

The Industrialisation of Patterns (Rome, 22 May 26)

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How might the nineteenth-century textile industry – its concrete organisations, and formal combinations, its mechanical engagements, and material explorations – give us clues, to trace a critique of the AI industry?

With the advent of deep learning, over the last fifteen years, images have been massively collected, and organised into datasets, to train artificial intelligence algorithms. Decomposed through chains of mathematical filters, they are treated as visual patterns, to optimise analytical and generative models.

Echoing the visual economy at the heart of the digital industry, this workshop invites us to look back at the production, and circulation of patterns in the nineteenth-century textile industry. What could such an archaeology teach us? What nodes of tension – of convergence, and divergence – should be followed, to sharpen a critique of the computational regime we live in?

PROGRAMME

9:30 – Opening Remarks.

9:35 – Philip Sykas (Manchester Metropolitan University): ‘Witnesses to the vanity, refinement, and caprice of the world’: Printed Pattern as Industrial Design Resource.

11:00 – Ellen Harlizius-Klück (Deutsches Museum): From Ordered Substance to Simulation and back again: The World Championship Soccer Ball as the Houndstooth of Sports Equipment.

12:30 – Lunch break

13:30 – Birgit Schneider (Universität Potsdam): Silk Roads through Flatland? Textility, Patterns and AI.

15:00 – Tristan Dot (University of Cambridge): The Cloud and the Grid: Textile Designs as Ungraspable Motifs.

16:30 – Jesse Lockard (University of Oxford) & Meekyung MacMurdie (University of Utah): Patterns of Evidence: Riegl and the Problem of the Sample.

18:00 – Final Discussion.

Reference:

CONF: The Industrialisation of Patterns (Rome, 22 May 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 17, 2026 (accessed May 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52478>>.