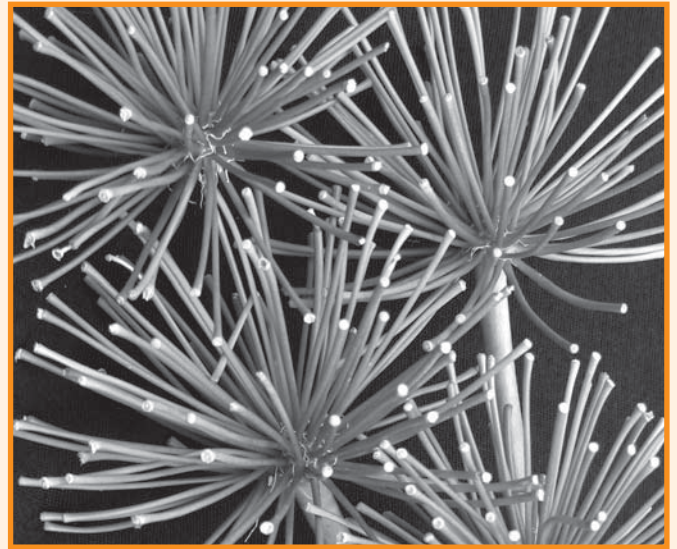




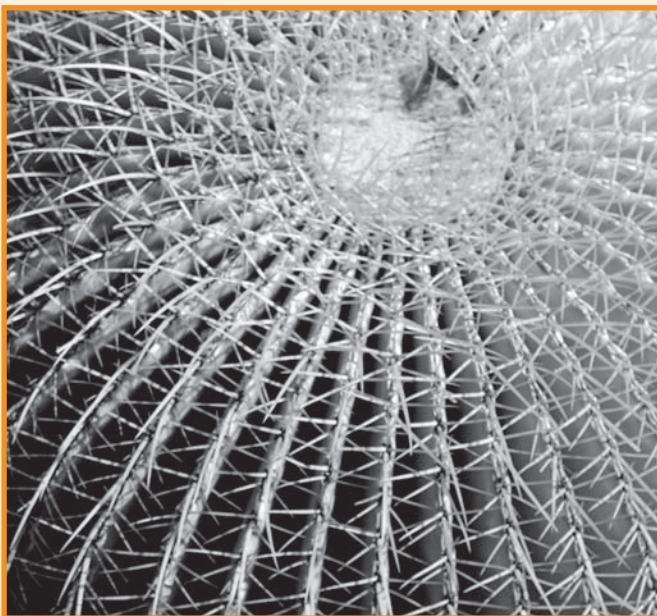
Thistles, surviving my inadequate weeding, produce compound seed heads with each seed carrying its feathery parasol ready to float away, much to my delight, and that of the grandchildren. In a wonderful palm-house in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, there are palms with fans that make a symphony against the Victorian steel grids and stained glass of the roof structures (for my next article, this building and the amazing plants within will be our focus).

There is something wonderfully satisfying about the multiple symmetries, the rhythm of the patterns, and the counter-play of the natural and the made. Indeed such plant forms 'explode' if you will, but in slow motion. Now there is a starting thought for a whole new investigation.... I'd want to look at another kind of radial form, less linear, found in numerous environments and appearing in animals as well as plants....



sufficient unto itself. But in western cultures at least, the sun and stars as symbolic elements, and the mariner's compass are enduring motifs. Recently I have found the intersecting of radial motifs, something like seedless agapanthus heads, to have provided a great inventive spark. It works so well in tie-dye, in over-printed lino blocks, and machine embroidery, yielding intricate and rich surfaces.

Finally, one of the most moving images in the Cairo Museum visited last year was on the throne of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun who was shown seated under the rays of the sun. The sun god Aten radiates golden beams, each ending with a hand in blessing, whilst the young queen gently caresses her husband with perfumed oil. Pleated garments fan upon the central figures, and even the formal floral arrangements echo this motif. Do look to see what else *you* can find!



Sea anemones produce radial tentacles, and Stevens found a balancing relationship between these and the salty sea which he believed to be like the diffusion pattern of dye-on-glycerin. But fleshy radial symmetries are elsewhere too - in mushrooms and fungi, and in spiky fleshy spherical cactus varieties. And there is insufficient room to mention the endless variety of radial symmetries that are found on the coral reefs. Any single one of these could provide endless resources for creative play.

I guess the question of how to use this pattern type might not, in fact, be so simple, as the circle or the sphere is an enclosed form,

NOTES

*Peter S Stevens *Patterns in Nature*, Penguin Books 1977
 Nicholas Reeves *The Complete Tutankhamun*, Thames and Hudson 2007
 The full moon is a prize winning image photographed by Luc Viatour of Belgium: www.lucnix.be
 The snowflake is published with thanks to Kenneth Libbrecht of Caltech, and more may be seen on his website: www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/
 Wikipedia has images of sea-anemones: go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sea_anemone#Gallery
 HE Gombrich *The Sense of Order*, Phaidon 1979 This has but a small section on natural pattern but it is a classic study of the decorative.

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