the decade.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER FOUR

In terms of interior design and décor, the 1980s was a wallpaper wasteland. Several styles prevailed throughout the decade, but wallpaper was hardly ever incorporated. Whether the space was Memphis Design inspired, preppy chic, a Miami Vice type bachelor pad, adorned in the country style, or simply covered in pastels, designers turned away from wallpapers. New design concepts purposefully sought to break away from the vibrant and “in your face” nature of many wallpapers used in previous decades.<sup>164</sup> Instead, they focused on creating wallpaper that looked like it was painted on the walls, often imitating the texture of paint for example, as patterned walls faded into temporary obscurity. Colorwashing, distressed faux finishes, sponging, and wall glazing replaced the use of wallpaper.<sup>165</sup>

One of the reasons for its decline in popularity was due to changes in the overall market. Textile and wallpaper companies in the United Kingdom in particular downsized dramatically, as a small minority of firms whose interests were solely financially motivated, dominated the industry.<sup>166</sup> Big American corporations purchased recognizable textile and wallpaper companies that were distinctly British, like Crown Wallcoverings and Sanderson.<sup>167</sup> It seems that the mood of British politics and its

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<sup>164</sup> Carolle Thibaut Pomerantz, 220.

<sup>165</sup> Alice Whately, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Lesley Jackson, 190.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

conservative Thatcher era translated into wallcoverings as well; stifled in creativity, artists failed to retain their uniqueness and instead began manufacturing totally formulaic and tiresome products, which did nothing to help the established downward trend in popularity that wallpaper was already experiencing.<sup>168</sup> Textile and wallcovering companies across the pond in America were not immune to the changes in design, and in many ways, relied almost entirely on British businesses for the majority of their supply. Still, a small number of companies from both countries attempted to maintain a presence in the once thriving marketplace.

Throughout the 1980s, Maya Romanoff continued with the design and production of wallcoverings; many of which displayed the inspiration from his trips to the East, and his appreciation for their technique and methodologies. Maya was greatly influenced by the Japanese product *washi* paper, a traditional paper made from the fibers of trees and bushes, which was released in the late 1970s to members of the Echizen Cooperative.<sup>169</sup> The cooperative is over a thousand years old, solely dedicated to papermaking. *Washi*, became a product with which Maya was intent upon learning more about in order to modify its inherent properties for use in wallpaper.<sup>170</sup>

Thus in the 1980s, Maya worked with Japanese paper maker Kazuhiro Yamaguchi and his company Yamaden Seishi to produce Maya Romanoff wallcoverings through a unique collaboration.<sup>171</sup> They used a special technique with copper plates,

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 57.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

stamping the fibers of rayon along with mulberry into a wet pulp onto paper.<sup>172</sup> About Maya and their collaboration, Yamaguchi stated, “Maya brought a new level of creativity to the process and modernized it. He could have printed this paper anywhere in the world, but he chose us. He taught us many things.”<sup>173</sup>

In 1987, Maya’s wallcoverings began to display the shibori and papermaking techniques he had learned in Japan. In that year he was one of only two Americans that were invited by the Japanese government to create a textile installation at the International Textile Fair in Kyoto, The Kyoto Dream Exhibit.<sup>174</sup> According to Betsy Benjamin Sterling and Stephen Blumrich in their article, “Artist Studio Collaborative Kyoto, Japan:”

The participating companies in various ways selected the artists. Some were known to a company from previous visits to Japan and from their work in international exhibitions, others were ‘introduced’ in the time-honored Japanese custom, and a few had existing business relationships with a company where this collaboration documented continuing work.<sup>175</sup>

The end result was his *Great Shibori Enclosure of Movement, and Comfort*, a silk and velvet sculpture, in which he used traditional techniques and presented textiles in a new way (Figure 36).<sup>176</sup> The piece looked similar to a DNA molecule and measured 20 feet

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> “Maya Romanoff Timeline,” *Maya Romanoff*, Accessed July 1, 2013, <http://mayaromanoff.com/node/646>.

<sup>175</sup> Betsy Benjamin Sterling and Stephen Blumrich, “Artist Studio Collaborative Kyoto, Japan,” *Surface Design Journal* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1998).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

high and 36 panels long.<sup>177</sup> The installation was an opportunity to display a modern direction and new concepts of how to work with a time-honored textile tradition.

While Maya Romanoff was in Japan for the World Textile Conference / International Textile Fair in Kyoto, Japan creating a textile sculpture, Romanoff worked with a traditional Japanese kimono-dyeing company. The centuries-old textile industry production of the “kimono” specifically, had an enormous influence on his design techniques.<sup>178</sup> From this company, he learned the ancient shibori dyeing method in greater depth. Regarding the technique, Maya explained:

The participating companies in various ways selected the artists. Some were known to a company from previous visits to Japan and from their work in international exhibitions, others were ‘introduced’ in the time-honored Japanese custom, and a few had existing business relationships with a company where this collaboration documented continuing work.<sup>179</sup>

The importance of what he learned during his trips to Japan and his participation with artisans trained in ancient techniques and craft afforded him the opportunity to put their lessons into practice. Romanoff ultimately incorporated all that he had learned over the years throughout his global travels and personal experimentation into his wallcoverings and textiles.

### **Jewel Wallcoverings**

Maya used his trip to Japan as an occasion to unite that which he had learned in papermaking and textile production into wallcoverings. This combination of techniques can be found in the Maya Romanoff Jewel Collection™ that was originally introduced in

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Betsy Benjamin Sterling and Stephen Blumrich, “Artist Studio Collaborative Kyoto, Japan,” *Surface Design Journal* 12, no. 3, (Spring 1998).

1988, and is currently in production with four patterns from which to choose. They are all created using some form of a Japanese paper making technique. Jewel Satin™ for example, is made in imitation of elegant silk brocade, like a kimono; a unique amalgamation of textile and papermaking craftsmanship (Figure 37). These are the kind of designs that are the clearest reflection of its maker. As Maya stated previously, this method of production often involves sewing in the design prior to dyeing the product.

Yoshiko Wada explains:

No two persons fold or bind or stitch in exactly the same way –the work of one may be very precise and even, that of another looser and more free. Likewise, the amount of force exerted on the binding thread, or in drawing up the stitching thread, or in compressing the cloth into folds on the pole, varies from person to person. The effect of each person’s hand and indeed temperament on the shaping of the cloth becomes imprinted by the dye in the finished piece.<sup>180</sup>

Maya put these methods of production into use for Jewel Satin™. The handcraftsmanship and elements of Japanese textile and paper making techniques are evident within this wallcovering, most apparent in person, The amalgamation of intrinsic qualities of time honored traditions and Maya Romanoff’s modern methodology are unmistakably present in Jewel Satin™.

Jewel Moonstone™ on the other hand, also part of the collection, is composed of finely crushed paper in order to give a more three-dimensional effect to walls. What separates these wallcoverings from traditional paper wallcoverings is that the patterns are not printed on with a machine, nor are they dyed upon (Figure 38). The patterns are created as a part of the paper, where, “colored pulps are swirled together as the paper

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<sup>180</sup> Wada, 54.

itself is being made, creating patterns within the actual substrate,” as Maya Romanoff explained.<sup>181</sup>

The Jewel Wave™ wallcovering is another example of how Romanoff blends modern technology and ancient techniques, many of which were learned in Japan on his visit during the 1980s (Figure 39). This wallcovering is created through the application of rayon fiber onto a wet, wood pulp, using an intricate copper plate, a variation of the same technique Japanese paper maker Kazuhiro Yamaguchi and his company Yamaden Seishi taught to Maya. Jewel Moonstone Momi™ is composed of a fluid pattern that reflects light very well, which is ultimately suggestive of silk and velvet fabrics (Figure 40). This is reminiscent then, of Maya Romanoff’s Kyoto exhibit shibori textile display, which was created with those very same fabrics and similar technique. Shibori as a word alone is a reference to the verb root, shibori, which means, “to wring, squeeze, or press,” although there is no English equivalent for this term.<sup>182</sup> Most importantly, Moonstone Momi™ is created in a similar fashion to textiles made in the shibori technique and mimics its appearance.

It is the manipulation of the fabric, and in this case paper, that is essential. The paper is manipulated in the same way as the textiles; wrung, squeezed, and pressed. As a result of Romanoff’s modification of these ancient techniques, the Jewel Collection™ commands incredible depth in an array of colors. The practice of coloring the pulp instead of painting designs onto the finished paper is a standard method of production that Romanoff learned during his visits to Japan. In the Jewel™ line, “wallcoverings in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Wada, 8.

saturated colors are given life via light-reflecting translucent fibers on the paper's surface."<sup>183</sup>

Jewel Horizon™ is produced as the rest of the wallcoverings in the Jewel Collection™. However, its rayon strings are arranged randomly, which creates a texture that is built upon a “consistent vertical base” (Figure 41). Unlike the rest of the collection, the backing of this wallcovering is not that of recycled paper. This unique take on traditional wallcoverings and traditional ancient techniques resulted in the creation of a Maya Romanoff product that continues to be popular today as it was at its inception during the 1980s.

### **Laura Ashley and Wallpaper**

With the wallcovering marketplace dwindling in popularity, manufacturers had to find alternative ways of maintaining relevance within the forgotten, once thriving, wallpaper marketplace. Companies like Graham & Brown managed to stay afloat in the 1980s and attempted to revitalize the wallpaper market through the introduction of the Superfresco line in 1984.<sup>184</sup> The papers were textured vinyl that could be easily hung, stripped, washed, and even painted; appealing to the prevailing fashion for wall treatments as opposed to wallpaper.<sup>185</sup> Its relative popularity is owed in part to successful television advertisements as the, “what comes up, must come down” slogan effectively “quadrupled the company’s market share and tripled its turnover,” according to Charlotte Abrahams.<sup>186</sup> The appeal of their vinyl papers was that they could withstand dirt and the

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<sup>183</sup> Barbara Westlake-Kenny.

<sup>184</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 31.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

effects of wear and tear over time, but they could also be modified at any point in time to suit the changing trends throughout the decade. Graham & Brown's endeavors with wallpaper during the sluggish 1980s cannot go unnoticed, but their wallpaper ultimately failed to make a turnaround in overall popularity for wallpaper and its utilization in the design industry.

Ultimately, the 1980s wallpaper market was truly dominated by one woman and her company that is often intrinsically linked to the decade: Laura Ashley. Her romantic designs, which were inspired by the Victorian and Edwardian eras, were a reaction against her distaste for modernity and a desire to create continuity between one's fashion sense and home aesthetic. Laura Ashley turned her attention almost entirely to the interior design and home décor side of the business at the end of the 1970s and began to focus on furthering its development. In 1976 she stated, "We are moving into interior decoration much more with the success of the furnishing fabrics and wallpapers. It's just really an extension of the same lifestyle, following through the basic concept of the garments."<sup>187</sup>

Laura Ashley wallpapers were evocative of another time and place, yet distinctly British in nature and wildly popular, especially during the 1980s. The beginning of their production however, was limited. The company tested the waters in 1955 with "*Plaza*"<sup>188</sup> which was featured in *House & Garden* magazine in 1955.<sup>189</sup> The company's focus turned to clothing shortly thereafter, and the idea of producing wallpaper and

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<sup>187</sup> Martin Wood, *Laura Ashley*, (Francis Lincoln Limited, 2009), 95.

<sup>188</sup> Figure/Image not accessible.

<sup>189</sup> Martin Wood, 97-98.



household goods wasn't put back into motion until 1974; from that point onward, they found great success in the wallpaper industry.<sup>190</sup> As a company, Laura Ashley sought to create wallpaper that would be different from competitors and also dissimilar from her previous designs in the 1970s. She decided to match wallpaper with fabrics that they had already fabricated, furthermore linking textiles and wallcoverings as they have so often been connected throughout history. A sense of the historical past could be found in each and every wallpaper design; whether it was a Regency-era stripe, or prints evocative of the moors of the English countryside with the kind of floral images described in *Wuthering Heights* such as her print known as '*Wild Clematis*' (Figure 42). Ultimately, the intent of the wallpaper was to acknowledge and reference days gone by.

Often times, the Laura Ashley wallpapers accompanied textiles adorned with Rococo shells, Victorian era cartouches, or ivy leaves climbing trellises.<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, they also designed papers that matched patterns exactly, with the intent of creating uniformity within a single room. The singular element in Laura Ashley designs for wallpaper and textiles that was always present and remained the foundation of her work was her devotion to the past and the blatant rejection of modern design. She detested new wallpaper products, such as vinyl. They were what Ashley referred to as, "an anathema" to her; exactly like the vinyl papers that were produced by Graham & Brown in the same decade.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Alice Whately, 20.

<sup>192</sup> Ziggy Hanaor, 15.

As the market was dominated almost entirely by one company, wallpapers during this decade lacked diversity in terms of creativity, variance in styles, and use. America was a huge marketplace for Laura Ashley products; sales served as the impetus behind the creation of Laura Ashley showrooms across the country which further bolstered the company's supremacy in the wallpaper business.

Even today, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London features clothing, wallpapers and textile designs from the opus of Laura Ashley, paying homage to the woman and her company whose inspiration derived from their museum exhibitions; those which displayed objects from her favorite fashions and decorative arts of bygone eras, to which she remained ever faithful.

In many ways Laura Ashley is a UK design icon; her "Britishness" evident throughout her designs. Scholars hailing from all parts of the globe acknowledge her success in wallpapers. Her influence is likewise unmistakable by the multitude of wallpapers that adorned the everyday person's home during the 1980s, which made Laura Ashley a household name. Her impact upon the wallpaper industry and design world during that time is not to be forgotten, and it's almost possible to do so.

### **Outdoor Installations**

Along with his thriving wallpaper business, the late 1980s was the decade in which Maya Romanoff created perhaps his most important outdoor installation, though he continued to have both hands in wallcoverings and actual textiles. It is also the biggest and brightest of his outdoor wallcovering installations, the spectacular 1988 draping of the Chicago Sun-Times Building, named *Bess' Sunrise* after the woman he considered to

be his stepmother (Figure 43). The installation was commissioned in order to mark the gathering of international textile artists in Chicago.<sup>193</sup> It consisted of “28 brightly colored, hand-dyed canvas strips, each 6-by-120-foot.”<sup>194</sup> Romanoff transformed what was considered to be one of the city’s most unattractive buildings into what he deemed as his vision of “Cleopatra’s Barge at Dawn” (Figure 44).<sup>195</sup>

The building was described as, “Squat...graceless...resembling an aluminum and marble houseboat run aground,” that, “struck its beholders as an eyesore.”<sup>196</sup> Consequently, the textile’s vibrant hues, which ranged from warm yellows and reds, to lively greens and blues, were a welcome departure from the status quo. The public delighted in the building’s display, as they reportedly urged, “...that the work be left up permanently instead of the planned two weeks. It has cheered passersby and even improved the morale of people inside the unloved building.” Some employees even claimed that from the inside, the sun’s light shining through the colored fabric strips gave them the feeling of being surrounded by stained glass.<sup>197</sup>

The Sun-Times spokesman, Mike Soll, stated, “Dressing it up is a welcome relief.”<sup>198</sup> When asked about his intent regarding the installation, Romanoff explained, “*Bess’ Sunrise* will change the public’s relationship with the Sun-Times Building. Instead of seeing an aluminum structure, they will experience a light and airy edifice. The work

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<sup>193</sup> Francine Schwadel, “If This is a Success, They Can Put a Nehru Jacket on the Sears Tower (Bess’ Sunrise, Maya Romanoff’s Textile Art Piece, Chicago Sun Times Building),” *Wallstreet Journal Western Edition* (Chicago, IL), July 6, 1998.

<sup>194</sup> Libby Morse.

<sup>195</sup> Francine Schwadel.

<sup>196</sup> Unknown, “Chicago: Draping an Old Eyesore,” *Time Magazine American Notes*, 132 no. 3, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1988.

<sup>197</sup> June Hill.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

will become a part of the lives of millions of city residents who daily observe this building.”<sup>199</sup> He envisioned public buildings draped in textiles and outer wallcoverings as another means of extending to the world his belief that beautiful art is everywhere and can be instrumental in creating comfort and joy through utilitarian forms. *Bess’ Sunrise* is still the world’s largest hand-dyed work of art that is additionally seen as a non-traditional wallcovering and textile.

### **Happenings; Installation Art**

For Romanoff, the 1980s ended on a beautiful note, having achieved so much as an artist, spiritual individual, and a businessman. However, he was overworked and needed to find a way in which he could devote most of his time to enhancing his small business into an internationally renowned company. Fate intervened when he met the woman who would not only change his life forever, but that of the Maya Romanoff Corporation. Joyce Lehrer Gutwaks, with a background in sales and a passion for people, was initially hired by Romanoff to assist with taxes.<sup>200</sup> Shortly thereafter, she became his sales director, but not before Gutwaks, the self-proclaimed “frustrated artist,” comprehended the company’s wallcovering collection entirely.<sup>201</sup> Joyce wanted to improve and strengthen the business, without altering its artistry.<sup>202</sup>

For all his brilliance and proficiency in textiles and wallcoverings, Romanoff was entirely devoid of the same skills in merchandising. During the 1980s, the company was

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<sup>199</sup> Janet Koplos, “Romanoff’s Odyssey,” *Fiber Arts*, January / February 1989.

<sup>200</sup> Richard Cahill and Michael Williams, 70.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 71.

almost entirely inclusive to the “trade,” or, residential use.<sup>203</sup> Joyce observed this to be one of the company’s major shortcomings, as she envisioned expansion into the commercial world as the key to their success.<sup>204</sup> Its reputation was solidified by their beautiful designs, but hindered by Romanoff’s reportedly poor customer service, something with which his new employee would quickly change. Joyce convinced designers from across the board to use their wallcoverings wherever possible, utilizing their creativity to imagine the wallcoverings enhancing walls outside of residential homes, of which they had long been a favorite.<sup>205</sup> As she revived a disorderly yet successful business, Joyce offered Maya the possibility of returning to where he was most comfortable, the design studio, working with his staff to teach them the tricks of the trade; they remain mostly secretive to this day.

Employees of the company, which now extended to children of employees and family of both Maya and Joyce, recalled the change that she had upon both employer and company. With Maya’s creativity and experimental nature at a high point, he finished the 1980s perfecting his skills, as he bestowed upon his staff the knowledge and methodology he possessed in order to solidify the foundation of the business, the art of fabricating beautiful wallcoverings in the spirit of time honored craft and modern artistry.

Romanoff’s time in the design studio paid off, as he tapped into his skills. By the end of the decade, Joyce continued to work on the business side, while fostering Maya’s inherent artistic capabilities. Their drive paved the way for the company’s potential as

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 73.

they approached the coming decade, stronger in both merchandising and quality and beauty of their products. This is one of the many reasons for which Maya Romanoff and his wallcoverings are so worthy of appreciation and incorporation into the history and study of the fine and decorative arts; his unprecedented work changed the face of wallcoverings and textiles beginning in the 1960s, only gaining further momentum in the 1980s, always honoring the basic teachings of fine and decorative studies through his dedication to artistry, hand craftsmanship, and the implementation of modern technology which enhances, rather than hinders, the beauty of the material.

## CHAPTER FIVE

By the 1990s, Maya Romanoff had hit his stride with wallcoverings and textiles, but was never satisfied with the status quo. He felt the need to continually re-invent his products. With Joyce Gutwaks by his side, Maya expanded his wallcovering lines greatly, with new designs that included unusual and different mediums such as a variety of wood species, new kinds of papers, and finally, he was able to discern ways in which to include and utilize various metals like copper and mica.<sup>206</sup> However, like the rest of the 1990s in terms of wallcovering designs and production, the decade wasn't a time when the use of wallcoverings was at maximum. In fact, wallcoverings were not the "in thing" in the design world at all. Still, during that somewhat humdrum decade for the rest of the market, Romanoff managed to be the recipient of a number of interior design related accolades, even presented International Furnishings and Design Association Trailblazer Award in 1994.

The 1990s were a reactionary period; whether a reaction against the pattern and color coordinated wallpaper trend established by Laura Ashley as she dominated the market in the previous decade, or a reaction against the world climate of the 1980s, the 1990s fostered artists and designers set on challenging the past. It was also a time when the vast majority of residential interior design reflected simplicity. Walls were less

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<sup>206</sup> Richard Cahill and Michael Williams, 76.

patterned than before, but not entirely devoid of decoration. Designers adapted to the changes associated with the cultural atmosphere associated with the 1990s, and they paved the way for the massive changes in wallcoverings that were to come in the 2000s, laying the foundation for the renaissance of wallpaper. Their work was often times more about a singular message than the art, espousing the belief that wallcoverings possessed qualities with which designer's could project an idea upon people, through the device of a utilitarian object.

While the majority of the wallpaper market had a limited amount of success during the 1990s, a number of Maya's products during the semi-dull decade were in fact, groundbreaking and significant; so much so, that the company's sales doubled during the first two years of the 1990s, and doubled again the next three years, and once again doubled the following three.<sup>207</sup> Still, he hadn't given up on his fabric installations, a reminder that his work in textiles and wallcoverings were forever intertwined.

Maya began the decade with his monumental installation called "*Southern Isles*" in 1990 (Figure 45).<sup>208</sup> The task at hand was to drape the Design Center of the Americas Building in Dania Beach, Florida; a building that was located on the I-95, and therefore seen by thousands of people driving on the interstate each day.<sup>209</sup> This gave Maya the chance to display his talents on a massive scale. Additionally, he hoped that passersby and viewers would contemplate the ways in which art and his compositions had the

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 64.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.



potential to possibly work in conjunction with an architecturally austere and modern building, to create a far gentler and aesthetically pleasing environment.<sup>210</sup>

His roots in textiles and his ability to manipulate fabrics into something beautiful truly shone through in this installation in particular. Maya designed the installation to be a draping of the building composed of over seventy-two thousand square feet of fabric, pared down into a total of 105 cotton panels, which he dyed to his specifications.<sup>211</sup> The colors of the fabric ranged in tone and shade, which created a vibrant yet peaceful quality throughout its display. Maya considered the building not unlike other edifices composed of harsh concrete and steel with which he had worked in the past, and believed his textile wonders to be the remedy for the lackluster appearance of this building. About this matter he stated, “I think textile and fiber art will wind up being one of the major art forms of public spaces, and painting will decline. It’s not easy to do a 10-story-high painting.”<sup>212</sup> His accomplishment with the Design Center of the Americas Building remains remarkable, as it is today the world’s largest building draping to date.<sup>213</sup>

Designer Florence Pion accurately captured the essence of Maya’s triumphant undertaking when she wrote about the draping in *Interior Motive* and declared, “He wanted his playful strips of fabric to respond to the elements of wind and rain, creating as he put it, a ‘moving crescendo.’”<sup>214</sup> The installation truly brought about greater exchanges between artists and designers within the community; his work blended the

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 65.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

worlds of architecture, textiles, wallcoverings, art, and fine arts into one giant conversation.

### **Utilizing New Materials**

Maya's wallcovering business continued to strengthen throughout the decade, as he and his Greenleaf Chicago factory employees experimented further with wallpapers, and tested their compatibility with dyes, adding threads here, or stone material there. The only thing that slowed him down was Parkinson's disease, with which he was diagnosed in the early 1990s. However he carried on, and never allowed the effects of the condition to hamper his ingenuity and visionary talents. Maya worked daily to strengthen and improve the company and expanded further into international territory outside of his coalition with the Japanese artists into European countries.<sup>215</sup> The expansion also extended to the wallcoverings themselves, as he found ways to incorporate new materials and techniques into the ever-expanding collection.

One of the first mediums he began to experiment with was wood. Ajiro™ Wallcovering, the winner of the 1993 Roscoe Award for best wallcovering design, is an example of a design introduced in the 1990s which was so popular and ahead of its time, that it continues in production today, and with great success. Now, it is available in Chevron™, Marquetry™, Sunburst™, and Coffers™ (Image (s) 46-49). Another wallcovering with a hint of the Far East, Ajiro™ is made using very thin pieces of the Paulownia tree, a native Chinese fig tree that is resistant to changes in humidity which

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<sup>215</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 76.

can often cause normal and denser wood, to split or buckle.<sup>216</sup> Alternatively, Paulownia is incredibly flexible which makes the wallcovering ideal for a variety of surfaces.

Ajiro™ is demonstrative of Maya's desire to make interior and exterior spaces more beautiful, as Ajiro™ has been used to wrap columns, decorate ceilings, serve as the foundation of a mirror, and adorn archways. The lines within the Ajiro Collection™ are truly deserving of their awards. The wallcovering possesses a versatile look and a range of tones that highlight the natural material and grain of the wood.

Maya incorporated one of the world's materials found in nature and combined its inherent beauty with relatively new technology during the 1990s. Ajiro™ was made using a laser and hand-craftsmanship. Its production today remains the same: the laser first cuts the wooden strips; however, all of the inlaid work is done by hand in the Chicago factory.<sup>217</sup> Each artisan painstakingly but quickly applies a golden varnish to the wood after it has been inlaid in a parquet frame. The marquetry technique is derived from the traditional marquetry work used mostly in furniture, a fact which reveals Maya's continued devotion to handcraftsmanship of decades past, and his unwavering appreciation of natural materials. The craftsmen in the Maya Romanoff factory use a pre-cut pattern so that unlike many of their other wallcoverings, Ajiro™ is exactly replicated.

The Ajiro™ wallcovering line was, and continues to be used by many decorators as an alternative to standard wood surfacing materials that are installed to look like paneling. This approach recalls the Renaissance technique of using wood surfacing as a

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<sup>216</sup> Libby Morse.

<sup>217</sup> Àlex Vidiella, Sánchez and Julio Fajardo and Sergi Costa Duran, *1,000 Architectural Details: A Selection of the World's Most Interesting Building Elements*, (Buffalo: Firefly Books, Ltd., 2010), 97.

substitute for tapestries and printed wallpapers that had only recently been widely used in countries like England.<sup>218</sup> After the wood has been cut, veneer and varnish is been applied and left to dry on a table. The Marquetry™ pattern is particularly impressive to view when mounted onto a surface, as the grain in the wood is highly visible and, depending on one's position, the shades appear to range in color which creates a warm and comfortable atmosphere. As Maya explained, "We train our people to experience the nature of the materials, the tools and colors, the pigments and dyes they use, until the beauty of the objects they produce flow from them naturally."<sup>219</sup> Ajiro™ is one of the wallcoverings within the Maya Romanoff Collection that is perhaps the best illustration of Romanoff's aforementioned statement. The *Chicago Tribune* noted in 1993: "Aside from their obvious beauty, Romanoff's wallcoverings represent a new way of combining methods and materials. His marbles and stones and woods are not 'printed on,' they are 'affixed.'"<sup>220</sup> Other wallcovering companies during the 1990s as previously discussed, were not manufacturing or designing these types of products.

The artisans creating Ajiro™ seem to channel the skills of craftsmen from a Medieval or Renaissance workshop. Their familiarity with the wood and the relative ease with which they apply the finishes indicate that they experience oneness with their work. Yet they are also trained to work with the most modern of technological inventions to assist them with cutting the wood, a skill that was initially taught to employees during the 1990s. This particular design fashioned by their artisans continues to speak to the artistry

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<sup>218</sup> Martin Miller, *Period Design & Furnishing: A Sourcebook for Home Restoration and Decoration*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1989), 36.

<sup>219</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

<sup>220</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 76.

of Romanoff's employees, and certainly reveals that the company was creating groundbreaking wallcoverings during a decade of minimal achievements within the field. The Ajiro™ pattern is today available in six color ways and its popularity does not seem to be waning.<sup>221</sup>

## **Paper**

"*Patina*" was introduced in the early 1990s, and is no longer in production (Figure 50). It was a hand painted paper that utilized some of earth's most basic materials, sand and stone. This wallpaper is formed as a result of the reaction between pumice and sand once it has been mixed with dyes.<sup>222</sup> The mixture on the paper was then left to dry overnight. The following day, the pumice was then scraped off of the paper, which allowed for a unique and ornate pattern to appear.<sup>223</sup> Its appearance is akin to marbling, which was a very popular kind of wallpaper décor in the 1990s. Although no longer available for purchase, the paper was not only relevant then, but is a testament to Maya's ingenuity, and displays his willingness to experiment with a multitude of elements in order to obtain a beautiful product.<sup>224</sup>

## **Metal**

The Maya Romanoff product line expanded further during the 90s through the introduction of The Precious Metals™ Collection, an environmentally friendly wallcovering with a complex production (Figure 51). Semi-custom designs are available today in contemporary and traditional patterns that can vary greatly in color and

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<sup>221</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

<sup>222</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 126-127.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

gradation. The gold, silver, copper, bronze, pewter, and aluminum genuine metal leaf is applied by hand in the Chicago studio. Its paper backing is tinted in varying colors, composed of metal leaf. No two sizes of leaf are ever exactly alike, and its application is more liberal so that there is a one of a kind appearance to each of the rolls.<sup>225</sup> The application of the leaf and its execution is a talent in itself that allows the artisan a bit of room to explore designs. Although there is a general formula to be followed, the squares of leaf can overlap in some sections, and be applied more separately to reveal a solid color that is painted on the canvas.

The inception of this wallcovering during the 1990s exemplifies the Maya Romanoff Company's philosophy that the antique techniques taught to the artisans, and the close contact between the artisan and material, are combined to create a wallcovering that was intended to make people feel comfortable within their surroundings; a concept Romanoff believed would allow for individuals to find comfort in themselves. This is a conviction retained and espoused by the company to this day.

### **1990s Contemporaries**

Unlike Maya, other artists used wallpaper to express discontent with public figures, politics, cultural issues, and so forth. One such case was a group of designers who chose wallcoverings to express their disappointment with, and expose the negligent way in which the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s was handled not only globally, but also by the United States government in particular. It was a terrifying disease, with which the public had little knowledge. Associated almost entirely with the homosexual male

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<sup>225</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

population, few resources were available to help treat those who were infected, and there was no exposure to the research being conducted about the disease from which people could learn and be educated. A group of artists took to their respective mediums to use as their means of conveying their feelings regarding that subject matter in particular.

Entitled “*AIDS Wallpaper*,” the Canadian artists’ collective group General Idea was behind this meaningful and thought provoking wallpaper (Figure 52).<sup>226</sup> They looked to the past as a source of inspiration, and utilized work created during the anti-establishment 1960s to send a message, beginning a new decade of revolutionary thinking. The General Idea based their design on the original L.O.V.E. screen print by Robert Indiana, popularized during the 60s, and used the letters A.I.D.S. in lieu of the other four initials.<sup>227</sup> By doing so, the logo no longer represented its original slogan of love not war. The image now extended to the AIDS crisis that the group intended upon making as universally recognizable as the original.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, they did not limit the logo to wallpaper; it was extended into the public forum, as it appeared on tote bags and posters, in addition to their wallpaper print.<sup>229</sup>

The wallpaper was exhibited throughout many galleries, museums, and other public places, including the “Graphic Response to AIDS” exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1996. The use of this logo as a re-formulization of a widely recognized print from the past was multifaceted in meaning and interpretation. By using

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<sup>226</sup> Joshua Decter, “*The Theatre of Dissemination: a General Idea Model*,” in exhibition Catalog *Fin de Siècle* Wurtembergischer Kunstverein 30.4 - 14.6.92 and travelling (Stuttgart, Barcelona, Hamberg etc) pp. 23-25 and 82-89 (illus.). (Victoria & Albert Museum).

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

the pattern in a repetitive manner, the General Idea sought to show how the virus also repeats and duplicates within the human body; a creative way in which to display this scientific process through their wallpaper that completely surrounds a space, as it is likewise intended to surround and invade the viewer's thoughts.<sup>230</sup> Though the General Idea's main objective behind the wallpaper was positive in nature, it was also a social and political commentary on the negligence shown during the 1980s. The commonplace use of wallpaper reflected the common person who lived seemingly ordinary lives afflicted by a disease, humanizing AIDS globally and raising public awareness through their utilization of a conventional medium.<sup>231</sup>

### **Addressing the Past**

American Renée Green chose wallpaper to confront the topic of race and history in her work, "*Commemorative Toile: Taste Venue*," from an exhibition at the Philadelphia Fabric Workshop in 1992, and used again more recently at The Whitworth Art Gallery's exhibition, *Walls Are Talking: Wallpaper, Art and Culture* which ran from February to March of 2010 (Figure 53). "*Commemorative Toile*" is screen printed in red ink on cloth that has been pasted to paper.<sup>232</sup> In this installation, the wallpaper is used alongside the term "de-coding culture," as Green sought to use her design as a way in which to challenge, and potentially call into question, the traditional ways that history has been taught and understood, more specifically that of African-American history.<sup>233</sup> In

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Green, Renée, "Commemorative Toile; Taste Venue," London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Accessed June 21, 2013, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O71605/commemorative-toile-taste-venue-wallpaper-green-renee/>.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.



order to tackle the topic of African and African-American slavery, Green inserted images pertaining to the lives and work performed by slaves; she exposes the conditions endured by these people in the colonies, subjugated by their enslavers of European and American descent. She cleverly utilized the classic toile paper that is closely associated with eighteenth-century genteel society. Upper class homes were adorned with the expensive Rococo patterned papers, which frequently depicted characteristic designs of floral, figures, or landscape designs that originated in Jouy France.<sup>234</sup>

This amusing juxtaposition of African-American slaves in place of traditional toiles de Jouy courting figures, questions the veracity of the ante-bellum south and institution of slavery traditionally taught in many schools. The myth of the southern belle, proper southern gentleman, and simple but happy plantation slave is addressed in this wallpaper. Her design invites viewers to further contemplate the images beyond that with which they typically associate in conjunction with the idea of toile wallpaper. Renée Green stated that the wallpaper serves a purpose, that it, “reminds us that Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not merely slaves or chattels; many were educated, independent and capable of self-determination, but we rarely see this aspect of black history represented in museum displays and exhibitions.”<sup>235</sup> This wallpaper design that addresses what could be considered an uncomfortable subject for many, confronts

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Beesley, Ruby, “Aesthetica: Manifestations of the Art Movement,” London, *Victoria & Albert Museum*, February 1, 2010, Accessed January 12, 2012, <http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/manifestations-of-the-design-art-movement>.

the ideal of the Scarlett O'Hara Civil War South, and like Carrie Mae Weems, alluded to an incredibly relevant topic in the 1990s, race.

### **In Vogue**

The 1990s proved to be a decade where wallpaper and its use increased in popularity. Although the designs are remarkable in many aspects, they pale in comparison to the work that Maya and his company contributed throughout the decades. Many of his wallcovering designs completed in that decade have become a part of museum collections, while others remain part of the Maya Romanoff anthology.

The 1990s came to a close as Maya Romanoff found contentment in his artistic and professional life, but his personal life as well. In 1996, Maya married Joyce Gutwaks. As Parkinson's began to weaken Maya's body, his mind remained in tact. Despite this setback, Joyce embarked upon a new decade with Maya in high spirits, determined to create a wallcovering powerhouse that was fortified by her practical business and sales prowess, fostered by the creativity of the wallpaper wizard.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> With reference to Maya Romanoff's Parkinson's diagnosis and his experience with the disease, Richard Cahan and Michael Williams' book, *Multifarious: Maya Romanoff's Grand Canvas* goes into great description and includes details that provide the reader with a better understanding of the man outside of his work. Their documentation of his illustrations and poems are beneficial in that they share another aspect of Maya's artistic side outside of his wallcoverings and textiles.

## CHAPTER SIX

The late 1990s and early 2000s were decades in which wallpaper enjoyed resurgence in popularity that has continued today. In contrast to the past twenty years when wallcoverings were seen as passé and taboo, this particular time period has provided wallcoverings with a comeback in interior design, in both public and private spaces. Wallcoverings have begun to serve as a way in which owners and designers express themselves or their personal tastes; a time where nostalgia for wallcoverings of the past have been revived as vintage papers are reproduced, collected, and used as inspiration for new wallpapers considered “design classics.”<sup>237</sup> Wallpaper is now enhanced with the use high-tech ways that hadn’t been used with respect to wallpaper design before. Artists began to experiment with texture digitally, as well as with new materials. Patterns that were obsolete are suddenly in demand, which has allowed for wallcoverings taking on a new identity. Wallpaper is no longer viewed as an element that should in the background of design; rather, it is looked upon as a unique piece of artwork.

Today, wallcoverings are so diverse and wide ranging in terms of styles and motif, it seems there is a wallcovering available to suit everyone’s taste. However, not all wallpaper designs and designers are note-worthy. A fair number of established

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<sup>237</sup> “New Directions in Wallpaper Design and Art,” London, *Victoria & Albert Museum*, Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2013, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/n/new-directions/>.

companies from years past do in fact, continue to create innovative and contemporary wallcoverings. However, there are a few who have managed to maintain healthy competition in terms of popularity and the output of a quality product alongside the likes of the Maya Romanoff Corporation.

### **Fromental©**

Two designers with experience in fashion, textiles, and interior design came together in 2005 to create a company whose wallcoverings are in high demand in the world of residential and commercial interior design. Husband and wife team, Tim Butcher and Lizzie Deshayes, established Fromental© as a handmade interiors house to produce wallpapers, fabrics, and accessories. Their wallcoverings in particular are akin to works of art, as artists can take up to six hundred hours to stitch individual panels.<sup>238</sup> The duo began their company inspired by the eighteenth-century wallcoverings imbued with magnificence and splendor, intent upon reinvigorating the market with wallcoverings that are carefully and skillfully made.<sup>239</sup>

They maintain that the success of their company lies in their dedication to the decorative arts and craftsmanship, represented in their work. Fromental© wallcoverings are designed in their London studio and sent to workshops North East of Shanghai where they are physically made by the hands of company artists.<sup>240</sup> Using dyed silk with paper backing as a background, the designs are painted and embroidered by hand. The paper is also made by hand, and is a product of the pulped bark of Mulberry trees.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 177.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

Fromental© offers a 20<sup>th</sup> Century Collection, where the pattern “*Prunus*” is particularly significant (Figure 54). Its production is described as an, “unconscious style; the blossoms are painted and embroidered, the backgrounds a variety of plain and striated silks.”<sup>242</sup> The pattern has no repeat, which results in a wallcovering envisioned to encompass an enormous wall. That design was inspired by floral patterns featured on wallpapers that were en vogue during the 1930s, a decade known for the Chinoiserie revival.

Fromental©’s panoramic papers known as the “*1787 Collection*,” are like a revamping of Zuber et Cie woodblock printed papers, famed for their use in the White House, Hampton Court Palace and Brighton Pavilion among others (Figure 55). Their scenic wallpapers do not take a modern twist on the tradition, but use archival materials in order to reproduce a similar product.<sup>243</sup> Within the collection, “*China Trade*” is a blue and white painted wallcovering composed of tea paper, which portrays a scenic eighteenth-century Chinese way of life as it tells a story to its viewer by following the paper working from the left to the right (Figure 56).<sup>244</sup> The blue and white colorway known as “qing hua” is evocative of porcelain pottery for which China was highly esteemed during that same time frame. The scenic panels are also similar in appearance to a Chinese Coromandel screen, but in blue and white colors, which has come to life on a wall. .<sup>245</sup> Like Maya Romanoff wallcoverings, this company is used in private homes,

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<sup>242</sup> “Design Layouts,” *Fromental© Website*, Accessed October 28<sup>th</sup> 2013, <http://www.fromental.co.uk/handmade-wallpaper/design-layouts/>.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

luxury hotels and restaurants around the globe. Fromental© is a company that is also worthy of praise, but they remain a young company without the history of Maya Romanoff but certainly more achievements to come in the future.

### **Timorous Beasties©**

Though the company was established in 1980 and found success during the 1990s, their major triumph that catapulted them into the design world's spotlight is their cheeky and provocative wallpaper, "*Glasgow Toile*" which they released in 2004 (Figure 57). The owners of the company and designers, Paul Simmons and Alistair McAuley describe much of their work, "like William Morris on acid".<sup>246</sup> The wallpaper became popular because of its graphic and modern take upon the classic Toile de Jouy papers that were known as status symbols for the wealthy; the idyllic life of the aristocracy and their follies captured on expensive wallpaper. The designers sought to capture the contemporary world of Glasgow with its modern buildings, modes of transportation, and the ever-present reality of social inequities, which, in turn, exposes the unseemly, mostly hidden aspects of society.

This toile shows representations of prostitutes, junkies, and pregnant teenage mothers pushing their babies in strollers, and even a man urinating on a tree in a Glasgow park. The duo captures the plight of the urban people in this wallcovering, which they claim is also a commentary upon the "incredibly conservative textile world."<sup>247</sup> They happily intend to shock the upper classes by exposing the parts of Glasgow they claim is

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<sup>246</sup> Lachlan Blakely, 173.

<sup>247</sup> Dominic Luytens, "Toile and Trouble," *The Observer*, (UK) March 19, 2005.

“ignored by the tourist board.”<sup>248</sup> The wallpaper was so popular after its introduction, that they were receiving calls from people all over who were requesting that their city’s underbelly be exposed on a Timorous Beasties© toile wallpaper. The duo relented, and created “*London Toile*” which is more akin to the tradition of “island toile” in a  $\frac{3}{4}$  pattern drop (Figure 58).

Timorous Beasties© finds success in their ability to appeal to a mainstream audience, but maintain a presence with interior designers who are seeking an edgy spin on wallpaper to use in restaurants, boutique hotels, and high-end homes. A number of their other designs appeal to academics, as with their Ruskin line, which perpetuates the traditional preservation of beauty like its namesake; “*Birds and Bees*,” a particularly fitting example (Figure 59). Their wallcoverings are both graphic and modern, but maintain an elevated sense of style rooted in the designer’s experiences in textile school as illustrators and artists who were educated in design, as well as history. The fact that their designs vary incredibly from line to line, allows them to maintain a presence alongside established firms like Brunschwig & Fils©, as well as more up and coming companies like Fromental© and Celia Birtwell. Their award winning designs have been accessioned to established and respected museums like the Victoria & Albert Museum, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

### **Designer & Manufacturer Collaborations**

To name all the promising wallpaper companies that have made a splash in the industry or are slated to carry on a presence in coming years would be nearly impossible.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

Established companies like Osborne & Little have recently collaborated with newer designers and some who are established in fashion. They employ the designers to create a special line to obtain more customers or appeal to a new audience (Figure 60). Roger Thomas for instance, created a line with Fromental©, Koroseal©, Townsend Leather©, and Maya Romanoff, among others (Figure 61). Jeff Lewis and Candice Olson have their own namesake wallpaper lines. With Calvin Klein, Armani, and Vera Wang also entering into the world of interior home design and wallcoverings as well, the possibilities for the popularity of wallpapers entering into the future are absolutely endless.

### **Crafting a Curtain**

Maya began the 2000s by embarking on a new commission that would allow him to return to what began his career, dyeing and manipulating fabric. As he had in the two decades past, Maya Romanoff was offered the chance to really nurture and display his textile roots and his talent with fabrics. He was commissioned early in the decade to design the main stage curtain for the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Chicago (Figure 62).<sup>249</sup> Romanoff didn't waste the occasion, as he was given another opportunity to bring together architects, artists, and designers. Romanoff and his staff branched into new territory with equally unfamiliar challenges.

The nine-story space required fabrics that were beautiful and flame-retardant, simultaneously achieving the fabric's ultimate function as a stage curtain. The design specifications required fabric to blacken out the background space, and enhance its surroundings through the beauty of faultlessly executed, dyed, and artistically

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<sup>249</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 78.



manipulated textile. Romanoff delved into his past experiences with fabrics, having worked in the tradition of Eastern and Western cultures, taking advantage of his lifelong dedication to experimentation and appreciation of textiles. However, he was now somewhat physically limited because of the complications of Parkinson's disease, contributing to the three years' time it ultimately took to finish the curtain.<sup>250</sup>

Maya returned to one of his favorite fabrics made in France about which he explained, "We started with a material that has fascinated me for years, then reinvented and built it into a piece that reflects the creative and dynamic spirit of the theater."<sup>251</sup> In order for the presence of that atmosphere to be realized within the theatre, Romanoff hired artists in China as well as his Chicago based employees who would work together in a multi-step process to create a beautiful end result.

Romanoff sent the fabric from France to China, where the staff, upon his direction, put the Japanese kanoko shibori tradition (considered tie-dye in the West) into action, which he frequently used on his wallcoverings.<sup>252</sup> The last step was an undertaking left to his local staff, where they utilized aluminum paint to create an opaque surface that was enhanced by the stage lights that reflected upon its exterior.<sup>253</sup> The curtain ultimately became a dramatic statement piece, which beautified the theatre. It allowed Romanoff to display the ways in which textiles can soften, as well as inspire, modern buildings which are devoid of character and warmth as he had done in years past with his "indoor parks" and outdoor installations.

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

Yet Maya struggled artistically and physically, working with a complex and unpredictable textile. Its manipulation required patience and the ability to manipulate the textile by hand, talents of which Romanoff was slowly being deprived. His family, friends, and staff were made most aware of his affliction right before the theatre was set to open in November of 2003, as his tremors were overpowering, and he relied more and more on his employees to carry out his work.<sup>254</sup> The end result was beautiful and a noteworthy achievement in the history of textiles; a modern fabric manipulated by hand through ancient techniques and traditions displayed in a contemporary setting for the public to contemplate and appreciate. The curtain's appeal was magnified by the metallic elements and dyes that glistened and shimmered, the fabric enhanced by artisan's handcraftsmanship in the kanoko tradition (Figure 63).<sup>255</sup> Its presence was remarkable, a testament to Romanoff's years of study, experimentation with, and love of textiles. In its composition, the curtain served as evidence of the years he spent fiddling around with dyes in ways he had seen on his African travels. Furthermore, it was a reflection of his dedication to Eastern traditions in papermaking and textiles, and a perfect example of his life goal to beautify the world through his creations in textiles and wallcoverings as works of art.

### **Bewitched, Bothered and Beadazzled™**

Perhaps it is during these years that Romanoff could be thankful for the time he spent teaching his employees his techniques, as he was slowly robbed of his ability to work, walk and talk. However, he somehow continued to move through the decade and

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<sup>254</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 80.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 78.

most recent years with wallcoverings the likes of which catapulted the company into a newfound status and world-renowned success. Much of the triumph is owed to a 2002 ambitious commission from the lingerie company Victoria's Secret.<sup>256</sup> Somehow while continuing to work on the curtain and other wallcovering projects, Romanoff and his staff came up with Beadazzled™ (Figure 64). A collaborative project, "Romanoff and company were challenged to keep the wallcovering used both beautiful and pliable. Plenty of experts were called in to make it a reality. In the end, glass beads found their way onto pliable polyester."<sup>257</sup> Two minds collided, with Joyce Romanoff credited with the idea for Beadazzled™, and Maya the one to come up with the secretive adhesive that miraculously binds the paper to the grounding.<sup>258</sup> Now it is a part of the permanent collection and permanent display in the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum in New York.<sup>259</sup> Charlotte Abrahams states in her book, *Wallpaper*, that the groundbreaking Beadazzled™ is:

A showstopper...how it is made is a closely guarded secret. All Maya Romanoff will reveal is that glass beads are mounted on light-reflective foil backings so that they create a shimmering luminosity even in the most dimly lit of interiors. However, the result of what Romanoff describes as 'manufacturing breakthroughs,' is a glass bead wallcovering that is flexible enough to be wrapped around corners, is light enough to be cut with standard wallpapering tools, and can be removed without destroying the wall.<sup>260</sup>

Today, there are a variety of products in the Beadazzled™ Line, including Leaf™, Leaf Rain™, Bijou™, Bauble™, Relief Marquetry™, Beadazzled™, Beadazzled Sparkle

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<sup>256</sup> Jocelyn Gerard, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Corporate Headquarters, Skokie, IL, July 18, 2012.

<sup>257</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 83.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>259</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 20.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

Geode™ and Geode™, all of which are made in the Chicago Factory (Figure (s) 65-72).

They are available in a variety of colorways, and they are also accessible in custom colors and in some cases, designs.

Production Manager Na Bopha Ly Om stated that much of her enjoyment in creating Beadazzled™ wallcoverings is the freedom she has in the experimentation with various designs. In general, it takes anywhere from two to four years for new products to join the existing collection.<sup>261</sup> Hand painted sheets of vinyl is used as the backing to all Beadazzled™ wallcoverings. There are tables in the factory that are designated for painting the vinyl where they are then hung up to dry on festoon racks, taken to a larger portion of the factory that looks like a warehouse, and dried even further. Once they are dry, the vinyl sheets are moved to other tables to be painted with a secret adhesive, at which point, the beads are applied in what looks like the sifting of flour or panning for gold. The beads vary in size. While a uniform size is used in Beadazzled™ specifically, Bauble and Geode™ for example, are composed of beads of differing dimensions.

Beadazzled™ is also offered as a custom product in terms of colors, of which the end results demonstrate how the perception of beauty and taste varies from client to client, united in their appreciation for Maya Romanoff products. It is another confidential matter to know the origin, sizes, colors, and composition of the glass beads used in Beadazzled™. The multitude of awards of which it has been the recipient, serve as a testament to its popularity with some of the world's most "forward-thinking designers"

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<sup>261</sup> Na Bopha Ly Om, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

from “Nobu in Hong Kong, Melbourne and Los Angeles, to the palace of the Crown Prince of Dubai.”<sup>262</sup>

Although some designers have claimed that the Beadazzled™ wallcovering line is not to be used in the “average home,” others would certainly disagree as it is a wallcovering that appeals to a wide audience.<sup>263</sup> These uncommon materials compose a beautiful form of uncommon art. Moreover, this sentiment would not be in keeping with the voice of the company’s founder. Having repeatedly stated that his aim in design as an artist and a craftsperson that doesn’t quite fit the mold of any traditional definition is to create beautiful products that are what he called, “functional art.”<sup>264</sup>

Romanoff’s lifelong goal was to bring the art and beauty into interiors across the globe; to bring joy to individuals through handcrafted artisans practicing ancient and modern techniques, and in a broader sense, beautify the world. The interior spaces in need of decoration vary from the standard American household, to the chic nightclubs, international royal palaces, and restrooms at a restaurant. The fantastical Beadazzled™ succeeds in expressing the sentiment of Maya, that “Wherever dreams take you, you will go.”<sup>265</sup>

### **Beadazzled™ as an Art Form**

The extent of Beadazzled™’s versatility is evident in Maya’s desire to expand Beadazzled™ into works of art that are more closely associated as fine art. With the rising success of Beadazzled™, Romanoff ventured into experimentation with the

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<sup>262</sup> Charlotte Abrahams, 20.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> June Hill.

<sup>265</sup> Lynda A. Bender.

wallcovering. These endeavors resulted in the company's introduction of custom murals. In 2004, "Romanoff found an outlet for his vision of combining glass bead wallcoverings with fine art through a project with Chicago artist and former tagger Dzine. The two collaborated on an installation called "Beautiful Otherness" for the ARCO exhibition<sup>266</sup> in Madrid."<sup>267</sup> Custom murals were made available for purchase through work with the individual client, which is still the case today. The artisans use their handcrafted techniques along with computers and modern printing to create the murals. Production Manager Bopha ly Om divulged the fact that customers can send the company any picture, artwork, or graphic and have it turned into a personal mural.<sup>268</sup> There are several examples on display in the Maya Romanoff Chicago Showroom, New York City Showroom, company Headquarters, as well as the factory.

Examples of custom murals which use Beadazzled™ include a rendition of Jayne Mansfield is hung on the outside of company President Joyce Romanoff's office wall (Figure (s) 73, 74). Designed by Las Vegas based designer Roger Thomas, the Mansfield mural is one of a set of two other custom murals that depict Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn. Thomas is said to retain Audrey Hepburn, and the Cary Grant mural was donated to a museum in Los Angeles (Figure 75).<sup>269</sup> Other partnerships in custom murals, outside of individual customer's private commissions, were with the Rockwell Group, Geisha restaurant, Swarovski, and Neiman Marcus (Figure (s) 76-81).

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<sup>266</sup> Acronym for *Feria Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo*, or International Contemporary Art Fair.

<sup>267</sup> Sophie Donelson.

<sup>268</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

<sup>269</sup> Jocelyn Gerard, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

Beadazzled™ maintains a presence in the market year after year, despite the fluctuating nature inherent within the design community. On display up and down the casinos and hotels on the Las Vegas strip, adorning the walls of chic restaurants, enhancing the walls of residential homes, Beadazzled™ is also permanently visible at New York’s Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum.<sup>270</sup> It is a wallcovering worthy of praise and study that illustrates Romanoff’s talents and ingenuity, enhanced by the partnership with his wife Joyce.

### **Mother of Pearl**

The wallcovering design that furthered the financial success of the company two years later composed of natural and beautiful materials is today known as Mother of Pearl™ (Figure 82). The wallcovering is handcrafted in Chicago, and was introduced in 2005.<sup>271</sup> Mother of Pearl™ is the winner of the Best New Surface award by NeoCon, the HD Expo’s Best of Show, and the House & Garden Magazine’s “Best of the Best” award.<sup>272</sup>

Mother of Pearl™ is created using the outer shell of the windowpane oyster (*Placuna placenta*), known more commonly as Capiz shell. Inherent in nature, the Capiz shell originates in the Philippines and harvested. It is then shipped to the Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory and pieced together using a Maya Romanoff adhesive. The composition and production methods are a secret.

A minimum amount of the shell is used, so that while a maximum effect can be achieved, the manufacturing process is still environmentally friendly. Maya Romanoff

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<sup>270</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 85.

<sup>271</sup> Sophie Donelson.

<sup>272</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

press materials explicitly state that the *Placuna placenta* is “reproduced prolifically and are ecologically harvested. Shell collection violates neither environmental nor other legal regulations.”<sup>273</sup> As the world population is increasingly more conscious of global warming and the conservation of the earth’s raw materials, the Maya Romanoff Company is adamant about doing their part to create beautiful wallcoverings while remaining committed to preservation of natural elements.

The Mother of Pearl™ wallcovering expanded to include Mother of Pearl Aphrodite™, Flexi-Mother of Pearl™ in Mosaic and Chevron, and Mother of Pearl Marquetry™ (Figure(s) 83-86). The Mother of Pearl™ lines come in a stunning color variety. Ranging from natural pearl, to coral conch, Tahitian pearl to phosphorescent green, this luminous and versatile wallcovering can furthermore be custom colored. The process of color matching is a tricky one, as clients ask employees to match a custom color; the company strives to achieve this goal as they attempt to carefully match the color to the customer’s control sample.<sup>274</sup> Clients send in pictures, tile samples, pieces of fabric and so on, as artisans’ use naturally based dyes to accomplish an almost exact replica.<sup>275</sup> The process resulting in this accomplishment is of course, another Maya Romanoff secret.<sup>276</sup>

The manufacturing process is a very specific, and one that cannot be altered. Once the shells are dyed, scalloped and coated, the 18” x 18” tiles undergo an inspection process that can be repeated two to three times. Like the color matching, the formula used

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.



to produce the coating used on the Mother of Pearl™ wallcovering is also confidential. If the color is not consistent per tile, and if the tiles exhibit any sign of a flaw or variation from one tile to the next, they are discarded and the color matching process begins again.<sup>277</sup> However, employees claim this is a very rare occurrence thanks to the patience and exacting technique with which Romanoff instilled and remained devoted to teaching them throughout his career.<sup>278</sup>

Apart from the period in which the shells arrive from the Philippines, the production process is relatively fast. The general lead-time is six to eight weeks, which is a result of the overseas shipment of the shells and the time that it takes to put the tiles together.<sup>279</sup> The combination of shipment and production time is ultimately the most time consuming part of the process.

To add more diversification to an already remarkably distinct wallcovering, Maya Romanoff released a line of Flexi Mother of Pearl™ wallcoverings, an idea from Joyce, made solid through Romanoff's contributions. An example of ingenuity at its finest, it is heralded by Maya Romanoff as, "different than anything we've done before. It opens up many possibilities for us. It illustrates to me how collaborative and how wonderful our company is, and the perseverance that has enabled us to take on challenges such as engineering new products with technology –and succeed."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Sophie Donelson.

The elegant Mother of Pearl™ wallcovering is both revolutionary and financially lucrative, boosting profits immensely since its inception.<sup>281</sup> Roger Thomas, who is both a collaborative creative partner with the company and the distinguished designer for Wynn Resort's casino and hotels, in which Maya Romanoff wallcoverings are frequently used, commented about the impact Mother of Pearl™ wallcovering has upon its audience. Thomas stated, "We walk into rooms, we expect certain things, but the last thing you expect is a wall of inlaid Capiz shell."<sup>282</sup> Thomas, also a former fine and decorative arts scholar, clearly gravitates towards beauty, as he continues to this day to use Maya Romanoff wallcoverings throughout his designs. This and other Maya Romanoff wallcoverings can be found in Las Vegas hotels, Chinese casinos, and high-end residential homes, extending the use of Maya Romanoff's wallcoverings to include many diverse environments. The element of surprise found in many of their creations evokes a wow factor that is undeniable, something alluring to designers and consumers alike.

## **Partnerships**

As the 2000s progressed, Romanoff relied more and more heavily on Joyce to run the company, and was dependent upon his employees to follow through on all that he had taught them over the years; how to execute and mimic the creations with which he had always hoped to beautify the world. Joyce devised a plan to bring in famous designers who would compliment Maya's vision, to collaborate on new wallcovering lines that would serve as a demonstration of artists who supported and held Romanoff's work in high esteem. These were designers, who were capable of enhancing Romanoff

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<sup>281</sup> Richard Cahan and Michael Williams, 85.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

wallcoverings. Their contributions also had the potential to maintain a consistent stream of profits with which to aid the business in Maya's limited participation, Maya was not able to come into the factory as he had done throughout his career, spreading his knowledge and teaching his methodologies and artistry, to all his employees as he had before. These partnerships however, were still approved by Maya, with his say and input as the deciding factor in creative design, while Joyce acted as his translator.

### **Roger Thomas**

The partnership with Roger Thomas was not an unusual one, as Thomas had been using Maya Romanoff wallcoverings throughout his career in design, a devotee of the artist. Inspired by scraps of metal, Thomas' line perhaps struck a chord with Romanoff because of his father's profession as a metallurgist, and the Precious Metals™ wallcovering line. The hand-painted vinyl wallcovering is known as "Tremolo™." The name is a derivative of the noun, which describes the wavering effects of musical tone, ultimately related to that of musical instruments. Artists who were trained to make violins by hand use artisan crafted tools in order to create Tremolo™ (Figure 87).<sup>283</sup> The vinyl base is enhanced during production through layers of metallic pigments that are hand applied to the embossed paper in the Chicago studio.<sup>284</sup> The end result is a harmony between the inherent imperfections of paint and the "consistency of line." These elements are a testament to Thomas' education in the decorative arts, and Romanoff's dedication to the complex qualities dwelling within the composition of colors, pigments

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<sup>283</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

and dyes; their manipulation an art-form to both artists. Tremolo™ is available today in a variety of colorways and as a custom wallcovering as well.

“Moon Lake™” is Thomas’s other wallcovering made in partnership with Romanoff (Figure 88). This design in particular pays homage to Romanoff’s love of paint and its properties, with Thomas stating that his inspiration derived from dripping paint, its complex nature one of Romanoff’s life-long fascinations.<sup>285</sup> “Moon Lake™” exemplifies the likeminded nature of two artists dedicated to their respective skills, of differing occupations, yet rooted in the same devotion to the decorative arts, materials, and craft-based techniques. The wallcovering is made entirely in the Chicago studio, the end result a stylish and dignified product that remains true to Romanoff’s desire to enhance interiors through utilitarian objects such as wallpaper. The Roger Thomas and Maya Romanoff collaboration in particular exhibits the principles of decorative arts studies, a devotion to the manufacture and design of beautiful yet functional objects.

## **Rockwell**

A second collaboration with friend, and architect-designer David Rockwell, founder of the Rockwell Group resulted in a line of wallcoverings that reflected Romanoff’s background in textiles and utilized fabrics as one of the main elements throughout its composition. The Maya Romanoff Company partnered with the esteemed interior designer David Rockwell in the fall of 2007 to produce a line of wallcoverings that are the perfect harmony of the individual artist’s talent and finesse. Rockwell and his company are well known for their interior and architectural designs, featured in the

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

Academy Awards, the Cosmopolitan Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, and a number of restaurants and hotels throughout the world. The David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff Collection consists of Groove-V Tubular™, Groove-V Out of Sight™, Groove Neat-O™, Stitched Vertical™, Stitched Puzzle™, Stitched Horizontal™, Stitched II™, Blanket Yarn & Stitch™, and Blanket Zig Zag™.

The Stitched™ varieties incorporate many methods of craftsmanship (Figure (s) 89-91). Using the signature Romanoff tie-dyed wallcovering Weathered Walls™ as its base, hand-dyed paper that gives that appearance of fine and lacquered leather is adorned with stitching.<sup>286</sup> The painting and tie-dye process takes place in the Chicago Factory, as does the sewing. The vibrant orange color is achieved through a secret dyeing process, which takes place in a multi-step operation.

The process begins, as the material enters a machine no larger than an average limousine that is located at the entrance to the factory. Artisans apply a color adhesive to the same virgin paper, a product that is unique to the company. The rolls of paper are then placed onto a type of conveyor belt that rapidly dries the colorant. While one artisan feeds the paper onto the belt, another artisan stands at the other end of the machine waiting for the paper to dry. As it is a rapid process, the craftsman must grab the paper skillfully but quickly. Next they take hold of the paper and spin it into a roll. It is interesting to note that the carefully perfected Romanoff dye when firstly applied has one distinct color. Yet the color is entirely different in appearance when dried on the paper,

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<sup>286</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

which is, of course, another Romanoff trademark secret.<sup>287</sup> A new color is later hand painted onto its surface and hung on festoon racks to dry. When finished, the paper is inspected and shipped from the factory to its destination.

The Blanket Zig Zag™ and Blanket Yarn & Stitch™ appear like a modern version of a rustic blanket (Figure(s) 92, 93). The woven fabric is a durable wool-blend with a felt texture. David Rockwell has stated that his designs were conceived with the handmade tradition observed by Maya Romanoff in mind, fused with new techniques that remain true to his own artistic sensibilities.<sup>288</sup> The collection is a reflection of a certain style of living that leaves interpretation to the viewer. The wallcovering is a testament to design and function as well as handcraftsmanship, a perfect manifestation of the old saying, “great minds think alike.” Additionally, according to the Maya Romanoff website, a percentage of sales from the company’s collaboration’s with Roger Thomas and David Rockwell are donated to the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS, which is another example of the Maya Romanoff company’s dedication to beautifying the world through their wallcoverings in more ways than one.<sup>289</sup>

### **Amy Lau**

To honor the company’s 40<sup>th</sup> year, Maya Romanoff partnered with the New York City based designer Amy Lau in 2009 to create what is now known as the Anniversary Collection. Three trademark re-interpreted designs are available in Crystal™, Half

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<sup>287</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

<sup>288</sup> “David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff,” [www.rockwellgroup.com](http://www.rockwellgroup.com), Accessed June 2012, <http://www.rockwellgroup.com/projects/entry/maya-romanoff>.

<sup>289</sup> “Sustainability,” Chicago: *Maya Romanoff*, [www.mayaromanoff.com](http://www.mayaromanoff.com), Accessed June 2012, [www.mayaromanoff.com/about/sustainability](http://www.mayaromanoff.com/about/sustainability).

Plaid™, and Snowflake™ (Figure(s) 94-96). The collection was originally composed of four designs, including Kaleidoscopic Snowflake™, which along with Half Plaid™, is currently not in production. Pictures of the pattern can be found in press publications and Maya Romanoff press materials.

The wallcoverings pay tribute to Romanoff's beginnings in tie-dye. Originally sold in high-end department store Bergdorf Goodman, the company's first ever retail collection included limited edition throws and pillows not currently available. The wallcoverings and other products in the patterns appeal to a wide audience that expands far beyond tie-dye enthusiasts and couture shoppers. Designer Amy Lau explained that Romanoff asked her to contemporize some of his patterns.<sup>290</sup> Due to the fact that Maya hand-dyes and folds his papers to mimic the authentic tie-dye process, Lau simply modernized the finished product but maintained the original process.<sup>291</sup>

Yet the important thing about this partnership is what it reveals about Maya Romanoff's techniques and methodology. The process in which the wallcoverings undergo and the methods behind their creation provide the ultimate insight into the mostly secretive system that originated with Maya. The papers, dyes, pigments, adhesives and finishes, are exclusive to Maya Romanoff, including the methodology behind the collection. In order to explain a part of the process, a documented quotation from an interview with Maya in which he illustrates his method of resist dyeing must be used. He stated:

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<sup>290</sup> Linda O'Keefe.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

Resist dyeing simply using a little wax, or paste, or stitches in fabric to create a resistance to the particular dye being applied. This resistance is what creates a myriad of designs. There are many different methods and techniques employed in what is largely a hand-dyeing process and some are quite unusual. ‘There’s a man in Japan who actually uses a telephone pole,’ says Romanoff. ‘He wraps the fabric around the pole, coils yarn around the fabric, bunches it all up over and over again. He’s able to create over 100 different patterns by using this method.’ Romanoff is not about to use a telephone pole, but at his production facility in Chicago, he is continually refining the process of mass-producing hand-dyed fabrics and wallcoverings for the market.<sup>292</sup>

### **The Romanoff Method**

Although Romanoff’s skills were largely self trained, (something that he considered to be more necessary in the design world than in the underdeveloped countries in which he was taught), Romanoff explained that his techniques aren’t shared because they have a clear economic value.<sup>293</sup> That is basis for which the company maintains a principle of exclusivity and confidentiality with reference to most of their products. For this reason, in order to avoid such indiscretions, the description of first hand observations that follows is condensed. Firstly, the paper is readied in order to go through the tie-dyed process with specialized fabric strips. The paper is then dyed. The result of the drying process is unique in that the paper displays a one of a kind pattern that forms a mirror image. Methods are explained to visitors step by step, as artisans in the factory show the custom made colors, dyes, and adhesives used in this wallcovering collection.

When a wallcovering is not of the desired caliber upon its completion, the expertly trained artisan employees have the ability to easily discern where in the process

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<sup>292</sup> Janet Koplos.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.



something went array due to the years they spent learning their craft from Maya. However, the artisans report that there are few mistakes in the tie-die production. Their fast response time to errors is due to their familiarity with the techniques necessary for the creation of Maya Romanoff wallcoverings. On a factory visit, when asked where head of production Bopha Ly learned her techniques, she proudly declared, “From Maya,” the man who took her in as a refugee and bestowed upon her the skills to continue his tradition of beautifying the world through his wallcoverings.<sup>294</sup>

This heartfelt exchange of words reveals how strongly connected she is to Maya and the company; her admiration and appreciation very present in her every description. It seems this is a feeling that is not lost on the other employees, as many of them have been with the company for over twenty or thirty years. Maya has explained what Bopha’s simple words echo when he stated:

Another special quality of work is that it holds us together in an unusual bond. I have been with the company 35 years. My production manager, (Bopha) came to me almost 25 years ago. We have a saying, ‘when a person is with us a year, they are with us forever.’ How many companies have been around long enough to have saying, much less a saying that deals with forever?<sup>295</sup>

Owing to Bopha and other employee’s sentiments, as well as the experience of observing the creation of the Anniversary Collection™, it is for this reason that this group of wallcoverings is the most representative of Maya’s dream and connection to not only the art and craft, but also his own artisans. The creative process is a shared experience, extending to all staff members, as it is something Maya equates to being something,

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<sup>294</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

<sup>295</sup> Unknown, Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

“amazing, really, sort of like a religious awakening rather than a job.”<sup>296</sup> The company headquarters and factory, populated by devoted company employees, has the feel of a Byrdcliffe Colony founded by Jane Byrd McCall and Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead.

This wallcovering collection, its methods of production and the company’s base are evocative of the Arts & Crafts Movement, certainly adhering to the principles and end results of the historic artistic crusade. This is another example of why Maya Romanoff and his company should be included within the curriculum of decorative arts scholars.

### **Island Weaves**

During this same decade, the company released the Island Weaves® Collection, which is a re-interpretation of classic Maya Romanoff products and techniques (Figure 97). The line has over twenty-two patterns, five original best sellers, and seven different color ways.<sup>297</sup> Partial proceeds of this line go to *Aid for Artisans*. The products are environmentally friendly, cost-effective, and made with ancient technology in combination with innovative techniques. In addition, they are very durable. The artisans use a paper-weaving technology along with jacquard looms and warp-dyed threads.<sup>298</sup> The woven paper is fused with jute, a rough fiber that is found in the stems of tropical plants and traditionally used to make rope or woven for sacks. These wallcoverings are not made within the United States, but demonstrate the Maya Romanoff Company’s dedication to enriching the lives of artisans from the developing nations that Romanoff learned many of the techniques and skills from so many years ago.

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

The Hemp™ Collection (Figure (s) 98-100) is also a wallcovering that is entirely handcrafted by artisans and whose partial proceeds is donated to *Aid to Artisans*<sup>299</sup> and includes Sheer Hemp™, Knotted Hemp™, and Braided Hemp™.<sup>300</sup> The Sheer Hemp™ wallcovering, although no longer in production, is composed of fiber that is “processed, knotted, spun by hand, and created without the use of chemicals or machines.”<sup>301</sup> Braided Hemp™ and Knotted Hemp™ are composed of Lakota paper and jute that is braided and hand-crafted in the same manner as Sheer Hemp™. However, it is different in that it is made by a hand-loom, then air-dried, and backed with Kraft paper made up of recycled pulp and virgin pulp.<sup>302</sup>

It is also a product that adheres to a Maya Romanoff standard. He stated in the past that his products are real and do not rely on machine, but instead, an artisan. The hemp collection is entirely made by craftsmen and its production expends little energy, making it another environmentally friendly Romanoff product. The fibers are transported by foot or bus and woven by handloom, where upon completion it is then air-dried after undergoing the “paper backing process.”<sup>303</sup> The end result is unique. The subtle grooves and consistency of the Hemp™ wallcovering collection makes for a product that begs to be touched. They are fashionable wallcoverings that appeal to clients looking to achieve

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<sup>299</sup> Aid to Artisans is a non-profit, mission based organization based in Washington D.C. The group works in communities throughout the world, generally underdeveloped nations, where economic resources are limited and as a result, local craft traditions and ultimately livelihoods are at risk. The group supplies artisans with business advice, assistance with sustainability, training, materials for their craft, and opportunities with which they might not otherwise be afforded. For more information, see website [www.aidtoartisans.org](http://www.aidtoartisans.org).

<sup>300</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

a minimalist and modern environment.<sup>304</sup> The Hemp™ and Island Weaves® Collections faithfully adhere to the company's belief that the artisan must be connected to the material, to allow for a product that ultimately creates a comfortable atmosphere.

In a gesture to this same mantra, the Meditations™ collection is a product that displays Maya's belief system as an enthusiastic follower of Buddhism (Figure 101). Furthermore, it is also an environmentally friendly product that utilizes ancient techniques, as well as those on the cutting edge of technological advancements. Meditations™ in Ohm™ and Mantra™ (no longer in production) are handmade in Nepal. Partial proceeds benefit *Aid to Artisans*. It has been awarded the *Hospitality Design Boutique's* Best of Show in 2009 as well as *Interior Design Magazine's* Best of Year in 2009.<sup>305</sup> The harvesting process is environmentally friendly, as it prevents decay allowing for new growth; the bark is used for paper while the excess is utilized for compost.<sup>306</sup> In order to soften, the bark must be soaked and then boiled in water and then put into a pulp beater (form of a Hollander beater), powered through nearby water sources.<sup>307</sup>

The pulp is lifted from the beater and placed onto a frame to dry naturally, as the artisans use chopsticks while the pulp is still wet to form the Ohm pattern. Its main attraction is the texture that the natural fibers create on the surfaces they adorn. The collection illustrates one of Maya Romanoff's greatest beliefs regarding his preference for artisan made products. Regarding the artistry found within the wallcovering, he stated that, "It's hard to express the joy of having something beautiful come from your

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<sup>304</sup> Na Bopha ly Om, Interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Chicago Factory, Skokie, IL, July 19, 2012.

<sup>305</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

hands and it's even harder to express the joy when that comes from a machine.”<sup>308</sup> The beauty that is created by hand in the Meditations™ collection is evident. Like the “local artistic energy that went into things people could use” that he had seen in Africa, the functional art that is created in Nepal is recreated in the Meditations™ wallcoverings<sup>309</sup>

## **Metals II**

Possibly to pay homage to his metallurgist father, Maya Romanoff created another remarkable wallcovering in 2007, True Metals™. The line comes in three patterns, Coffers™, Trapezoid™, and Basketweave™ (Figure(s) 102-104). Though Romanoff was quoted as feeling connected to fabric and unable to understand his father's relation to metal, Romanoff created a line of metal that could be manipulated and transformed like a textile, uniting the dissimilar materials. It is composed in a unique and uncommon method. Jocelyn Gerard, the Maya Romanoff Showroom Relations and Manager at the Chicago headquarters, explained that the genuine metal is produced in a family-run mill whose workers are locals and are trained in ancient techniques.<sup>310</sup> She added that pieces of left over metal are melted down and reused by local statue makers.<sup>311</sup> The original components are harvested from local farms that are dried in an open-air environment. All of the metal used is recycled, the finishes are naturally based, and the

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<sup>308</sup> Karey Koehn, “The Man Behind the Magic: The Vision of Maya Romanoff,” *Retail Store Image*, July, 1996.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Jocelyn Gerard, interview by Author, Maya Romanoff Corporate Headquarters, Skokie, IL, July 18, 2012.

<sup>311</sup> Unknown Maya Romanoff Press Materials, Chicago: Maya Romanoff Corporation, Unknown.

workers are artisans in their own right. A percentage of proceeds are donated to benefit *Aid to Artisans* as another contribution to enhance the world through beauty.<sup>312</sup>

Wallmica™ (Figure 105) is another Romanoff wallcovering composed of metal. It is mineral based and made of micro-thin, shaved pieces of mica that is also an environmentally responsible option to a more bulky, heavy metal surfacing material.<sup>313</sup> True Metals™ and Wallmica™ fits within Maya Romanoff's design directive; they are entirely genuine products and hand crafted by artisans, a belief system that can and should be appreciated and studied by all decorative arts scholars.<sup>314</sup>

### **The Late 2000s**

The company's production of handcrafted, inventive, and unique wallcoverings did not cease despite the failing health of their chief designer and founder. Joyce continued to contribute to all aspects of the business, ensuring its success regardless of the dire circumstances outside of day-to-day operations. The wallcoverings were consistently featured in magazines and articles year after year, each spring and fall, a new collection was released, as other noteworthy wallcoverings were retired and others conceived. In 2012, Maya and Joyce were honored by the Museum of Art and Design's "*Visionaries Award for Lifetime Achievement*." In May of 2013 his work was exhibited by the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, another in a long list of exhibitions he was included throughout his incredible career.

The years of his wandering in Africa and Asia well behind him and the teachings it brought having served him well; it seemed that Maya Romanoff had instilled all that he

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Libby Morse.

possibly could to his treasured artisans and family members as his health declined. He once commented upon the worth of one's own faculties in his small promotional book, stating, "When I build an environment, I work on sight, touch, smell and hearing. When I design an upholstered fabric, I design work to be felt with body as well as spirit. I make things whose beauty will move people over and over."<sup>315</sup>

By the end of 2013, Maya was deprived of his sensibilities that he had described, now a memory. His spirit however was another matter, as it lived within each and every one of his designs and creations, a testament to the dedication throughout his life to beautifying the world one textile and wallcovering at a time for the greater good, all of which, certainly serve as irrefutable reasons for which Maya Romanoff and his life's work should be included within the curriculum and studies of fine and decorative arts scholars.

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<sup>315</sup> Maya Romanoff, *Floating World: Environmental Textiles*, (Unknown city of publication and publisher, ca. 1983), 8.

## CHAPTER SEVEN CONCLUSION

Although there are many wallcovering companies that exist around the globe, Maya Romanoff's substantiates itself as a pioneer in extraordinary surfaces. From Maya's beginnings in tie-dye, to draping of public buildings in textiles, to his award winning wallcoverings, it is clear that this artist and businessman was a trailblazer. While other company's products are printed out by machine, never having been touched by an artisan, Maya Romanoff's wallcoverings are almost entirely hand crafted from start to finish. They are mostly made in the Chicago factory, and for those that are not, artisans who are skilled in ancient craft techniques likewise create them. Artisans are able to connect to materials, using the techniques of their employer, and stay true to their craft. Every wallcovering that is created serves to enrich interiors, whether they are the interiors of buildings or the interior of one's soul and spirit. Maya Romanoff unites modern and ancient technology with a respect for nature and beauty in every wallcovering fashioned. Their superior surface materials would not be realized if it were not for the perfect combination of innovation, the mastery of hand craftsmanship by owner and employees, and a dedication to bringing beautiful works of art into every day life.

Wallcovering specialists, scholars, designers, and interior design enthusiasts alike are sure to find something they are able to appreciate and find value in with reference to



the life and work of Maya Romanoff. His wallcoverings and work with textiles speak to individuals with differing tastes and backgrounds, with unique designs rooted in time-honored traditions of craftsmanship and beauty.

Designers with backgrounds in the fine and decorative arts and architecture fully appreciate his historically rooted, yet forward thinking wallcovering designs as they could also acknowledge the often detect the presence of Romanoff's long lasting love of and experimentation with textiles. The possibilities for the company's wallcoverings were endless, with the potential to be specified by designers in public spaces, displayed in design magazines thus creating a buzz amongst those working in residential projects, furthermore creating a basis from which the reasons for the study of Romanoff and his achievements should be incorporated into fine and decorative arts studies. His accomplishments expand far beyond the use of his wallcoverings in luxury hotels and restaurants. His contemporaries, scholars, family and friends espoused the reasons for which his life's work was important, and worth of study after his passing. Architect and designer David Rockwell explained it simply, "He was an extraordinary artist."<sup>316</sup> Senior Vice President of Sales and niece Laura Romanoff stated:

Maya gave me belief that there is a grand, wild world out there, that there is something new under the sun and it is our right and responsibility to find it and to wrap our arms around it. Maya inspired all of us—his family, friends, co-workers, partners and clients—to see the world from an oblique angle, to tease beauty out of the most unlikely places.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Unknown, "Honoring an Icon: Maya Romanoff 1941-2014," The Editor at Large the Interior Design Community, Accessed January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, <http://www.editoratlarge.com/articles/honoring-an-icon-maya-romanoff-1941---2014>.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

Those outside his circle of family and friends have further affirmed the reasons for Maya's inclusion. David McFadden, former chief curator and VP of collections and programs at the Museum of Art and Design (MAD), stated:

Maya Romanoff set a standard of excellence in design and craftsmanship unequalled by any other manufacturers of wallcoverings, his personal vision that seamlessly merged wallcoverings and architectural space has delighted and Inspired so many over the decades. His personal warmth and generosity endeared him to so many, including myself. His memory will live on in the many elegant and innovative designs he conceived, nurtured and achieved.<sup>318</sup>

Speaking for the design community, Editor-in-Chief Cindy Allen explained, "Best described by his exquisite wallcovering, Maya has bedazzled us for decades, and his masterful artistry—and unforgettable spirit—will carry on with his beloved wife, Joyce, and family, for years to come."<sup>319</sup>

Roger Thomas, the head of design and for Wynn Hotels and Resorts, was formally schooled in art history and studio arts, and not in interior design as most assume. He has been included in *Architectural Digest's* 100 amongst other prominent awards, as he is furthermore a designer for home décor, leather, textiles, passementerie, furniture, carpets, jewelry, and of course, wallcoverings. The Roger Thomas website promotes his background upon a visit to the site, stating that his inspiration is found in the decorative arts of many cultures.<sup>320</sup> Furthermore, he is knowledgeable about craftsmanship and technique. Thomas espouses upon that education and the inspiration it has provided him in his design endeavors:

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> For more information about his background visit Roger Thomas' website <http://therogertthomascollection.com>

I learned how art unfolds throughout history. Each successive generation draws inspiration from the past, or in the case of my generation, purposefully rejects the work of the preceding generation to find the new. I was one of those who, armed with knowledge of what went before, looked to create only that which was completely original, yet was still informed by the great examples of the rich history of art and design. I found it was remembering the essence of the objects I had studied that brought the greatest original inspiration using the past as the basis of form or silhouette or color.<sup>321</sup>

Thomas described Romanoff to the Chicago Tribune shortly after Romanoff's passing, stating, "Maya Romanoff has always made luxury by pursuing the very finest and most original designs with the finest craftsmanship and quality, which is what I think luxury is. His products are made with such care by hand, using the highest-quality materials."<sup>322</sup>

Renowned publications like *Architectural Digest* dedicated sections of their publications to Maya Romanoff when he passed, memorializing the man and his achievements. Students of the fine and decorative arts are taught about Jack Lenor Larsen in courses about textiles, Coco Chanel for fashion, taught about Sèvres when studying porcelain, Tiffany and Company in courses about the silver and glass, and even Laura Ashley for wallcoverings; all of which or whom remained dedicated to their craft with their talents throughout their lives. These individuals provided scholars with years of groundbreaking accomplishments within the field of studies of decorative arts, not unlike Maya Romanoff.

Maya was a man dedicated to the elements based upon the principles of the study of fine and decorative arts. His work exemplifies not only diversity in terms of material, but unification in terms of wallcoverings and textiles. Maya Romanoff deserves more

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<sup>321</sup> Roger Thomas Collection Press Materials, Unknown Date, Unknown City of Publication.

<sup>322</sup> Graydon Megan, "Maya Romanoff, Fabric Designer, 1941-2014," *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 2014, accessed March 21, 2015, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-23/news/ct-obit-romanoff-met-20140123\\_1\\_fabric-coverings-products](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-01-23/news/ct-obit-romanoff-met-20140123_1_fabric-coverings-products).

than a display in a museum, of which the majority of scholars in the fine and decorative arts know nothing about. His work is largely restricted to those whose livelihood is made in interior design, both residential and commercial, and those individuals who were alive to witness his textile installations or tie-dyed t-shirts at Woodstock. Maya sensed a stagnant environment in art during the 1960s, and was part of the counter-revolutionary creative generation that sparked change in style internationally.

Maya Romanoff and all he has contributed to the world outside of interior design should be included in courses of study about wallcoverings and textiles, whether in introductory classes or those that focus on those subjects in particular. He is a fantastic example of a twentieth century and into the twenty-first century designer who transformed wallcoverings as we know them today.

## FIGURES



**Figure 1- “Design 706”**

**Lloyd Wright, ‘Taliesin Line,’ F. Schumacher & Co., Color Screen Print on Paper, 1956, Made in the United States of America. Museum Number E.582-1966.**

*Image Courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 2- "Diablo"**  
**Lucienne Day for Cole & Sons, 1951, screen-print wallpaper, created specifically for the Festival.**  
*Image Courtesy of the Robin and Lucienne Day Foundation website.*

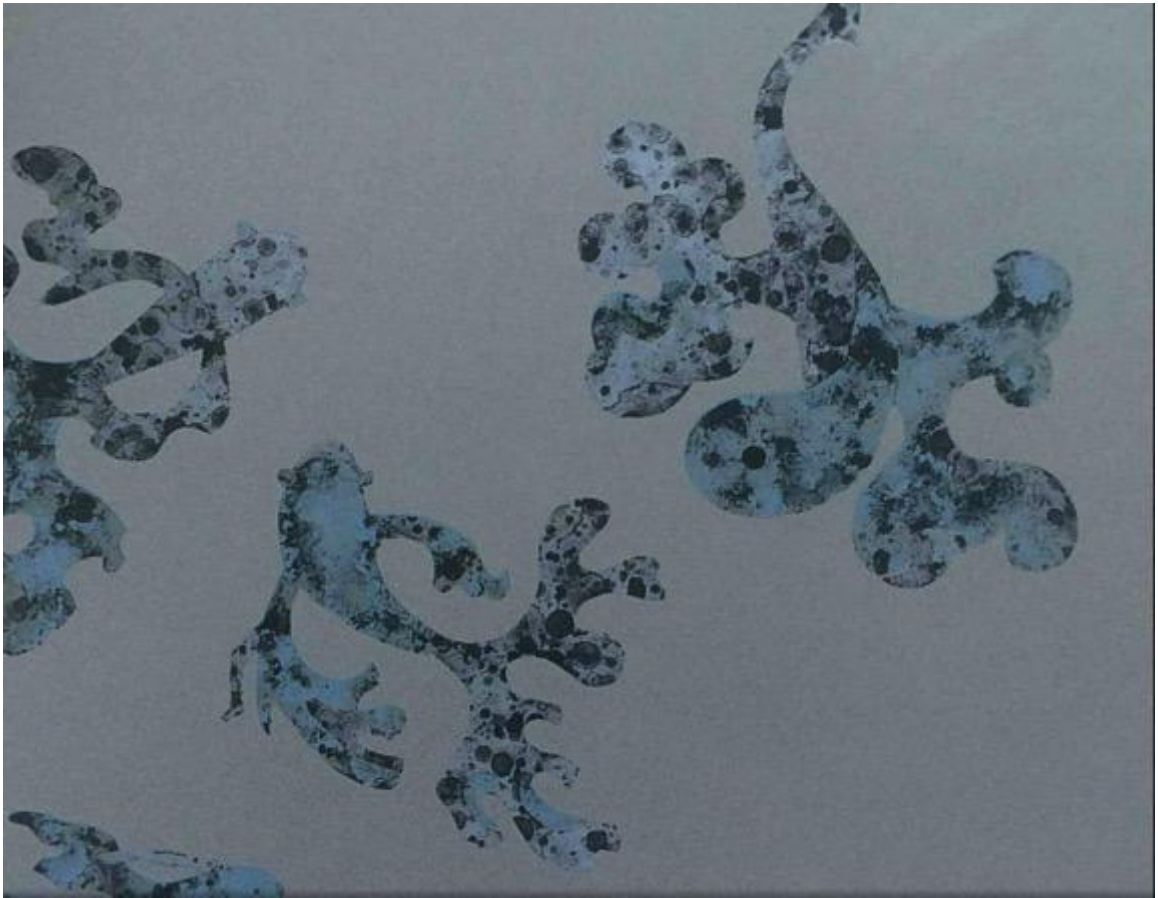
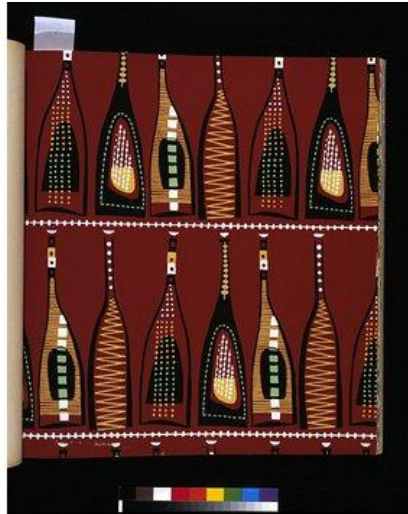


Figure 3 - *"Emperor's Gold Fish"*  
Katzenbach and Warren, photogravure technique, 'American Futures Collection,' 1954.  
*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*



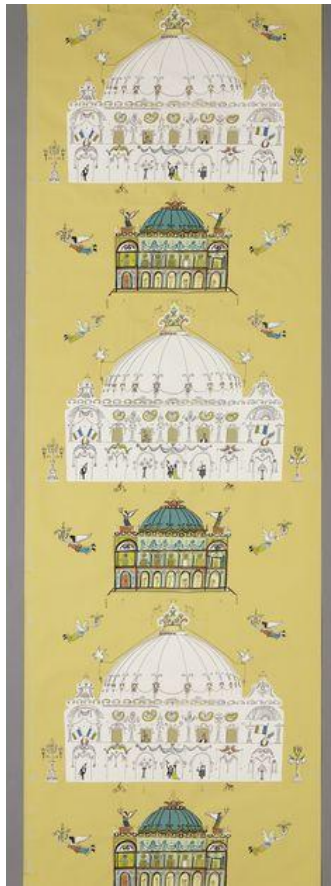
**Figure 4 - "Malaga"**

**Wallpaper Manufacturer's Ltd., Lighthown Aspinall Branch, 1955, 'Palladio Wallpapers,' color screen print technique, United Kingdom, Museum Number E.444.23-1998.**

*Image Courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*







**Figure 6- "Opera"**

**Saul Steinberg for Greeff Fabrics, wallpaper, screen-printed on paper, 1953. Object ID 18618305.**

***Image Courtesy of the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.***



**Figure 7- "Opera"**

**Saul Steinberg for Greeff Fabrics in 1953.**

**Reprinted onto a textile, currently available for purchase from F. Schumacher and Company, available in multiple colorways: SKU 174000.**

***Image Courtesy of F. Schumacher website.***



**Figure 8- "Aviary"**  
**Saul Steinberg for Piazza Prints, Inc., 1951**  
**Currently in reproduction by F. Schumacher and Company.**  
*Image Courtesy of the F. Schumacher and Company website.*

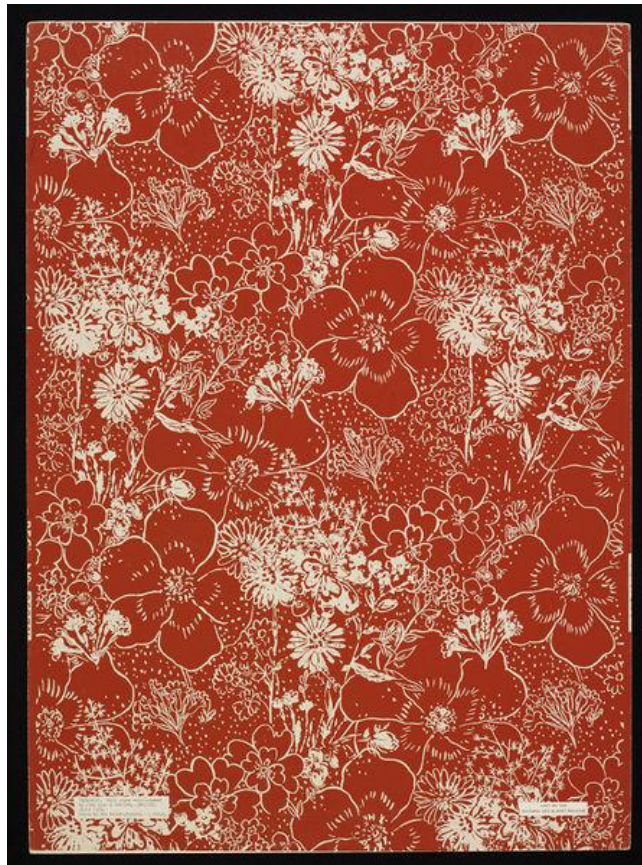


**Figure 9- "Untitled"**

Wallpaper made in Guangzhou, China between 1810 and 1830, painted paper by an unknown artist for an unknown manufacturer. Museum number E.2853-1913.

*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

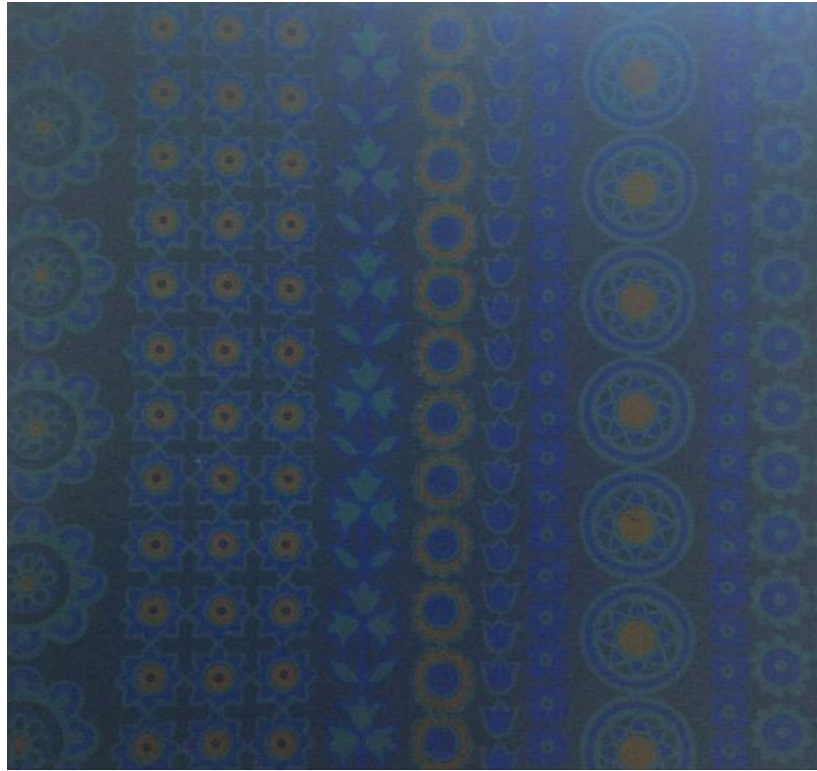




**Figure 10- "Miranda"**

**John Line & Sons Ltd., silk-screen print on paper with an all-over floral pattern in white on red, 1950s, United Kingdom. Museum Number is E.89-1798.**

*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 11- "Lubi'Lu"**  
Pat Albeck for Sanderson, 'Palladio 7' collection, screen-printed wallpaper, 1966.  
*Image courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*



**Figure 12- "Berkley"**

**Edward Pond for Sanderson-Rigg Ltd., 'Palladio 8' collection, screen-printed wallpaper, 1968, United Kingdom. Museum number E.159-261-1968.**

*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*





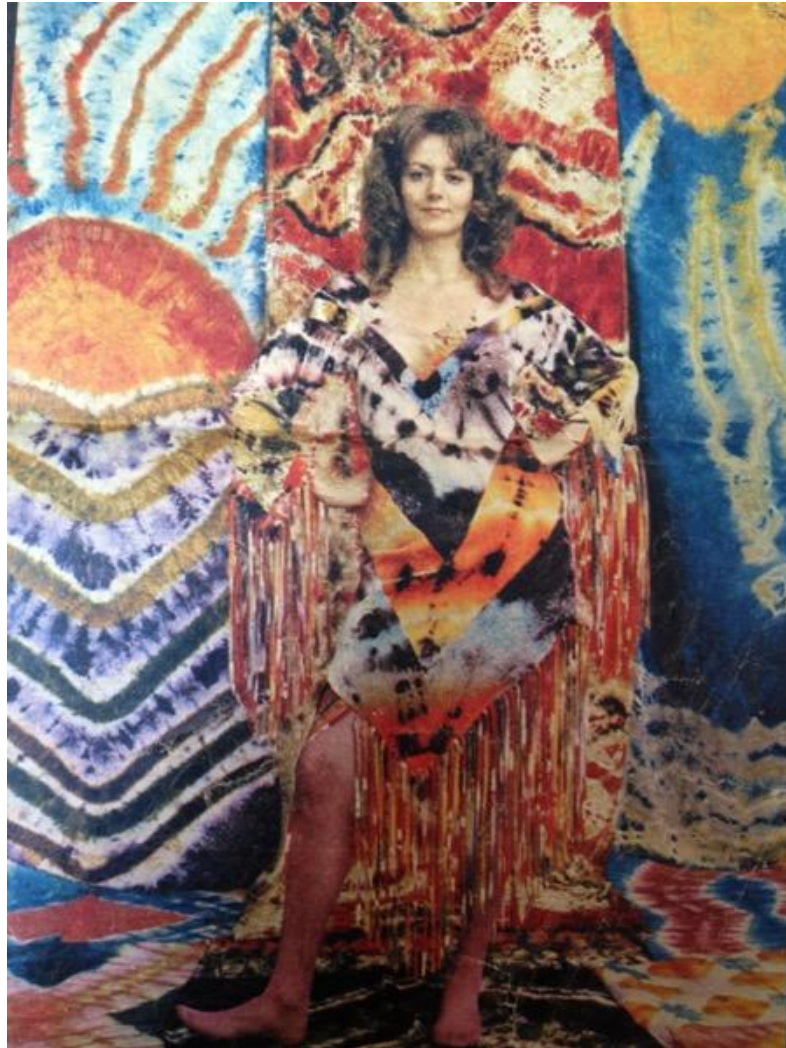
**Figure 13- "Ziggurat"**  
**Margaret Cannon for Sanderson-Rigg, Ltd., 'Palladio 8' collection, silk screen-print on paper, 1968, United Kingdom. Museum number E.5084-5188-1968.**  
*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 14- "Untitled (Wearable Art)"**

**Image of Maya Romanoff donning his "wearable art."**

**Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph (Can also be found in Richard Cahan and Michael William's book, *Multifarious: Maya Romanoff's Grand Canvas*).**

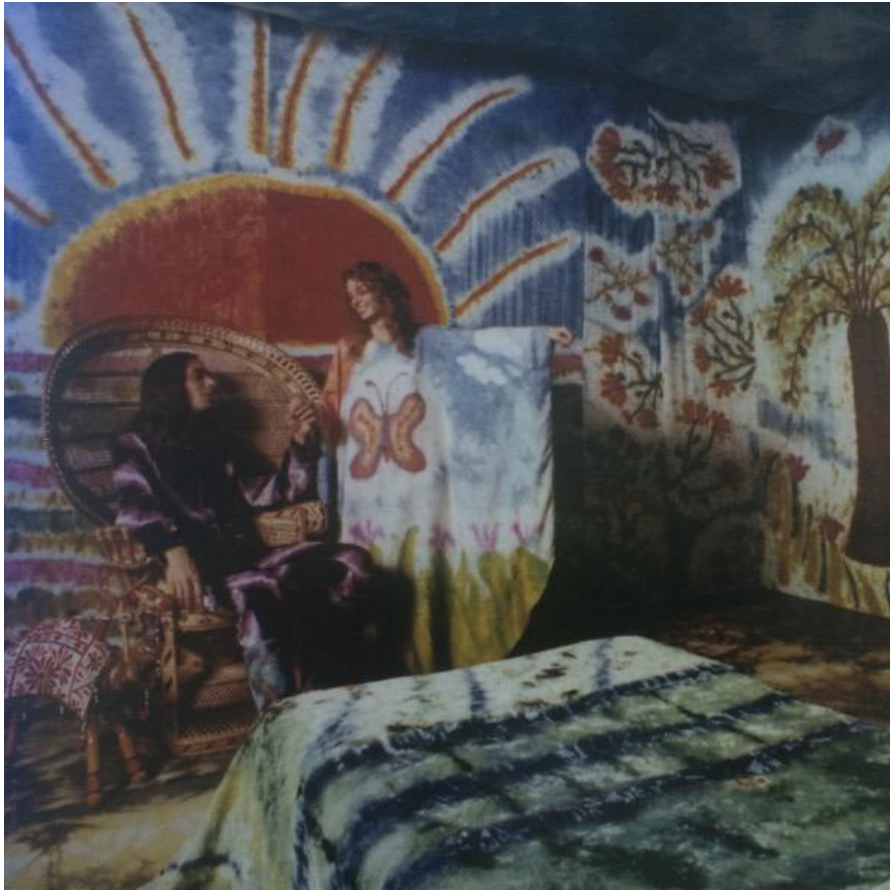


**Figure 15- "Becky Romanoff in Tie-Dye"**  
*Image Courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph.*



**Figure 16- "Wearable Art"**

*Image Courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.*



**Figure 17- "A Flower Garden That Never Dies"**  
Photograph of Elita Mallers Murphy's daughter's room, created by Maya and Quinja (Rebecca) Romanoff, 1971.

*Image Courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.*





**Figure 18- "Celadon Crystal"**

**Maya Romanoff Tie-Dyed Leather Sofa**

***Image Courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph from Maya Romanoff Archives.***



**Figure 19- "Leather Chair"**  
**Located in the Maya Romanoff Skokie Illinois Headquarters**  
***Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.***

**J&D BRAUNER**  
**OAK PARQUET SPECIAL**

Solid oak border. Handsome lock-mitered legs. Walnut finish. 60"x36" **\$249.**  
**SOLID OAK CHAIR** has cane back with seat upholstered in Haitian cotton.  
Side chair **\$69.90.** Arm chair **\$79.90.**



Photos by John Hlaskos



Hand-dyed Chinese tussah silk by Maya Romanoff in his "New Stripe" pattern wraps a Dunbar chaise by John Saladino in a smoky color.

**Interiors**

Figure 20- "New Stripe Sofa"

Maya Romanoff for John Saldino, *Chicago Tribune*, September 26, 1982, Accessed May 15, 2013.





**Figure 21- "Kimono I"**  
Maya Romanoff's first outdoor installation at the Richard Himmel Design Pavilion in 1977  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff Facebook page.*



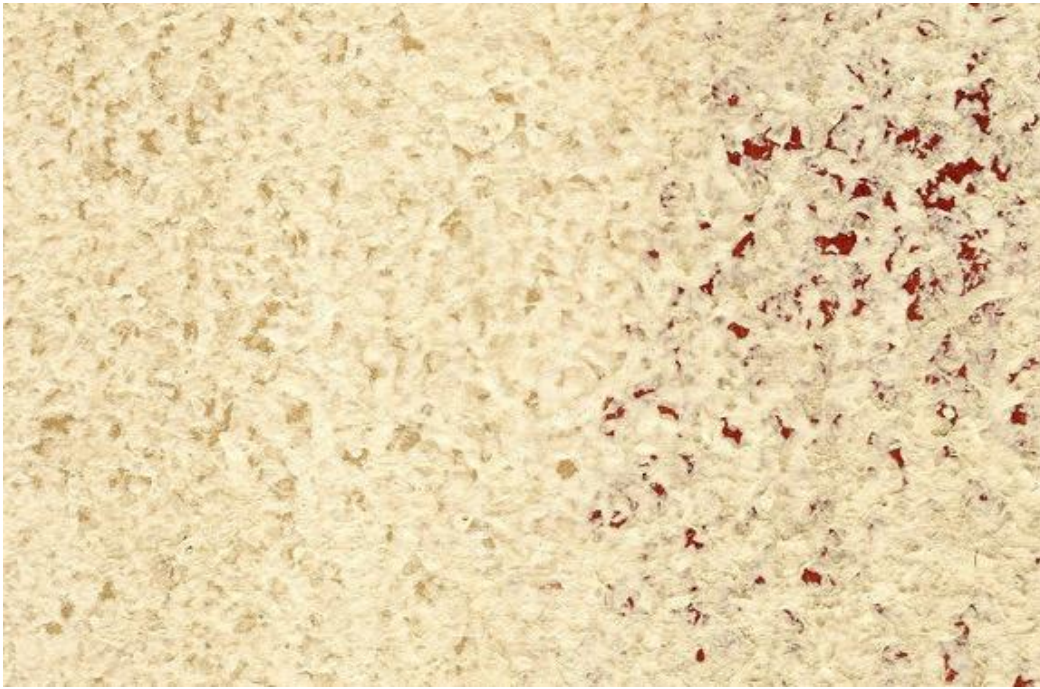
**Figure 22- "Untitled"**

**Maya Romanoff in Meditation**

***Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.***



**Figure 23- "Kimono II"**  
*Image Courtesy of Courtney Kristich, July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.*



**Figure 24- "Medici Fresco"**

**Medici Fresco™ (Pompeian)**

***Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, Taken July 18, 2012, Personal Photograph.***



**Figure 25- "Sarah / Dolly Mixtures"**  
**Linda Beard for Coloroll, flexeo-printed wallpapers, Dolly Mixtures range, 1979.**  
*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*





**Figure 26- "Peacocks"**

Florence Broadhurst design from circa 1975, manufactured in Australia by Florence Broadhurst Wallpapers Pty Ltd, screen print on paper. Museum number L2006/39-1:3.

*Image Courtesy of the Historic Houses Trust website*



**Figure 27- "Japanese Floral" & "Japanese Bamboo"**  
(L) "*Japanese Floral*" [FBW-BO98]; (R) "*Japanese Bamboo*" [FBW-BO76]  
Florence Broadhurst Designs, from the 1970s currently reproduced by Signature Prints in Australia.  
*Images courtesy of Signature Prints website.*



**Figure 28- "Weathered Walls"**

**Photograph of Weathered Walls™**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich and Maya Romanoff Archives, Photograph Taken July 18, 2012.***





**Figure 29- "Willow"**

**Screen print on paper wallpaper from 1975, original design by William Morris in 1874, produced by Osborne & Little Ltd. for Liberty & Co. Museum Number E180-1978.**

*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 30- "Throstle"**

Screen print on paper wallpaper from 1973, original design by an unknown artist for a wallpaper produced by Jeffrey & Co in 1895, produced by Osborne & Little Ltd. Museum Number E1654A-1657-1974.

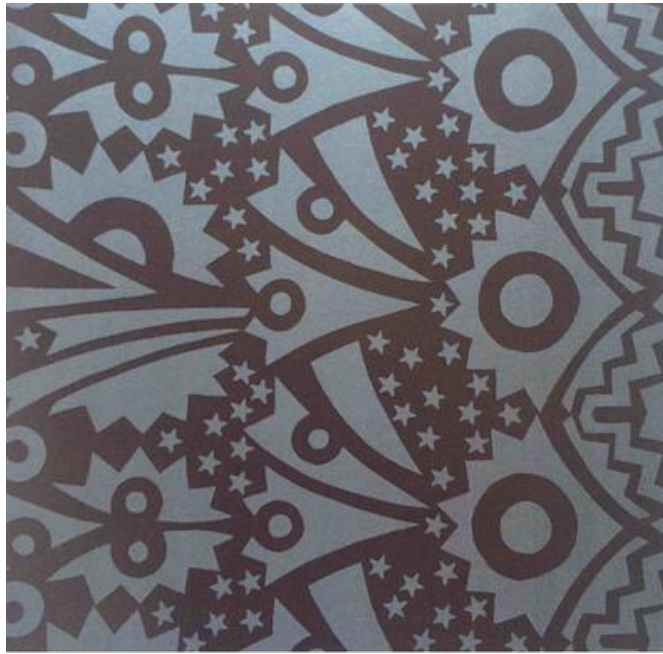
*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 31- "Faltenwurf" ["Shadows-Folds"]**

**Designed by Paul Wunderlich for Marburger Tapetenfabrik in 1971-72, machine printed on paper, part of the X-art Walls series and manufactured in Germany. Museum ID 1992-110-1.**

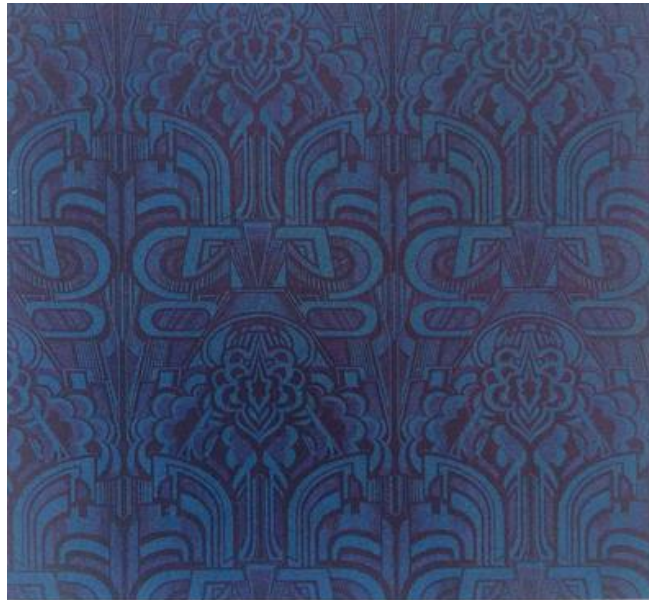
***Image courtesy of the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.***



**Figure 32- "Deco"**

**Screen printed wallpaper by Judith Cash, manufactured by Sanderson in 1971 in the United Kingdom, also part of the Palladio 9 collection.**

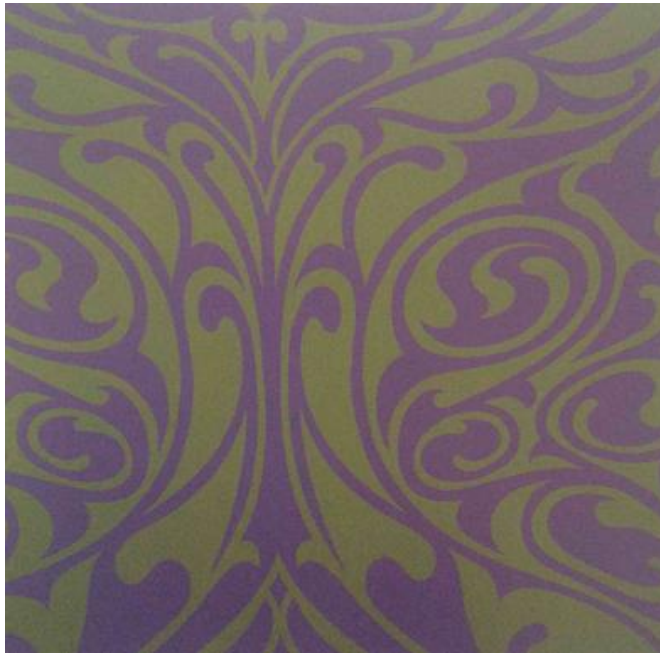
*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*



**Figure 33- "Apollo"**

**Produced by Sanderson as part of the Palladio 9 collection in 1971, screen-printed wallpaper designed by John Wilkinson.**

*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*



**Figure 34- "Gandalf"**

**Produced by Sanderson as part of the Palladio 9 collection in 1971, screen-printed wallpaper designed by David Bartle.**

*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*



**Figure 35- "Barbarella"**  
Designed and manufactured by ICI in 1974, vinyl wallpaper, produced in the United Kingdom.  
*Image Courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Pattern Design.*





**Figure 36- "Great Shibori Enclosure of Movement and Comfort"**

*Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters.*





**Figure 37- "Jewel Satin"**

**Wallcovering from 1988, part of the Jewel Collection**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters.***



**Figure 38- "Jewel Moonstone"**

**Wallcovering from 1988, part of the Jewel Collection**

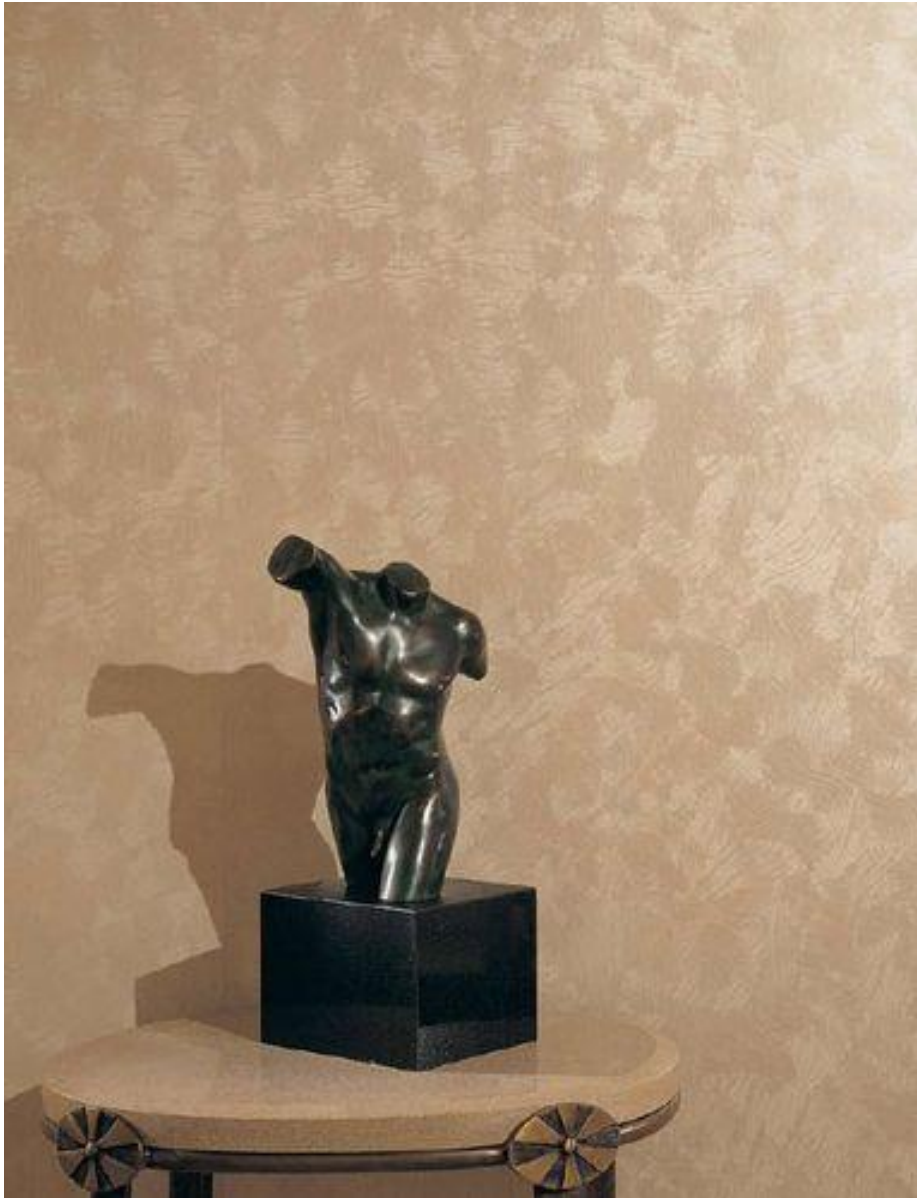
***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters.***



**Figure 39- "Jewel Wave"**

**Wallcovering from 1988, part of the Jewel Collection**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, taken in July 18, 2012 at Maya Romanoff Company headquarters.***



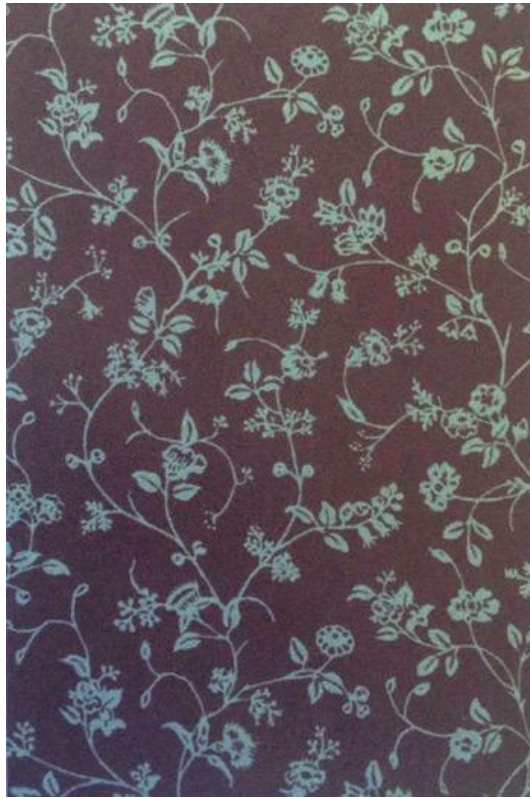
**Figure 40- "Jewel Moonstone Momi"**  
**Wallcovering from 1988 part of the Jewel Collection**  
*Image courtesy of Archipex website.*



**Figure 41- "Jewel Horizon"**

**Wallcovering from 1988, part of the Jewel Collection**

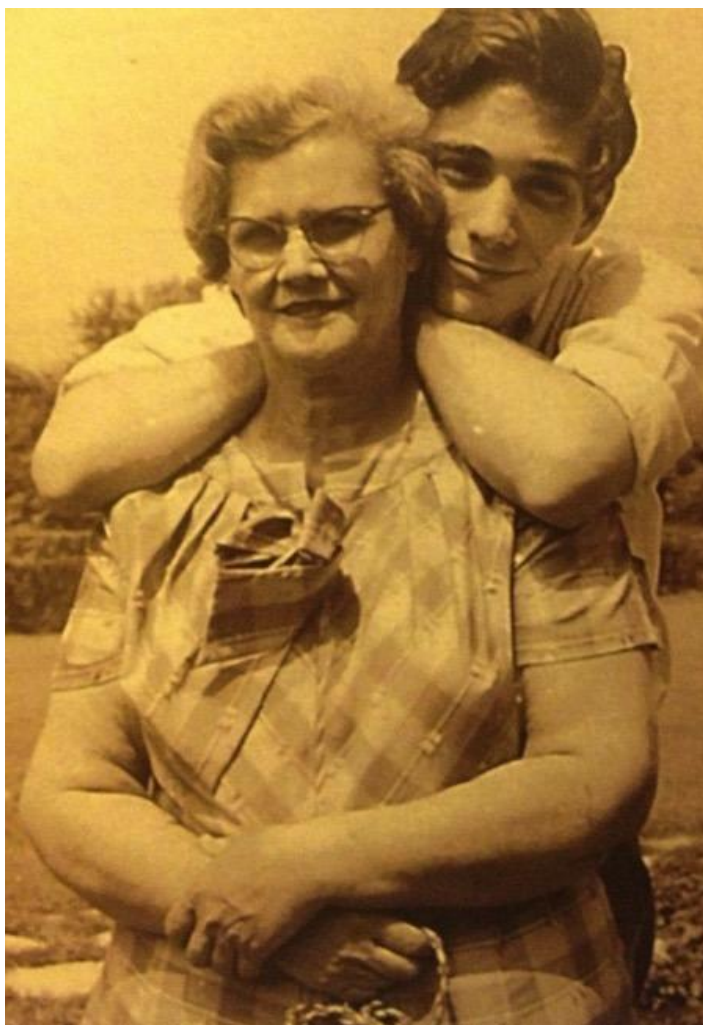
***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, taken in July 18, 2012 at Maya Romanoff company headquarters.***



**Figure 42- "Wild Clematis"**

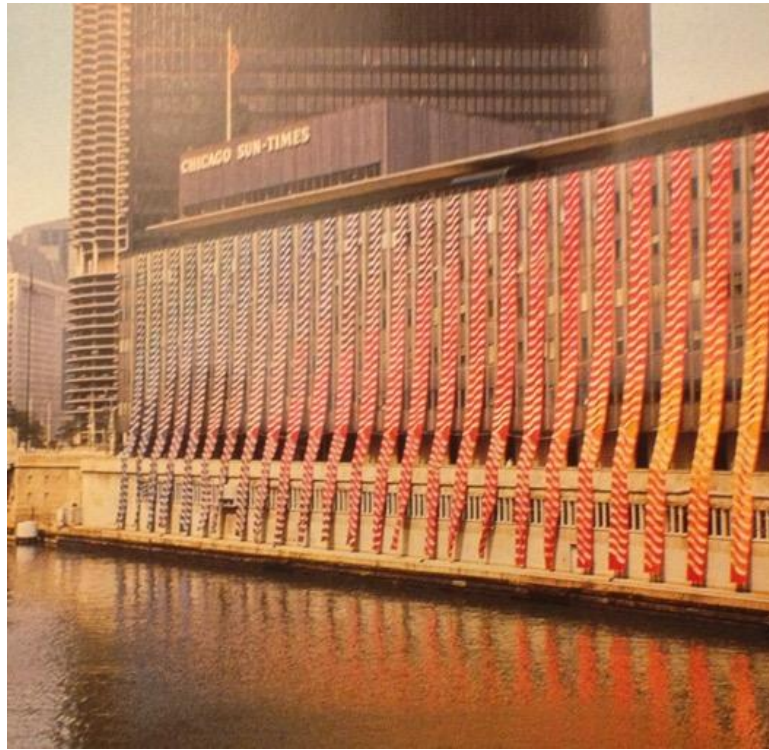
*Image courtesy of Lesley Jackson's Twentieth Century Patterns*





**Figure 43- "*Maya Romanoff with Bess Latham*"**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, personal photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters.***



**Figure 44- "Bess' Sunrise"**

**Maya Romanoff's outdoor installation**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, Personal Photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters.***





**Figure 45- "Southern Isles"**  
**1990 outdoor installation at the Design Center of the Americas Building in Dania Beach Florida in the United States.**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, personal photograph, July 18, 2012, Maya Romanoff company headquarters*



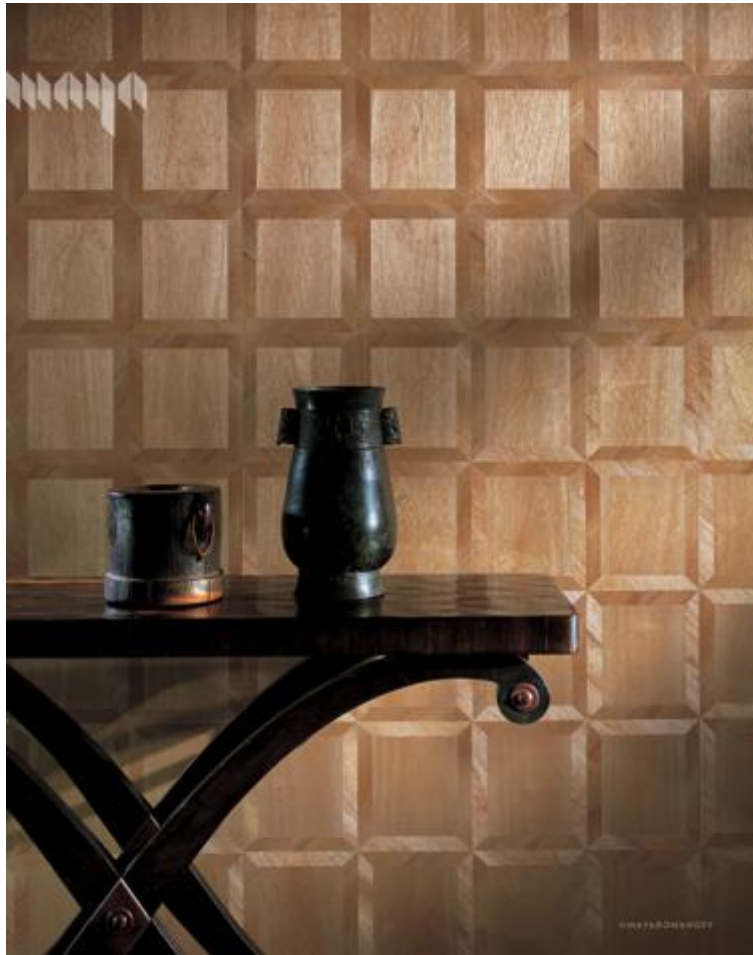
**Figure 46- "Ajiro Chevron"**  
**Maya Romanoff Wallcovering.**  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 47- "Ajiro Marquetry"**  
**Maya Romanoff Wallcovering**  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*

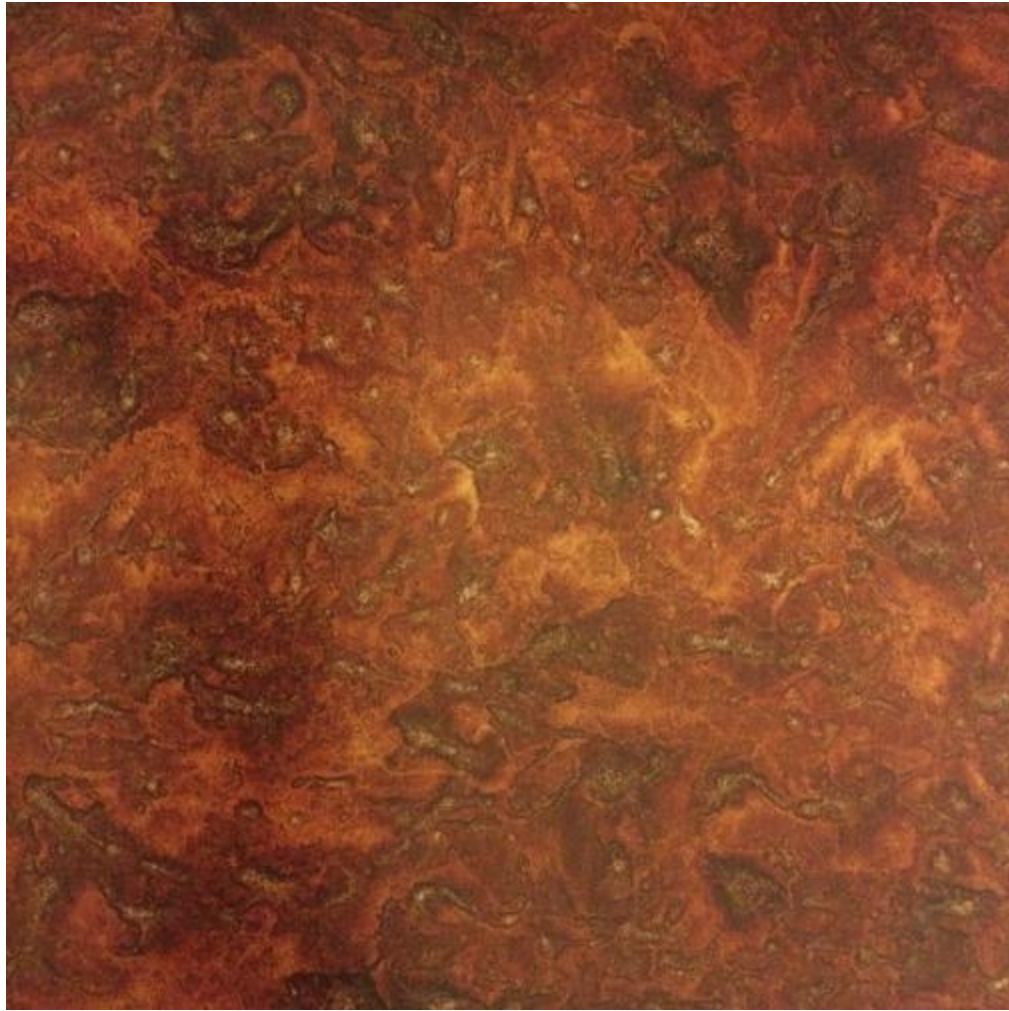


**Figure 48- "Ajiro Sunburst"**  
**Maya Romanoff Wallcovering**  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 49- "Ajiro Coffers"**  
**Maya Romanoff Wallcovering**  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 50- "Patina"**

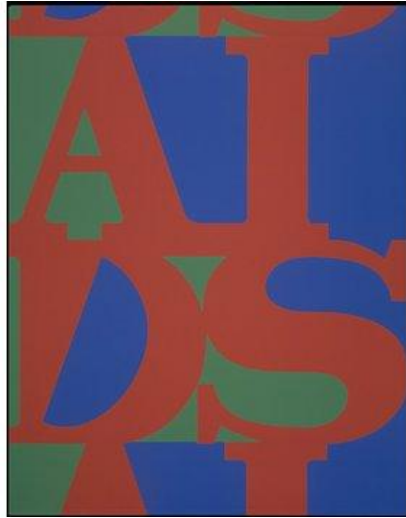
**Maya Romanoff retired wallcovering, a hand painted paper from the early 1990s, pumice sand and dye**  
*Image courtesy of Richard Cahan and Michael Williams' Multifarious: Maya Romanoff's Grand Canvas.*



**Figure 51- "Precious Metals Leaf"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Precious Metals Leaf*, metal leaf, paper, paper backing, gold silver, bronze aluminum, colored with water-based pigments.**

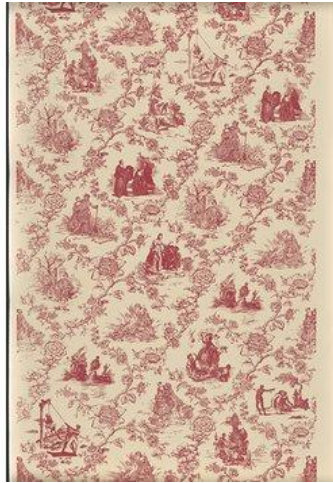
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website.*



**Figure 52- "AIDS Wallpaper"**

Wallpaper, color screen print, part of the Street Poster Project in New York City, early 1990s, made by the General Idea, taken from the Robert Indiana 1964 image. Museum Number E.388-1994.  
*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*





**Figure 53- "*Commemorative Toile*"**

**Wallpaper screen print in red ink, on cloth pasted to paper by Renée Green, made in the Philadelphia Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, PA in the United States in 1992. Museum Number E.2320-1997.**

*Image courtesy of the © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



**Figure 54- "Prunus"**  
Fromental wallcovering painted with embroidery, dyed silk with paper backing  
*Image courtesy of the Fromental website, © 2015 Fromental*



**Figure 55- "Bismarck"**  
**Fromental wallcovering**  
*Image courtesy of the Fromental website, © 2015 Fromental.*



**Figure 56- "China Trade"**  
**Fromental wallcovering, in color qing hua, reference number c056-01, hand painted scenic wallpaper on tea-**  
**paper.**  
*Image courtesy of the Fromental website, © 2015 Fromental*



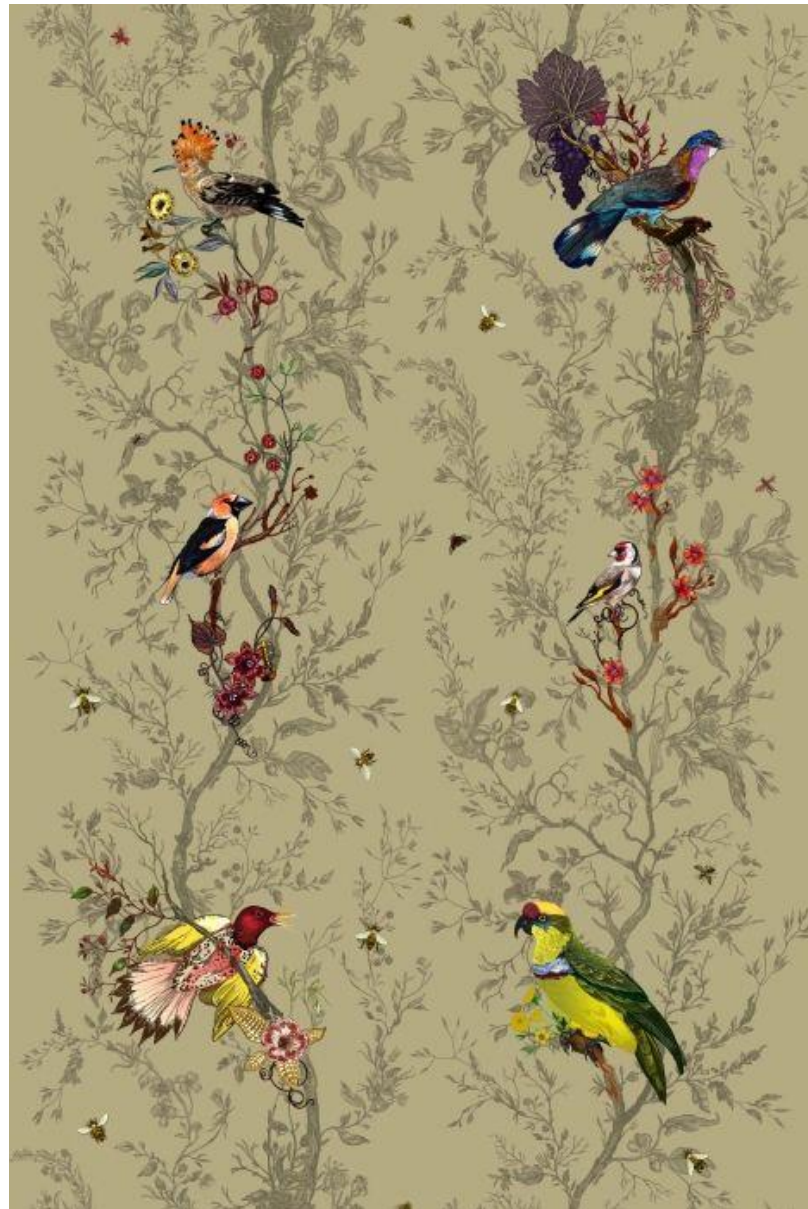
**Figure 57- "Glasgow Toile"**  
Timorous Beasties wallcovering  
*Image courtesy of the Timorous Beasties website, ©2015 TIMOROUS BEASTIES*





**Figure 58- "London Toile"**  
**Timorous Beasties Wallcovering**

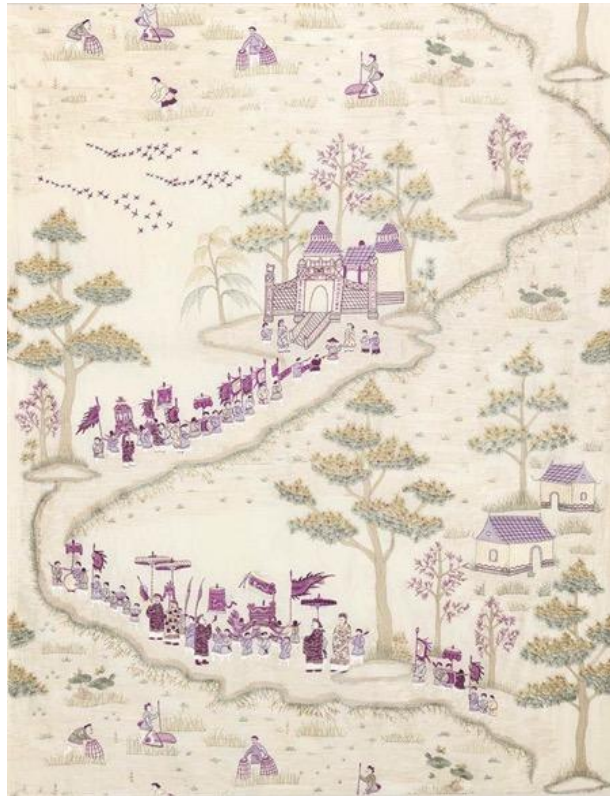
*Image courtesy of the Timorous Beasties website, © 2015 TIMOROUS BEASTIES*



**Figure 59- "Birds n' Bees"**

**Timorous Beasties Wallcovering**

*Image courtesy of the Timorous Beasties website, © 2015 TIMOROUS BEASTIES*

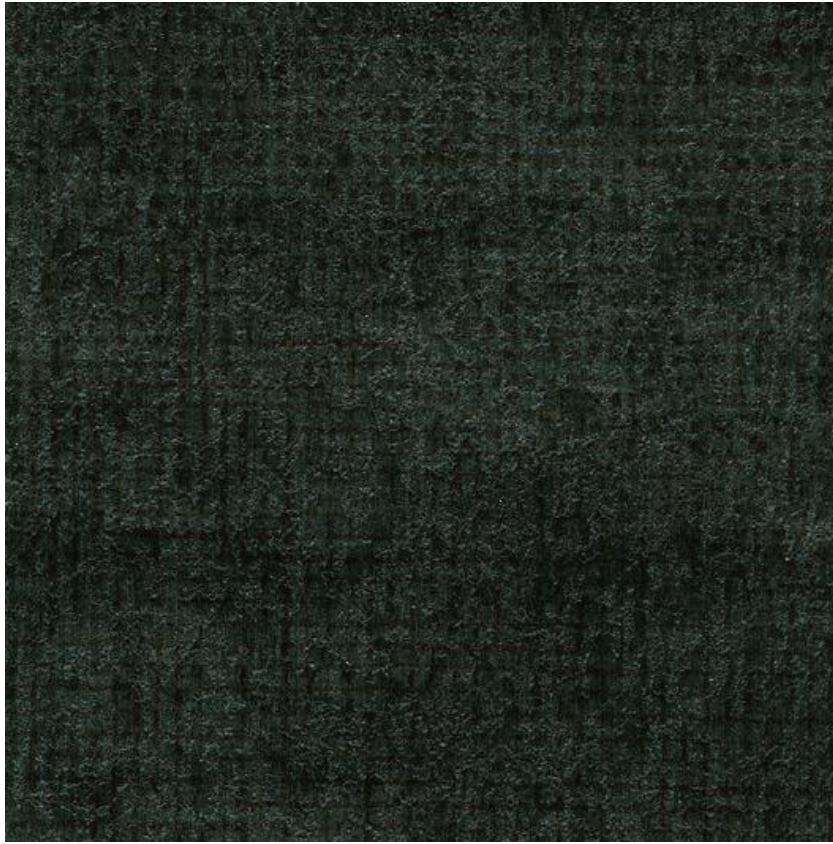


**Figure 60- "Cathay Parade"**

Nina Campbell for Osborne & Little, *Cathay Parade*, digital print wallpaper on paper, manufacturer Osborne & Little©

*Image courtesy of the Osborne & Little website.*





**Figure 61- "*Monet's River*"**

**Roger Thomas for Koroseal, *Monet's River*, two dimensional, vertical surface vinyl wallpaper in Bayou, Non-Woven, The Roger Thomas Collection® for Koroseal**

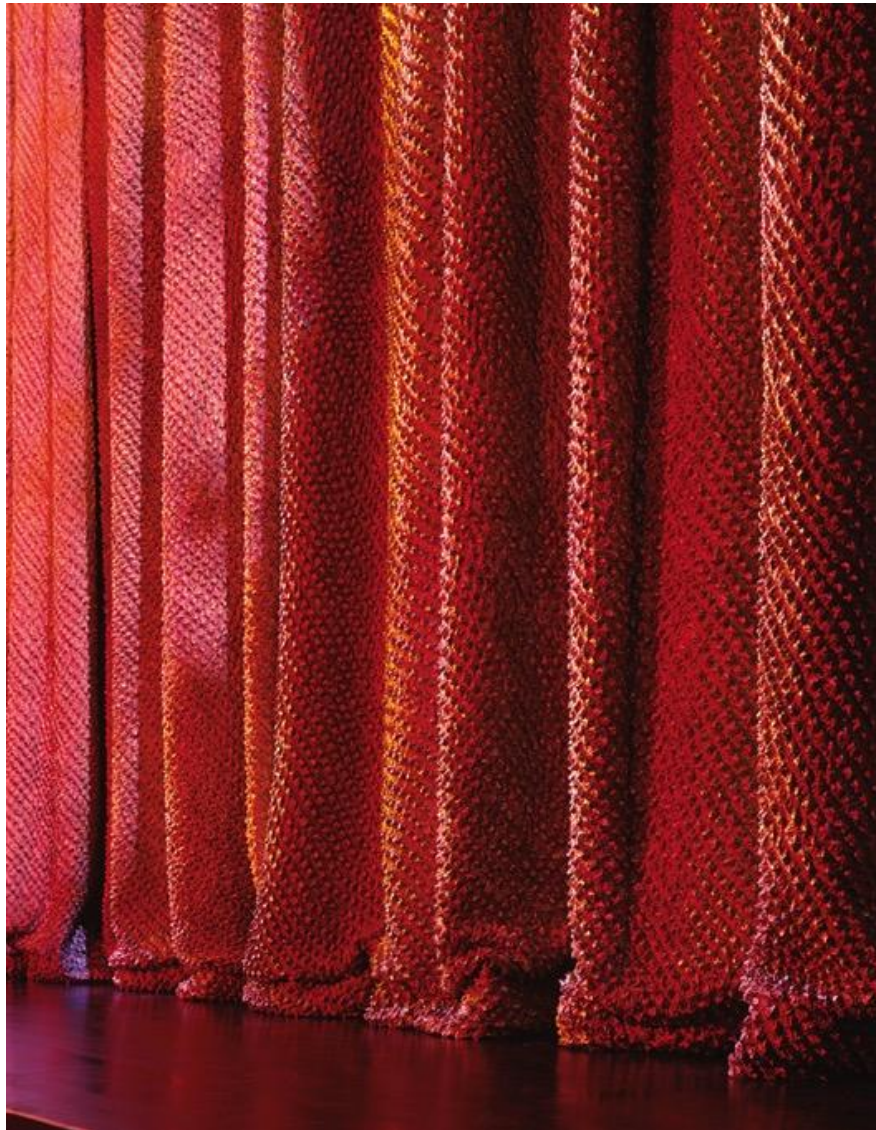
*Image courtesy of the Koroseal website.*



**Figure 62- "*Harris Theatre*"**

**Maya Romanoff's curtain design at the Harris Theatre. Harris Theatre, Chicago, Illinois**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 63- "Curtain"**  
Curtain made in Japanese tradition, designer Maya Romanoff, manufactured by Maya Romanoff employees,  
Harris Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, 2003  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 64- "Beadazzled"**

**Image of the flexible glass bead wallcovering, hand inlay of glass beads composed with adhesives, designed by Joyce and Maya Romanoff in 2003.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website.*





**Figure 65- "Beadazzled Leaf"**

**Maya Romanoff, Beadazzled Leaf, glass beads, metallic leaf, loose repeats of brushstrokes in metallic leaf, adhesive backing, by the Maya Romanoff Corporation.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 66- "Bedazzled Leaf Rain"**  
Wallcovering, glass beads, non-woven backing paper with adhesives, designed by the Maya Romanoff Corporation.  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 67- "Beadazzled Bijou"**

Wallcovering, glass beads, non-woven backing paper with adhesives, designed by the Maya Romanoff Corporation.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 68- "Beadazzled Bauble"**

Wallcovering composed of enlarged standard Beadazzled™ glass beads, nonwoven backing, adhesives, designed and manufactured by the Maya Romanoff Corporation

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 69- "Beadazzled"**

Flexible glass bead wallcovering, hand inlay of glass beads composed with adhesives, designed by Joyce and Maya Romanoff in 2003.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 70- "Beadazzled Geode"**

Wallcovering, glass beads, nonwoven backing, and adhesives, designed and manufactured by the Maya Romanoff Corporation.

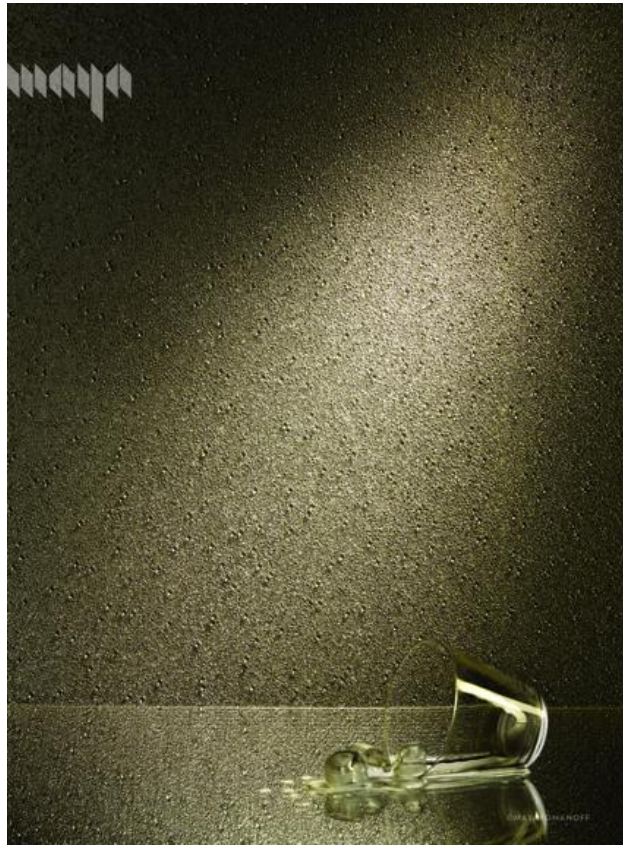
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 71- "Beadazzled Relief Marquetry"**

Wallcovering, glass beads, nonwoven backing, adhesives, designed and manufactured by the Maya Romanoff Corporation

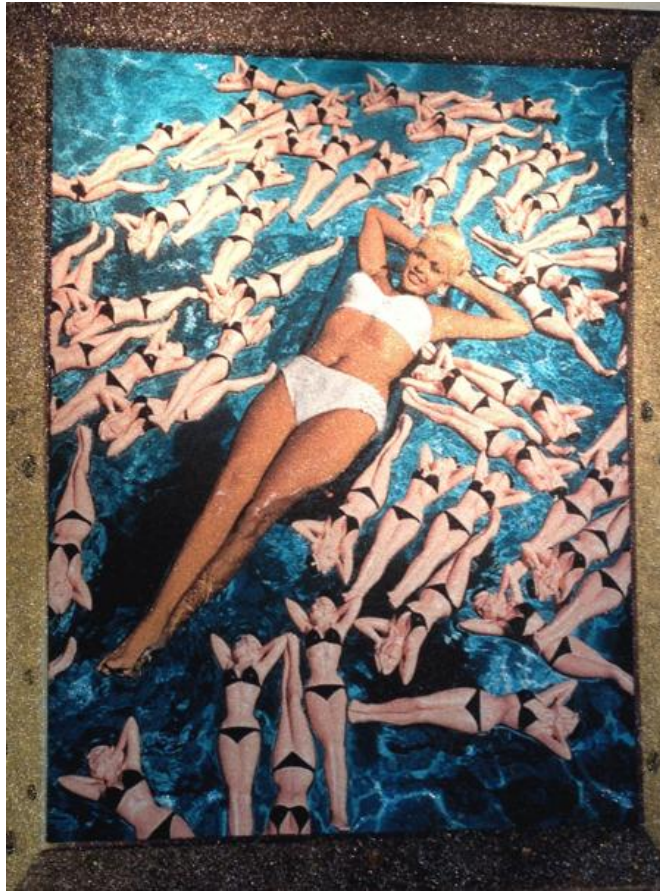
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 72- "Beadazzled Sparkle Geode"**

Wallcovering composed of "sparkle" and glass beads, nonwoven backing, adhesives, designed and manufactured by the Maya Romanoff Corporation.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 73- "Jayne Mansfield"**

Custom mural of actress Jayne Mansfield using Beadazzled™, designed by Roger Thomas for Joyce Romanoff, located in the Skokie, Illinois headquarters.

*Image courtesy of Courtney Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 74- "Jayne Mansfield"**

Close up of custom mural of actress Jayne Mansfield using Beadazzled™, designed by Roger Thomas for Joyce Romanoff, located in the Skokie, Illinois headquarters.

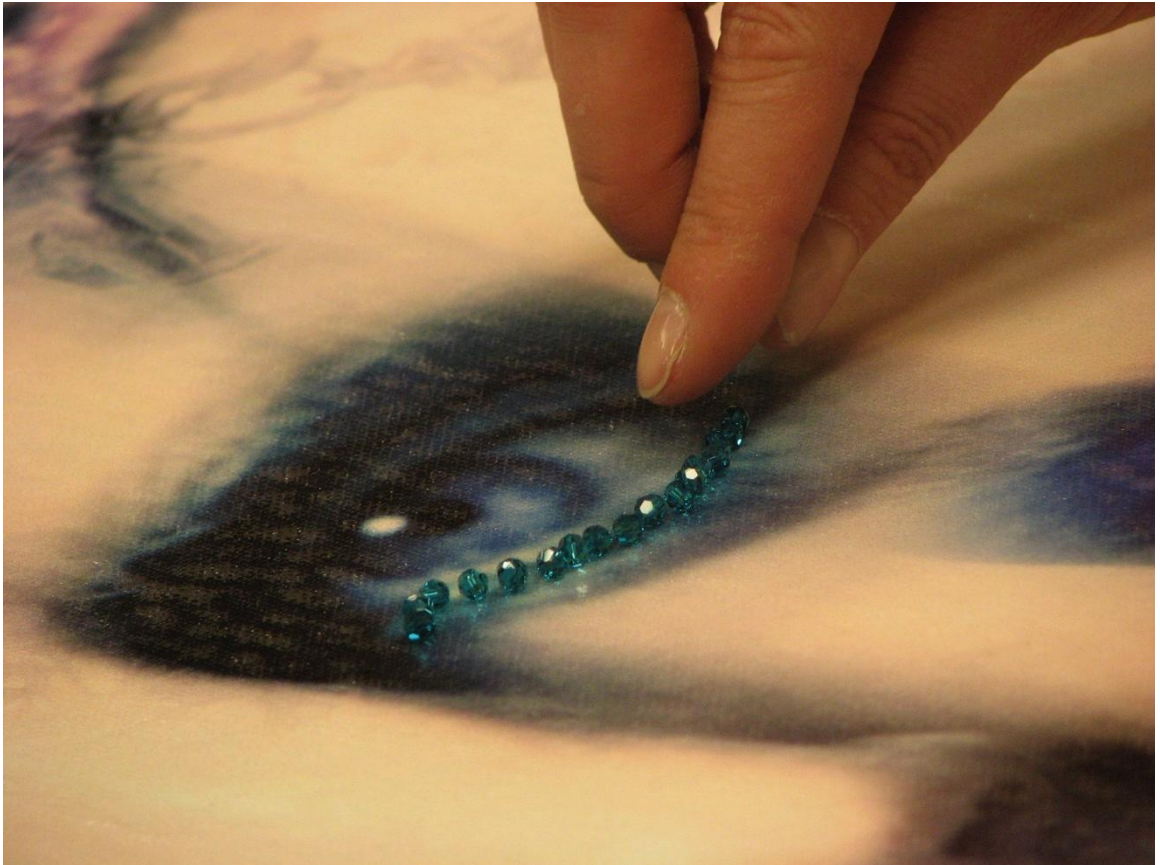
*Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph, taken in 2012.*



**Figure 75- "Audrey Hepburn"**

Custom mural of actress Audrey Hepburn using Beadazzled™, designed by Roger Thomas for Joyce Romanoff, located in undisclosed location.

*Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph taken in 2012.*



**Figure 76- "Untitled"**  
**Beadazzled™ Mural Process at the Maya Romanoff factory, provided by Maya Romanoff employee.**  
*Image Courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 77- "Untitled"**  
**Beadazzled™ Mural Process at the Maya Romanoff factory, provided by Maya Romanoff employee.**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph.*



**Figure 78- "Untitled"**  
**Beadazzled™ Mural Process at the Maya Romanoff factory, provided by Maya Romanoff employee.**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 79- "Untitled"**  
**Beadazzled™ Mural Process at the Maya Romanoff factory, provided by Maya Romanoff employee.**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*



**Figure 80- "Beadazzled Custom Mural"**

Maya Romanoff, *Untitled Beadazzled™ Custom Mural*, n.d., glass beads, Swarovski North American Headquarters, <http://www.mayaromanoff.com/product/beadazzled-custom-mural>.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 81- "Untitled"**  
**Beadazzled™ Mural Process at the Maya Romanoff factory, provided by Maya Romanoff employee.**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 82- "Mother of Pearl"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Mother of Pearl*™, genuine Capiz shell, Capiz shell veneer on non-woven paper backed with adhesive.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 83- "*Mother of Pearl Aphrodite*"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Mother of Pearl Aphrodite*<sup>™</sup>, rounded Capiz shells, veneer on non-woven paper backed with adhesive.**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph***



**Figure 84- "Mother of Pearl Chevron"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Mother of Pearl Chevron*<sup>™</sup>, made with stain-resistant coating, Capiz shell veneer on non-woven paper backed with adhesive.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 85- "*Flexi-Mother of Pearl Mosaic*"**

Maya Romanoff, *Flexi-Mother of Pearl Mosaic*™, stain-resistant coating, Capiz shell veneer on non-woven paper backed with adhesive.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 86- "Mother of Pearl Marquetry"**

Maya Romanoff, *Mother of Pearl Marquetry*™, stain-resistant coating, Capiz shell veneer on non-woven paper backed with adhesive.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 87- "Tremolo"**

**Roger Thomas for Maya Romanoff, *Tremolo*<sup>TM</sup>, Vinyl embossed with metallic pigments.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 88- "Moon Lake"**

**Roger Thomas for Maya Romanoff, *Moon Lake*™, cheesecloth overlaid on paper backing, colored and screen-printed by hand.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 89- "Stitched Vertical"**  
David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff, *Stitched Vertical*™, hand-dyed paper, tone-on-tone vertical stitching  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 90- "Stitched Horizontal"**

David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff, *Stitched Horizontal*™, hand-dyed paper, tone-on-tone horizontal stitching  
Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website



**Figure 91- "Stitched II"**  
David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff, *Stitched II*<sup>TM</sup>, vinyl.  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 92- "Blanket Zig Zag"**

**David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff, *Blanket Zig Zag*<sup>TM</sup>, 80% wool, 20% polyamide, acrylic thread, non-woven polyester backing.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 93- "Blanket Yarn & Stitch"**

David Rockwell for Maya Romanoff, *Blanket Yarn & Stitch*™, 80% wool, 20% polyamide, acrylic thread, non-woven polyester backing.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 94- "Anniversary Collection Snowflake"**

Maya Romanoff, *Anniversary Collection Snowflake*™, virgin pulp-based clay-coated white paper, water-based pigments, hand-dyed.

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 95- "Anniversary Collection Crystal"**

**Maya Romanoff, Anniversary Collection Crystal™, virgin pulp-based clay-coated white paper, water-based pigments, hand-dyed.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 96- "Anniversary Collection Half Plaid"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Anniversary Collection Half Plaid*™, virgin pulp-based clay-coated white paper, water-based pigments, hand-dyed.**

*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*



**Figure 97- "Island Weaves"**  
**Maya Romanoff, *Island Weaves*™, woven paper, jute, paper backed and post-consumer recycled materials,**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 98- "*Sheer Hemp*"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Sheer Hemp*<sup>™</sup>, recycled content backed on Kraft paper, hemp fiber and Lakota paper with polyester thread, water-based dyes without metal, processed, knotted, and spun by hand, produced by hand-loom, and air dried, (Wallcovering is no longer in production).**

***Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph***



**Figure 99- "Knotted Hemp"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Knotted Hemp*<sup>™</sup>, recycled content backed on Kraft paper, composed of hemp fiber and Lakota paper with polyester thread, water-based dyes without metal, processed, knotted, and spun by hand, produced by hand-loom, and air dried.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*



**Figure 100- "Braided Hemp"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Braided Hemp*<sup>TM</sup>, recycled content backed on Kraft paper, composed of hemp fiber and Lakota paper with polyester thread, water-based dyes without metal, processed, knotted, and spun by hand, produced by hand-loom, and air dried.**

*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*





**Figure 101- "*Meditations Mantra*"**

**Maya Romanoff, *Meditations Mantra*™, Lakota paper, mica, adhesives, water-based dyes.**

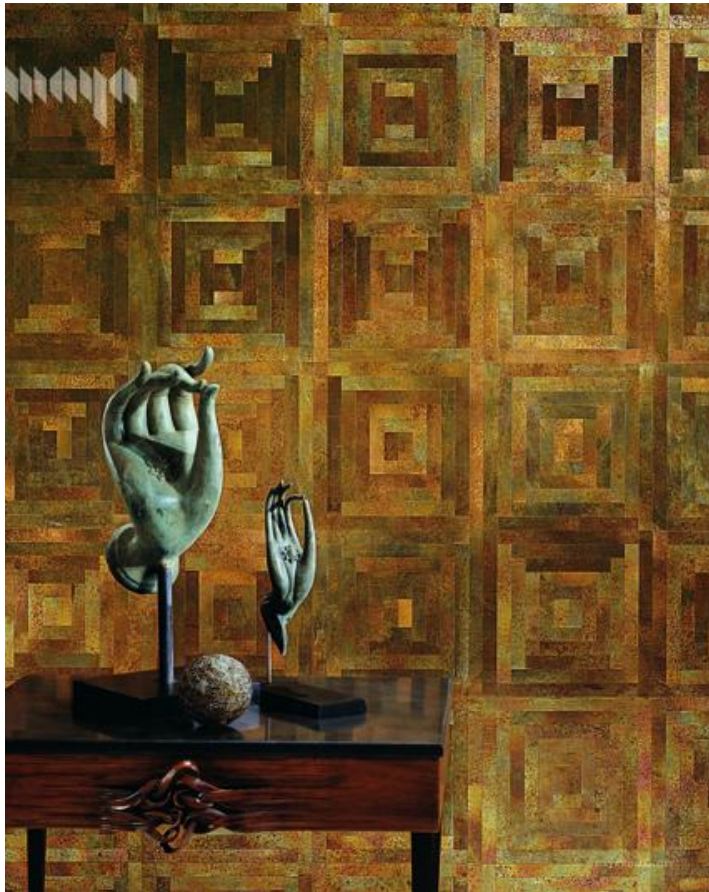
***Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph***



**Figure 102- "*True Metals Basketweave*"**  
**Maya Romanoff, *True Metals Basketweave*<sup>™</sup>, recycled aluminum, copper or brass, recycled paper backing,**  
***Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph***



**Figure 103- "*True Metals Trapezoid*"**  
**Maya Romanoff, *True Metals Trapezoid*™, recycled aluminum, copper or brass, recycled paper backing,**  
***Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph***



**Figure 104- "True Metals Coffers"**  
**Maya Romanoff, *True Metals Coffers*<sup>TM</sup>, recycled aluminum, copper or brass, recycled paper backing,**  
*Image courtesy of Courtney Elizabeth Kristich, personal photograph*





**Figure 105- "Wallmica"**  
**Maya Romanoff Wallcovering.**  
*Image courtesy of the Maya Romanoff website*

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