Annotated bibliography

Critical Question:

How can traditional *Anatolian kilim motifs* be reinterpreted in contemporary contexts while respecting their cultural origins and adapting to modern aesthetic and communicative demands?

Benjamin, W. (1936) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. New York: Schocken Books.

Benjamin's reflections on the loss of "*aura*" in mechanically reproduced art resonate deeply with the transition that traditional kilims have undergone. A key characteristic of handwoven kilims is their imperfections – subtle mistakes, unique asymmetries, and variations that appear across the pattern. These "*flaws*" are not errors but marks of human touch, capturing the individuality of each weaver and embedding in every piece. However, as the craft has modernised, machines have taken over much of the production, and with them, the imperfections that gave these works their personality have vanished.

The notion of "*aura*" – the authenticity tied to an artwork's unique time and place of creation – has been invaluable in understanding this shift. Today, even if the same original designs, layouts, and materials are used, machine-made kilims lack the irregularities that handwoven pieces naturally have. This mechanisation process strips the kilims of a certain intangible value, a loss that aligns with Benjamin's observations about art becoming detached from its roots in the pursuit of mass production and replication.

The transition from handwoven to machine-made kilims symbolises a broader narrative of tradition yielding to modernity, where efficiency replaces individuality, and perfection erases personality.

Ording, P. (2019) *99 Variations on a Proof.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Like Ording's exploration of diverse methods and techniques in approaching a single proof, I have experimented with various approaches in my project to transform the kilim into a digital wallpaper. From the outset, I have aimed to reinterpret the traditional kilim through varied methods, creating 100 iterations with this philosophy in mind. In the initial stages, I manipulated the kilim using digital techniques, sometimes blending with coding and other times utilising pixelation. I explored mathematical methods, useing polygonal transformations and the kaleidoscope technique to break down and reassemble the wallpapers.

Later, I decided to extract individual symbols from the kilim and work on them one by one. In doing so, I considered different materials and techniques, embracing contemporary materials and methods to render these motifs. This exploration allowed me to combine traditional patterns with modern, experimental approaches, adding new dimensions to each symbol and motif.

Inspired by the various trials in Ording's book, I have also incorporated some experimental kilim and motif attempts in this booklet as text-based elements. These explorations offer an additional layer to my project, reflecting Ording's spirit of iteration and variation.

Pater, R. (2016) *The Politics of Design: A (Not So) Global Design Manual for Visual Communication.* Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.

In The Politics of Design, Ruben Pater discusses the cultural and political values that influence visual communication, asserting that design is never truly neutral. This perspective is significant for my exploration of Anatolian kilim motifs, where external reinterpretations often shift their original meanings. Pater suggests that all design "reinforces or subverts" existing structures (p. 130), aligning with the need to approach culturally significant symbols with care, as they carry deep historical and cultural weight.

Pater also touches upon themes like Cultural Thievery (p. 126), where he examines the risks of reappropriating cultural motifs without complete understanding. He draws attention to how cultural symbols can easily be misrepresented or stripped of their original significance when borrowed and used out of context. On the other hand, in the "Learning from Cave Paintings" part (p. 144), Pater reflects on some of the earliest symbolic forms used in human history, underscoring the value in respecting cultural symbols that, like these ancient forms, contain a rich shared human narrative.

This broader critique within The Politics of Design highlights the responsibility of using cultural symbols thoughtfully, reminding me of the importance of maintaining a balance between honouring the original significance of kilim motifs and reimagining them for today's visual language.

Baudenbacher, B.K. (2022) *Somewhere Yes: The Search for Belonging in a World Shaped by Branding.* New York: Fast Company Press.

Baudenbacher explores human identities, cultures, and symbols, describing them as a "complex, intricately woven structure". This analogy resonates deeply with my project on Anatolian kilims, where each motif and pattern forms part of a collective cultural memory. Just as Baudenbacher illustrates society's interconnectedness through symbols and shared experiences, kilim motifs represent centuries of stories, beliefs, and shared identity within Anatolian heritage.

Baudenbacher further highlights the role of choice in self-definition by noting, "We have the power to create our identities instead of passively accepting pre-established ones" (Baudenbacher, 2022, p. 64). This perspective aligns with my approach to reinterpreting kilims in the contemporary context. By reimagining these symbols, I aim to honour their origins while allowing for new, self-defined narratives that speak to today's audiences. In doing so, I am inspired by Baudenbacher's notion of identity as something dynamic an adaptable.

In discussing symbols, Baudenbacher emphasizes that they often step in "when language falls short," serving as a powerful visual shorthand (Baudenbacher, 2022, p. 113). Kilim motifs function similarly, transcending language and culture, conveying meaning through form and pattern. My project leverages this universal language, using familiar motifs to bridge past and present, tradition and modernity. I view each reinterpreted kilim pattern as a symbol of change and continuity.

Ahmed, F. (2014) *Deconstructed Carpets.* [Exhibition] Dubai: Cuadro Gallery. September 14 - November 30.

I have admired Faig Ahmed's work since my initial interest in kilims began. He blends heritage with modernity. In his projects, he radically reinterprets traditional Azerbaijani carpets by distorting, melting, or glitching their designs. In the *Deconstructed Carpets* [↓], Ahmed "*deconstructs*" the rug, separating it layer by layer and presenting it as fragmented forms. This method invites the viewer to engage with every component as an essential piece of the whole, enhancing the perception of each motif's individual significance.

Ahmed's approach has significantly influenced my exploration of kilim motifs. By isolating each motif, he encourages viewers to see them as independent elements with unique narratives that can be preserved or reinterpreted. This approach aligns with my project, where I aim to present each kilim motif as a symbol with historical depth that remains relevant in contemporary contexts.

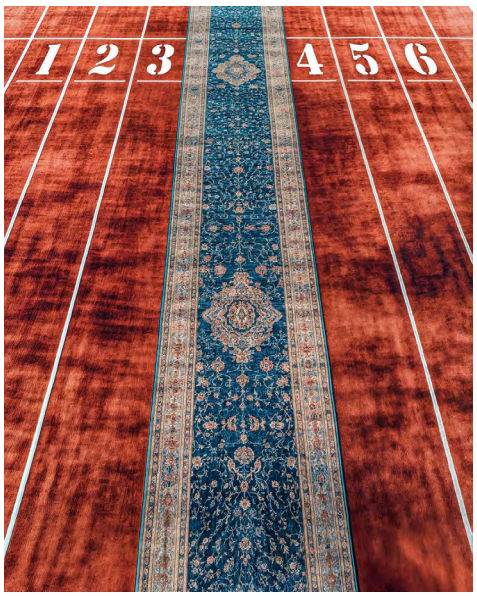


His process has guided me to view each kilim motif as a bridge between past and present, preserving cultural heritage while allowing new interpretations that connect traditional meaning with modern relevance.

Mekawi, C. (2023-2024) *Carpet Court, Carpet Aquatics and Athletics, Olympics Edition.* [Digital Art, AI Installation]

Chafic Mekawi's Carpet installations during the 2024 Paris Olympics reimagine traditional Middle Eastern carpet motifs in contemporary athletic settings, like tennis courts, to create a unique intersection between heritage and modern sport.While traditional carpets are familiar to us, seeing them outside their usual context evokes a different feeling. Mekawi uses generative AI to position these carpets in unexpected complex environments, achieving something normally challenging to imagine or implement. Carpet Aquatics [↙], Carpet Athletics [↘].







Mekawi's work inspired me to envision traditional kilims beyond their customary uses and settings, encouraging me to explore how they might exist in contemporary contexts. This approach aligns with my own project goals, as I aim to adapt kilims to environments that challenge the viewer's usual perceptions. Through his project, Mekawi demonstrates that traditional design's power lies in preservation and its ability to transcend boundaries and find relevance in new environments. His installations remind me that kilims can resonate with today's audiences by bridging past and present.

Carpet Court [↖]
Mekawi, C. (2024)

Line of Enquiry

This project explores how traditional Anatolian kilims can be reimagined within contemporary settings. Initially, I experimented with photo manipulation techniques on a reference kilim, exploring coding and interactive methods. This process evolved into extracting individual motifs and reimagining them one at a time using contemporary materials and techniques, aiming to evoke new emotions.

My objective is to examine the historical significance of these motifs and how they resonate within today's cultural landscape. This approach seeks to create a refreshed motif set that balances traditional narratives with contemporary Anatolian values. Ultimately, the goal is a cohesive guide that enhances understanding and appreciation of kilim motifs, making their stories accessible for modern audiences.

Inspired by artists like Faig Ahmed and Chafic Mekawi, and informed by theoretical insights from Benjamin, Ording, Keefer, and others, this project positions kilim motifs as adaptable elements bridging tradition and modernity. Benjamin's reflections on reproduction highlight the importance of cultural integrity in transformation. Ording's iterative approach to exploring concepts guides my experimentation with motifs, while Keefer's views on symbols reinforce the idea of kilims as visual narratives. Together, these influences shape the way I approach kilims as cultural symbols that connect the past with the present.