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# From Balkan Motifs to Contemporary Graphic and Textile Objects in Public Space

*Od balkanskih motivov do sodobnih grafičnih in tekstilnih objektov v javnem prostoru*

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## Abstract

Building on the foundations of the past and present, we can create a future where modern artistic interpretations of ethnological heritage remain an important source of inspiration for textile creators. Today, textile techniques intersect with modern technologies, materials and content, which also alters the perception and evaluation of textile outcomes. Ethnological tradition encourages us to revitalise the past and present it to modern users in updated forms, while the artistic patterns once woven, embroidered, or knitted from thread are also transformed through new materials and processes. In the project, a thread was understood as a fundamental means of textile artistic expression and as a hidden network of pattern design that interprets the content of digital illustration. The vector drawings, conceived as tools for divination, originated from the stories of the Balkan geographical area and gradually evolved from naturalistic depictions into abstract patterns, intertwining elements of woven kilim carpets and their symbolism. The artistic compositions were enhanced by three selected colours, i.e. red, black and light ochre, which ensured through a limited palette the visual coherence of the objects created. The vector results establish a link between the ethnological tradition and contemporary reinterpretation of movable heritage. Their materialisation as prints on tarpaulin for urban seat cushions and as hand embroidery, created in collaboration with the project members Razkrite roke (Engl. Revealed Hands), enabled the transition from flat digital graphics to tactile, three-dimensional textile forms. Inter-institutional and intergenerational collaboration expanded the creative process into the realm of community dialogue and highlighted the importance of transferring craft knowledge into a contemporary context, where textiles serve as a connecting medium between the past and the present, the artistic and the practical.

Keywords: textile pattern, embroidery, inkjet printing, Balkan textile heritage, vector graphics, craft knowledge transfer

## Izvleček

*Na temeljih preteklosti in sedanjosti lahko gradimo prihodnost, v kateri sodobna likovna interpretacija etnološke dediščine ostaja pomemben vir navdiha za ustvarjalce na področju tekstila. Tekstilne tehnike se danes srečujejo s sodobnimi tehnologijami, materiali in vsebinami, s čimer se spreminja tudi dožemanje in*



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vrednotenje tekstilnega rezultata. Etnološko izročilo nas nagovarja, da preteklost aktualiziramo ter jo v posodobljenih oblikah približamo sodobnemu uporabniku, obenem pa se z novo rabo materialov in postopkov preoblikujejo tudi likovni vzorci, ki so se nekdanj tkali, vezli ali pletli iz niti. Nit je bila v projektu razumljena kot osnovno sredstvo tekstilnega likovnega izražanja in kot skrita mreža zasnove vzorca, ki vsebinsko interpretira digitalno ilustracijo. Vektorske risbe, zasnovane kot pripomoček pri divinaciji, so izhajale iz zgodb balkanskega geografskega prostora ter se iz naturalističnih upodobitev postopno preoblikovale v abstraktne vzorce, v katerih se prepletajo elementi tkanih preprog čilimov in njihova simbolika. Likovne kompozicije so dopolnjevale tri izbrane barve: rdeča, črna in svetli oker, ki so z omejeno barvno paletto zagotovile vizualno skladnost izvedenih objektov. Vektorski rezultati vzpostavljajo vez med etnološkim izročilom in sodobnim reinterpreteranjem premične dediščine. Njihova materializacija v obliki natisov na cerado za urbane sedalne blazine ter v ročnih vezeninah, ustvarjenih v sodelovanju z društvom Razkrite roke, je omogočila prehod iz ploskovite digitalne grafike v taktilno tridimenzionalno tekstilno obliko. Medinstitucionalno in medgeneracijsko sodelovanje je razširilo ustvarjalni proces v polje skupnostnega dialoga ter poudarilo pomen prenosa obrtnega znanja v sodobni kontekst, kjer tekstil deluje kot povezovalni medij med preteklim in sodobnim, umetniškim in uporabnim.

*Ključne besede:* tekstilni vzorec, vezenje, kapljični tisk, balkanska tekstilna dediščina, vektorska grafika, prenos obrtnega znanja

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## 1 Introduction

The field of textile expression is once again emerging as a distinct form of artistic communication. Today, textile objects and installations compete with drawing, painting and sculpture at major international exhibitions and festivals, e.g. BIEN Textile Biennale [1, 2]. Through textiles, artists increasingly address archetypal themes: this soft, warm and homely material enables the creation of intimate, physically marked, yet spatially expansive artistic statements in diverse forms and contexts.

Textiles manifest themselves in space in relation to our bodies. On the one hand, textiles are our “second skin”; on the other, they are embedded in various interiors or exteriors as artistic statements that we observe, evaluate and contemplate through our own bodies. In this spatial engagement, diverse content materialises, interpreted by creators on all continents. Geographically, we can trace different cultural traditions, whether in pattern construction or choice of colours. However, in a way, they all share interweaving, weaving and crocheting. The techniques remain the same across all geographical regions, the previously mentioned variations still

being observed in expression and results. We do not need to look far, as in our immediate vicinity, there is the Oloop collective, which in its work connects handicraft with research into the impact of creative processes on the well-being of individuals and the community, and establishes a dialogue between art, design and social responsibility [3, 4]. One of its most prominent projects is Women Who Embroider a Story. Similarly, the artistic duo Chiachio & Giannone, with their monumental, embroidered installations, combine intimate narratives of identity, love, and family with current issues of social diversity and community engagement, as in the project Celebrating Diversity [5, 6]. Historically, the legacy of the Bauhaus school with its textile experiments, especially the work of Gunta Stölzl, confirms that textiles have been an important research field in contemporary design for decades, combining technical knowledge with artistic experimentation and abstract composition [7].

The research and artistic project initially set among others the following objectives: creating artistic interpretations in the form of abstract patterns;

challenging stereotypes and raising awareness of the diversity of identities; fostering intercultural and intergenerational connections; physically implementing and transferring an artistic template from digital space to a real object; graphic design and artistic concept include the connection between the artistic product and a functional object; public presentation and installation of objects in public spaces.

## 2 Theoretical framework

### 2.1 *Examples of good practice*

#### 2.1.1 **BIEN Textile Biennale**

The BIEN Textile Biennale prepared its third edition for 2025. The biennale explored textile expression under the theme Air. The curator, Lovro Ivančič, emphasised that air is inseparable from culture, space, the body and the past, and that it serves as a medium for movement, rhythm and life. All these qualities also apply to the textile art object, which was presented in various spatial forms at different venues [1, 2].

By showcasing the artists and their works, the organisers highlight the significance of textile techniques and the possibilities textiles offer for conveying artistic messages. The exhibition format is enhanced by workshops, round tables and presentations, which help raise public awareness of this form of creativity. The international participation of artists brings diversity to our environment, allowing us to encounter practices emerging in the global art scene that use textiles as a medium for communication.

#### 2.1.2 **Oloop – textile community for wellbeing**

The Oloop collective comprises textile artists Tjaša Bavcon, Katja Burger Kovič and Jasmina Ferček, who have been working under this name since 2003. They have gained knowledge and experience both in Slovenia and abroad, building on it for over two decades at the intersection of art, design and socially engaged, participatory practices. Their work transcends traditional design boundaries. Through textile art, contemporary spatial installations and

sustainable products, they create experiences that connect tradition and modernity, evoke emotions and address socially relevant topics. They pay particular attention to exploring the meaning of craftsmanship and the impact of creative processes on the wellbeing of individuals and communities. People are at the centre of their projects. Through workshops, education and socially engaged initiatives, they build bridges between art and everyday life, connect different communities, encourage cooperation and explore the impact of design on health, ecology, sustainability and identity. Their work has received international recognition several times, including the Red Dot Award. Oloop thus represents more than design; it is a way of thinking, creating and coexisting with the world [3, 4].

#### 2.1.3 **Chiachio & Giannone – participatory textile installation**

Chiachio & Giannone is an artistic duo comprising Leo Chiachio and Daniel Giannone, who have been living and working together in Buenos Aires since 2003. Both are academically trained painters who have transferred their artistic sensibilities to hand embroidery, replacing colour and brushstrokes with needle and thread. Their work, often monumental in scale, combines elements of magical realism, humour and distinct technical virtuosity, expressed through various materials and a wide range of stitches. The central themes of their work are family, identity and love. In their textile portraits, they often depict themselves and their three dachshunds, reinterpreting the traditional family portrait and enriching it with their own life story. Their works are both autobiographical and universal, opening discussions about contemporary forms of family, gender roles, and the position of the LGBTQ+ community in art and society. They frequently include community participation in their projects. Among the most notable is the Celebrating Diversity project, presented in 2019 at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) in Los Angeles, where more than 3,000 participants contributed embroidery for a 36.5-metre rainbow flag, which

the artists used to lead the Long Beach Pride Parade in 2022. They undertake similar projects in collaboration with galleries, museums and cultural institutions worldwide, allowing their work to transcend the gallery setting and establish itself as a space for dialogue, community and celebration of diversity. Their exhibitions and residencies range from San Diego (Lux Institute, 2020) and Bourges, France (Transpalette, 2022) to Chile (Genio Doméstico, 2019), where they also carried out the collaborative action *Bordatón* and donated a work in honour of the Violeta Parra Museum. In addition to textile installations, they curate projects such as the virtual exhibition *CUIR* (2021), which brought together twenty queer artists from across the Americas. Chichio & Giannone demonstrate through their work that embroidery is a contemporary visual language that enables the exploration of identity, preservation of memory and building of community. Their work combines traditional techniques with current social issues, creating a space where textiles become a means of artistic expression, political reflection and inclusion [5, 6, 8].

#### **2.1.4 Textile cartographies – global network of textile narrative and participatory art**

Textile Cartographies is an international movement that began in 2022 as a participatory action research project using textile art as a means of storytelling. The project is coordinated by the APECV research group – Research Group on Arts, Community and Education (GriArCE). The network currently brings together 35 groups from 22 countries, involving universities, schools, art collectives and various associations. Each group has one or more coordinators who develop actions and projects with participants. These initiatives respond to current global challenges such as the environment, climate justice, social justice and sustainability, exploring visual discourses through art and contemporary textile technologies. By April 2025, Textile Cartographies involved approximately 6,000 participants in activities organised by local groups in museums, schools, universities, cultural

institutions, and social-health and non-profit organisations. The network thus represents an example of good practice, where textiles become a tool for reflection, collaboration and social dialogue at a global level [9].

#### **2.1.5 Centre for heritage, arts and textile (CHAT) – textile heritage and digital art**

CHAT is a textile heritage museum in Hong Kong, located in the renovated former Nan Fung Textiles cotton factory in Tsuen Wan. Since the opening in March 2019, it has organised exhibitions, workshops and community programmes to preserve both tangible and intangible textile heritage, and to encourage new ideas and dialogue between heritage, art and design. The centre's identity is inspired by the basic structure of fabric (warp and weft), symbolising its mission to connect diverse voices, disciplines and practices. CHAT presents itself as a space for new beginnings, where contemporary interpretations of textiles are shaped by the intertwining of art, design and heritage. The museum not only tells the story of the industrial past, but also challenges conventional notions of textile art and encourages diverse and experimental practices. In addition to its exhibition and educational activities, CHAT awards research fellowships intended for international researchers, archivists, writers and postgraduate students engaged in the history of the textile industry in Hong Kong and beyond. CHAT hence represents a museum of textile culture and a laboratory for the future, which, through innovative approaches, creates a space for artistic research, community exchange and the ongoing valorisation of textile heritage [10, 11].

#### **2.1.6 Yarn bombing Los Angeles – urban textile intervention**

Yarn Bombing Los Angeles (YBLA) is an art collective that has worked at the intersection of textile art, street art and urban interventions since 2010. The group, which developed from participatory yarn bombing projects in Los Angeles, operates from the 18th Street Arts Center in Santa Monica. Their work

includes public installations, performances and workshops that expand the concept of public art and blur the boundaries between craft, contemporary art and street culture. The collective's largest project was CAFAM Granny Squared (2013), in which over 500 participants from around the world covered the facade of the Craft and Folk Art Museum with hand-crocheted squares. After dismantling, the contributions were repurposed as blankets in collaboration with women's centres in Los Angeles. The collective's participatory approaches foster community, collaboration and public dialogue, while also establishing textiles as a medium for contemporary art in public space [12].

### 2.1.7 Bauhaus heritage of weaving

The textile knowledge of the past was skilfully utilised and revived by participants at the Weimar Bauhaus School. Embroideries and knitwear were produced based on in-depth studies of composition, colour relationships and form, which were initially developed on paper or canvas. The materials reveal that these designs were first created using classical techniques, e.g. drawing or painting with watercolours, dry coloured pencils and similar media. Textiles were made using geometric shapes, with rectangles complemented by rhombuses, triangles and circles. The complexity of the compositions and the expanded colour palette were developed experimentally by Gunta Stölzl. She brought an artistic dimension to the textile tradition, resulting in innovative textiles and contemporary tapestries, while also pursuing experimental designs in woven elements in her works [7].

## 2.2 Balkan motifs and colours

A *čilim* (Engl. kilim) is a woven carpet in which the same motif appears on both sides, allowing it to be used as a "positive" on either side. The Persian term for carpets woven in this manner is *palas* [13]. All carpets are characterised by duality, reflected in both the technique and execution of the motif, as well as in the symbolism of the depicted motifs. In the latter, totemic tribal motifs are linked with religious

symbols. The symbolism of the motif is further enhanced by the colour palette.

The motifs of the Balkan kilim are rich in symbolic meanings that originate from different historical periods, often dating back to the Neolithic. These symbols are multifaceted; they express fertility, protection, cosmic order, and the happiness and prosperity of the community [14–16]. The elements that appear in the graphic templates include the triangle and star motifs, as well as other abstract motifs.

**The triangle motif** (Figure 1 and Figure 2) appears either individually, representing an amulet, talisman or charm, or in a series, forming ornaments called teeth, flowing water, cloud bands or a snake. The triangle in a kilim carries several meanings; it symbolises water as the source of life, opens the "gate of heaven", protects the sacred space and is also a symbol of fertility. Its origin dates back to prehistoric times and the Neolithic. Compositions with triangles on Bosnian kilims, called *dulumaš*, *kriškaš*, *sofraš* or *makazè*, represent the expansion of the universe, the infinity of space and a symbol of fertility [14–18].

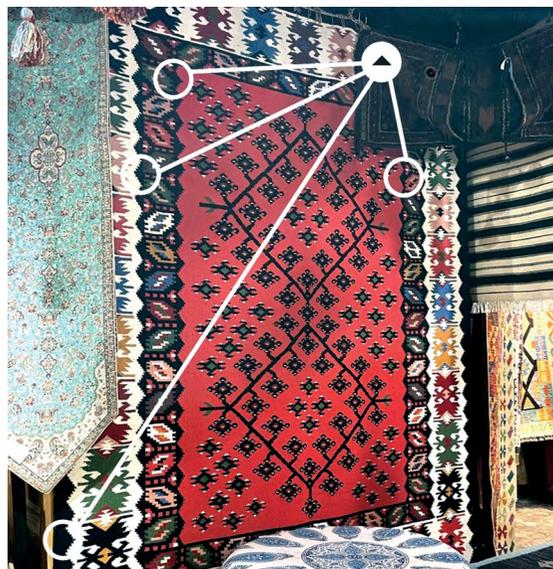


Figure 1: Triangular motif appears on various carpet parts; adapted from Amna Design [15]

**The star motif** (Figure 2) is one of the most frequently used elements, appearing in various forms

such as a simple star, a stepped wheel or the so-called “love border”, which combines a star and a “small wheel”. The symbol represents happiness, prosperity, fertility, divine light and universal cosmic order. Its tradition dates back to the Neolithic period [14-18].



Figure 2: Triangular motif and star motif appear in various combinations with additional decorative elements; adapted from Amna Design [15]

These motifs are typical of Bosnian carpets and are often passed down from generation to generation as part of family heritage. The Balkan mythology presents various stories and protagonists that shaped the beliefs of our ancestors. The visualisation of folk art plays a key role in preserving and raising awareness of the culture and history of the nation, while also strengthening awareness of the diversity of our society. In the Balkans, and more widely across Europe, the most characteristic colours of individual cultural traditions are black, white and red. Symbolically, black represented the Earth or Mother Earth, and thus fertility and stability. Red was associated with life energy and blood, and also symbolised strength, continuation of the lineage and struggle. In traditional understanding, white represented eternity and spirit, sky and purity [18, 19].

These colours already played an important role in the Cucuteni-Trypillian civilisation from about eight thousand years ago, which is together with the Vinča culture formed in the Balkans considered one of the earliest foundations of the European cultural development. The civilisation was geographically located in what is now Romania and Ukraine [19].

Such colour symbolism is also reflected in the material cultural heritage of the Balkans, as the combination of red, black and white dominates embroidery, Easter eggs and numerous other objects created within the folk and artistic traditions of the region.

### 3 Experimental

#### 3.1 From illustration to grid

In 2024, Nejla Kadirić created a series of 22 visual images or illustrative interpretations, drawing on Balkan folklore heritage as a starting point and inspiration for further research into visual design [14, 18]. Her illustrations were later developed and transformed into abstract patterns, based on the visual elements of traditional rugs and their characteristic ornamental motifs.

During the visual design process, we explored the world of rituals, dance and ethnographic traditions of the Balkans, conceptually linking them to folk beliefs, stories and narrative traditions of the past, which significantly contributed to the substantive and visual context of the research. We developed patterns with students at both material and symbolic levels. We first created the illustrations on paper (Figure 3) and then transferred them to digital form using Adobe Illustrator and Affinity Designer.

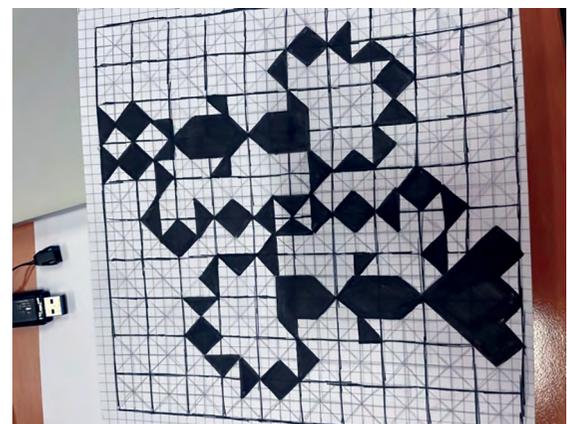


Figure 3: Sketch of illustration composed of triangles; created by Sara Selšek

Teja Medvešček then imported the selected works into Adobe Illustrator, where we used the Create Object Mosaic function to convert the bit-map images into a grid of square vector fields. We tested grids of  $30 \times 30$ ,  $40 \times 40$  and  $50 \times 50$  fields, and found that the  $40 \times 40$  grid was the most suitable for our project.

The next step was colour processing. When converting images into a grid, individual fields are automatically coloured according to the average colour of the pixels they comprise, resulting in each square being a slightly different shade. To unify the appearance while preserving the original design, we assigned one of three colours to all fields, using only those already present in the original motifs. We used the Magic Wand tool to assist with this, selecting fields with similar shades by adjusting the tolerance and then assigning them the appropriate colour. We had a certain amount of freedom in this process, as we needed to balance recreating the motif as authentically as possible by using a limited range of colours.

When designing the nets, we did not aim for strict symmetry, but instead maintained slight

irregularities that contribute to authenticity and visual interest. A similar principle can be found in some traditional weaving techniques (e.g. Persian carpets), where craftsmen often intentionally incorporate minor imperfections as an expression of handcraftedness.

Figure 4 shows a digital illustration created using the Zaljubljena card template, in which Kadirić depicted Pižoj and Penda. The abstracted figure is surrounded by a field of flowers, signalling the arrival of spring [14]. Sara Selšek constructed the motif from triangles and depicted a loop, symbolising their connection and commitment. We aimed to make the result visually engaging from every angle. In most cases, we encounter a central composition, with complex patterns radiating from the centre of the rectangle. Circular designs complement compositions where we experiment with vertical mappings or mirrored representations of the motif. The further we moved from the basic building blocks, the more open the patterns became to interpretation. In these abstract works, we achieved perfect modules, which could be combined into more complex visual narratives through repetition.

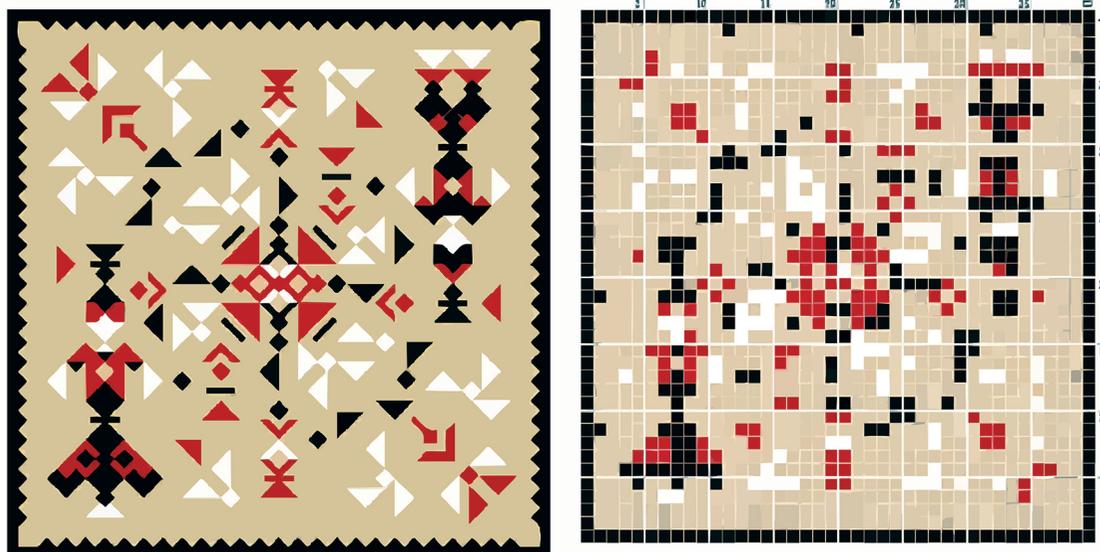


Figure 4: Illustration and construction grid based on card Zaljubljena

The basis of the pattern lies in its potential for repetition and placement. By rotating and mirroring, we can create more complex and interesting patterns, which removes the repetitive monotony from its artistic form [20].

The illustration was interpreted in a completely abstract artistic manner by Marika Gönc (Figure 5). The graphic design is entitled *Wabi-Sabi*, named after the ancient Japanese philosophy, which in contrast to Western aesthetic ideals emphasises the acceptance

of imperfection and transience. The deconstruction of perfection is evident in the work through the connection of individual lines with larger surfaces and the deliberate asymmetry of the composition, where the left and right sides are not identical, much like the human body is not entirely symmetrical. The author aimed to highlight the beauty of seeking inner truth and accepting imperfection as an aesthetic value. The central motif of the design is a star with additional decorative elements.



Figure 5: Illustration and construction grid based on Hermit card

### 3.2 Embroidery made by project members *Razkrite roke*

Handmade textile techniques, e.g. embroidery, have historically represented an important part of everyday life and have served as carriers of cultural heritage. Embroidery involves manually decorating basic fabrics with thread. Cotton, linen or hemp canvas can be embroidered, as well as artificial materials. With a needle and embroidery thread, it is also possible to embroider other fabrics, felt, leather or artificial materials that allow perforation. As a status symbol, embroidery was once reserved for the nobility and bourgeoisie; however, it remains prominent in liturgical clothing, with embroidery workshops established in monasteries. It is a time-consuming

process that is in modern times increasingly replaced by machines. In the past, Bled was home to a world-class embroidery factory; Bled Embroidery supplied many households in Slovenia.

In Slovenia, two embroidery techniques are distinguished. The first is embroidery using a drawn template, where the embroiderer draws a pattern on the base and repeats the motif with thread. The second is embroidery using counted threads; in this case, the well-known cross-stitch is used, where the motif is embroidered on a sparsely woven surface and resembles the so-called Pixel Art [21, 22].

Although often replaced by machine processes today, hand embroidery remains an expression of creativity, patience and a personal connection to

textile materials. The purpose of our project was to highlight the importance of these skills as part of a movable cultural heritage that is gradually disappearing, and to expand the range of products created by the project members Razkrite roke, i.e. women of different generations, mostly retired, who engage in

these activities in their leisure time, with modern interpretations. The construction grid enabled us to prepare and adapt the art templates for embroidery (Figure 6). The embroideries were created on a jute base, as the structure of this natural material made it easier to count and embroider the pattern (Figure 7).



Figure 6: Preparing for embroidery using construction grid and starting work

Jute is an affordable plant fibre used in interior design, primarily for coarse fabrics, carpets, bedspreads and underlays. Due to its high tensile

strength, it withstands mechanical stress well; however, it is less elastic and sensitive to moisture and light, which can affect its durability [23].



Figure 7: Final product of embroidery made by project members Razkrite roke

The embroidery material was a blend of acrylic and wool fibres in four colours, i.e. black, red, white and beige. This followed the tradition of artistic

carpet knotting. The fabric was then sewn onto the completed embroidery and the filling was added (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Decorative pillows featuring illustrations by Sara Selšek (left) and Marika Gönc (right)

Wool and wool-like fibres are softer, warmer and more elastic than jute, making them suitable for upholstery fabrics and decorative textiles. In addition to natural wool, synthetic fibres (e.g. acrylic) that imitate wool are also widely used in interiors, as they offer good colour fastness, easy maintenance and a more affordable price. Decorative pillows made of wool and wool-like fibres are valued for their comfort, warmth and aesthetic appeal. Wool provides a pleasant touch and natural breathability, while synthetic fibres allow for greater shape retention and lower costs. Jute is less commonly used for pillows; nevertheless, it can be combined with other fibres to create a rustic look or serve as a filling material. Modern trends in interior design focus on combining various natural and synthetic fibres to achieve a balance between durability, aesthetics and functionality [23, 24]

### 3.3 Urban seating objects

We printed the illustrations using the inkjet printing technique on tarpaulin material. We selected 2 cm thick foam as the filler for urban seat cushions. The foam added volume and thus functionality to the two-dimensional graphic prints on the tarpaulin.

The artificial polymer enabled machine sewing and the material's compactness made it suitable for outdoor use. There was no data loss during the printing, as the templates retained their appearance and the selected colours remained unchanged (Figure 9).

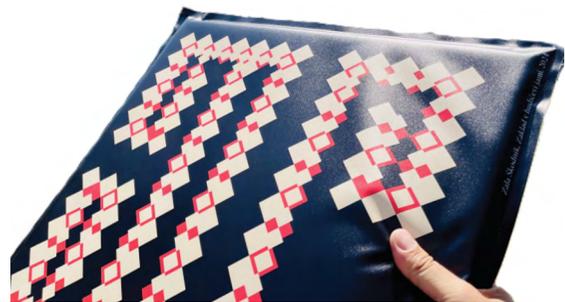


Figure 9: Close-up of urban lounge chair featuring illustration by Zale Škodnik

## 4 Results and discussion

With each public presentation, we were able to examine the creative work in new contexts. The relationship in the gallery space was completely different from that in the public space. The works displayed outdoors were smaller and formed a complementary relationship with the greenery, providing contrast and clear exposure.

The project was first publicly presented in March at the Gornjesavski Museum in Jesenice. The exhibition, entitled *Intertwined from All Winds*, included graphic designs, interpretations of artistic proposals and embroideries by the project members *Razkrite roke* (Figure 10) [25].



Figure 10: Presentation of final products by students from Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering and project members *Razkrite roke*, 2025

The composition at the Air BIEN 2025 exhibition (Figure 11) created a dialogue among all the graphic interpretations and variations produced by the authors from different local backgrounds, each contributing their own authorial statement to the whole. Although industrially printed, the graphic designs incorporate the traditional characteristics of kilims. The carpet in the air, once beaten to remove dust, became a performative object in the exhibition project, allowing individuals to find a comfortable seat in the urban space [26, 27].

Patterns accompany us in a wide range of life circumstances and appear to us in various forms. The project results featured square carpets, exhibited as kilims during the research process, with key elements forming newly composed dynamic patterns. In these, a centre is established in the artistic square for all patterns, with rotation around it. The artistic proposals, in dialogue with digital illustrations by Nejla Kadirić, together formed a complete whole, bringing together different starting points and



Figure 11: Project in public space on opening day of BIEN 2025 in Jesenice

formal considerations regarding the patterns and heritage of Balkan weaving, interweaving and textile ornamentation.

As part of the biennial events, we organised a travelling exhibition on a train, where graphic interpretations journeyed from Jesenice to Nova Gorica (Figure 12). Through the project, we drew attention to seats and especially standing areas, offering passengers the opportunity to sit in a different “format”.



Figure 12: Project presentation on Slovenian Railways train, 2025

Graphic designs in dialogue with embroidery offer an opportunity to build a relationship between the traditional and the contemporary through an exhibition project. At the same time, they demonstrate that a textile creation provides a means to express and transcend social boundaries, contributes to a sense of belonging and enables the preservation of

cultural tradition. We believe that the use of symbols and illustrations in such creative projects fosters dialogue and inclusion among different communities. We also invited project members Razkrite roke from Jesenice to participate in this community. Together, we translated our graphic patterns back into embroidery, thus reconnecting with the tradition of kilims. The graphic patterns we created in the course Visual Analysis of Graphic Products 2 (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Department of Textiles, Graphic Arts and Design) entered a new space through the work of project members Razkrite roke, both in terms of materiality and communication. We forged a special bond between generations and cultures, which is now sustained in the dialogue between the digital print and the textile product.

The winds of our region have enabled the exchange of different cultures, peoples and nations over the centuries, leaving the area marked by rich patterns, forms and content that we still encounter today in modern celebrations. This cultural interweaving (Figure 13) has shaped us into a nation that is recognisable, especially in the southern and eastern parts of Slovenia, by the characteristic embroidered patterns once present on traditional clothing, some of which are now preserved in modern embroidery and designed textiles.



Figure 13: Placement of urban seating in public space of renovated railway station in Nova Gorica, 2025

After the World War II, with economic development, the Slavic tradition was enriched by the influences of other Balkan nations, who introduced new elements of their customs and traditions into our region. Much of this cultural wealth was preserved in private spaces, and in some cases, it also became part of social organisations, where it was incorporated into cultural programmes and supplemented the Slovenian ethnological tradition. New industrial centres such as Velenje, Jesenice and Zasavje became the meeting points for these influences.

The urban benches, presented at three exhibition events, will be used in advance by the curators and educators at the Gornjesavski Museum in Jesenice. In this way, we included another age group in the project who will be able to engage with and use our intergenerational and multimedia project. Through the project, we introduced young people to an activity registered in the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage, using both techniques, namely embroidery by drawing and embroidery by counted threads.

## 5 Conclusion

The research and artistic project was designed with clearly defined goals that guided the entire process from conception to implementation and public presentation. Below, we examine the extent to which these goals were achieved and how they are reflected in the creative, technical and social outcomes of the project.

The first goal, the creation of artistic interpretations in the form of an abstract pattern, was achieved. We converted vector drawings into digital grids (40 × 40), which subsequently developed into abstract patterns that took their final form during embroidery. The patterns draw on the cultural heritage of kilims, while simultaneously translating it into a modern visual language. The limited colour palette (red, black, white and light ochre) contributed to the coherence and integrity of the design.

The second goal, the destruction of stereotypes and raising awareness of identities, was only par-

tially achieved. The project, through its updated presentation of Balkan folklore symbolism, stimulated reflection on identity and cultural diversity. However, direct measurable effects on the destruction of stereotypes could not be identified, as this is primarily a long-term process of social reception.

The third goal, intercultural and intergenerational networking, was achieved. The collaboration with the project members Razkrite roke, women of different generations (mostly retired), and students of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering enabled the exchange of experiences, skills and stories. The project established a bridge between the academic environment, local communities and different generations, thus strengthening the connecting role of creation.

The fourth goal, the physical implementation and transfer of the artistic template from the digital space to a real object, was achieved. Digital graphic templates were transferred to physical objects, i.e. urban seating elements and three-dimensional textile embroidery. This established a clear connection between the graphic design, artistic expression and a functional object.

The fifth and final goal, public presentation and implementation of the objects in public space, was achieved as well. The project was presented at several locations, i.e. Gornjesavski Museum in Jesenice (Intertwined from All Winds), BIEN 2025 (performative object “Carpet in the Air”), a traveling exhibition on a Slovenian Railways train and an intervention in Nova Gorica. The urban benches will remain in permanent use in the museum, further confirming their implementation in public space.

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