



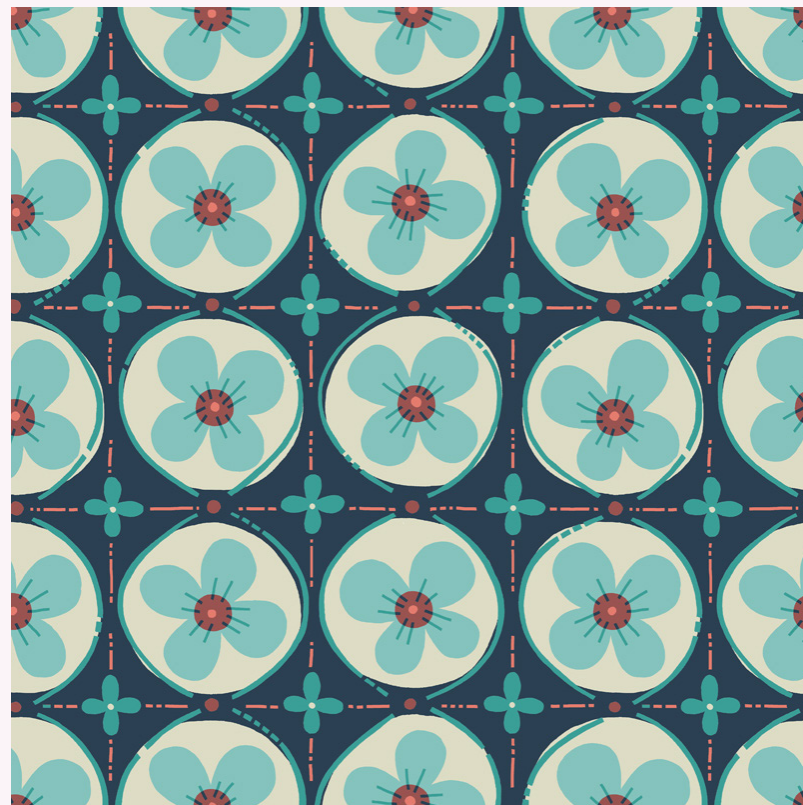
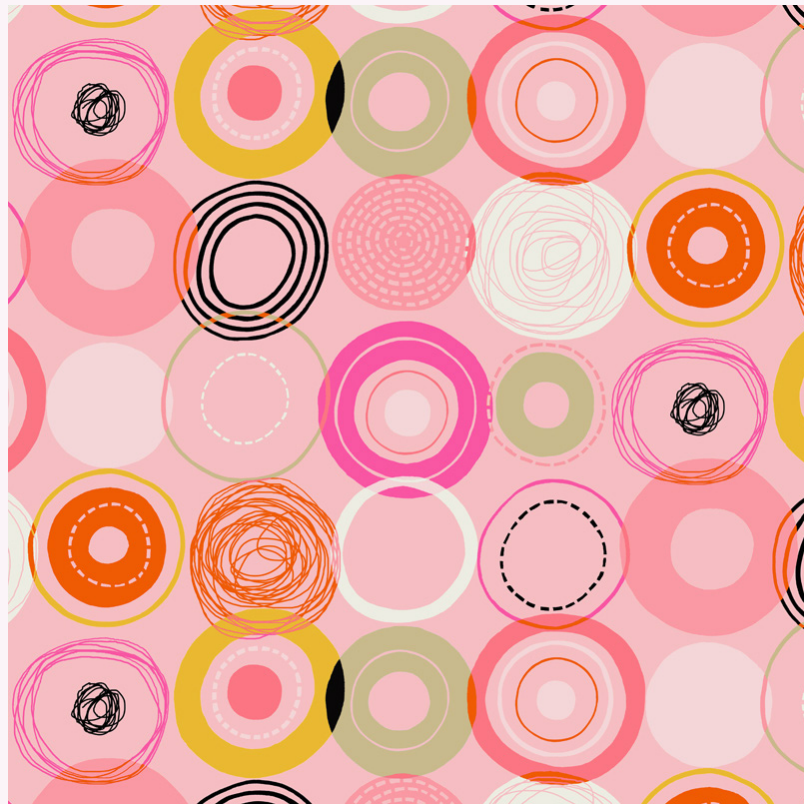
Pattern Designer



BIOGRAPHY

Nancy Wolff is primarily a surface pattern illustrator, from New York, United States of America, but functions as a designer, painter, photshopper, colourist, contract negotiator, and agent within her role as a designer. She studied fine art majoring in painting at Skidmore College in New York, and her first job out of college was as a textile company. After beginning as a textile designer, she became very interested in patterns, but didn't start designing in repeat until she became a freelancer, when she taught herself, as before that someone else took her designs and made them into a repeating pattern. After experimenting with colour and texture, her personal unique style developed over time to create very distinctive designs. Nancy has now co-founded and is the primary designer for a design studio called Loboloup, which specialises in handmade wallpaper, but also prints on fabric and pillows.

Nancy has also written and illustrated two children's books called 'Tallulah In The Kitchen' and 'It's Time For School With Tallulah', and has also illustrated 'This Little Piggy's Book of Manners' by Kathryn Madeline Allen. Her illustrations have been featured in a multitude of magazines as well as The Society of Illustrators Original Art. Nancy Wolff has also dabbled in animation, having created an animated short film called 'All Aboard' for Nickelodeon, which received a Parent's Choice Gold Award. She is a fairly private person and doesn't share photos of herself on the internet, so I cannot put a face to a name unfortunately.



OVERVIEW

Nancy Wolff has quite an extensive portfolio of pattern designs with illustrations of a variety of subject matter from florals to more abstract shapes. While there are a few different ways she approaches her pattern illustrations, she always keeps within a very consistent design language. The most common themes in her work is the inclusion of floral or organic inspired shapes even in her more abstract patterns, but her shapes are always simplified and presented in a hand-drawn way.

She has designed patterns for clothing, stationery, fabric, and her own brand of wallpapers. Her clients include: Acme Studios, Crocodile Creek, Galison, Great Arrow Graphics, Klutz Press, Kokka, Mattel, Oopsy Daisy and UNICEF.

FLORALS

A substantial portion of Nancy Wolff's portfolio features her floral illustrations, and it is probably what identifies her the most as a designer. I would presume it is also what she enjoys designing the most as it is the first page on her portfolio and preeminently what she shares on her social media. After all, it is what initially drew me to her work since nature is one of my favourite things to replicate in all areas of my art.

Her floral illustrations like this one include simplified shapes that are not necessarily abstracted to the extreme, and some shapes are clear representations of actual flowers, such as the daffodils. As can be seen here, many of her floral illustrations feature multiple competing elements that are then repeated in her pattern, and this one in particular also has quite a complex colour scheme.

Her layering of colours within a shape adds dimension to flat 2-D objects and helps to differentiate different elements or sections of the flowers. Her linework in this illustration is very strong as it features on almost every piece of the work, adding detail and pattern to each flower and leaf.

I am most inspired by the way she simplifies such often complex objects like flowers, but still creates a wide variety of interesting forms out of quite basic shapes.

[Click the image to see more examples.](#)

ABSTRACT FLORALS

Nancy Wolff's abstract floral work takes a more childlike approach to these natural forms, often holding no clear resemblance of any real flower, rather just a generalised imitation, similar to those that a child may draw.

These illustrations often include one or just a couple of simple shapes repeated with slight adjustments made to colour, size and direction to create some variation, as can be seen in this illustration. There is a lack of detail in the shapes, and like in this one are often more geometricised, with sharper lines and less organic line work. There is also a common theme of overlapping shapes with illusions of transparency which abstracts the forms even more. This is evident in other examples also where the forms are less geometric and more resemble some of her more organic work.

See more examples by clicking on the photo.

ABSTRACT PATTERNS

Nancy's abstract pattern work is interesting to me as while they are very different to her floral work, they still keep with the same style. There is a lot more focus on colour in these illustrations and the relationships between the different colours in the page. In this pattern, the distribution of light, dark, and mid-tones is very evenly balanced making for a satisfying composition.

Her abstract patterns also still include quite organic forms, so her inspiration found in nature translates into this area of her style as well. For example, abstracted or simplified leaf shapes, 'u' shapes and curves, and circles are all shapes found in nature that become the base shapes in these patterns. None of her shapes are perfect, even the circles are very rough and hand-drawn which contributes to the organic and unpredictable qualities in her shape construction as well as her line work.

Nancy's lines in these more abstract patterns create more unpredictable patterns than in her floral work, and create interest in fairly simple shapes to still produce a captivating pattern. It also helps to add more texture and break up solid sections of colour.

She has also designed some striped and plaid designs which stray even further from her typical style, but still use very similar techniques when it comes to colour, linework and imperfect arrangements of shapes.

[Click the photo to see more examples of abstract patterns.](#)

TILED PATTERNS

Wolff's tiled patterns are definitely the most structured of her designs and feature a more obvious and smaller repeat typically (with a couple of exceptions) in a tiled, rather than bricked formation, similar to something like floor tiles, hence the name.

There is usually only one or two basic elements included in these patterns, also including more geometric inspired shapes like circles and squares, which makes more a more clear tiled effect. Despite the geometricised nature of these patterns, the often organic shapes and lines within the tiles offsets the structured nature of the design.

As well as this, her inspiration found in nature has still influenced a structured design like this, with flowers and other organic forms often making up the main components of these patterns. She also keeps to her style in mainly using monochromatic colour schemes to produce designs of this nature.

[Click the image to see more.](#)

BLACK & WHITE

Nancy Wolff has also adapted a number of her coloured designs to suit a black and white colour scheme, and has designed some especially for this style. This work stands out from all her other work, but just presents it in a unique way. Differing from other designers who use black and white, her whites are cream rather than stark and bright, which keeps with her muted colour schemes.

Her linework is more prominent in these designs and there is more emphasis on finer lines, which create even more of a hand-drawn look to some of her other work. These designs and this one in particular combines her floral work and abstract pattern work nicely, as she uses more pattern to differentiate between different components and create more variety, as the different patterns create illusions of different greys. This forms a dynamic tonal range which is often unachievable in stark black and white illustrations. I think Nancy creates a good balance between white space, black space, and patterned 'greys' wherefore nothing stands out too much.

Pattern is a very strong focus in these designs, far more so than in her coloured ones, but it can be seen how this interest in application of pattern is implemented into her colour work. More examples of black and white illustrations and pattern can be seen by clicking on the photo.

Click the photo for more examples.

DESIGN LANGUAGE

Nancy Wolff's personal style is determined by the techniques she uses in her work to achieve the look that she does. Since her subject matter varies across her portfolio, her design language is based around her colour choice, shape construction, linework and layout of items. As well as this, all her designs are digitally drawn and constructed and are designed in repeat. It can also be seen that often once one element has been designed, like a focal flower, that is simply repeated, rotated and resized to create variation and then arranged in the design, making repetition the main characteristic contributing to her design language.

COLOUR

Nancy's colour choices are an important part of her design language from her most commonly used colours to the style of colour schemes throughout her designs. Her designs are often very colourful and while the hues are bright, they often lean towards being more muted and aren't overly saturated. Her most commonly used colours are variations of pink, blue and green, but she tends to stray away from basic colours, being more inclined to use corals rather than pure pinks (as demonstrated in the design to the left), or teal and mint tones instead of pure blue.

In terms of her colour schemes, depending on the complexity of a particular design, her colour schemes may vary, but there are a few reoccurring themes across her illustrations. Firstly, a number of her designs feature a monochromatic colour scheme, where only one colour is used across a range of tones. This is most often used if only one or two elements or shapes are being repeated in a design.

Another approach to colouring her designs is to use a complimentary colour scheme, including a dominant colour and a monochromatic range of tones of this colour, but one contrasting complimentary colour that adds a pop of difference. For example, a range of blue tones may be contrasted with pops of coral.

Finally, her most colourful designs include a range of tones that often fit with an analagous colour scheme like the one displayed to the left. It features an array of analagous tones like yellow, orange, red, and pink, plus one or two contrasting colours like the brown and mint green. One consistency between all Nancy's colour schemes is that there is always one dominant colour, like pink in this example.

[Click the photo to see more examples of aforementioned colour schemes.](#)

SHAPES

Wolff's shape design is another strong element of her design language. I chose this particular artwork to demonstrate her use of shape in her patterns as I think it displays a wide variety. As can be seen her shapes are often abstracted and very simplified, but this is complimented by the details she adds with linework, and the combination of a multitude of these simplified shapes. Her florals and leaves in this resemble those that a child might draw, that are a very basic but still easily recognisable representations of such forms. Even her more complex components of her illustrations are at their core, very simplified basic shapes layered together.

Nancy illustrates all her solid florals as flat vector shapes, which is another key aspect of what makes her work unique. As demonstrated in this illustration, the illusion of hollowed flowers is created, not through illustrating 3 dimensional shapes, but by using variations in colour to give 2D shapes an extra layer. By keeping the colours, shapes and line work flat in these particular designs, it doesn't make those elements stand out too much or look out of place from the rest of the other shapes.

In this pattern, Nancy's shapes are very organic and hand-drawn, while in some of her more abstract work they can become more geometricised, but often still have an imperfect and raw quality to them which fits well with the theme of many of her illustrations: nature.

Click the image for more examples of shapes in her work.

LINEWORK

I would consider Nancy's linework to be among one of the most unique elements of her design language and is what adds a lot of character to her work and breaks up the flat shapes she illustrates. Her linework adds detail and texture to simplistic forms and creates more distinguishable features in more complex florals. It also adds a level of abstraction to these complex components and adds to the flat design style she creates.

Her linework adds an illustrative quality that contrasts and compliments the flat vector-like shapes. Nancy's linework is often rough and organic, often varying in width and adding to the hand-drawn qualities of her work despite being digitally created designs. They also have squared ends and look to have been constructed as individual shapes rather than drawn as lines.

As well as adding detail, she uses her linework to add pattern to some of her illustrated elements of her patterns. This is more evident in her black and white work but this illustration is also a good example of how broken dashes lines and stripes are used to add interest to the leaves.

Click on the image to see more examples of how nancy uses her linework to add detail and pattern to her work.



LAYOUT

The most dominant aspect of Nancy Wolff's design language when it comes to her layout is the fact that her patterns are repeating. They are designed to repeat so often there is only one of each floral element in the pattern swatch that is then bricked by column and offset by 1/2.

Within the repeating patterns there are a few layouts that Nancy uses consistently, the first being the style that is demonstrated in this illustration with a very dynamic placement of objects. It involves several separately drawn floral elements that are overlapping and interlocking in many different directions, representative of perhaps flowers having been picked and tossed on the floor. This creates a very lively and playful mood within the pattern. A similar second style of layout Nancy frequently creates is through forming a seemingly continuous interlace of vines, flowers and leaves, often with small, dainty repeated shapes.

The third style of layout is designed in stripes, wherein three or four vine like illustrations are designed and repeated still in a bricked-by-column fashion, but present as continuing stripes over the length of the patterned item.

In most of her designs there is minimal overlap, but as can be seen in this design, when overlap does occur, she often fills the overlap space with a different colour to almost create a transparency effect, which adds to the flat and abstracted style of her designs. This is best exhibited in some of the work where this is used to an extent where it appears as though all the components are transparent. An example of this as well as other layout styles, can be seen by clicking the photo to the left.

APPLICATION

Most of Nancy's work is created for her personal portfolio but a number of her designs are available for purchase as wallpapers from a site she co-founded called Loboloup, in which the repeating nature of her patterns is fully showcased. All of her designs can also be printed on fabric upon request, and she mentioned in an interview that she would also like to print on cushions and rugs for Loboloup.

This is a strong element of her design language as, while she has also done book illustrations, she is primarily a pattern designer, and since she is now the owner and designer of her own wallpaper business, most of her focus is now directed towards her wallpapers as a designer.

She has also designed for clients including gift ware, stationery and clothing companies, but I couldn't find any examples of this work, so it must have been on products from previous years. However, Nancy says that "My designs and illustrations have appeared on every imaginable surface, including fabric, stationery, gift wrap, greeting cards, pens, plates, puzzles, calendars, juice boxes, journals, lamps, rugs, book covers, wall art and much more."

Click on the image to see more examples of wallpapers designed and sold on her website.

ADAPTATION

For my adaptation of Nancy Wolff's work into my own design language, I want to take aspects of her style and apply them to my own work to create unique designs. As Nancy's designs are purely created in a repeating fashion for surface pattern design, I firstly want to create designs that can also be presented as printed illustrations in a set. I will create a set of three illustrations that can be exhibited singularly or all together. I will then adapt these three illustrations into patterns, all of which won't necessarily fit with Nancy's own design language but will be based upon it.

I will be focusing on the aspect of her design language pertaining to her floral and nature pattern designs as this is something that aligns with my personal design language that I want to present. This particular design inspires me especially as I like the combination of larger and smaller flowers, as well as the fact that it includes slightly more complex forms than some of her other abstract-ed designs, but are still simplified. As for colours I want to take inspiration from some of her more monochromatic designs, and keep to a fairly limited colour scheme, however I like that this design employs a colour scheme comprised mainly of variations of a couple of colours, being red (or pink) and green.

In summary, I hope to take inspiration from Wolff's subject matter, use of simplified flat flat shapes, and elements of her linework and colour schemes, but adjusting them to fit my own vision.

MY ILLUSTRATION SERIES



ILLUSTRATION 1

I wanted my illustration series to feature two fairly monochromatic illustrations, and a central feature artwork to combine these colours. I chose pink and blue to meet together and create purple in the centre, so for my first illustration I developed a colour scheme with a few varying shades of pink, plus complementary colours like green and yellow.

I am keeping fairly close to Nancy's design language with this illustration as I am still utilizing her tessellated layout of elements, however I have constructed mine in a way that is more precise and calculated, trying to keep fairly even gaps between all my components. I have noticed in a number of Nancy's illustrations, she arranges her florals more randomly in terms of direction and proximity, which creates a very organic look, but isn't something I necessarily wanted to include.

This illustration also isn't designed in repeat, as for a print I wanted to still have a main focal point of the artwork, so I centred the four large flowers. Also differing from Nancy's design language I tried to formulate my designs to have one dominant element, while in her illustrations there are often several competing components. I wanted to create a slightly different mood in my designs, so I tried to use the neat puzzle-like arrangement and a good balance in size of flowers to generate a feeling of calm and satisfaction, rather than the very lively mood I get from her patterns.

So as to not entirely copy Nancy's unique designs and simply incorporate her language into my designs, I sourced my own outside inspiration for my floral designs. I used real life flowers from my garden and pictures on Pinterest to gauge ideas of different potential floral forms and shapes, and then implemented Nancy's construction techniques to create floral shapes in her design language.



ILLUSTRATION 2

This design is probably the least in keeping with Nancy Wolff's design language as it is constructed and presented in an entirely different way, which was my intention for this feature illustration in my set. As I really enjoy including hands in my own designs, I knew it was something I wanted to include in this project.

While this illustration isn't laid out in a pattern-like fashion I have still included some elements of Nancy's design language such as her simplified, abstracted shape design, flat colours, and lack of overlap of flowers. In this illustration especially I wanted to allow Nancy's design language to influence my design of my daffodils and Granny's Bonnet flowers to make them simplified but still recognisable.

I tried to create a consistency and harmony between my three designs by still including an element of puzzle-like arrangement of elements, as demonstrated in the two interlocking 'C' like curves of the hands holding bouquets. I also wanted to keep with the neat and tidy nature of my other two pattern designs by making the bouquets fairly even, neat oval shapes.

In designing this, my main struggle was with deciding on a background colour. Both my outer illustrations include yellow as a pop of colour so I wanted to do the same with this one, as well as use purple as a middle colour between pink and blue. I also intentionally created one bouquet with pink flowers from my first illustration, and blue flowers from my third, to produce a solid middle design, almost simulating the collection of flowers from both designs and bringing them into one. However, due to the range of colours in this drawing, choosing a background colour was difficult as there isn't a colour that is overly dominant. Eventually I settled on this green, as I think it complements all the colours equally and none of them become lost in it.



ILLUSTRATION 3

In this illustration I wanted to create different types of shapes but still keep within the same style of shapes, colour and linework. I actually found this one a lot more difficult to put together than the pink illustration because the elements are more arch shapes than circular shapes, which were more difficult to fit together.

To create all of these illustrations I used Adobe Illustrator and primarily relied on the brush tool and occasionally the pen tool. I found that the brush tool allowed me to create much more organic, hand-drawn looking shapes that fit with Nancy's design language, while I decided to stray from her influence slightly with my line work. Instead of making the lines quite uneven, square and sharp, I used the brush tool which has smoothing effects to create soft, clean flowing lines that I feel match the calming nature I have tried to create in my illustrations, especially emphasized by the blues in this one. I tried to utilize some of Nancy's linework design language in my illustrations in terms of how they add detail to the flowers and leaves, but I have tried to keep to smooth unbroken lines, rather than dashes and stripes which add pattern more than just detail.

In terms of the colours in my illustrations, I was inspired by Nancy's monochrome and complimentary colour schemes. As can be seen in this illustration, I have used a variety of blue tones to create the base colour scheme, but I added yellow to add a pop of colour and help the eyes to move around the illustration rather than staying static among a sea of blue. To fit my own design language I decided to use colours that were of purer hues than those often in Nancy's work, as I think this creates a brighter and cleaner appearance. Although I still made my colours more muted rather than overly saturated because I like that about her work.

With this illustration I also tried a darker background, but found it disrupted the flow of my print set, and also made this a far more dominant piece.

ADAPTION TO REPEATING PATTERNS

PATTERN 1

To create my patterns I used the pattern tool in adobe illustrator which worked amazingly to develop customisable patterns. It was quite simple to be able to just create a swatch* and tweak the settings to make it fit together.

To begin I simply selected a section of my original illustration that had a good variety of flowers in it and deleted anything that extended too far out of a fairly square border. I pieced together several copies of this selection in a way that I envisioned a pattern fitting together, and made adjustments to size, spacing and directions of some of the elements so that when I created a continuous pattern, all protruding objects would fit into gaps on the opposite side.

For this pattern I bricked it by column, in keeping with nancy's style and offset the brick by about 3/5 as that created the ideal seamless effect.

*Hover the mouse over the image to see the swatch

PATTERN 2

While this is a repeating pattern it is possibly the furthest from Nancy Wolff's personal design language, simply due to the subject matter in the pattern. I wanted to challenge myself in making a pattern out of this illustration as I was unsure of how well it would translate, but overall I am quite happy with how it turned out.

I tried a few variations of how I wanted the arms and hands to sit within the pattern. I found that having them connected created the most aesthetically pleasing outcome, as otherwise it just looked like a drawing that had been tiled a few times, and didn't feel as though it belonged as a pattern.

I needed to line up the ends of the arms perfectly in my swatch before proceeding with creating the pattern, so I just used a number of guides to align the ends. I then applied the pattern tool to the swatched and bricked it by column again, offsetting it by 3/4 to create this stripe effect which I think is very effective. I like the abstract feel of this pattern and how it creates a different look from my original illustration.

PATTERN 3

To create this pattern I repeated a similar process to my first pattern, in terms of creating the swatch. Due to the nature of a lot of my floral designs however, I had to make this swatch more rectangular than square as there were a number of quite long and spindley stems that I could delete or remove without impacting other parts of the design.

Diverging from my last two patterns, I bricked this one by row as that worked best for the particular design. I offset it by 4/5 so it's actually almost directly tiled rather than bricked but there is still a slight offset.

I found that I created much larger swatches than Nancy does, as often her pattern will only have one of each element she designed in a particular tile of the pattern, but I wanted to create slightly more variation in colour, size and placement of my flowers, so I kept my swatches reasonably complex.

This was definitely the most difficult design to get right in terms of shape and layout, colour (I initially struggled to find a colour on which the white would stand out), as well as adapting into a pattern, but I am happy with the result.

VARIATIONS OF MY DESIGNS



BLACK & WHITE

I wanted to experiment with taking one of my designs into black and white as this is something that Nancy does with some of her patterns. I think it creates a much more bold and complex design, as it isn't relying on colour to create a focal point. This design doesn't have a lot of hierarchy so the eye tends to move all over the design, which isn't a bad thing when it comes to pattern designs, it's just a different approach.

I found it a little difficult to convert this into black and white as I had to rely on the outlines of shapes to make them distinct from the background. As I used the brush tool and only coloured the inner shape and not the stroke in illustrator (in my original designs), some of the strokes were very uneven and didn't necessarily fit the look I was going for, when I switched the area of fill.



DARK COLOURS

I also wanted to include this design in my presentation as I was quite inspired by some of Nancy's designs that include a darker background which really make the foreground colours stand out. This was my original colour scheme for this particular design, but I changed it to have a lighter background to fit with my illustration series.

I think the mood of this is less calm and relaxing, like my other one, as the contrast creates a stronger and more punchy look, also creating a slightly more lively environment. I like how it makes the white stand out, as I struggled in my other illustration to find a colour that would make the darker and white tones stand out equally.

I actually think that this illustration fits Nancy's design language better, as most of her blue toned illustrations have darker backgrounds.

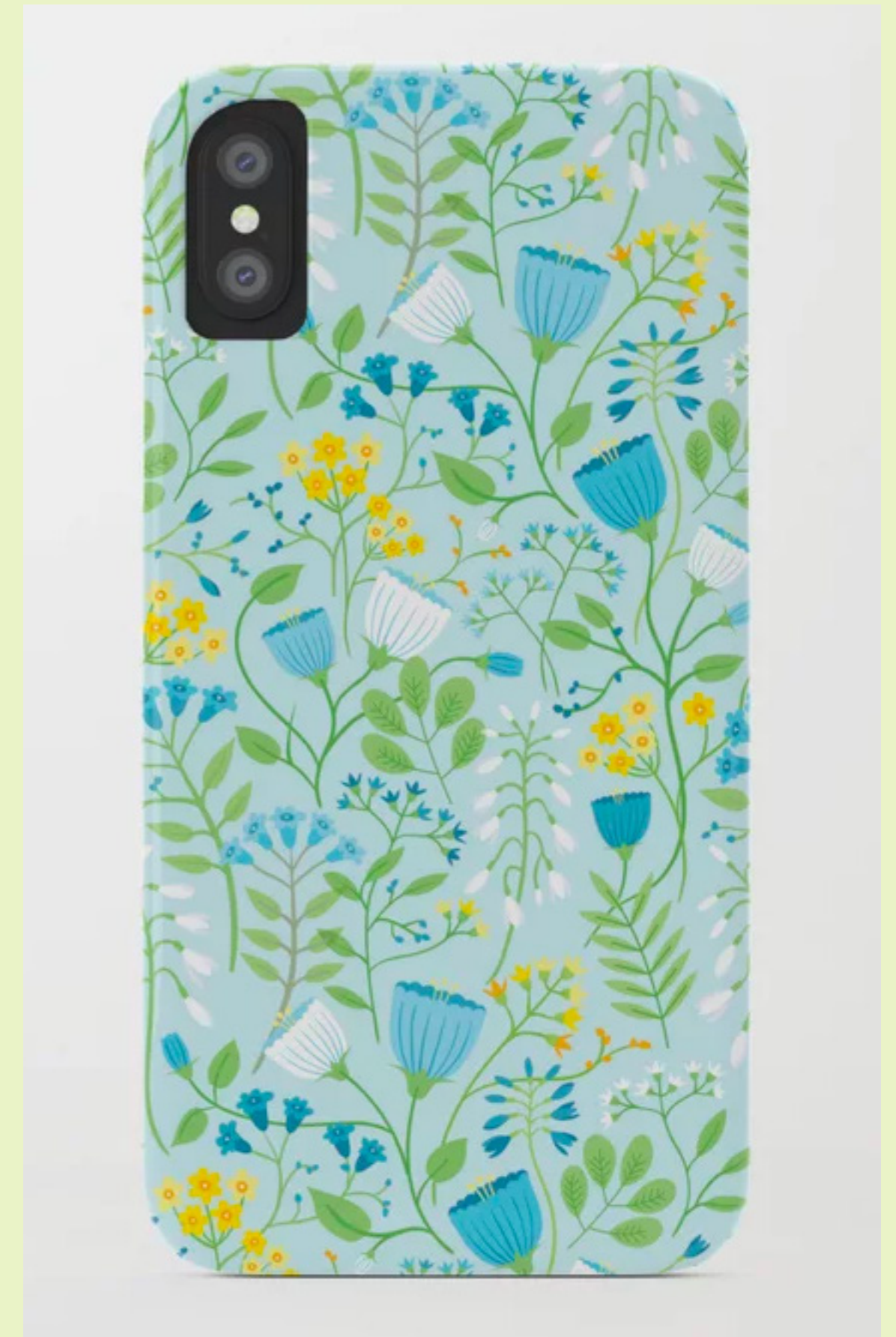
APPLICATION OF MY DESIGNS

ART PRINTS



A mock up of my designs as a framed print set, for which the original illustrations were intended for.

PHONE CASES



A mock up of my designs applied to a technological object, such as a phone case.

CUSHIONS



A mock up of my designs as a home decor item, such as cushion covers.

I used a website called Society6 to create these mockups.



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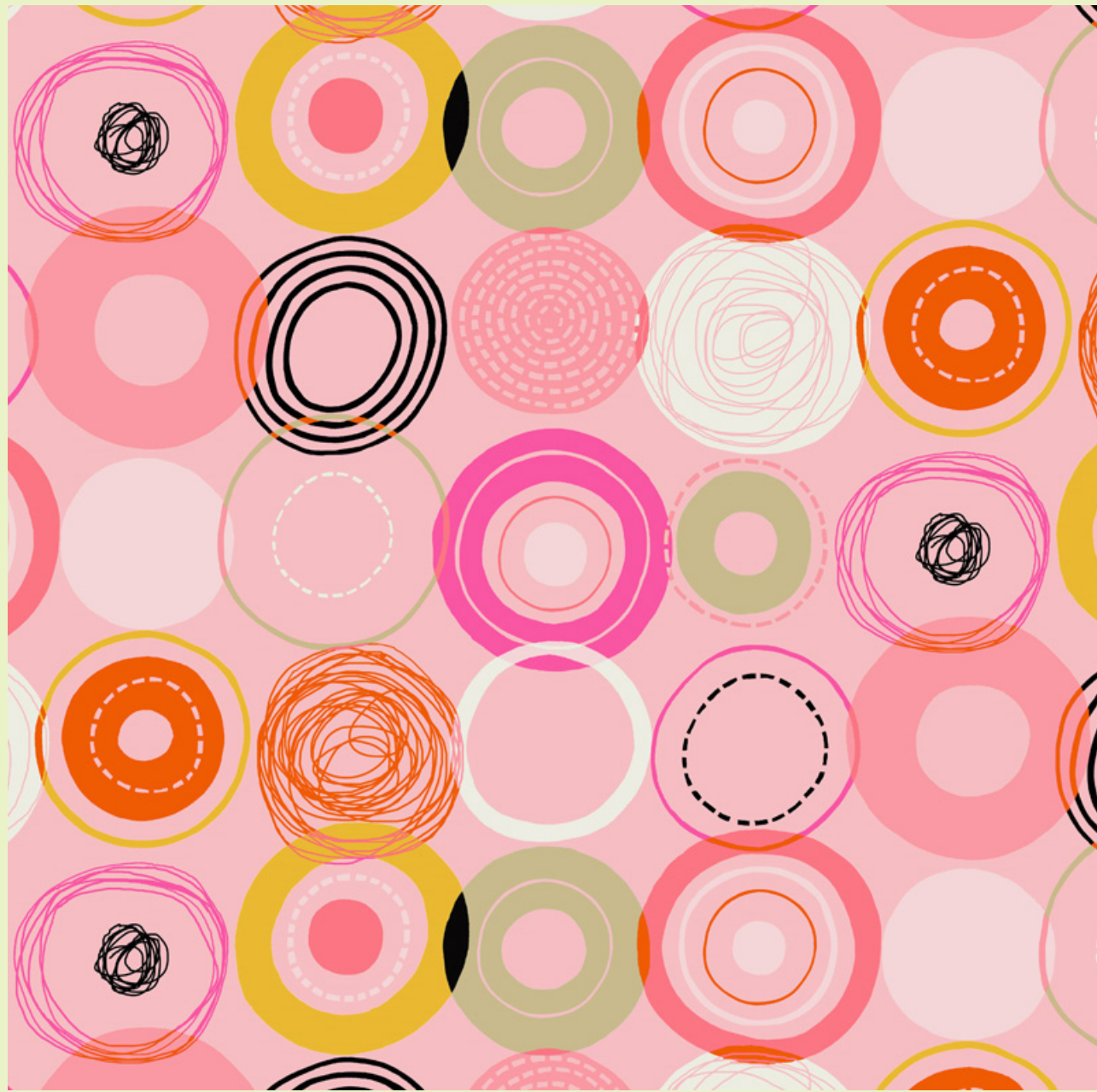
FLORALS



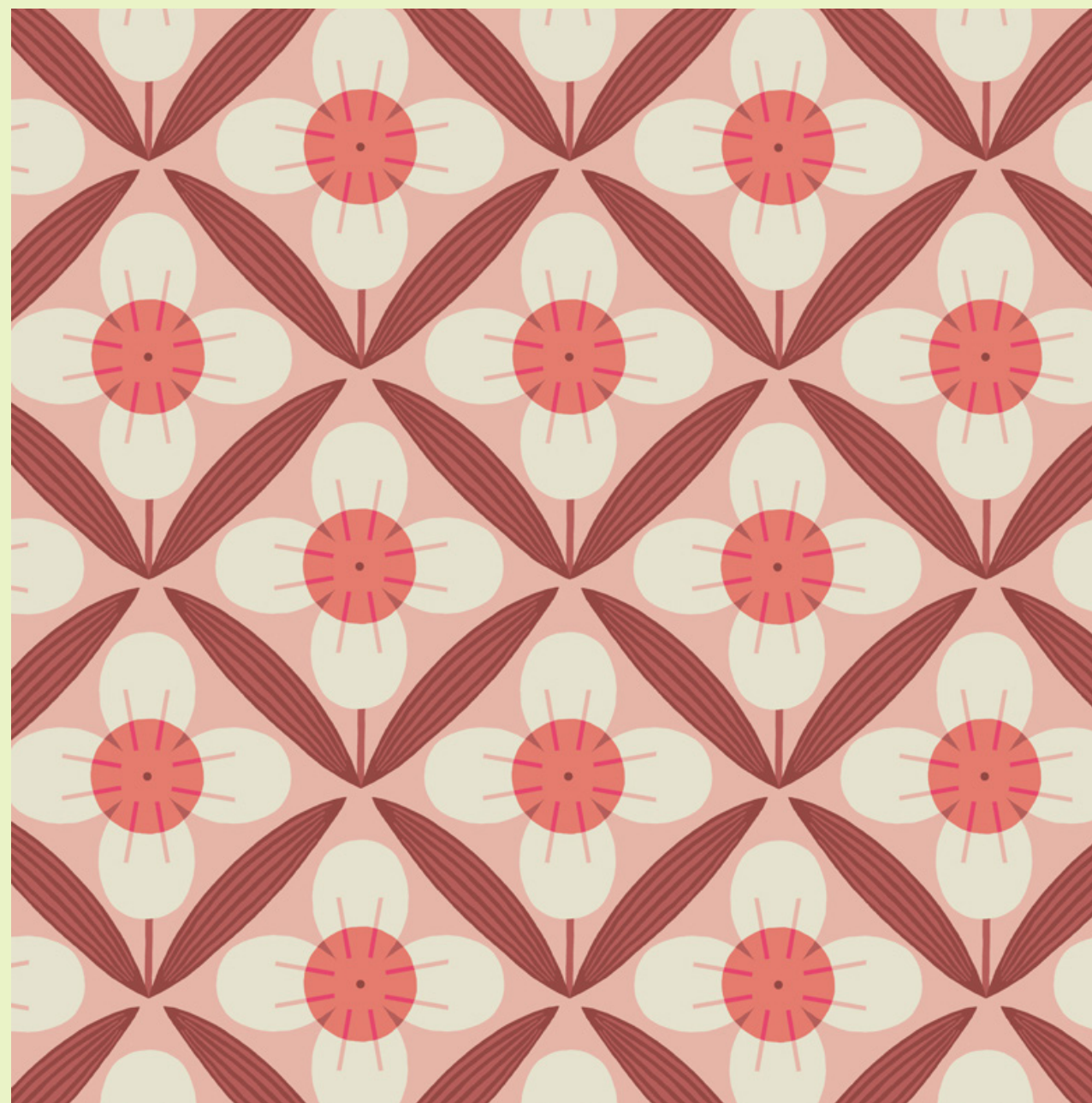
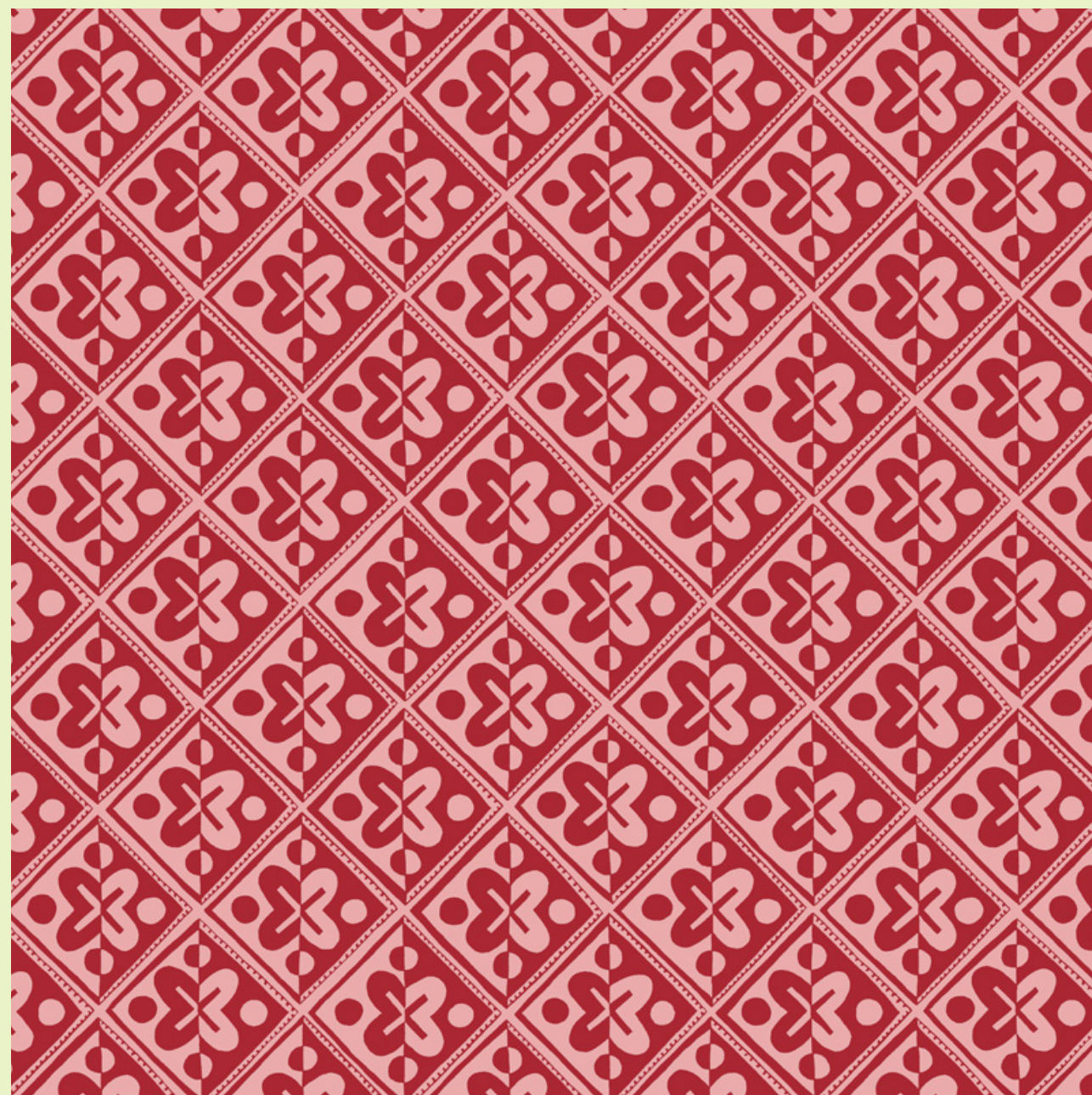
ABSTRACT FLORALS



ABSTRACT PATTERNS



TILED PATTERNS



BLACK & WHITE



COLOUR



Monochromatic



Complimentary



Colourful

SHAPES



Small and repeated



Abstract and child-like



Simplified representation

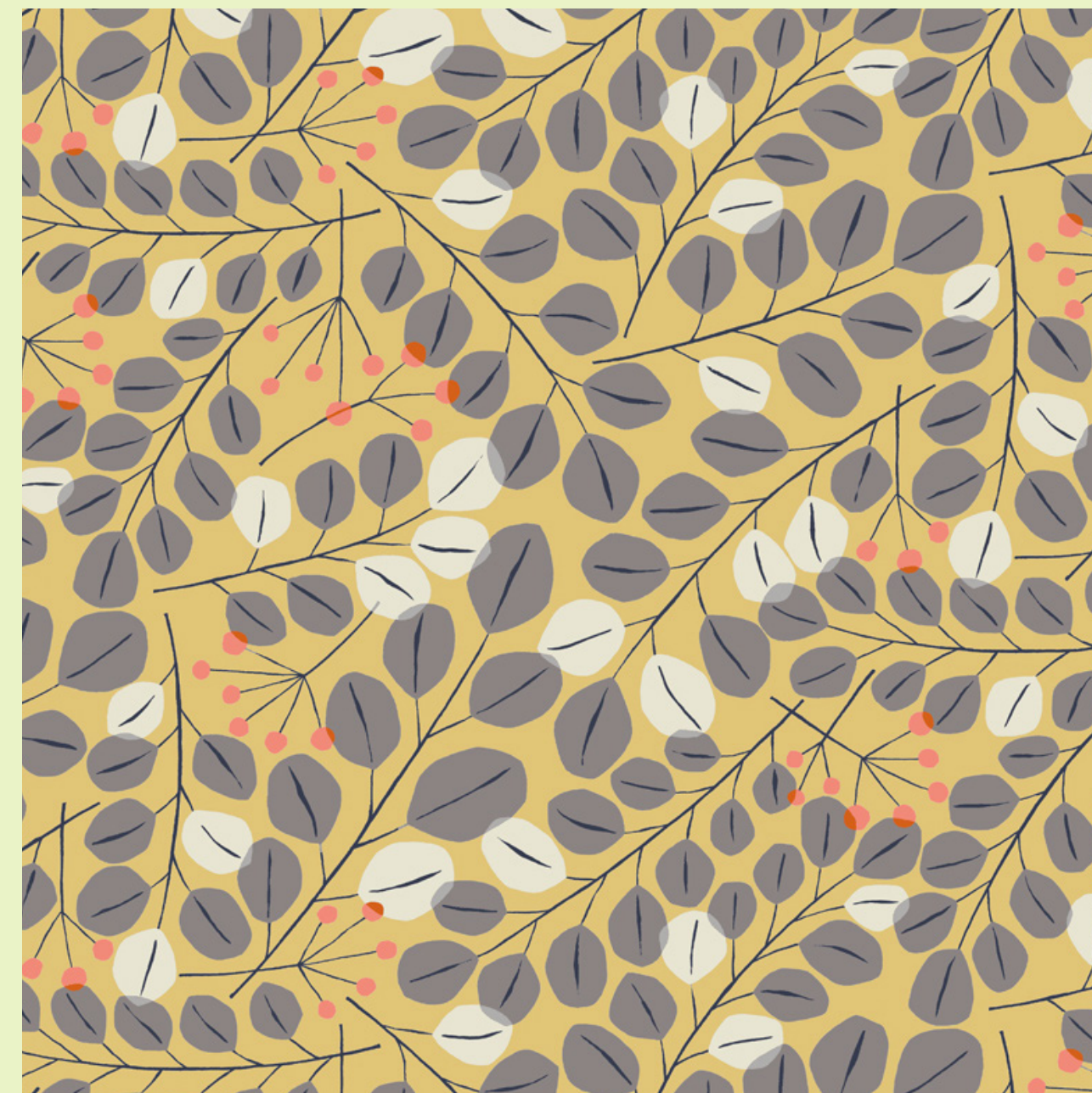
LINEWORK



Texture and detail



Patterned



Thin hand drawn

LAYOUT



Dainty continuous interlacing

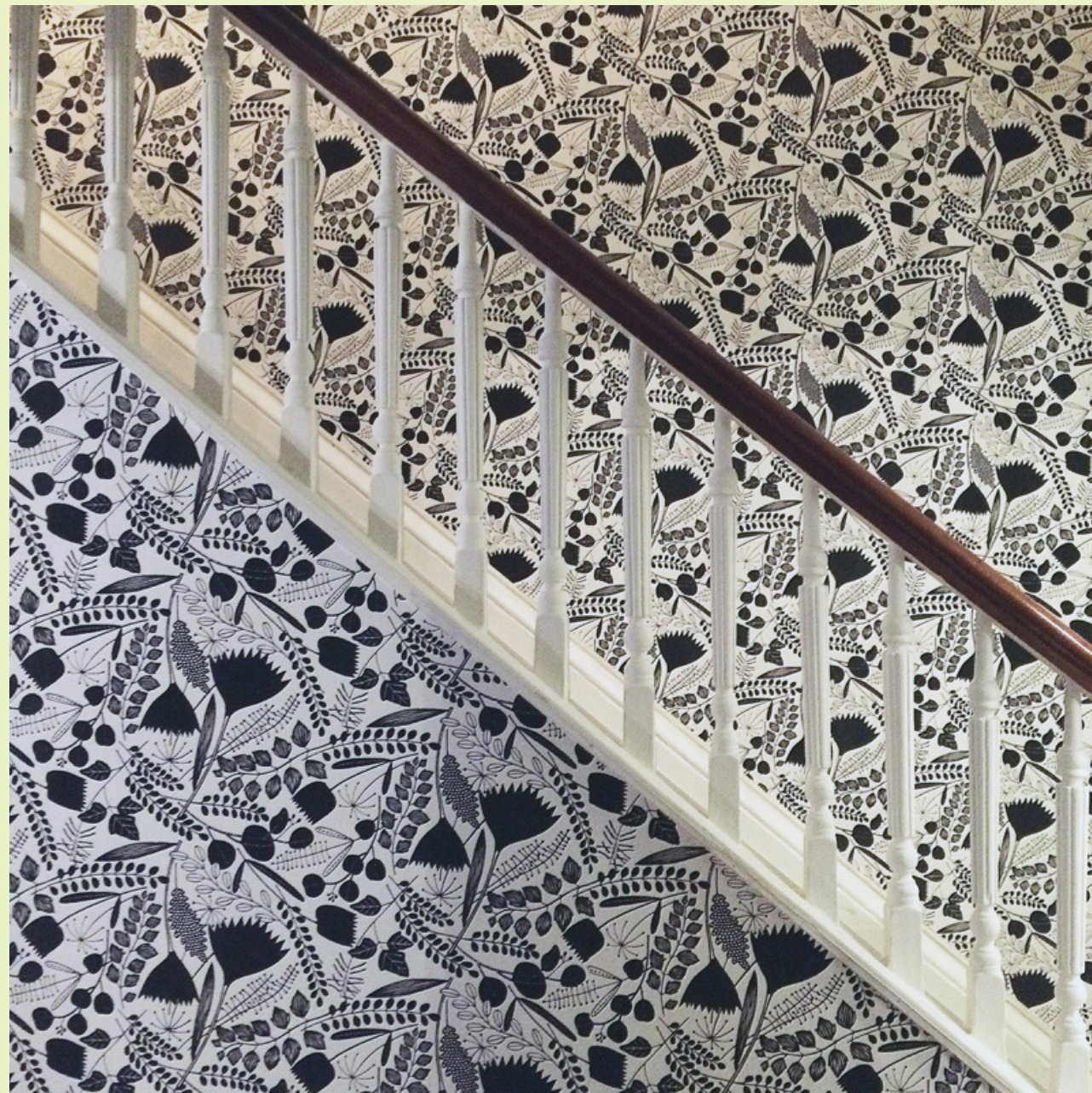


Stripes



Overlapping

WALLPAPERS



Bloomsbury



Meadow



Loose Leaves