



Handloom Textiles of Assam

P3 Project Report

Project Guide
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Declaration Sheet

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others ideas or words have been included. I have adequately provided cited and referenced the sources of information that I have included in the study.

I also declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misinterpreted or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will cause for disciplinary action by the Institute.



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Date: 01-07-2015

Approval Sheet

This Project entitled 'Handloom textiles of Assam' is approved in partial fulfilment of the Masters Design Degree in Visual Communication.

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I would like to thank my friends, batchmates and family for providing me with constant support and feedback throughout the whole project.



Abstract

The aim of the project is to explore Assam's handloom textile motifs as a visual medium of coded messages. The idea is to understand the motifs as a form of communication by the weavers towards the person they are weaving it for. The attempt was to understand the deeper meaning of the distinguishing elements and using the symbolism to depict a story using an amalgamation of the existing traditional technique of weaving with the digital art media.

The concept of reviving a traditional medium with the new age technology of digital medium was thoroughly explored. This attempt could provide the different artists, designers as well as weavers a perspective of seeing their practice at a more scalable and experimental level.

The project saw the growth from an attempt to first understand the motifs to search for a story and then the struggle to understand and learn the traditional technique of weaving to modifying it using the digital softwares to developing a product in terms of a book and further enhancing it to create a 2D animation.

The future of this project could be a series of stories that could be gathered from the different parts of the State and compiled through the common loop of the weaver as the main connecting point to each story. For egs: The weaver could weave a different motif or a group of motif and tell a different story every time.

Contents

<i>Declaration</i> <i>iii</i>	<i>Scope of the Project</i> <i>33</i>
<i>Approval</i> <i>v</i>	<i>Story explorations</i> <i>34</i>
<i>Acknowledgement</i> <i>vii</i>	<i>The loom</i> <i>44</i>
<i>Abstract</i> <i>ix</i>	<i>Execution process</i> <i>45</i>
<i>Introduction</i> <i>1</i>	<i>The final outlook</i> <i>47</i>
<i>Colours</i> <i>4</i>	<i>Story: Juria Mora</i> <i>50</i>
<i>Ethnic groups</i> <i>6</i>	<i>The final look</i> <i>53</i>
<i>Motifs and Designs</i> <i>9</i>	<i>Characters</i> <i>56</i>
<i>Types of Motifs</i> <i>14</i>	<i>Book (Illustrations)</i> <i>65</i>
<i>Motifs in textiles</i> <i>34</i>	<i>Learnings and future scope</i> <i>79</i>
<i>Textile as an art form</i> <i>28</i>	<i>References</i> <i>81</i>



Map of India showing Assam

Image M1



Map of Assam

Image M2

Introduction

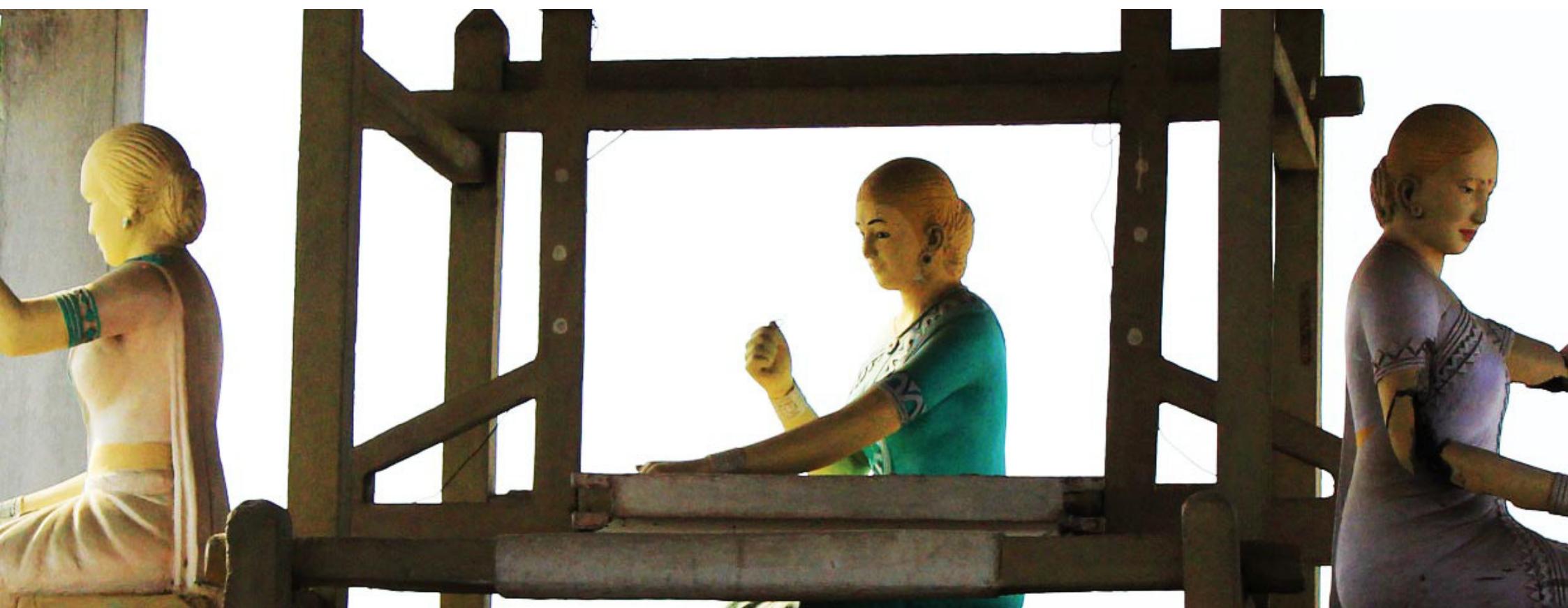
Assam

Assam Handloom weaving is so vast, so complex, so colourful yet with a pristine simplicity and infinite charm (1)

Assam the biggest state in the northeastern India is the land of a number of ethnic groups, each enjoying a distinct identity of its own. But, remarkably this ethnic diversity has hardly impeded the growth of a broad-based, integrated culture in a state. These groups however diverse they seem in their customs and traditions have lived side by side for ages shared a common history and evolved in the process a culture that may aptly be called 'Assamese'.

Almost every home in Assam hums the sound of loom. Weaving in Assam is not just a commercial venture but is actually a labour of love. Range of Assam Handloom weaving is so vast, so complex, so colourful yet with a pristine simplicity and infinite charm. Weaving has been in Assam an age old affair, descending down from generation to generation through the pathways of centuries old history. (1)

In Assam the weaving has much more to offer than meet their material needs. In other words, it transcends the mundane occupational levels to take on a creative dimension. Over the ages weaving has come to be associated with their emotional life. When a girl etches a floral design on a Bihuan, a gift to be given to her beloved on the occasion of the Bihu festival- she naturally, puts her heart into it. And the design on the Bihuan, etched with the coy love of a maiden heart, becomes eventually a spiritual creation. (1)





A tribal girl nearly always relates each floral design with a flower she is familiar with. In fact, the designs they execute have a meaning of their own. In some cases, the designs narrate the tale of tribal migration. (1)

Textile craft among the other ethnic groups in Assam is the exclusive domain of the woman

The designs etched by the Rabha girls show the hills and rivers that had to be crossed in passage, thereby embodying the whole history of their migration in miniature. When a Zeme Naga warrior returns from a successful hunting session, he wears a shawl with a special design on it for the display of his bravery. The Zeme Naga girls derive the ideas of these special designs from their traditional culture. It is their cultural heritage that guides them to choose which dress is to be donned on the occasion of a marriage ceremony or at the time of mourning. Thus the clothes the Assamese traditionally wear not only protect the body against heat and cold but also goes a long way towards preserving the value systems of society. (1)

Colours

One main reason why the handloom products of Assam are in great demand all over the country and abroad are that they display a wealth of colours. The dyes are produced locally from herbs and trees. The chemistry and methods of their preparation vary from place to place as also from tribe to tribe.

The types of trees and herbs used for the preparation of dyes are:

- Rum (*Strebilanthes flaceidifelius*)
- Black (*Adhatedavasica*)
- Juatie (*Bixa- Ovellana*)
- Palas (*Butea frendosa*)
- Haladhi (*Curuma lenga*)
- Jamu (*Eugenia Jambolana*)
- Kendu (*Diosphresu embryoptenis*)
- Daruharidra (*Merinda augustifelia*)
- Sewali (*Nyethanthes- arbartrisas*)
- Majathi (*Rubia cardifelia*)
- Indigo (*Indigefera*)
- Barthekera (*Grscia pendunculata*)
- Kal (*Musasapintum*)
- Madhuriam (*Psidium-quaiva*)
- Amlakhi (*Phyllontus – embilical*)

(1)

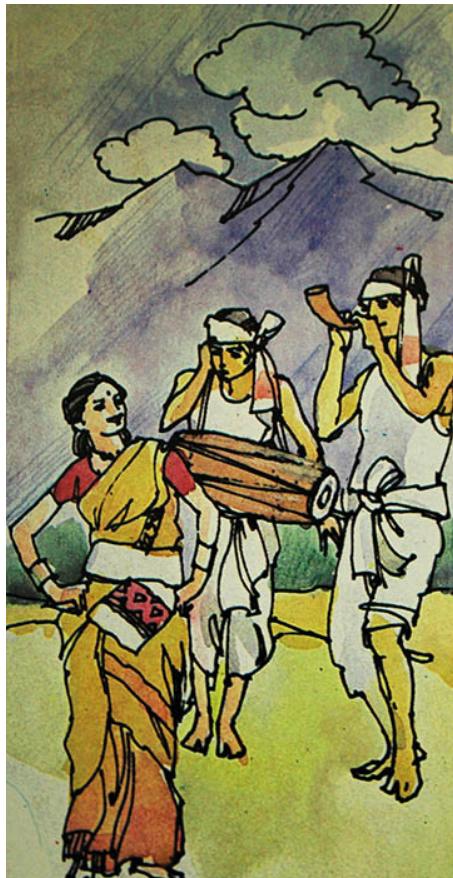
Although these plants are found all over Assam, every ethnic group, guided by its cultural variables, chooses the colours of its own. Each group considers a certain colour or some particular colours which becomes an exclusive possession which no other group can lay claim to.

The colours and designs of the textile products of Assam have some strong features which vary from one area to another. The textile used by the highlanders is characterized by sharp colour contrasts. These contrasts are not so pronounced in the textile used in the plains. In fact, the more one go downhill, the more these contrasts tend to dissolve into serene smoothness. This gradual colour transformation from the sharp to the smooth is due to the changes in environment and economic patterns. The ethnic groups living in between highlands and the plains are less fond of contrasts than those residing uphill. In the foothills the brightness of colours gives way to designs floated beautifully on weft and warp. The designs are sometimes simple and sometimes composite and have both floral and geometric motifs. Each ethno-cultural group, as has been noted above, has its own predisposition to a specific colour. For example, the Pathi group among the Rabhas prefers the green, while the Randhani group's choice ranges from the light brown to the orange. It is hard to say why a particular group grows fond of a certain colour. Several factors, both ecological and cultural are said to play an important role in the choice of colours. (1)



Ethnic groups of Assam

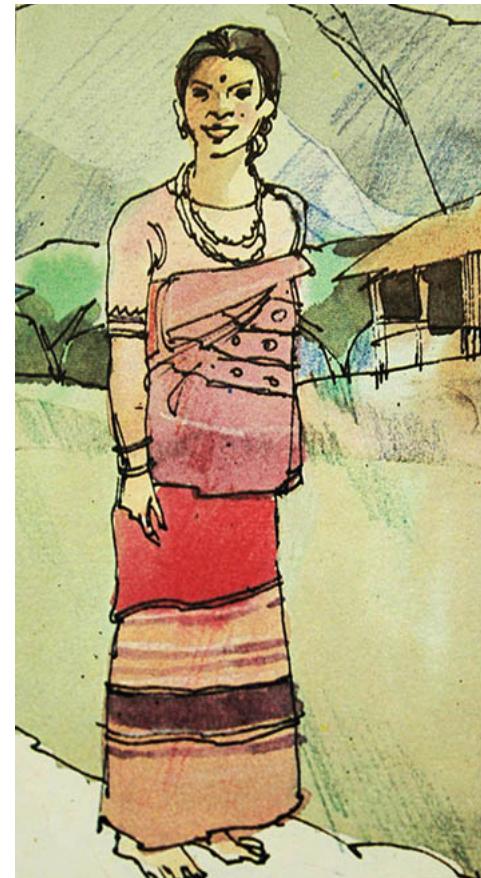
Assamese



Mising



Rabha



Karbi



Image 1.1

Lalung



Dimasa



Deori



Rajbansi

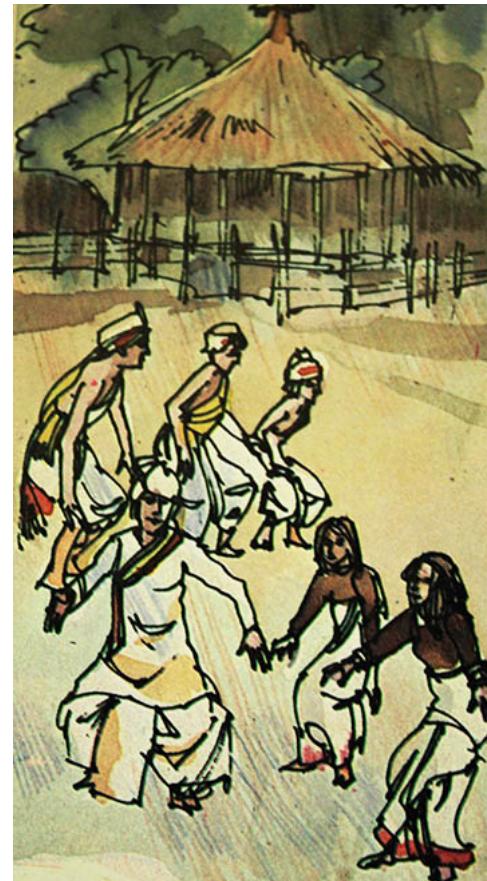


Image 1.2

Kachari



Tai Ahom



Sutia



Image 1.3

Motifs and Designs

As with the choice of colours, so with the choice of motifs and designs.

The motifs and designs executed on textiles are of many kinds and shapes – floral, geometric, etc. Some designs and motifs are used by certain ethno-cultural groups, some common to all. For instance, the eight point star a familiar design is extensively on the mekhala border (pari) and fulam gamocha (decorative handkerchief) along with the typical floral motifs of the Gangetic valley. (1)





The eighth point star with floral motifs has to come to be accepted as a standard textile design both by the highlanders and the people of the plains speaks of the quiet but very important cultural integration that has come about over a long period of time in Assam. (1)

Such a cultural assimilation may be possible only when the intrinsic values of traditions meet. This cultural synthesis is not hostile, forced or imposed one; it is rather the outcome of a continuous socio- economic process in which all ethnic groups of the State have taken part in their respective ways over a considerable span of time.

This is a meta process that took place silently and peacefully, maybe through inter-mingling and inter-mixing by marriage, trade and commerce or simply through migration or forced isolation thrust upon by invaders of other tribes, singly or through combination of factors, in the corridors of time. (1)



Image 2

'Bohag Bihu' the spring festival is one of the most important festivals of the Assamese. The importance of 'Bohag Bihu' in Assamese life is so great that it is no more looked upon as a mere festival. It has turned into a fountain of life, which Assamese youths look forward to with great eagerness. There are other 'Bihu's' as well representing different seasons. (1)

Weaving being a way of life with the Assamese, until recently every girl was adept in weaving silk and cotton. The Assamese girls now work on the simple loom. Previously they used to work on the throw shuttle loom. They execute various types of exquisite floral and geometric designs on the cloth. Four types of colours – black, red, yellow and white are used for textiles.

ATTIRE

Like the Assamese language, the traditional dress of the Assamese lady shows signs of Tibeto-Burmese influence. The Assamese male wears a 'dhoti'. He wears a 'gamucha' (towel) and a scarf which is specific to the ethnic group he belongs to. The Assamese women wears the 'mekhela' and 'chadar'. The wrapping technique may differ across all the different ethnic groups. (1)

In textiles motifs refer to the single units which ornate the textiles with regular arrangements.

The design refers to the sequence of arrangements of different motifs forming the composition. Motifs are woven on a ground of plain or twill weaving by floating definite extra warp or weft element.

Motifs and designs are the important aspects of weaving which provide intricacies and add beauty to the fabric. The motifs and designs can be seen in the form of a border, buta, buti, all over pattern or other regular or irregular plans.

(2)

The designs and motifs can be distinguished into these following categories:

1) Naturalistic: Naturalistic designs are those which are derived from flowers, leaves, plants, animals, landscapes etc. The motifs are kept realistic to provide an authentic image of nature

2) Stylized: In stylized designs the motifs do not exactly maintain the image of the natural object. Usually the lines are simplified and conventionalized. At times the lines are also distorted.

3) Abstract: Abstract designs are mostly based on geometric form, yet the abstract implies an element of impressionism and a greater freedom as compared to most geometric designs.

4) Geometric: Geometric designs are based on the true forms of circle, square, triangle, rectangle, diamond shape etc. Endless variations and combinations of these basic geometric forms are used. Although many geometric designs are derived from nature, these cannot be easily related to their respective natural sources of inspiration. The term symbolic is applied to such arrangements. The use of symbols to express ideas, thoughts or wishes is termed as symbolism.

5) Structural: The designs are called structural when the structure of an object forms the design. (2)

The term traditional is often applied to motifs and designs which have been handed down from generation to generation without losing their original characteristics. In case of the hand woven textiles of Assam, various indigenous designs with their discrete symbolic meanings play an important role. Unfortunately, these traditional motifs and designs are on the verge of disappearance. In view of this, an attempt is made to delineate the motifs and designs used by different cultural groups in their textiles traditionally.

The motifs and designs in the traditional textiles of Assam are unique and distinctive in many ways. They are found to be indigenous in their source of inspiration and carry specific meaning and significance in the socio cultural life of the people of Assam. Traditionally, the designs are either created or adopted by the weavers themselves in their looms or borrowed from others. Various ethnic groups have also contributed diverse socio-cultural elements towards the growth and development of a synthesized Assamese culture.

Motifs and designs of distinctive cultural emanated from different sources and cultural backgrounds have also played a significant role in shaping the character of motifs and designs among Assamese weavers.(2)

Objects of nature constitute the main source of inspiration for motifs and designs used in the ornamentation of textiles in Assam. To embellish these objects in weaving, they are simplified, conventionalized, and to some extent distorted. Thus, the textiles motifs of Assam are more stylized than naturalistic. The cognatic perception of the diverse elements of physical environment is clearly manifested in these motifs. It is not merely a matter of cognition, but also a reflection of the ability of the weaver to select those items that can be rendered artistically in textiles through weaving. (2)

The different types of motifs are as follows:

FLORAL AND PLANT MOTIF

The floral and plant motifs offer unlimited scope for the adornment of textiles. Flowers form the simplest and smallest configuration to those with well-defined petals. The simplest floral motif found is a small circle or dot with short radiating lines on all sides. However big, bold flowers in stylized and geometric forms are either used as a single unit (buta) or in repetition as a design. Some of them are categorized as wild flowers without any specific name. Such a motif is found in a design popular among among the Kacharis called as the derhachar- agar (Plate 7). It is regarded as the symbol of success.

Padum (lotus) and Golap (rose) are two flowers commonly found in the textiles produced by non-tribal plains Assamese. These two flower motifs are however never used in mekhala (lower part of half saree) traditionally since these are generally used in fabrics of religious

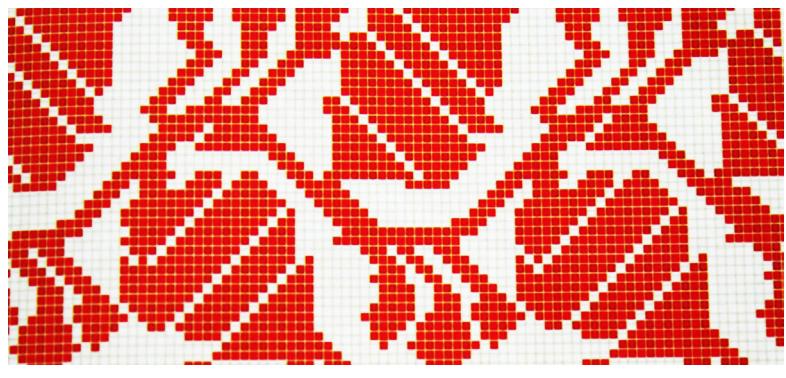
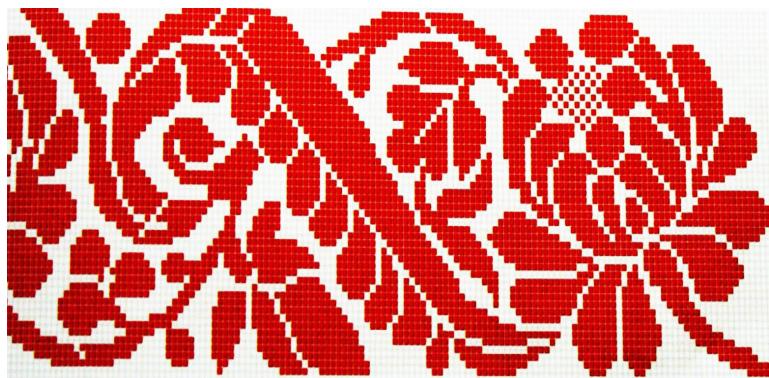
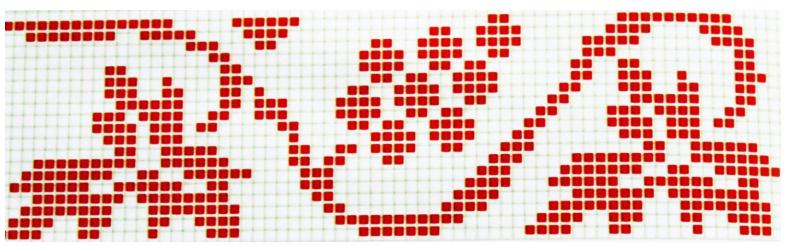
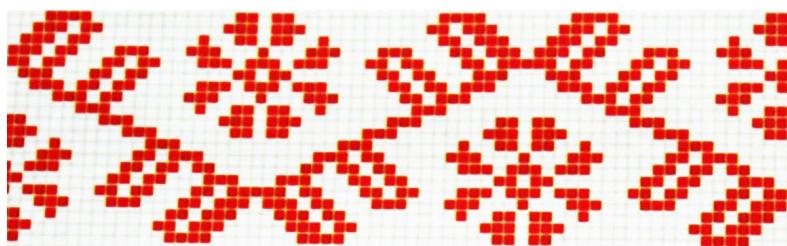
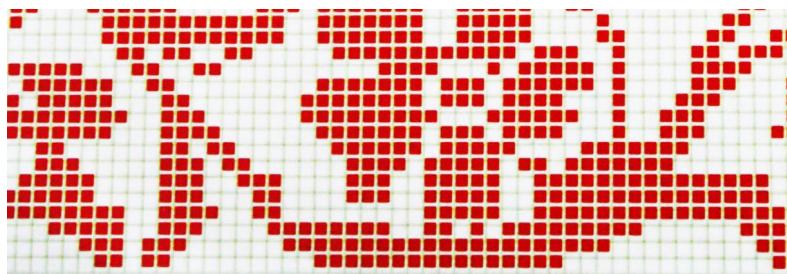
importance. But varieties of gach(plant) and lata(creeper) are abundantly used. Some plant or gach motif are so stylized that they have no specific name given to them. The running motifs called as lata (creeper) is used either as a single line or along with other motifs. The Besides this latas are named after their leaves and flowers. These have captured the imagination of the woman and they have suitably adopted such items as designs on their looms. The power of observation and tremendous capability of the indigenous weavers to render objects of nature into textiles motifs has contributed towards the enrichment of the textile tradition of Assam.

There are also a variety of motifs which are an extension to the lata design. It is called as the lata phul (creeper with flowers).(2)



*Varieties of Gach (plant) Design
done on a digital graph

Image 3



Varieties of Lata (creeper) Design
*done on a digital graph

Image 4

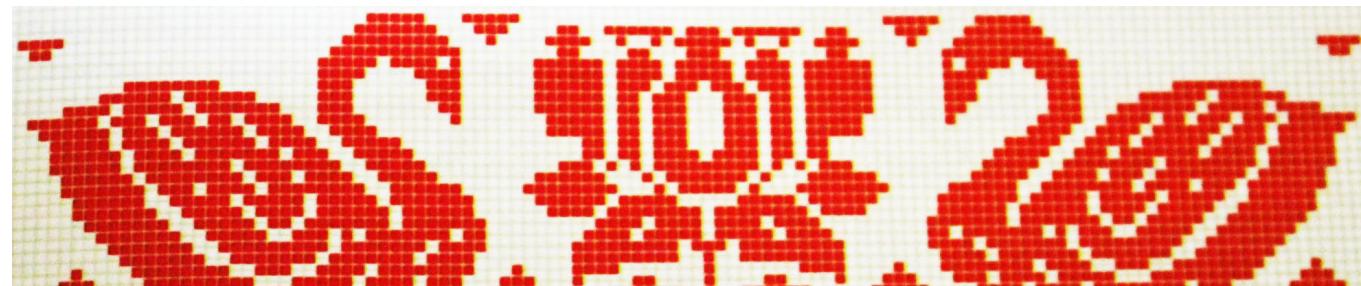
ANIMAL AND BIRD MOTIF

A variety of animal motif like butterfly, peacock, elephant, tiger fish etc are cleverly adopted in stylized form with a minimum of lines occupy an important place in the textile design of assam, particularly in the case if tribal textiles. An in depth analysis of these designs revealed that butterfly is used profusely in the textiles in all communities. Though the names differ, motifs representing spider, crab, fly.etc are found mostly among the tribals.

Charai (bird) in general, mora charai (peacock) , hanh (duck and swan) are the most common motifs seen in the textiles. Peacock, duck and swan is regarded as sacred motifs by the Assamese Hindus. The border design of cloth used in places of worship often has the peacock motif in

combination with the other motifs. Two moras (peacock) facing each other forming an interesting design is called as juria-mora. Uses of bird motif among the Karbis and Rabhas have deep socio-cultural significance. Some of them are regarded as sacred birds connected with the myths regarding the origin of these tribes.

Fish, lion, tiger, elephant, horse, deer, dog, goat etc, are other animal motifs in highly stylized form found in particular among the tribal textiles of Assam. Fish, lion and tiger are occasionally seen in the nontribal plain Assamese textiles. The peacock or a lion can be seen abundantly among historic textiles pieces of Assam. (2)

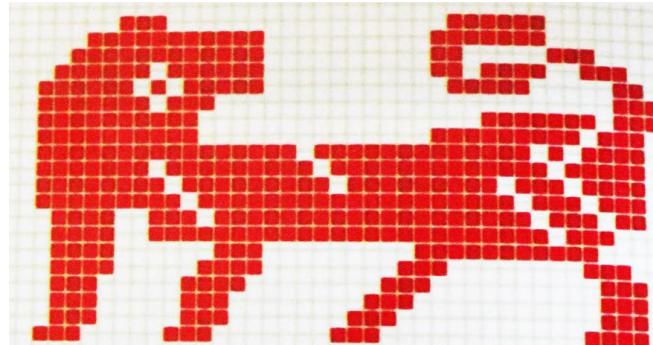


*Swan with Lotus
done on a digital graph

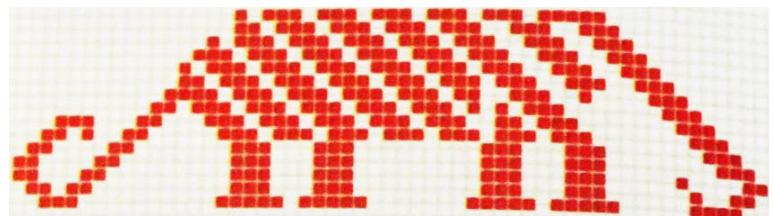
Image 5



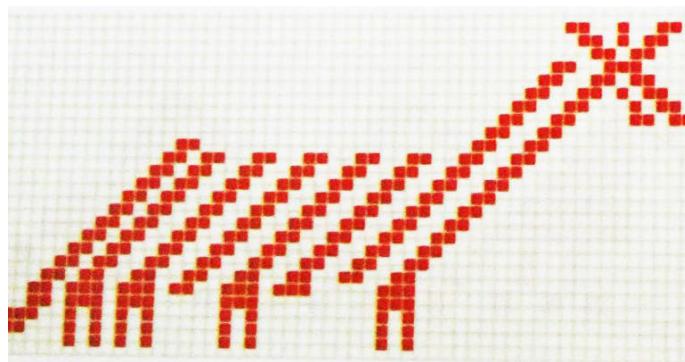
Peacock



Lion



Elephant



Deer

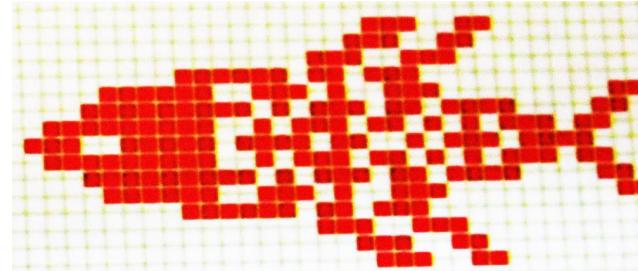
Varieties of animal and bird motif
*done on a digital graph

Image 6

STRUCTURAL MOTIF

A great influence of material culture is often marked in the textile tradition of Assam. Artifacts and material objects used in the socio cultural life of the people are adopted for ornamenting the textiles. Some of the regular use contemporary elements such as brick, awl, earring, nose ring, watch, serrated edge of sickle or saw, arrow, hand fan, even the shape of the airplane appear as motifs in the tribal textiles of Assam

On the other hand ghoti (water pot), leta cereki (weaving implement), sarai (metal dish with raised border with a cover or without a cover), chaki (oil lamp/diya), dhupdani (incense stick holder), Bhagawata (holy book of Hindus) etc are some of the motifs incorporated in the textiles of nontribal people. (2)



Aeroplane



*Sarai (metal dish with raised border with or without a cover) top and left bottom: *done on a digital graph*

Image 7

GEOMETRIC MOTIF

Diverse elements of nature seem to be the main source of inspiration so far as ornamentation of textile is concerned. It is believed that the wonderful unity, orderliness, harmony of line and curve, the symmetry of form and shape which are all intrinsic characteristics of nature have inspired the geometrical designs.

Geometrical forms have been used for fabric ornamentation for a very long time in various cultural settings over the past.

Geometric designs and a combination of other stylized motifs can be seen abundantly in the textiles that also gives a clear indication of their popularity. However the simplicity of the designs in the present is disturbed by the external influences and also due to the improvement of weaving technique. Contemporary designs have become non-symbolic and more vivid. These are becoming more and more innovative or have grown to a mixture of tradition and innovation. (2)

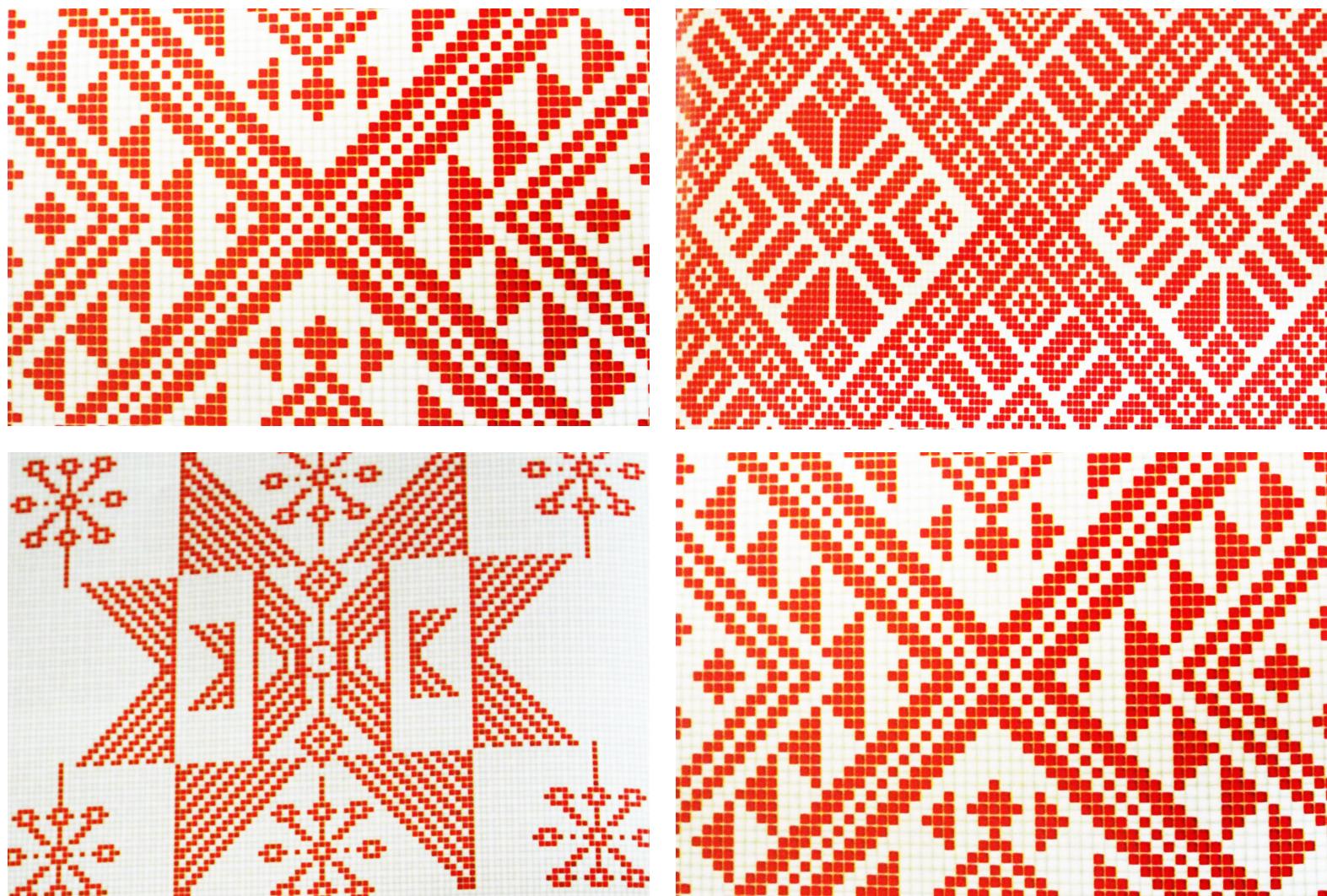


Gamkharu motif



Gamkharu (bracelet)

Image 8



Varieties of geometric motif
*done on a digital graph

Image 9

Samples of Motifs on cloth

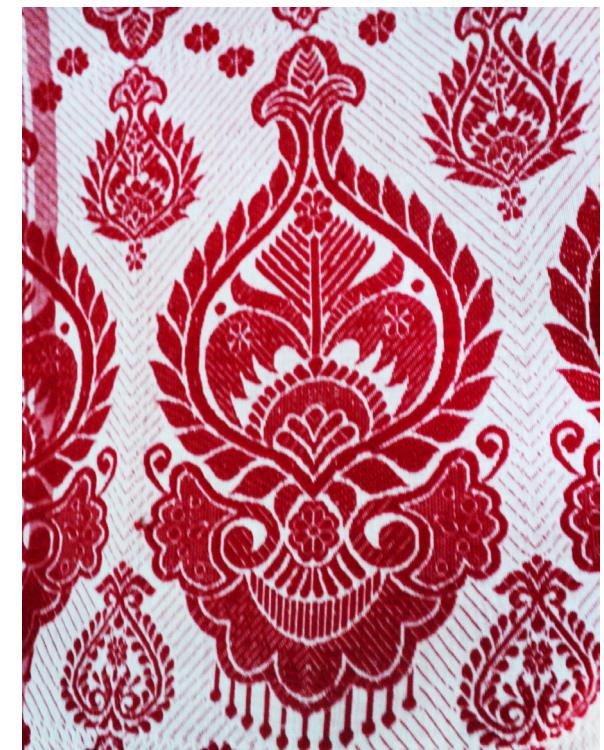


Kinghaap

This style is inspired from the Ahom dynasty and signifies the royalty and magnanimity of the erstwhile kingdom. The design consists of two lions facing each other.

Phooldaani

This style is from the flower bouquet. This design consists of a stylised vase with flowers.





Mayur

This motif is inspired from Peacock. The design stylisation compromises of replicating patterns as well as reflections of the same motif



Mogor

This motif is similar to paisley. This is one of the evolved designs which has been accepted widely within the culture



Kaziranga

One of the most commonly used motifs is the Kaziranga style which, according to the local craftsmen and experts derives its inspiration from the wildlife of Kaziranga. As part of the motif a Rhino and a deer are woven onto the silk garment.



Pokhila

As most patterns woven on the Assamese Mekhela Chador are inspired by nature. The pattern of butterfly known as pokhila in the local language is often woven in different shapes depending on the expertise of the weaver.



Ghot

The motif is inspired from the water bearing traditional brass vessel.



Gach

The motif of a tree is one of the most common patterns found in the Assamese traditional garments. The shape is often represented in a geometrical manner and the shape and design varies according to the expertise of the weaver.

Image 10



Japi

Japi is a traditional Headgear, once used by females of noble and rich families, but now serves as a headgear for farmers to protect them from rain and sun. The motif of japi is often found woven on traditional Assamese garments.

Lota

Lota design is inspired from the organic shapes of fern, flowers and leaves



Buta

Buta is the ornamental element that acts as a filler and is repeated multiple times as a sole element throughout the fabric.

Textile as an art form

1

One of the pattern that proves this approach among the popular motif is the Kaziranga design. It forms a plethora of elements that exists in the environment of the Kaziranga National Park which stands as a landmark for Assam. The major elements includes Rhino, Deer, Bird, Monkey, Flora and Fauna etc



2

*On the similar lines
Lakhi Prabha Bordoloi being a
weaver by profession have tried to
experiment and have combined
her creativity and skills by creating
two major projects*

*1) Shrimanta Shankardev Artwork
which can be compared as a piece of
art. She made the people of Assam
proud and shared the limelight with the
Assam Governor.*

*2) Longest Woven Cloth (Gamusa)
in Guiness World Record:*

*She along with other weavers
participated in the Gunies World Record
by weaving a gamusa of 1.5km. The
motifs on the gamusa depicted every
ounce of Assamese Culture from festivals,
food, flora and fauna to famous people.*



Image 11

Textile Animation

1) Panda Extinction

The movie explains the concept of extinction of Pandas through frames which are woven into textiles using jacquard.



Image 12



2) Tako Bole Chhe

The movie is an animated documentary which celebrates the art and passion of the Kutch artisans associated with Kala Raksha. The film traces multiple journeys made by the participants towards defining their identities and towards forming the Kala Raksha Trust and the School of Design.

Image 13

3) *The Animated Bayeux Tapestry*

The movie offers a pictorial interpretation of the Norman Conquest of England (1066) and the events leading up to this pivotal moment in medieval history. Currently residing in France, the Tapestry measures 20 inches by 230 ft. The animation is created out of the tapestry.



Image 14

Scope of the project

I wanted to explore the project in terms of a narrative similar to the above examples. This enabled me to add another dimension to the existing perspective of textiles of Assam and hence provided an authentic identity to the motifs as a visual medium.

The stories or excerpts were taken from existing folktales which were related to the significance of motifs. These excerpts had a potential for converting it into a narration.

The project was focussed towards the following deliverables:

Book

The book could give a glimpse of all the main sequences framed into images which will depict the story

Animation

The animation will show the same story through 2D animation

Story explorations

Story 1: The Parijat Mala (Garland made out of celestial flowers) with Saptamukhi (seven faced diamond) and Kasari:

Each flower represents ten directions and nine diamonds represents nine graha or the universe. All motifs are red in colour. The celestial nature or character of the parijat mala becomes prominent when it is viewed in relation to the other celestial bodies.

This design has a mythology background that reflects the utopian desire of Satyabhama, one of the seven principal queen consorts of Lord Krishna, who aspired to enjoy the eternal youth and beauty prerogative to the Gods and Goddesses by acquiring parijat. The fragrance of this flower travels to such a distance of walk, which is covered by the span of tini (three) prahara (time space); each prahara represents one fourth of the total time from dawn to dawn.



Wearing this garland the wife gets ever ending love from her husband. Each flower represents ten directions, while nine diamonds representing nine planets; many stars again gridle each. The parijatmala, the central or principal zone when viewed under against the saptamukhi kasari, narrates a situation where there is a desire to immortalizing the celestial youth of the Goddesses of the desire to the total resignation to the supreme vastness of Lord Krishna, and an ending of this utopian desire to the total resignation to the supreme vastness of Lord Krishna. It is a representation of higher consciousness and makes one view the exuberance of a desire centering rounds one's self ends in infinity. The theme that remains at a philosophical level finds its visual expression in the form of textile design and it gets fully integrated with the social reality. Parijatmala is craze ends in nonchalance and merges with the ultimate consciousness the total resignation. The underlying meaning of the kasari is always finite in nature; it sets a borderline between utopia and reality. (3)

Story 2: The Aparajita

This symbolizes fertility or procreation, the sipini etches out the pudendum in a very overt way. She is also well aware of this meaning. But it forms a part of her aesthetic expression. This universal reality is shown in flower in symbolic form and the so called 'obscenity' receives a coat of divine attribution – it moves to the celestial level, it becomes the goddess Durga. She becomes a symbol of motherhood. It exists and perpetuates breaking the barrier of time and space. (3)

Story 3: Position of the gender

The position of women is always left to the male. The gamocha produced follows the same order when used. On the shoulder of the male the floral part of the same remains in the left. It is because of the fact that the floral motif she produces is the reflection of her. (3)

Story 4: The weavers challenge

A Rabha girl challenged a youth that she'll compell him to marry her as she knows how to create 'mokardama' designs (a complicated formation of fancy diamond) on the 'hachati' (handkerchief). Here her physical beauty is over shadowed by her aesthetic capability. (3)

Story 5: The peacock and peahen

A magician had a beautiful daughter who fell in love with a young man. But her father did not give his consent for her marriage. Her father yielded ultimately to the wishes of his daughter. The magician had a rug charged with magical power. This rug, if touched by other than the magician can transform anybody into an animal. This secret was known to his daughter, but not to her husband. Her father used to keep the rug used to keep the rug under the sun regularly. One day she went to the field leaving her husband alone in home. Suddenly clouds loomed over the sky signaling the impending rain. She felt worried apprehending that her husband might try to remove the rug lest it should get wet. She knew the outcome. She started rushing towards home. But it was too late. Rain already started. The apprehension that she made came to a reality. He already started transforming into a peacock. She made a frantic attempt to get her husband away from the rug. No sooner did she touch the rug; she also faced the same fate as her husband did. She took the form of a peahen with a less colourful plumage than her husband, because the major part of the magical power of the rug was spent on her husband. For this reason, a peacock is more colourful than a peahen. (3)

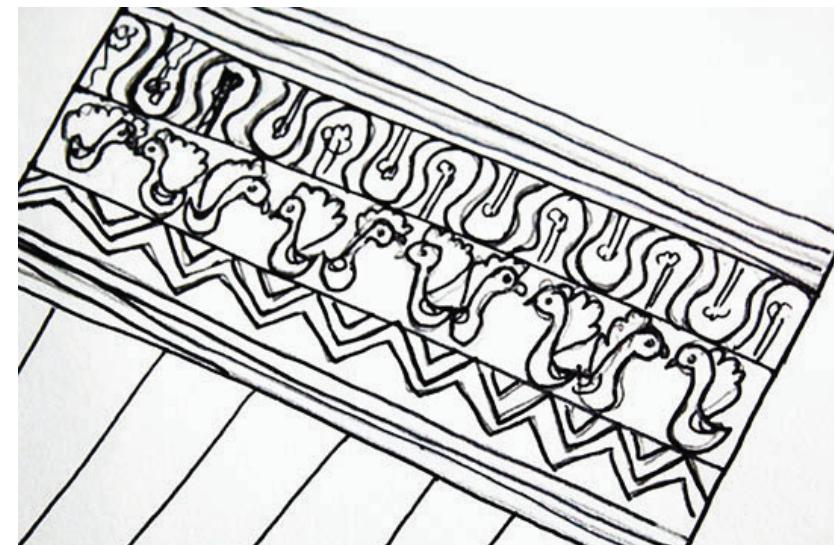
Out of the various stories,

'The Peacock and Peahen story 'justified and showed the potential for being an effective narrative.

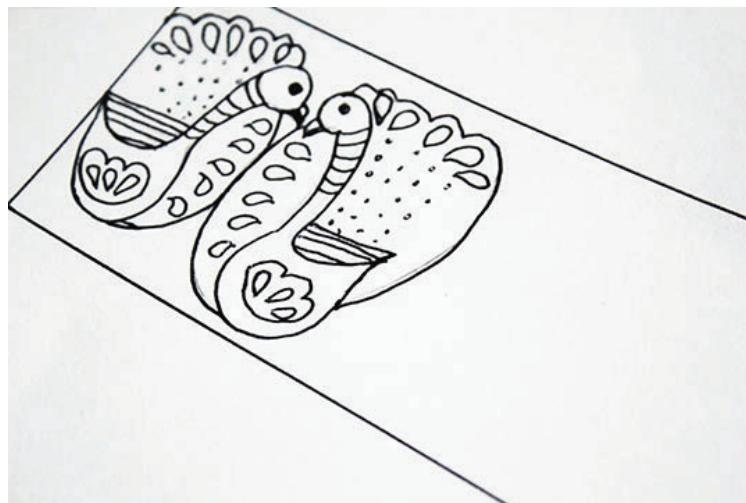
The story was worked on and the following is the rough storyboard that explains the story.



A weaver is lost in the warp and weft of the loom and is being busy putting each weft in her creation. The sound of the loom is humming a rhythmic melancholy.



She sees the peacock motif adorning the fabric in repetition



She can see the multiple colours of thread entwining carefully to form the beautiful mesh of the peacock.



The frame zooms to her face and gets blur. It indicates a transformation of what she is imagining.

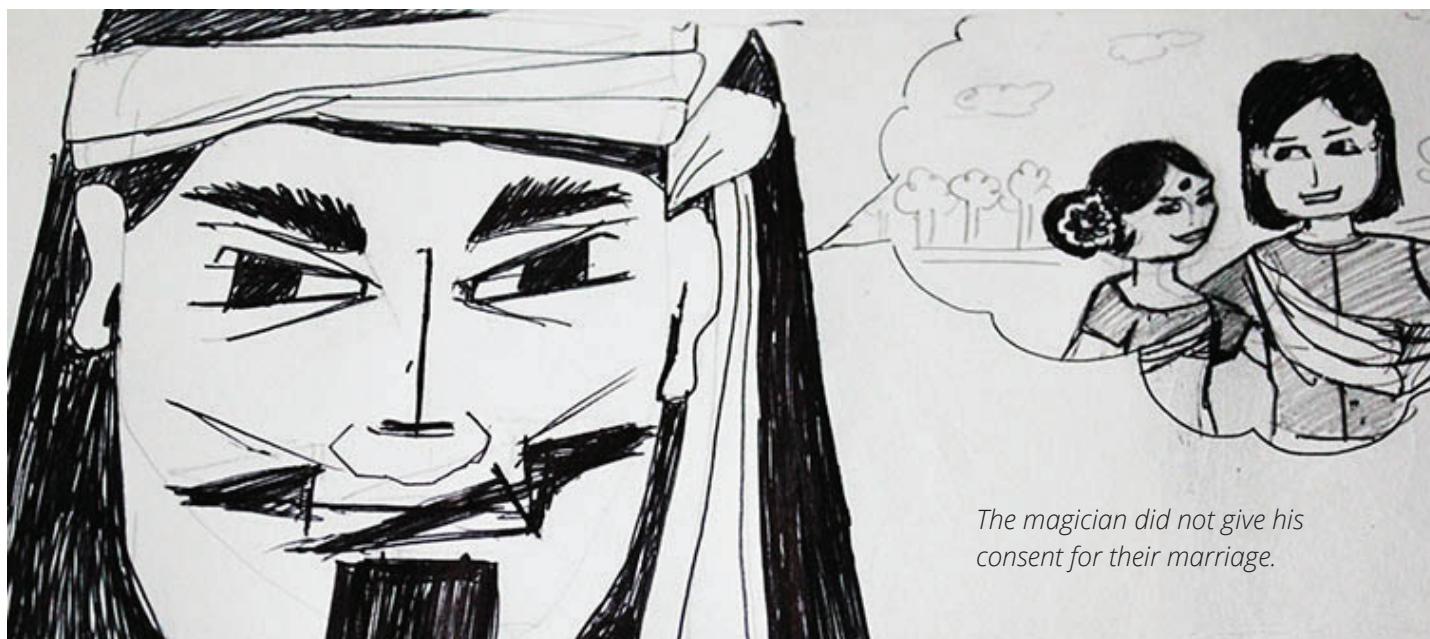
*The frame converts into a beautiful piece of artwork with motifs.
The clouds, field, house, trees everything looks like a woven cloth.*



There amidst the scenery lives a magician and his beautiful daughter.



The magician's daughter fell in love with a young man



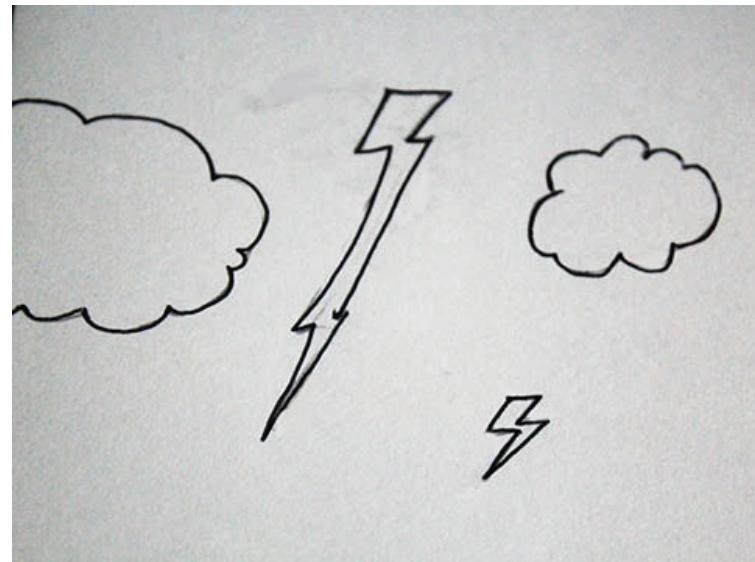
The magician did not give his consent for their marriage.



After seeing his daughter sad, the magician finally agreed to his daughter's wishes.



And then he got them married.

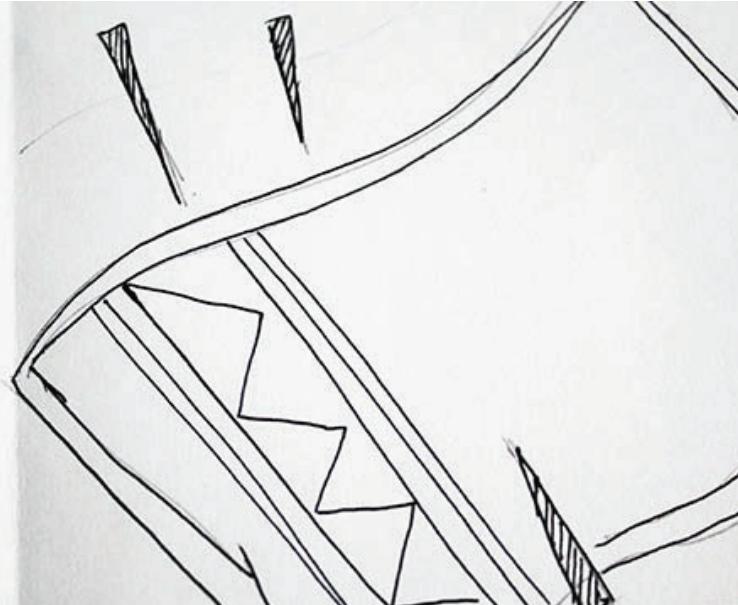


One day when she was walking by the paddy fields, she saw that the sky was getting dark. It was about to rain.



She started running towards the house and started complaining about the unexpected rain.

She was scared about only one thing.

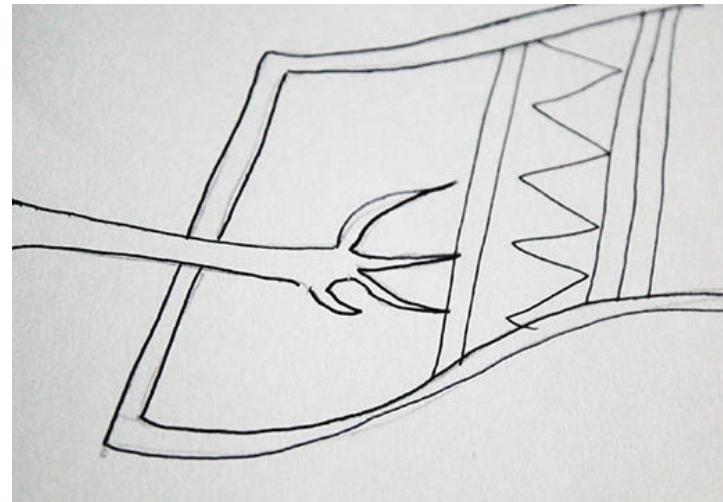
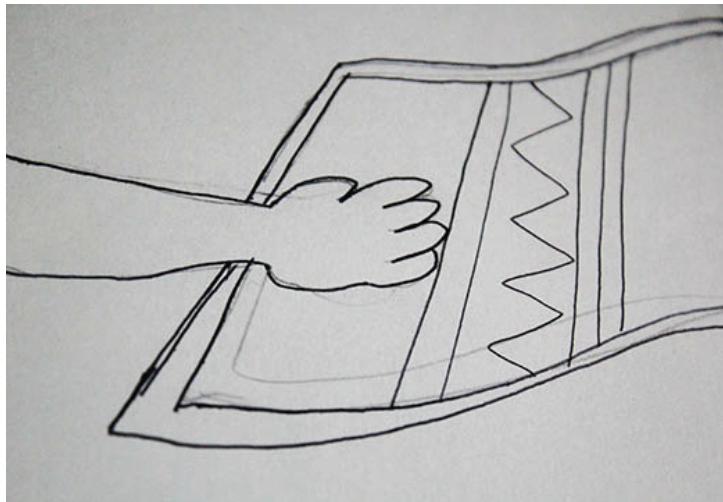


The secret: Her father (the Magician) had a magic rug. The rug was not supposed to be touched by anyone except the magician, otherwise it would turn the person into anything.

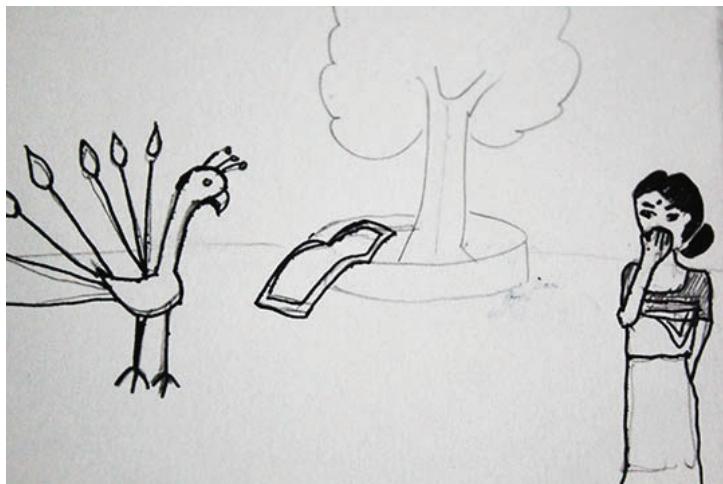
Her father had kept the rug in the courtyard to dry that morning. She started worrying about her husband that he might try to



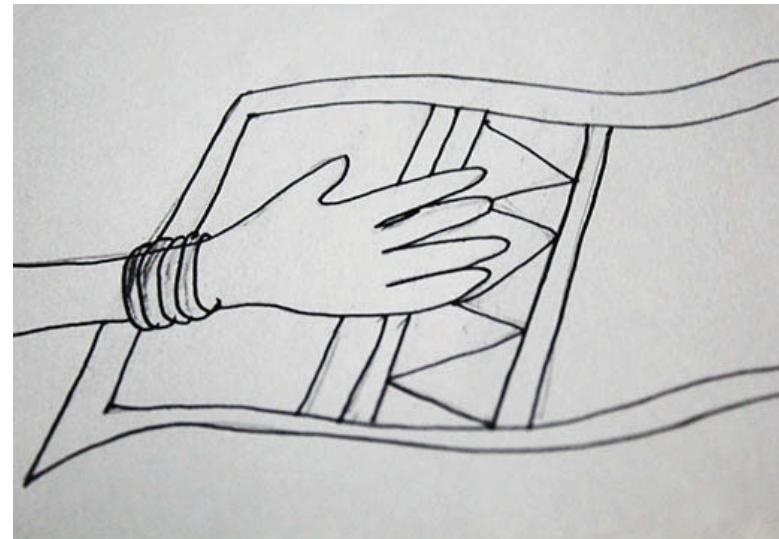
Meanwhile, the husband saw the unexpected rain and rushed towards the rug to save it from getting wet.



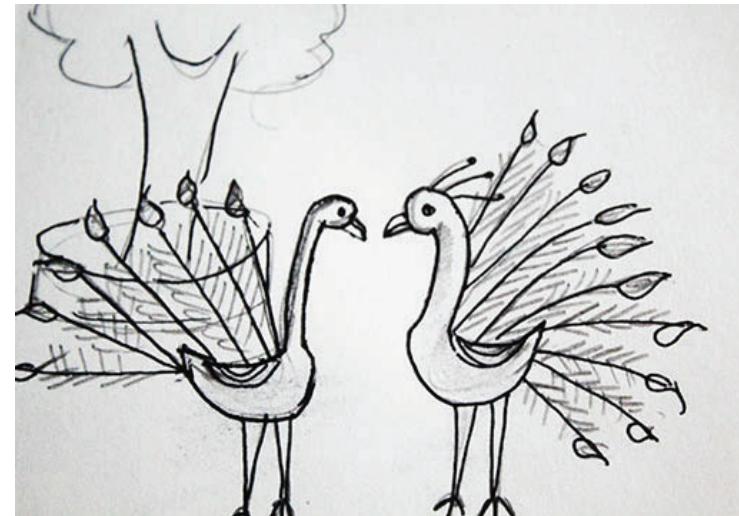
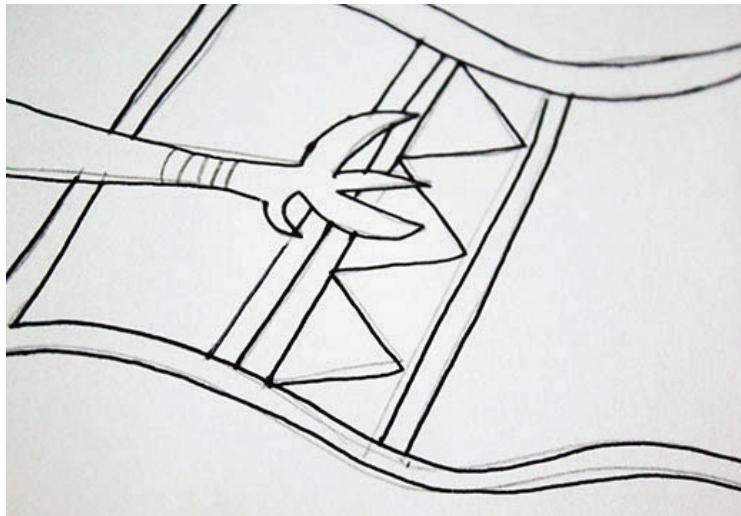
When he touched the rug, he changed into a peacock in a fraction of second.



*When she reached the courtyard, she faced what she was afraid of.
Her beloved husband has already become a peacock.*

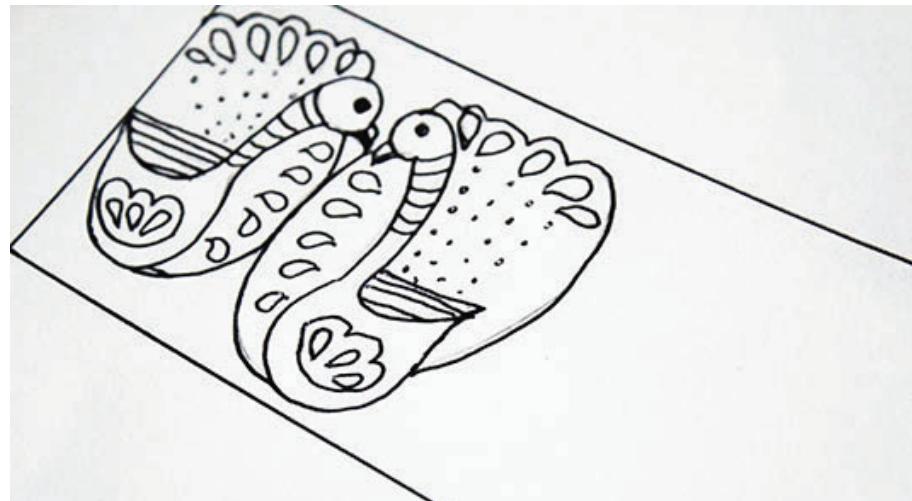


She became so sad that she wanted to die. She was so shocked that she decided to choose the same fate as her husband.



Similar to her husband she also got converted into a peahen. Since most of the power of the rug was used for her husband she became a less ornate peahen.

After some time, when both of them stood facing each other, the rug trapped them as a motif.



The frame gets blur and focusses back to the woven peacock motif.



*And then to the weaver who was imagining the story
behind the creation of peacock motif.*

The Loom

The weaving is done using a sample loom. The sample loom is a loom which is one sixth size of an actual loom. All the weaving process used is manual.



Execution Process

Stage 1

The character designs were first drawn as outlines in a vector software.

Stage 2

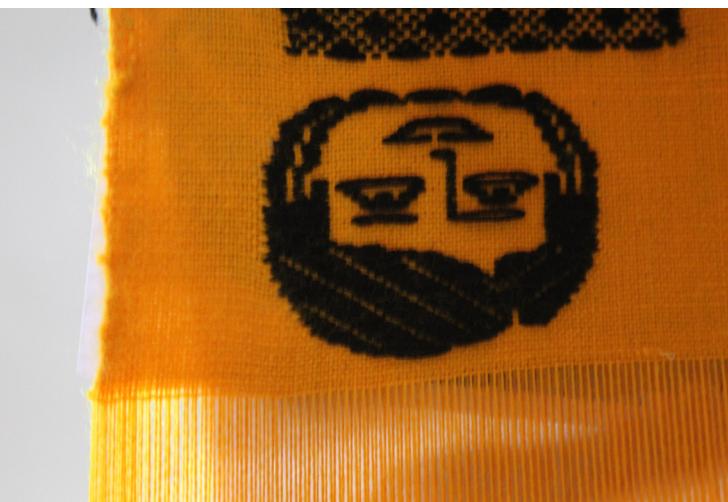
Then converted into weaving centric graph geometric shapes using a software called as Texcelle.

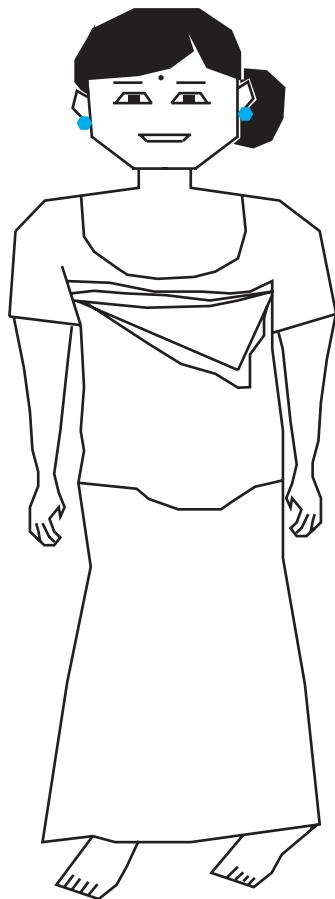
Stage 3

The designs (warps are chosen by hand) are executed one by one using hand. The weaving is done on a sample loom. The time consumed by each character is about 2 to 3 weeks each.

Stage 4

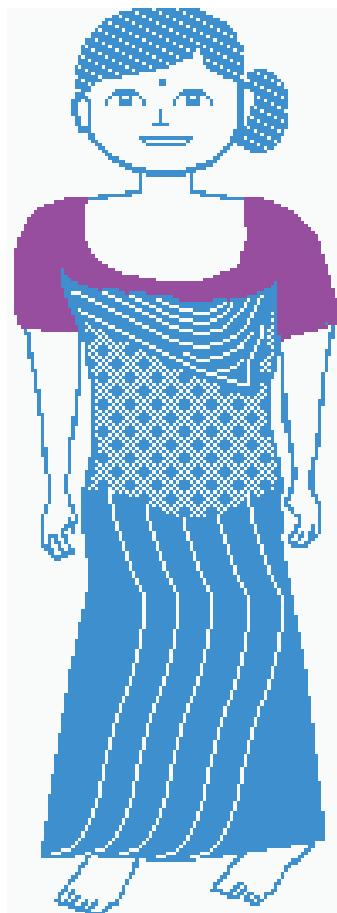
The weaving elements once finished is taken as a base and edited digitally to create the respective characters. For example: the girl and the weaver is taken out from the single base woven element. Similarly, the male characters are also developed accordingly.





Basic weaving

Stage 1



Texcelle rendering

Stage 2



*After weaving in
the sample loom*

Stage 3



*The final character executed digitally
keeping woven fabrics as the base*

Stage 4

The final outlook

Form

Form (character): The look of the character is inspired from the Pati Rabha tribe of Assam since the story belongs to them.

Form (background): The background is created using the authentic motifs which are scanned and edited from Assam textiles.

MUSIC

Music: The music used for the animation is a live performance by

*Debogandhar by Prabhat Sharma
(An Assamese live performance band)*

Story

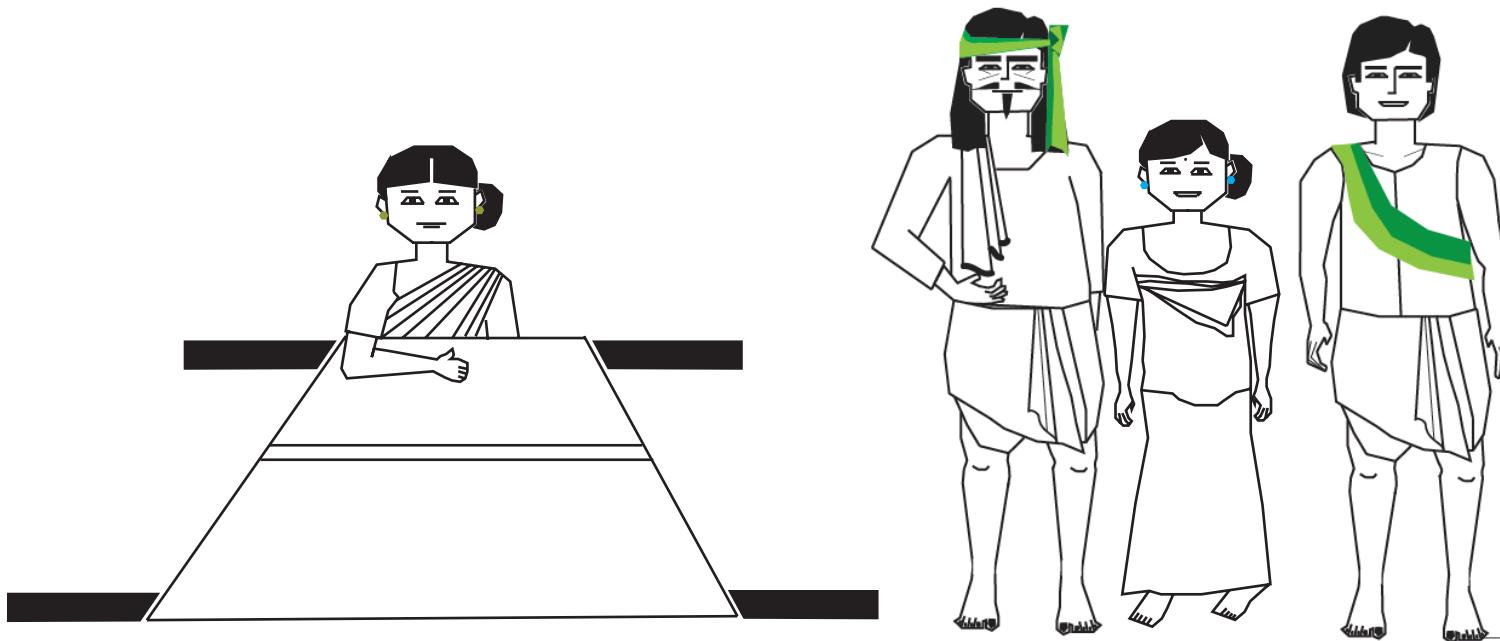
The story is divided into two sections using different colour schemes.

WHITE and RED

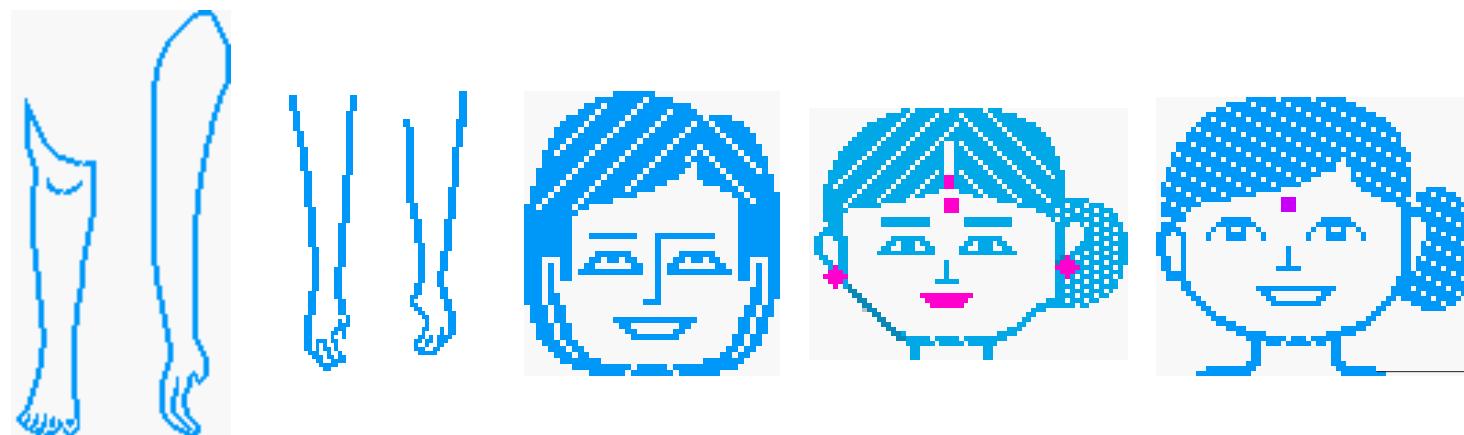
The reality that the weaver is weaving is used as white and red which denotes and signifies the cultural importance and identity of Assamese textiles. Here the colour defines a compilation and abundance of importance of the one main chord that is the 'gamusa' tradition and the collective portrayal of Assamese culture.

COLOURED

The colored variation of the story refers to the complex process of imagination by the weaver using scenes and therefore uses color in the form of various motifs compiled to form the scenes.



Digitally done outlines



*Outlines done using Texelle
(a textile graph software)*

The elements from the graph is woven to get the exact output



Story: Juria Mora

(Juria meaning couple) and (Mora meaning peacock)

The weaver is lost in the warp and weft of the loom and is lovingly putting each weft in her creation. The sound of the loom is humming in a rhythmic melancholy..

She sees the peacock motif adorning the fabric in repetition. She sees the colours of the thread entwining carefully to form the beautiful mesh of the peacock..

As soon as she pulls the last colored thread, she sees that the butterfly motif from the pattern has become alive. It flutters its wings and flies right into her imagination..

She can see the butterfly sailing through mountains and rivers, through lush forests with animals and birds..

The butterfly goes into a little thatched hut, standing near a river with green lush shrubs all around.

It flutters and lands on a hand. The hand is of a young girl who lives in the hut with her father amidst the forest.

The butterfly then flies away and gives way to this beautiful story..

Once there was a beautiful girl named (name her). It was a beautiful day in the forest, she wanted to take a walk outside. She was waiting for her father to finish cutting the logs required every day, to keep the fire burning in the house.

She walked outside, to see her father hard

at work. She asked him, if she could go for a walk. She promised him that she would be back before dinner-time. Her father hugged her lovingly, and said that she could go.

She started walking, in no particular direction. The wind caressed her face, the forest smelt lovely, just after a light rain. She kept walking, enchanted, taking it all in. Suddenly, she saw a young man walking from the opposite direction, coming nearer. She looked up at him, shyly. She felt butterflies in her stomach. He looked at her, and thought of how beautiful she was. They fell in love, at first sight.

They walked together, without a word. Their

beautiful surroundings seemed to bring them closer together with each step.

They found a bridge with the meandering river flowing underneath. The place felt very serene. The butterfly came and flitted between them, as if it knew of their love. Slowly, they started talking to each other, exchanging whispered words. They lost track of time.

It was getting late. The father started in search of his daughter, who still hadn't returned home. While he walked among the trees near the bridge, he heard some voices.

He turned around, and saw his daughter sitting upon the bridge, deep in conversation with a strange young man. He was furious, that he had not been informed of this. He decided to go home, wait for his daughter, and give her a good scolding once she got back.

He went home and started pacing the house until his daughter arrived. The moment she arrived he asked her about the man. She said that she met him in the forest, and that she was in love with him. Her father scolded her about being so naïve.

But she was adamant about marrying that man. The father refused, repeatedly. The daughter cried, endlessly, trying to convince her father that the man was right for her.

The father gave in, after a while. He agreed to get his daughter married to the man on one condition - which was a secret. She agreed to the secret condition, and the father gave his consent to the marriage. Within the next few days, they were married. The three of them lived together in the hut amidst the green shrubs, happily. Days passed, in peace and harmony.

One day, the daughter was walking in the paddy fields, when she saw a sudden burst of dark clouds coming over the horizon. The sky changed from a pleasant blue to a menacing dark tone. The winds started blowing and the sky seemed to shatter, with each thunderbolt. The clouds became darker.

All of a sudden, she had a realization. She remembered something, and started running home, frantically.

While she ran, she had a sudden flashback of her father's condition before her wedding.

Her father had a rug with magic powers. The rug, if touched by anyone other than her father, would transform that person into anything else! Before her wedding, her father was concerned about the man, and did not want him to risk his life. But the girl promised that she would keep her husband and herself, away from that rug, at any cost. So her father had agreed to the wedding. Her father had washed and put the rug out to dry, the very same morning. He had warned her that he would be leaving it out in the open. She felt terrible that she was so careless as to let it remain outside, even in her absence!

The thunderstorm echoed her worst nightmares, as she ran home. She prayed that nothing bad had happened. Back at home, the young man saw the sky turning suddenly to a darker shade. He saw thunder flashing and predicted that it was going to rain.

He looked outside, in the verandah, to see if there was anything that would need to be saved from the rain. He saw the bright red rug, that looked as if it were left to dry outside, near a tree. He quickly ran to protect it from the rain.

*The moment he touched it to pick it up, the rug transformed him...
...Into a beautiful peacock!*

The girl reached home, and looked frantically around for her husband. But her worst nightmare had been realized. There, standing on the rug, was a peacock. He beloved husband had been transformed into a peacock!

She sat down in the heavy rain, cried and blamed herself about her own carelessness, through the dark evening.

She decided to choose the same fate as her husband. Her love for him was so strong, she decided that there was no point left for her to be a woman. She decided to let the magic rug transform her too, into whatever being it chose. She touched the rug, and soon enough, she was transformed - into a peahen!

Since most of the power of the rug was used to transform the husband into an

intricate peacock, the wife became a less ornate peahen.

There stand a peacock and a peahen, united once more, in the verandah, surrounded by the lush green shrubs, under a tree, near the little hut, beside the flowing river. After a while, the rug grows in size, traps the peacock and peahen in a beautiful woven pattern, onto itself.

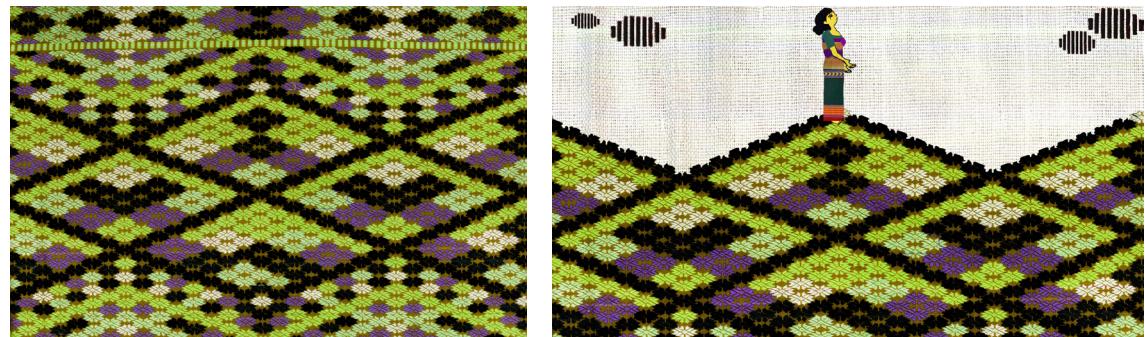
And this is the story of how the peacock motif came into being.

The weaver comes back to reality, gazing at the peacock motif once in a while, her mind still far away. And the rhythmic sound of the loom continues to echo in the surroundings, as she weaves more stories onto the cloth.



The final look

The characters were created with digitally edited pictures of textiles which were collected from the varied traditional attires of Assam. However the human figures required for the animation was created by weaving using a manual sample loom.



Backgrounds

The backgrounds were created in such a way that it looks similar to a woven cloth. The elements that formed the background was created using high resolution (600 dpi) scanned images of existing woven fabrics.



The images on the right hand side shows how a single background is edited digitally and converted into multiple backgrounds.

Some backgrounds were created using a single unit or an element. The elements in the right hand side (down) shows some of the elements used in repetition to form a composition.



Some elements used for backgrounds

Various elements
used for the
backgrounds



Pokhila (butterfly)



Mayur (peacock)



Phooldaani
(flower vase)



Pepaa
(a rhino horn flute)



Gach (tree)



Lota (creeper)



Phul (flower)



Dhul
(a traditional drum)



Sorai (bird)



Ghot
(water bearing
traditional brass vessel)



Ghor (house)



A type of buta
(used as multiple forms
especially clouds)



Gach (tree)



Mayur (peacock)



Pokhila (butterfly)



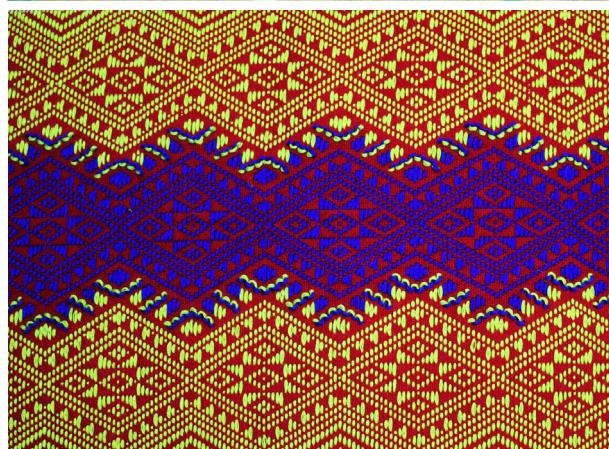
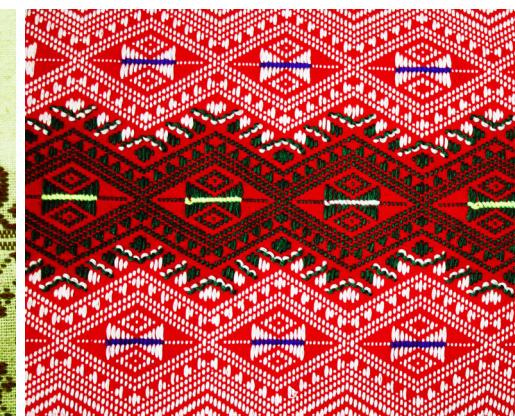
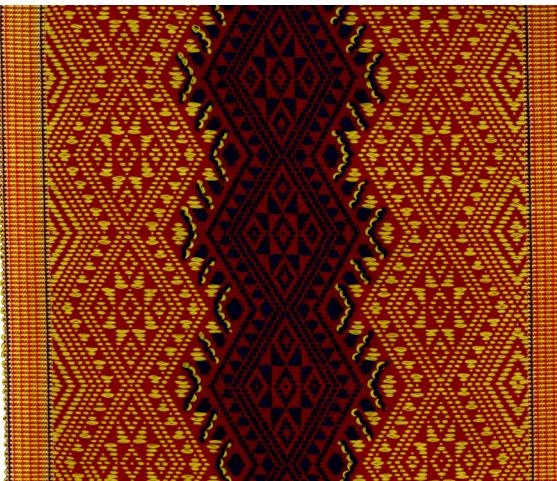
Saaki (diya/ light)



A type of buta
(used as multiple forms
especially water)



Bhagavat Gita



Various scanned
images of
fabrics used as
backgrounds and
other elements

Characters

weaver | girl | father | husband

Character 1 : The Weaver



front view



top view

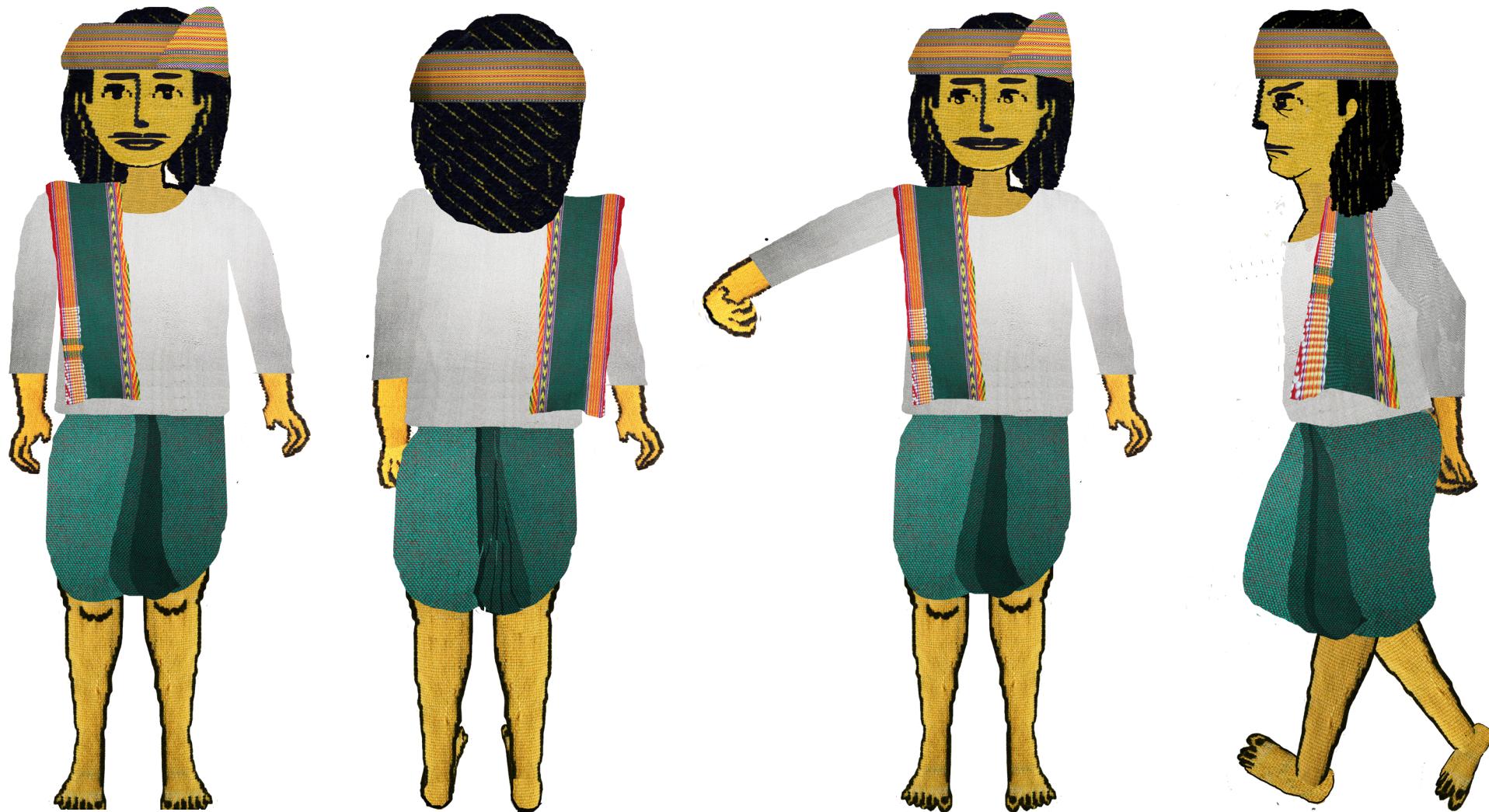
Character 2 : The girl





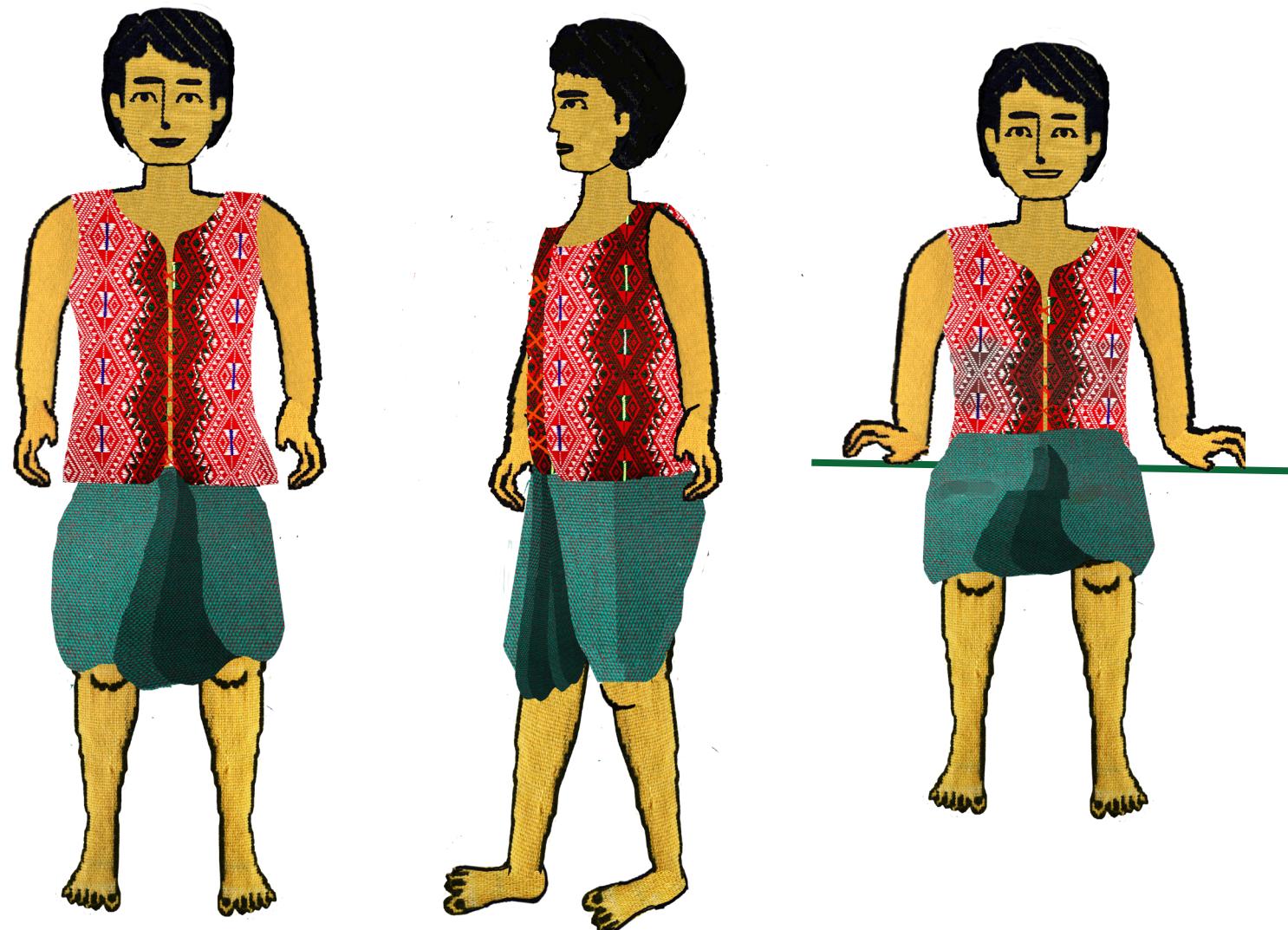


Character 3 : The father





Character 4 : The young man





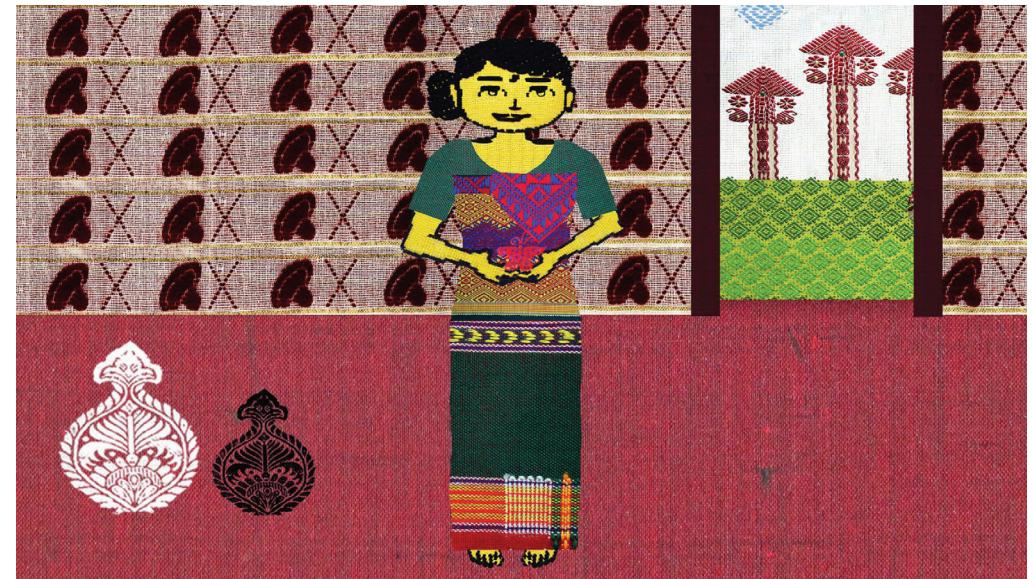
Book *Illustrations / Images*



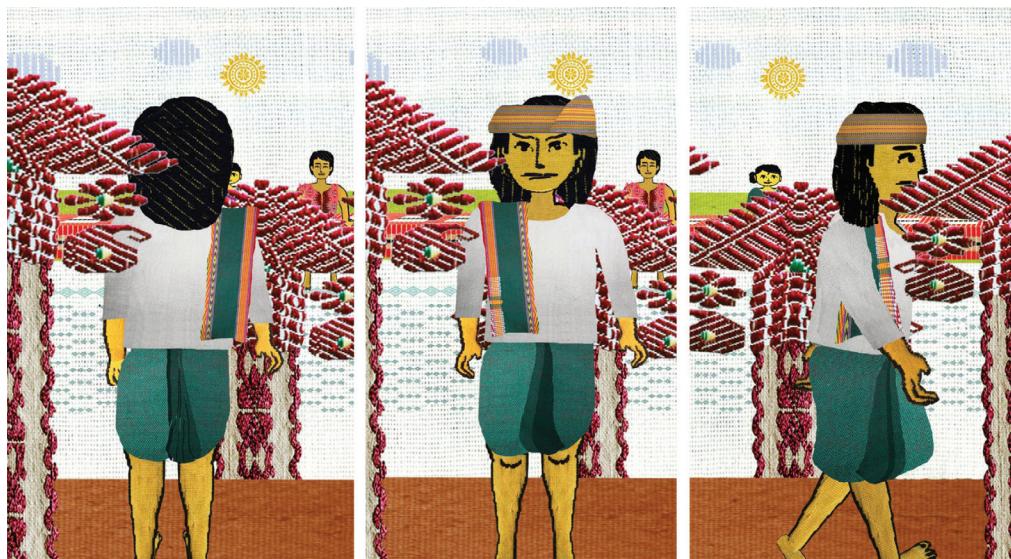
JURIA MORA

A folktale on a motif

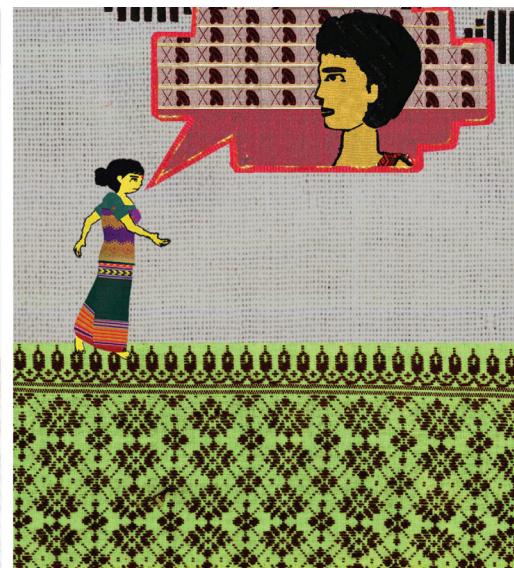
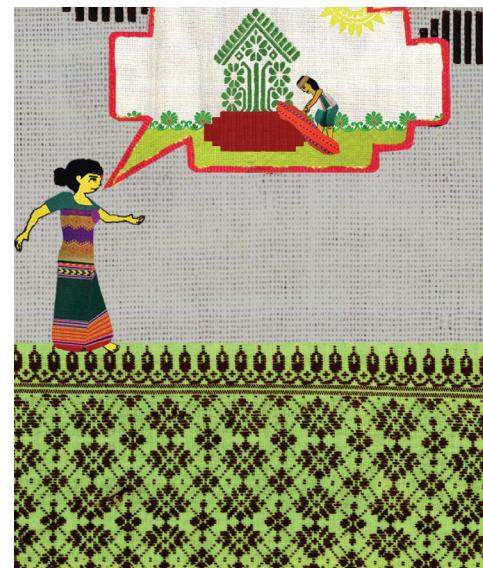
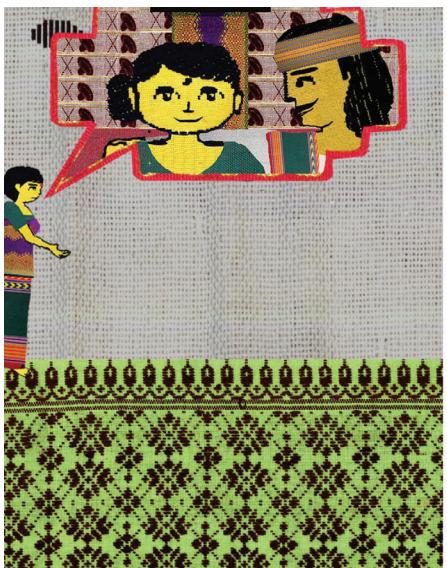


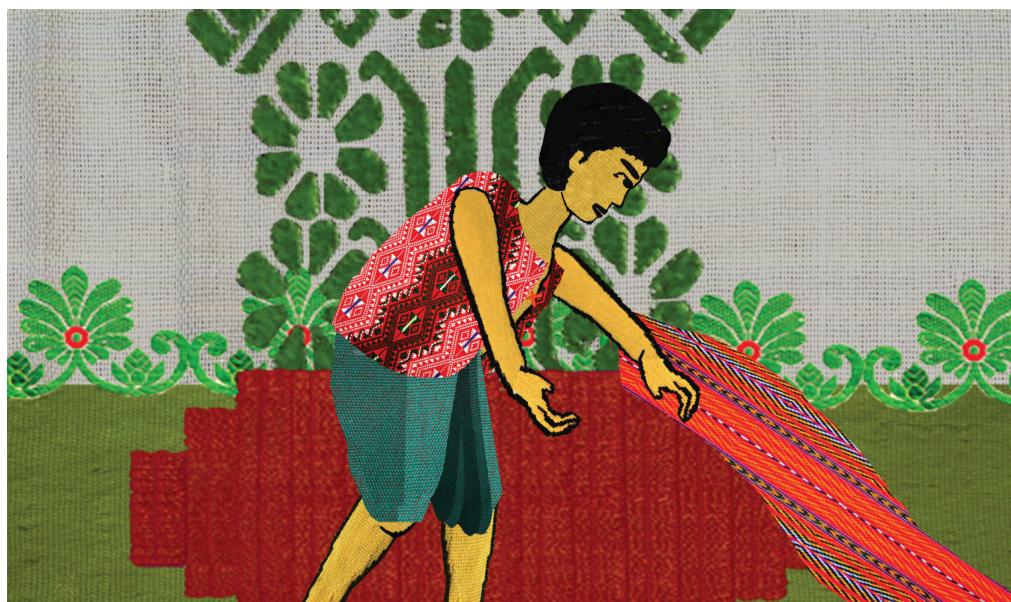
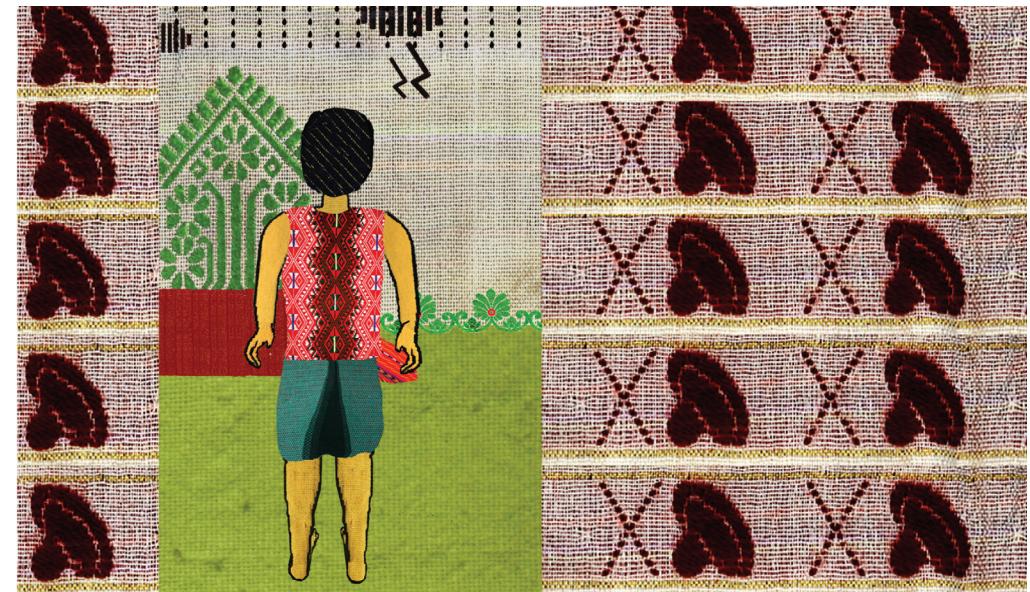
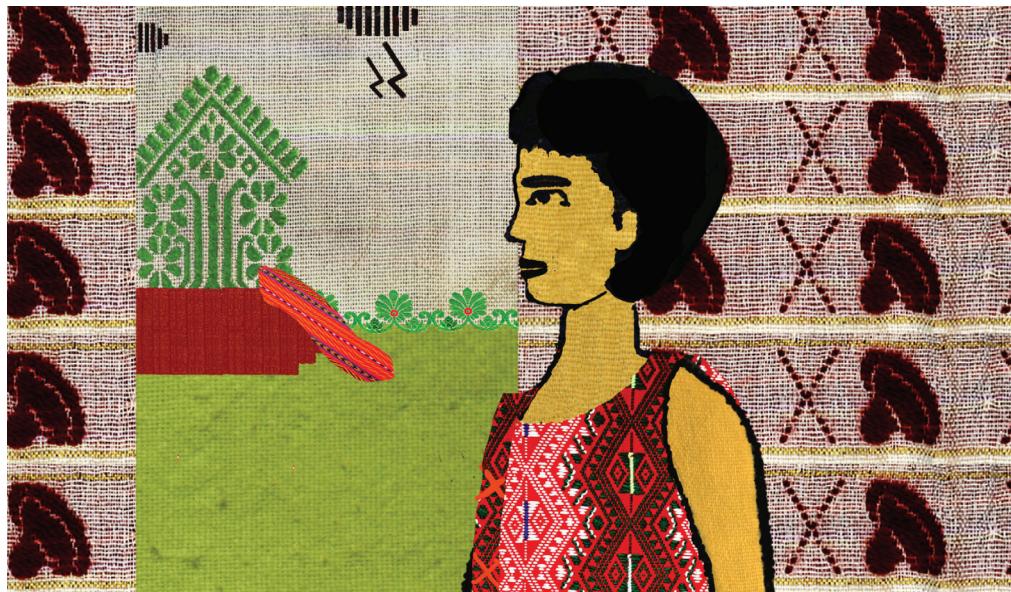


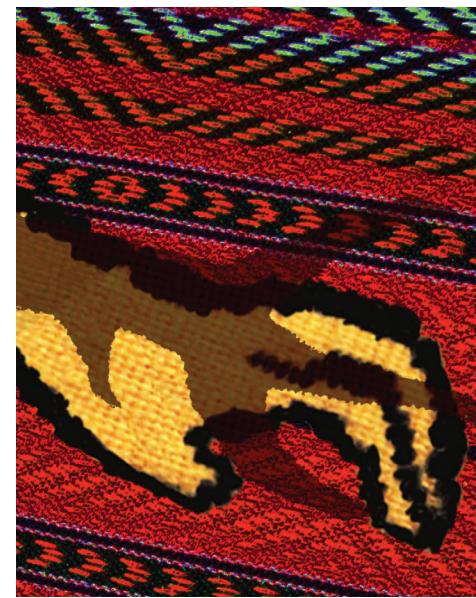


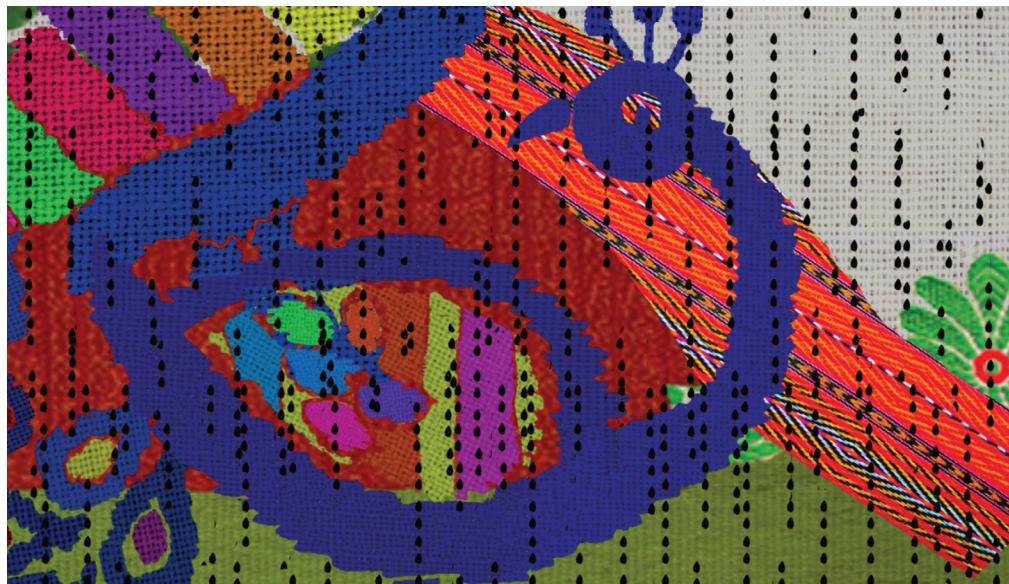














❖ The weaver comes back from her imagination constantly glancing at the peacock motif and continues weaving the other part of the cloth. And the rhythmic sound of the loom continues to echo in the surroundings.



Sometimes folktales are preserved on the textile as a reminiscence of the past.

A textile among Pati Rabha (a tribe from Assam) retains a bird motif identified as peacock and peahen with their plumages of varied colour. This is the story behind the formation of the motif.





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Learnings and future scope

The project is executed in a span of 5 months. The following timeline shows the execution period of the project:

Month 1 and 2: Secondary research, search for motifs, story

Month 3: Weaving of the character elements

Month 4: Illustration and Book

Month 5: 2D animation

This project enabled me to understand a new skill which is far more laborious than creating an artwork on the computer. It also tested my patience as each weft had to be inserted very carefully to render a warp of fabric as compared to the pixels rendering in milliseconds in digital processing.

Though the digital medium seemed to be the easier part than weaving, converting the illustrations (using photoshop) into a 2D animation (using after effects) was another learning experience. We are so used to using the softwares we are comfortable in that medium conversion (illustrations to animation) took a lot of trial and error in that timeframe.

The project enabled me to explore a 2D static medium into collaterals beyond what it is generalized. This attempt can provide a new perspective as an art form to the audiences. Furthermore employment opportunities to the weavers and can also enable them to gain new avenues of uplifting their dying art form and skill. In another dimension it can also allow artists and designers to explore and collaborate with this medium.

References

1. *Weaving dreams on their looms* . Ambari, Guwahati 1
Director of Handloom and Textiles , 1985.
2. Mazumdar, Labanya. *Textile Tradition of Assam* . s.l. : Bhabani Books .
3. *Some selected motifs of gamocha from Assam and their meanings*.
Roy, Shankar K and Medhi, Birinchi K. 2005. *Humankind*, pp 195-203,
Assam : s.n., 2005, Vol. 1.
4. *Textiles of Assam: A cultural Spectrum*. Roy, Shankar K. 1994. Assam
Dept of Anthropology, Gauhati University, 1994, Vol. 8. 46-56.

Image M1	https://www.google.co.in/search?q=map+of+assam&source=lnms&tbs=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAmoVChMI4tP0h5L9xgIVhSOOCh0SmAVQ&biw=1366&bih=57#tbs=imgo:1&tbs=isch&q=map+of+india&imgrc=tSS_RFJgsNnp2M%63A
Image M2	https://www.google.co.in/search?q=map+of+assam&source=lnms&tbs=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAmoVChMI4tP0h5L9xgIVhSOOCh0SmAVQ&biw=1366&bih=57#q=map+of+india+showing+assam+2013&tbs=isch&tbs=imgo:1&imgdii=lvBHAa8bcfEOGM%3A%3BIVBHAa8bcfEOGM%3A%3BnJ0vyMegp2nSnM%3A&imgrc=lvBHAa8bcfEOGM%3A
Image 1.1, 1.2, 1.3	<i>Weaving dreams on their looms . Ambari, Guwahati 1 Director of Handloom and Textiles , 1985.</i>
Image 2	www.litizen.com
Image 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	<i>Mazumdar, Labanya. Textile Tradition of Assam . s.l. : Bhabani Books</i>
Image 10, 11	www.newswala.com , Enazori Mumbai fb page
Image 12	www.youtube.com
Image 13	www.der.org/films/stitches-speak.time
Image 14	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayeaux_Tapestry

