

Designing for a Mess: Color and Pattern Design of Baby Burping Cloths

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***Abstract:** This text offers a glimpse into the creation of aesthetically appealing patterns to cover up milk burped up by babies. The patterned burping cloths -inspired by global fountains – are designed to be drizzily irregular with soft-toned colors to camouflage where a burped baby's spit up hits the surface. The designer's process for this debut baby collection (explored here from initial ideation through product production and placed in context of her body ofwork and current design philosophy) took longer than it takes to birth a living, breathing baby.*

***Keywords:** color, pattern, harmony*

1 Product Descriptions

Bellagio Baby Burper in Melon: Whether in Italy or Vegas, Bellagio rings of opulent fountains and true decadence. Meant to keep you luxe and chic while the babe fountains up breakfast.

Berlin Baby Burper in Lemon: As dawn spews on Berlin's Neptune Fountain, you'll likely spot some fresh graffiti in the edgy and grandiose inner city. Let your baby's early morning spray mingle with the work of the Berlin hipsters. As luck would have it, infants inherently know how to tag things.

Antalya Baby Burper in Sky: Wax idyllic with patience as strong as Turkish coffee with those late nights up with the little one.

Trafalgar Baby Burper in Pink: A huge bubbler right in London proper. Let your sweet little one gurgle amidst the grace and orderliness of the Brits.

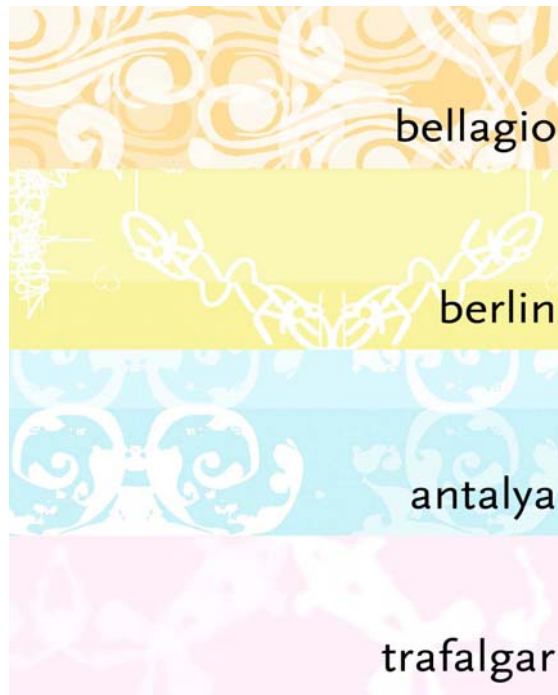


Fig. 1. Detail images of patterns from the the debut collection of Design Orange baby goods. The Bellagio and Berlin patterns were created in more gender neutral hues to provide color options for consumers.

2 Design Process

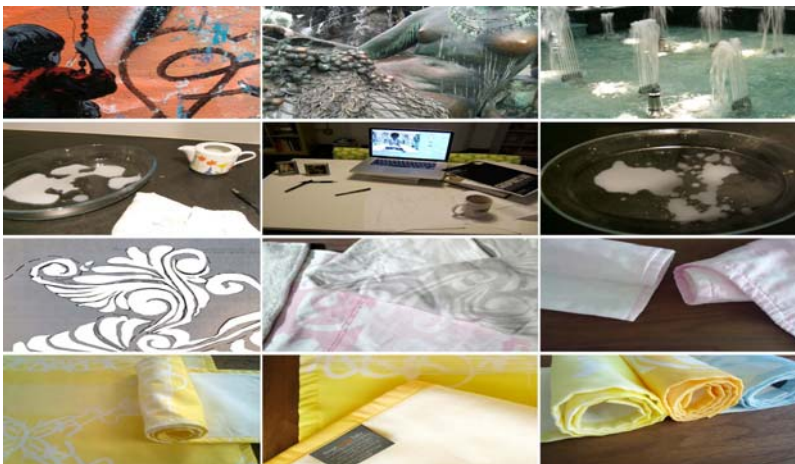


Fig. 2 (top). Images from an at-the-time recent Berlin trip. The exquisite city pulls off an astounding merging of a past with heavy narrative with a celebration of the present day thriving creative metropolis. At left: Punchy graffiti can be found sprinkled throughout much of town. In middle: The historic Neptune fountain personifies four major regional rivers and glorifies the achievements of Berlin's past. At right: Fountains with contemporary hardware in a rebuilt Berlin district exemplify the palpable progressive attitude present in today's Berlin.

Fig. 3 (upper middle). Milk pour experiments and the design process.

Fig. 4 (lower middle). Examples of early drawings and prototypes. Note the change in materials and colors from the images in Fig. 4 to the images in Fig. 5 below. At left: A drawing exploring the balance of milk drip imagery and historic patterning in the Bellagio design. In middle: Front fabric layers were organic cotton knit, and back layers were organic knit or organic terry cloth. Shrinking and stretching issues with production, washing, and drying called for experimentation with many fabric combinations before the correct fabric pairing was found. Colors were also explored and refined; here, Bellagio is printed in a cappuccino color with cream patterning, and Antalya is developed with a pink printed pattern and a natural colored backing. At right: Trafalgar prototypes printed in variations of pink appear nearly too light in hue. A notable discovery at this stage was that the fabrics pleasantly softened and became plusher with washing.).

Fig. 5 (bottom). Organic cotton sateen with a clean white base and a heavy white certified organic cotton flannel were chosen for the front and back layers. At left: Berlin Baby Burper and Berlin Baby Changer in Lemon. In middle: Bellagio Baby Burper in Melon and Berlin Baby Burper in Lemon. At right: Berlin Baby Burper in Lemon, Bellagio Baby Burper in Melon, and Antalya Baby Burper in Sky. Each burper measures ~203 mm x 673 mm. Each changer measures ~406 mm x 673 mm. Sustainably made, produced, and designed in home country.

3 Evaluation

As the products have passed the designer's rigorous stretch and shrink tests, the next step in evaluation will be a formal analysis of burper spit up on the products themselves. Burpers are currently in the hands of new parents or parents-to-be, and the designer eagerly awaits results. The burpers offered a range of tints (of the actual chosen hues – lemon, melon, pink, sky) or variations in opacity and hue of whites and creams over the fabric surface. Color production cannot be controlled to a highly calibrated level at this scale of production, but a color analysis of baby spit up in relation to burper colors still promises to provide helpful information. The designer also wishes to determine if and how actual colors of baby spit up vary in regions of the country and the world. (Metameric effects seem too difficult

to control in test samples as it is likely that end consumers burp babies in an inconsistent/widely varied set of light conditions.)

Further design development in baby burper patterns would be a solid next step in the iterative process, especially in conjunction with the aforementioned formal spit-up analysis. Utilitarian developments could include waterproof lining, a wrap-and-tie strap, and an antibacterial + organic + pleasant smelling inner layer.

4 Product Line in Context of Body of Work

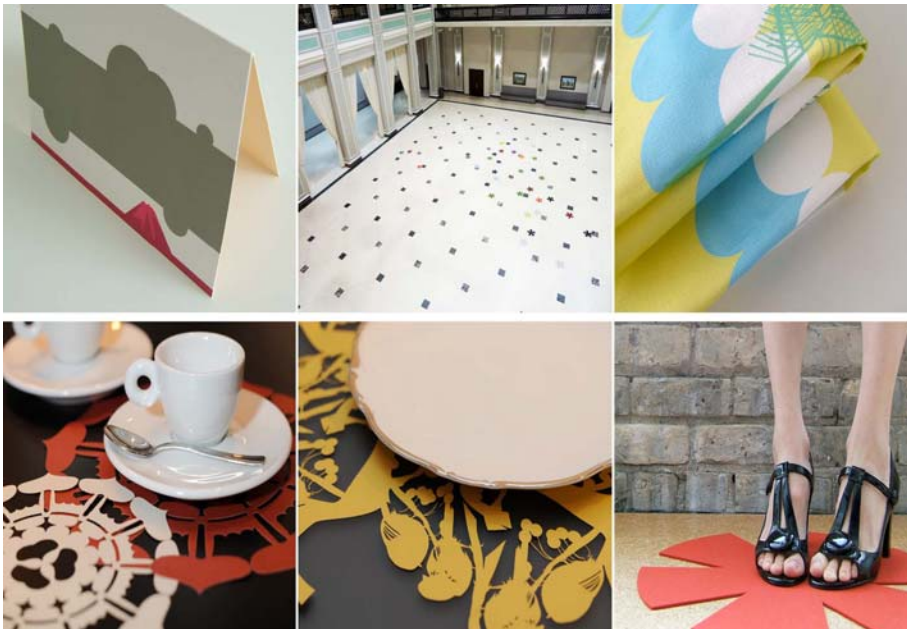


Fig. 6 (top). Recent design works that address color invading the natural or built environments. At right: Volcano Card from the Disaster Etiquette Series. Jada Schumacher for Design Orange. Inside message reads, “Sorry to hear about the volcano.” This card was created in response to the large ash cloud above Iceland after a major volcanic eruption. In middle: Asterisk Rug Spots installed in downtown Saint Paul, Minnesota. Jada Schumacher for Design Orange. The rugs interrupt the regularity of the flooring grid in this built environment. At left: Clear Sailing | Milfoil Dish Towel from the Two Sides of Summer Series. Jada Schumacher for Design Orange. Consumers can flip the towel on the towel bar to expose clear sailing waters or waters filled with milfoil overgrowth (an invasive plant species clogging up many American lakes). Just as these works explore a color “invasion” in a pre-existing space, so too the baby burpers examine the

appearance of colored spit up onto a presumably previously clean (and likely not identically colored) shoulder space. The burpers are also socially interactive objects about systemic change.

Fig. 7 (bottom). Recent design works that “protect” surfaces from drips, spills, stains, and grime. At right: Heartbreaker Doilies in Sustainable Silver and Metallic Red. Photograph by Tiffany Bolk Photography for Design Orange. In middle: Lovebirds Doily | Placemat. Photograph by Tiffany Bolk Photography for Design Orange. At left: Asterisk Rug Spot [sans in orange]. An asterisk is a festive typographic element that marks something of significance, something to be further defined, or something fantastically notable. Stand on this candy-colored spot to have your own remarkable moment of transformation (or not). Baby burpers and changers also protect clothing and surfaces from baby spit up and messes.

5 Shifts in Design Methodology

While many earlier pieces by the designer explored social expectations, earlier works such as Orange Room were larger in scale and more focused on atmospheric color and the experience of color in space. Often, these ideas started with a noticed color phenomenon (i.e. a pile of materials, a funny glow, etc.) and then found their social content. The current works are more delicate and lightweight. They are less installations and more product lines; they are more mini-spaces or objects than spaces themselves. These works seem to start with a specific social situation or a seemingly outmoded shred of etiquette. For example, Bedside Manners Cards [contemporary calling cards for the pillow] bloom as a reaction to the hurried, transitory, and digital nature of much of our days. These cards allow for a saucy or sappy ongoing conversation via the tiny, tangible pillow cards. And, Disaster Etiquette Cards [cards for global condolences] grew out of a response to the natural disasters occurring with frequency as our climate changes. These cards (Flood, Quake, Spill, Twister, and Volcano) can be sent to those experiencing all sorts of disasters in everyday life – a divorce, a rumor spreading, a job layoff, a break-up, a flooded basement, a tantruming toddler, and similar.

It seems that a crashing economy and changes in physical restraints of making and moving have driven some of these changes in the designer's process. In addition, the ever-present thread of investigation around etiquette in the designer's work seems to have taken a higher precedence in recent years. This subtle shift in priorities could be a result of the designer's unintentional backlash against “immediate” forms of communication including texting and social media. With these quicker modes of interacting, message receiver impatience and curt message delivery (becoming more noticeable and societally prevalent) can appear to champion a general lack of manners. The designer's recent direction conceptually moves towards an encouragement of a mannerly mode of presence with

intentionality and emphasizes efforts to enjoy the even seemingly mundane bits that comprise much of a day. The designer's work – still about color, space, and light in technique – seems to have scaled down from aspirations of generating all-encompassing color auras in installation work to creation, refinement, or acknowledgement of compact and colorful moments (i.e. tiny spaces for transformation or baby spit or tea cups) already present in the everyday.

6 Possible Areas of Further Exploration

Clearly, military wear and animal skins have long utilized camouflaging techniques for safety and survival. Recent military patterns have transitioned from the more familiar globular woodland, urban, and desert patterns to digitally created (but still landscape-specific) patterns such as the trademarked MARPAT.¹ These patterns, while appearing to the naked eye less realistic from closer ranges, take away some of the hard edges that can allow those trained in primary vision techniques to spot the globular camouflage designs in the real landscape.² These digital manipulation strategies could be applied in burper pattern designs to increase irregularity in the patterning and further render spit up spots unnoticeable.

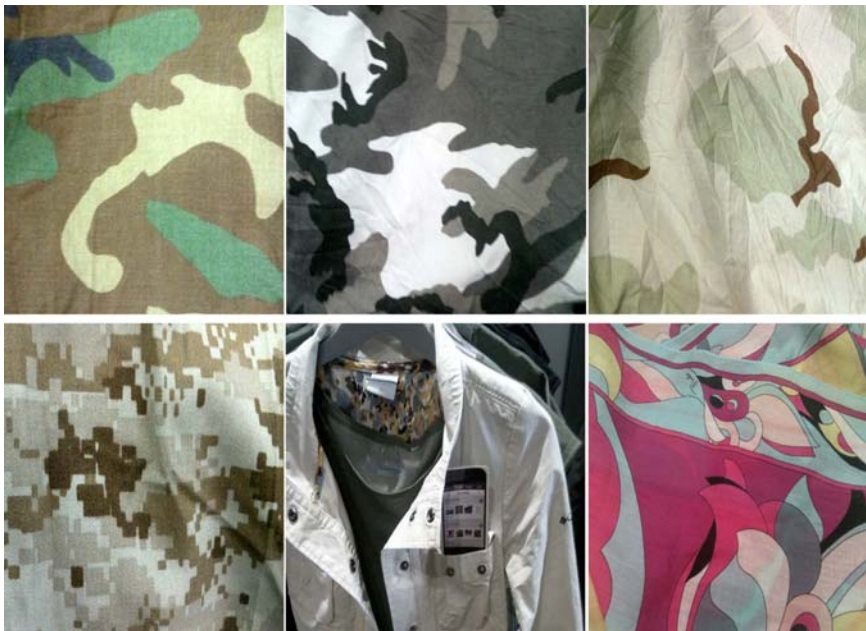


Fig. 8 (top). Classic military patterns from the United States of America. At right: Woodland Camouflage. In middle: Urban Camouflage (unofficial as official urban pattern was not released by the United States).³ At left: Desert Camouflage.

Fig. 9 (bottom). At right: Digitally manipulated and Desert trademarked MARPAT Camouflage. In middle: Camouflage for decoration, not utility, in women's jacket lining by the brand, Colombia. At right: Designs in this Emilio Pucci scarf flaunt drool-shaped patterns for ornamental effect.

Taking inspiration from the Berlin Baby Burper – where spit up can be considered artistic marking making as opposed to residual mess making – further product lines could be developed to accentuate – not hide – the drooling mess. Possibly a spit blossom chemise? A slobber shrug? A drool man scarf in the style of famed designer Emilio Pucci? Options and potential directions forward abound, as it seems likely that babies will continue to fountain up breakfast with regularity and fervor.

Acknowledgement

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MINI MANIFESTO

Product Philosophy

I create crisp paper goods and colorful home items that let the user communicate to crushes with quirky honesty, to kids with truthful joy, and to friends with wacky sweetness. These etiquette-based, situationally aligned, and sustainably produced products allow the user to access the subtle humor and exquisite joys in the immediate present. I believe that even in sleep-deprived moments covered in baby puke, we can employ wit and intelligence to celebrate life.

Thoughts on a Designer's Life

Really look. Really listen. Even though you love what you do so much that it can be hard to be torn away from the creative flow, make time to take lavender baths, too.

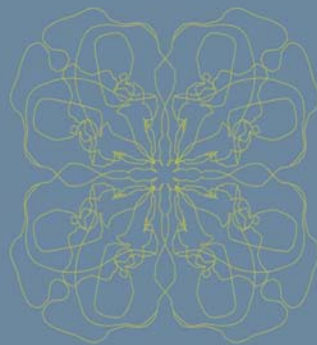
Be active in designing the life that you want. Be willing to continually and gently reassess that life design and your current path to ensure that you satisfy your existing and future needs.

Design Inspiration

I am influenced by fashion (think the lines and progressive fabrics of Juan Carlos Obando or the shocking pink silhouettes of Elsa Schiaparelli), modernist architecture (the bookplated marbles of Mies and magenta courtyards of Luis Barragán), and minimalist art (the atmospheric hues of Donald Judd and the abstract shapes of Ellsworth Kelly).

Museum hopping is an exquisite luxury. It's super important to stay current (and to nourish your creative self). See contemporary art and outrageous performances. Go to concerts. Watch movies. Walk through boutiques and touch nice fabrics.

Travel in your own town. Travel somewhere far away. Travel somewhere that smells like curry or anise or dirt or honey.



*mini manifesto inspired by interview questions from Sarah Saleh of Boxed Online, a global retailer located in Bahrain and the MENA region

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