Line of Enquiry

How can Anatolian kilim motifs be critically examined, deconstructed, and recontextualised in ways that preserve their cultural significance while enabling their visual and conceptual adaptation for contemporary design applications?

This project investigates how these motifs function as structured visual languages rather than static ornamental patterns. Through research into traditional usage, grid systems, production techniques, and pattern-making principles, the project examines how they have historically conveyed meaning and how they can be adapted for new design contexts.

By engaging in motif deconstruction, digital manipulation, and rematerialisation, the study explores how these symbols can be transformed using transparent, metallic, and textural surfaces, questioning their conventional representations. Additionally, it includes a new set of symbols developed in response to the ways kilims are used today, as well as the changing social practices and visual expressions of contemporary Anatolian culture.

While this expanded visual system builds upon tradition, it remains open-ended, encouraging diverse interpretations by both kilim artists and designers. Rather than imposing a rigid framework, the project provides a structured yet adaptable foundation for future reinterpretations.

The final work will take shape as both a reference book and an interactive digital platform, combining research, experimental design approaches, and practical applications to create a valuable resource for those engaging with Anatolian motifs.

Project Proposal

This project explores Anatolian kilim motifs as evolving design elements rather than static patterns. While deeply rooted in tradition, their meanings have become fragmented over time. The project aims to bridge historical significance with contemporary applications, making these motifs accessible and adaptable for designers.

Building on previous explorations of motif deconstruction, digital manipulation, and rematerialisation, the next phase focuses on developing a reference book and an interactive digital platform. These will serve as practical design tools that foster reinterpretation while maintaining cultural integrity.

Target Audience

This project is aimed at *designers engaging with Turkish heritage and identity.*

- Turkish designers seeking structured ways to incorporate cultural narratives into their work.
- International designers interested in heritage-based design, symbolism, and cross-cultural applications.

Audience Engagement & Deliverables

Interviews & Workshops	→	Engaging designers in discussions and experimental reinterpretations.
Reference Book	→	A structured guide with historical insights, motif reinterpretations, and practical applications.
Interactive Platform	→	A space for continued exploration and designer contributions.

Annotated bibliography [3]

Akan, E. (2006-2010) Grandbazaar Sofa, Big Iznik, Hadji Bowl, Morphing Beads and Rahle *in Turkish Reforms Collection.* [Furniture/Product Design]

Erdem Akan's "*Turkish Reforms*" collection challenges the way cultural heritage is traditionally approached in design. Rather than simply preserving historical forms, the collection reinterprets and reconstructs traditional elements through contemporary materials, techniques, and conceptual frameworks. Works like the Grandbazaar Sofa and Hadji Bowl showcase how deeply rooted cultural symbols can be adapted into modern contexts without losing their narrative essence.

This approach directly informs my exploration of Anatolian kilim motifs, particularly in how heritage can serve as an active design tool rather than a static reference. Akan's use of scale manipulation, digital fabrication, and material experimentation parallels my project's interest in rematerialisation and motif deconstruction. The Hadji Collection and Morphing Beads also highlight how symbolism can evolve through contemporary production methods, reinforcing the idea that cultural forms are not fixed but adaptable.

Akan's collection encourages a shift from preservation to transformation, aligning with my approach to kilim motifs as an evolving system of meaning. His work serves as a critical reference point for how designers can engage with tradition in ways that are forward-thinking rather than purely retrospective.









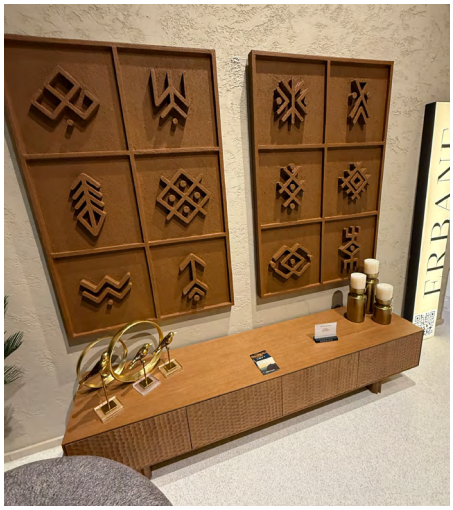


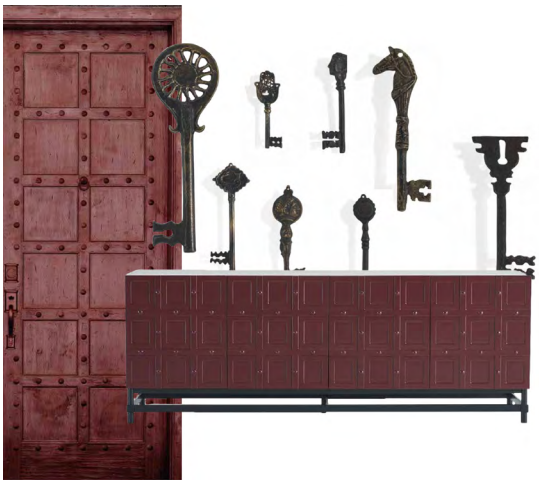
Güleç, H. (2025) Mardivan, Erbane, Shemsa, Damla, Taht, Destina, *Azora Collection for NDESIGN.* [Furniture/Accessories Design]

Hale's Azora Collection is deeply rooted in the rich, multicultural heritage of Mardin. As a designer from Mardin herself, she brings an intimate understanding of the region's layered cultural history into her work. This collection draws inspiration from city's landmarks, mosques, madrasas, ancient marketplaces, and even everyday details like pigeons flying above historical sites.

Güleç's designs reference various cultural narratives—such as the Syriac Eye symbol, transformed into pillows as a nod to protection beliefs, or the region's stepped rooftops, which informed the design of a divan. She also takes inspiration from the traditional amuletic tattoos of the region, translating them into fabric patterns, showcasing how ancestral symbols can continue to evolve through different mediums.

Her approach exemplifies how design can act as a bridge between past and present, allowing cultural heritage to be experienced in new ways without losing its essence. The Azora Collection aligns with my own research on Anatolian kilim motifs by demonstrating how material culture can be reimagined within contemporary design practices while staying rooted in its origins.









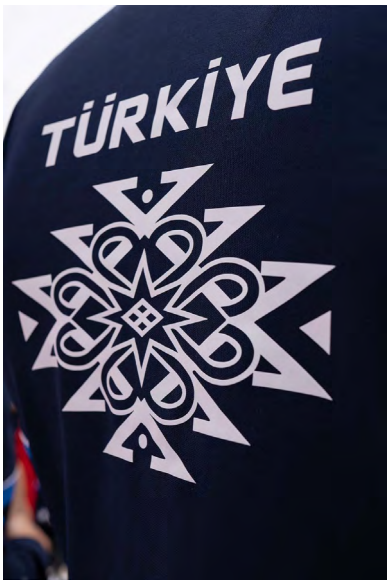


Aydın, B. (2021) Tokyo 2020 Olimpics Official Apparel Design *for "Team Türkiye"* [Apparel Design]

Bünyamin Aydın, founder of the fashion label Les Benjamins, is known for his approach to bridging Eastern heritage with contemporary design. His collections consistently draw inspiration from cultural narratives, particularly those of Anatolia and the Middle East. In collaboration with Nike and Vakko, Aydın designed the official apparel for Team Türkiye at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, marking a significant moment where traditional Turkish visual culture met the global sports stage.

Aydın deconstructed and extracted carpet motifs, creating a monogram that symbolized *authenticity, creativity, unity, and diversity*. This motif was applied across uniforms, tracksuits, and accessories, offering a modern interpretation of traditional Turkish aesthetics in a performance-oriented setting. The integration extended beyond apparel—even the aircraft transporting Turkish athletes featured a special livery inspired by the '*flying carpet*' myth, reinforcing the cultural storytelling embedded in the design.

This project aligns with my research into reinterpreting Anatolian kilim motifs within contemporary contexts. Aydın's work demonstrates how cultural heritage can be translated into new mediums while maintaining its symbolic depth. His approach highlights the potential of motif-based storytelling in modern design, a core aspect of my project's exploration into traditional patterns as adaptable, evolving design systems.













Karaoglanoglu, Y. (2024) Cappadocia Cutlery Set and Cumhur Coffee Cup *for Karaca.* [Product Design]

Yagız's latest work for Karaca, one of Türkiye's leading porcelain and homeware brands, is a cutlery set inspired by the cultural and visual identity of Cappadocia. When one thinks of Cappadocia, the image of vibrant hot air balloons filling the sky immediately comes to mind. Yagız, inspired by this distinctive visual, integrated the soft, rounded forms of the balloons into his cutlery designs.

As part of the company's rebranded vision to integrate Turkish heritage into its global and domestic offerings, Karaca has refocused its design and marketing strategies toward celebrating Türkiye's cultural values. This direction aligns with Yagız's approach in the Cappadocia Cutlery Set, where he recognized the formal similarity between spoons and hot air balloons and extended this concept beyond spoons to knives and forks as well. When two knives are placed back-to-back, the silhouette of a hot air balloon emerges, demonstrating an innovative and cohesive design approach. This project was awarded by the Red Dot Design Award.

Additionally, for Karaca's Republic Centennial Collection, Yagız designed the Cumhur Coffee Cup, which draws inspiration from the grand dining traditions of early Republican-era Türkiye. The cup features the crescent and star emblem, while the rich red tones symbolize the sacrifices of the nation's people and the Turkish flag. Such successful reinterpretations of national identity within contemporary design contribute significantly to the formation of a distinctive Turkish design language, serving as an exemplary model for integrating heritage into industrial design.



