

## **SOCIAL PATTERNS**

Pretty as a picture...Landscape is frequently considered in Western societies as merely the backdrop against which human activity occurs that alters and consumes its natural resources. In this way, it's similar to wallpaper as an important but often overlooked environmental influence.

Work typically associated with women, such as childbirth and childcare and frankly, any activity that implies care, is generally discounted but routinely expected. Not so curious that care-based occupations top the list of essential services. And yet many of those essential workers, mostly women and people of color, are compensated at a lower rate than other higher status professions that, at least in terms of today's pandemic are not, it seems, essential.

Does anyone see a pattern here?

The Pattern and Decoration Movement (also referred to as P&D) of the mid 1970's was a response to a Westernized, male-dominated aesthetic that diminished non-Western approaches and the feminine. P&D artists identified and used patterns found on common items such as fabric, quilts, and wallpaper to create new levels of consideration and value. However, while artists such as Miriam Schapiro, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Rahway Zakanitch and Valerie Jaudon were busy erasing the line previously drawn between the fine or "high" and decorative arts there was criticism leveled at the colorful and upbeat images. Were they relevant enough, feminist enough or were they (gasp) just pretty?

Flash forward forty-plus years. Many contemporary artists work with decorative tropes and devices to create images that resonate and respond to the world around them and to create compelling content. My own work falls into this category; I use the appeal of pattern to invite the viewer in for a challenging conversation. Call it "P&D 2.0."

We don't often recognize the organizational systems in nature that have a scope and duration outside of our generation's memory or lifespan. Tallmadge Doyle's mixed media prints use the language of pattern to bring awareness to the plight of the environment. The Eugene artist explores "...ecological shifts as a result of rising sea levels and animal migrations..." through delineated silhouettes of natural forms that are rhythmically overlaid and contrast with cartographic elements used to map scientific information. Doyle creates tension between the methodologies and tools used to quantify organic subjects and the subjects themselves. Simultaneity of time is experienced through the orchestration of the visual layers as a non-linear mapping system that allows her to juxtapose "...a current reality with references to geological periods in the distant past and into the projected future of rapid climate change." Beautiful and cautionary.

Glide, OR artist, Renee Couture's project-based practice currently considers the romance of motherhood and parenting. I remember feeling failure and shame as a new mother who wasn't always thrilled with her little bundle of joy. Couture cites a statistic (more patterns) "...1 in 7 women nationally experience symptoms of postpartum depression (PPD)." She courageously digs into and documents the emotions surrounding her own motherhood and PPD, and appropriates culturally associated patterning such as a pink, floral swaddling cloth, to express her own entangled emotions. Some of those feelings described by the artist include "...suffocation and erasure, exhaustion, incompetence, sadness, anger, numbness, and disconnection from my body." Sound familiar? The degree of expected self-sacrifice nearly erased me as a person. Don't get me wrong—I love my kid, but intense love for one's child is not exempt from the challenge of raising a human being in a society invested in false narratives.

Pattern—with a purpose.

575 Words

**Renee Couture Image Information:**

Title: My Life Is Plagued By Should

Media: Photography

Size: 30" x 60"

Year: 2019

Renee Couture website:

<https://www.rcoutureart.com/>

**Tallmadge Doyle Image Information:**

Title: High Tides Rising XXXI

Media: Woodcut, etching, India ink, watercolor

Size: 24x18

Year: 2019

Tallmadge Doyle website:

<https://tallmadgedoyle.com/>

- Pattern & Decoration Movement Information:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattern\\_and\\_Decoration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattern_and_Decoration)

<https://hyperallergic.com/446327/the-pattern-and-decoration-zeitgeist/>

- Post Partum Depression Statistics and Resources:

<https://www.postpartumdepression.org/resources/statistics/>

TALLMADGE DOYLE - High Tides Rising XXXI



RENEE COUTURE - My Life Is Plagued By Should

