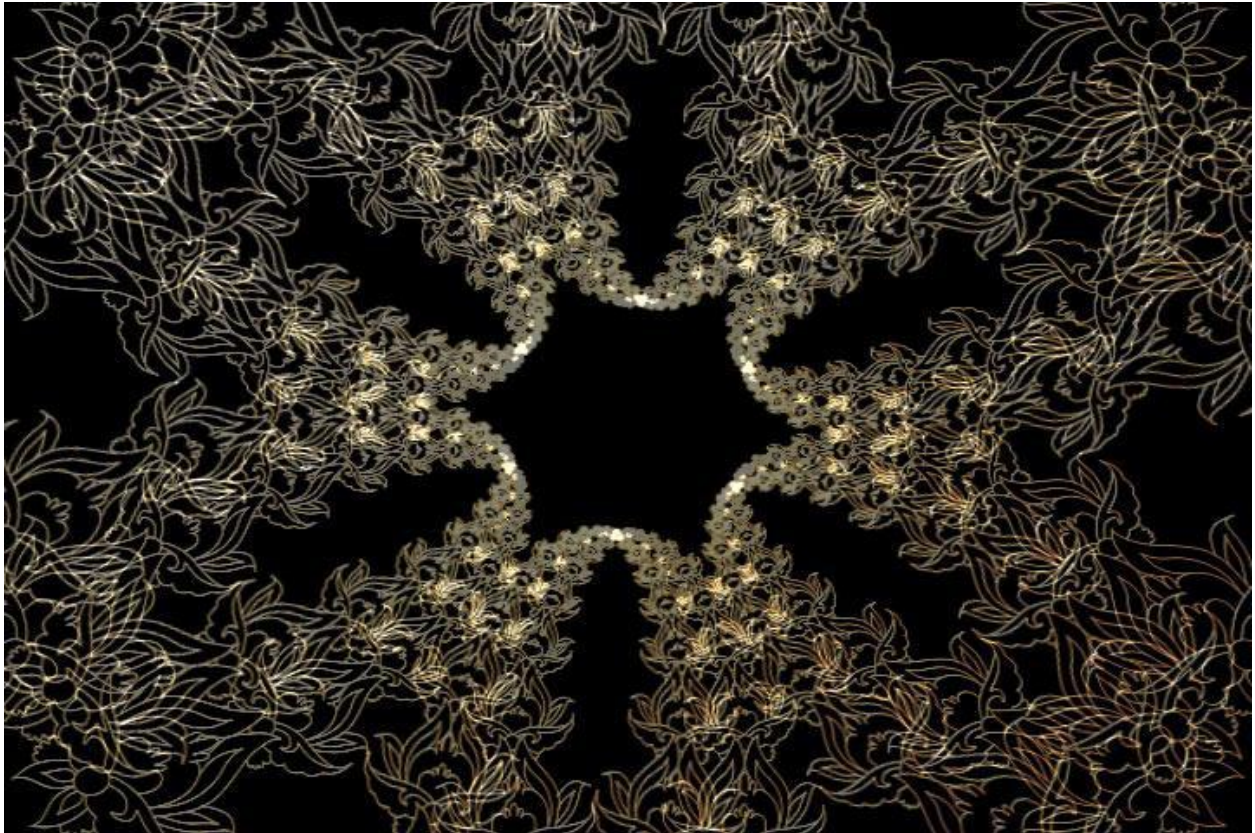


Rising Symmetry

Lia Rogers and Katayoon Etemad

University of Calgary



Rising Symmetry is a piece without a traditional narrative; it is simply a resting space. The rhythmic animations are created to install a feeling of contemplation. The whole is more than the sum of its parts: a central concept in Persian design. Unity is created through repetition and symmetry. The mind is lulled by the rhythm even though the eye has no respite. There is no central focal point for the patterns; especially when they are animated, creating a meditative quality. The animations capture interest because the complexity of the pattern takes attention to understand. *Rising Symmetry*, acts as a counter balance to the busy streets and the hectic city, providing a small breathing space.

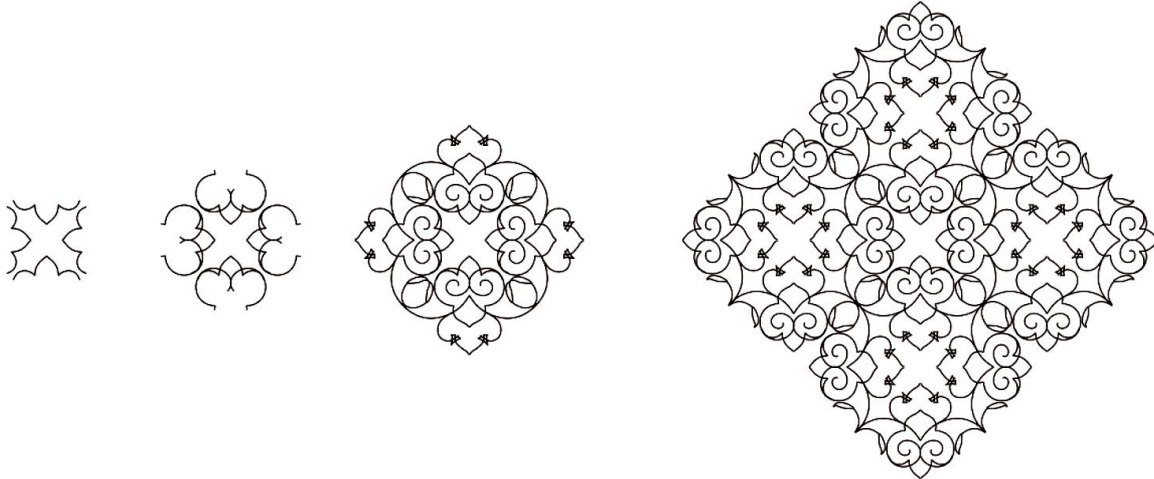


Figure 1: The progression of a floral pattern.

Rising Symmetry is a piece without a traditional narrative; it is simply a resting space. The rhythmic animations are created to produce a feeling of contemplation. The intricate patterns follow a central concept in Persian design where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The complex patterns have many different internal variations and unity is created through repetition and symmetry. There is no central focal point for the patterns; especially when they are animated, creating a meditative quality. The mind is lulled by the rhythm even though the eye has no respite. The animations capture interest because the complexity of the pattern takes attention to understand. *Rising Symmetry* acts as a counter balance to the busy streets and the hectic city, providing space to breathing and take a break.

The floral patterns are decorative motifs taken directly from the patterns applied to Persian architecture. They have little symbolic meaning, having evolved far from their origins as abstractions of plants. Animating the patterns is a challenge because of their puzzling geometry, complex structure and continuous symmetry. The drawing process proceeds from a simple form to a complex shape level by level, dynamically producing the patterns and giving an illusion of growth. *Rising Symmetry* had 23 different coloured animations, each between 20-40 seconds for a total of about 20 minutes total projection time. The patterns were played in a random order, so that even if a visitor stood for an extended time the projection would not have a repeated sequence.

The building chosen for *Rising Symmetry* was the ARP Pharmacy. During the day, the upper story is a blank white slate with a slightly corrugated surface. During Illuminate, *Rising Symmetry* transformed it into a dynamic and colourful space. This canvas was perfect to highlight the intricate patterns and allow the designs to stand out. Given the frenetic energy of a Grey Cup weekend the piece was a welcome rest from the constant barrage along Stephen Avenue Walk. It was perched two stories above the ground, making it easy to see, allowing a great number of people to stop and just watch the patterns evolve.



Figure 2: Photo of the Twigs building with a projected pattern.

During the festival, the location of *Rising Symmetry* was swapped with another artist to be projected onto the more intricate Twigs building. This experiment allowed the flavour of the patterns to change as they chased across the front of the architectural details. This is more in keeping with the intent of the patterns because normally they are applied as a decorative motif to Persian architecture. The switch proved an important opportunity to watch the patterns trace over the carved front of the building. Watching the lines draw themselves became more mesmerizing as they danced over the curved surface. Even with some of the details and overall pattern being lost in the dark windows of the building, the pattern chasing over the elaborate facade of the building were captivating.

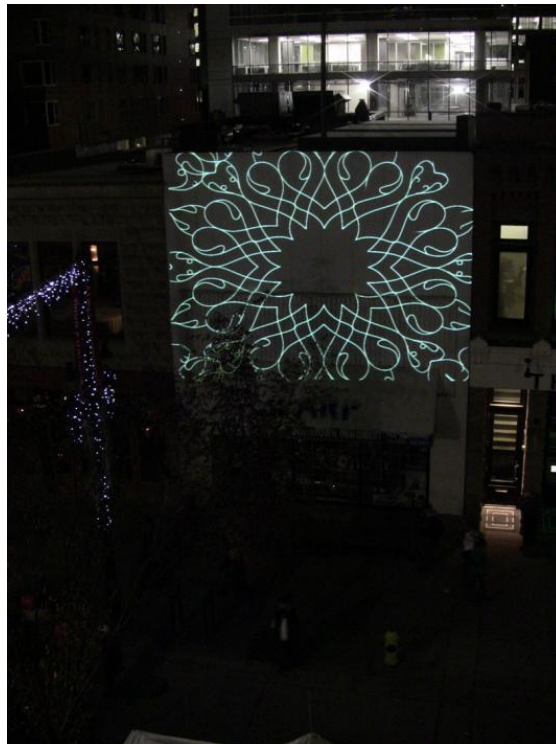


Figure 3: Photo of the APR building with a projected pattern.

Rising Symmetry was an artistic experiment, so no count of visitors or scientific analysis of length of engagement was conducted. Observation showed that more people stopped to watch the patterns on the pharmacy building than on Twigs building. This is most likely due to overall impact of the pattern being more visible on the building's blank wall. The length of the animations also played a part in engagement. Viewers did not need to spend a long time to get the payoff, which was important given the amount of activity and variety of things to do along the street. Some watchers stayed for several patterns and some just stayed for one, but many people stopped, especially with the brighter more intricate patterns. The lighter more subtle patterns were harder to notice. Visitors did not raise their eyes when these were playing because they did not stand out so much in the noise and chaos of the street party. For situations such as this, bright patterns would be most effective.



**Figure 4: Enmax Illuminate Calgary 2009
Grey Cup Street Party.**

Illuminate offered the opportunity to play animated Persian floral patterns on an external architectural surface. Exchanging the video with another building was a unique experiment with applying the animated patterns to alternative spaces. *Rising Symmetry* gave viewers a visual resting spot from the exciting activity of Grey Cup weekend.