

3D

DEFINITIVE DESIGN + DECOR

S f D C

INSIDE: INTERNATIONAL DESIGNERS GO ARTISANAL • THE FASHIONABLE ALLURE OF EXQUISITE FABRICS • ALCHEMY WITH ANTIQUES • TWO DREAM ROOMS BY CECILIA SAGRERA-HILL AND GEORGE BRAZIL • LEADING INTERIOR DESIGNERS AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A RECIPROCAL LOVE OF FRESH IDEAS • DESIGNERS' FAVORITE HOTELS

THE SAN FRANCISCO DESIGN CENTER

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• From the Anke Loh Spring 2011 Collection, a hand-embroidered textile by the Honar Educational Training Center for Afghan refugee women, with additional textile treatment by Anke Loh.

fabrics after a fashion

BY JENNIFER MINNITI

What do today's leading clothing designers have in common with top interior designers? A passion for extraordinary textiles.

Textiles provide fertile ground for dialogue and collaboration between the fashion and interior design practices. Whether it is sharing the same inspiration for trends or collaborating efforts between the two disciplines, what is most remarkable today is that both professions are rediscovering and reinventing the innate beauty of textiles.

It is not uncommon for large fashion design houses to launch home collections; Donna Karan, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Armani and Missoni are household names. But when Diane Von Furstenberg, an esteemed fashion designer, recently launched the Diane Von Furstenberg home collection, she became a pioneer in promoting collaborations between fashion and interior designers. This past September, Von Furstenberg held a benefit presentation of fashion-inspired interiors for the Council of Fashion Designers of America (where she currently resides as president) at the Aldyn, a luxury residential development in New York. About 20 fashion and interior designers came together with the goal of creating a series of fashion-inspired

residences. Earlier this year, Von Furstenberg landed her first interior design assignment. She redecorated a number of guest rooms at the luxurious Claridge's Hotel in London with her signature printed fabrics.

It has become a ubiquitous practice for fashion designers to team up with major retailers, allowing for increasing visibility to the mass market for high-end designers. The interior textile market, perhaps learning from the current fashion business model, has followed suit. American fashion designer Oscar de la Renta, who was once a designer at the French couture house of Balmain, collaborated with Lee Jofa Design Studio, an interior industry leader, on a collection of textiles for the home. The fabrics, although not exact replicas of those used in his garments, certainly reflect the de la Renta aesthetic—one of luxury and elegance. Both houses have a history of craftsmanship, employing time-intensive embellishments such as extravagant embroideries and classic prints. These two heavy hitters seem like natural collaborators.

BACK TO BASICS

Along with the rapid growth of textile digital printing, quite a number of fashion designers are returning to and revitalizing traditional hand techniques such as ikat, shibori, block printing, hand embroidery and the handloom. The comeback of traditional weaving and printing techniques in fabric production aggregates great value to the product, sustains traditional heritages and creates opportunities for rural communities. When fashion designers work with tribal or indigenous cultures, they not only preserve and revive lost traditions and techniques but also promote those processes to the contemporary marketplace—creating cross-cultural networks that support handmade textiles.

SUNO is a contemporary New York-based fashion brand that has made headlines for creating collections that benefit both the garment district in New York and textile industries in Kenya. The young company sources native textiles, while pattern making and cutting is done in New York. SUNO promotes fair trade and pays its African workers a fair



• Bermingham & Co. based one of its ikat designs on this antique robe pattern. The fabrication process employs 37 separate steps, requiring more than a month to produce 200 yards of ikat fabric.



• Ethnographic textiles at the SFDC, left to right: Galbraith & Paul, Seville Medallion (De Sousa Hughes); Raoul Textiles, Henry Marmalade (De Sousa Hughes); Pierre Frey, Alhambra Rubis 1 (Shears & Window); Chelsea Editions (De Sousa Hughes); Suzani (Donghia).



• The Oscar de la Renta Home collection for Lee Jofa reflects the sensibility of the designer's clothing lines—embracing color, texture and fine details.

wage. The garment industry in New York is struggling to survive; young brands like SUNO may be the key to revitalizing this once-thriving fashion center. Not only has SUNO created a new fashion business model, it is also changing the landscape of contemporary textiles.

Ethnographic prints have long inspired big-name fashion designers. Lately, however, these influences have taken a new direction. Fashion designers are returning to the tactile. The use of traditional textile printing and dyeing is creating less of a demarcation between traditional textile treatments and modern fashion. The resulting effect is a collage of ethnographic references and zesty color combinations with contemporary materials and shapes. Proenza Schouler, for example, recently showed a novel take on tie-dye by using shibori, a traditional Japanese tie-dyeing method, with vivid color schemes as well as black and white. Dries Van Noten is well known for his use of Indian block printing, ikat, and Moroccan prints combined with innovative draping and shape. And Junya Watanabe, one of the most influential designers of our time, frequently uses tribal references, resulting in aggressive and bold, graphically arranged prints mixed with conventional fabrications such as denim, gingham and khaki cotton.

On a smaller scale, Anke Loh, a Belgian designer located in Chicago, designed her spring 2011 collection with fabrics from Afghanistan and Pakistan, hand embroidered by the Honar Educational Training Center for Afghan refugee women. Anke brings her own female hand into the mix by tie-dyeing the embroideries and cutting minimal modern shapes—creating a new cultural identity that celebrates traditional artisanal craft and contemporary fashion design practices.

HANDMADE TEXTILES AT THE SFDC

The same handcrafted and ethnographic-inspired trends are making a strong showing in the textile showrooms at the San Francisco Design Center. There is a renewed interest in craft and quality, and the message is spirited in the return of the intuitive. Rose Tarlow's Melrose house textile is an exclusive that

took years to develop in Senegal. The mill focused on innovation through traditional production. These textiles are intricately and meticulously woven by traditional methods on handlooms, producing fabrics that are superior in tactile feel and drape to those made on similar industrial looms. Pierre Frey developed a Moroccan-inspired fabric that changes design direction—incorporating a variety of historical design motifs and a bright palette of color-ways into one textile. A designer has greater potential to consider the lines and edges of a soft object or furniture when exploring the possibilities this kind of textile permits.

Bermingham & Co., shown at Brunswick & Fils, reintroduced traditional ikats, a distinct process of tie-dyeing produced in Uzbekistan. Handmade ikats require painstaking effort; the fabrication process requires more than one month to produce 200 yards of ikat fabric. The revival of ikats from this company can be seen in *Elle Decor* and on the runway of the Versace fashion house.

Perhaps most exciting in the showrooms are two textile producers that use hand-blocked printing. John Robshaw textiles are hand printed in India on high-end linen. The attention to the details of print, accomplished by hand, produces a rare tactile environment that evokes a quiet yet strong visual experience. On a local level, the textiles from Galbraith & Paul are designed and hand-block printed by artisans. All of the labor is done in its studio in Philadelphia, and each finished textile carries the unique hand of the artisan.

In today's technology-saturated market, where devices and machines dominate our daily activities, we are perhaps craving the special quality found in the art and craft of textile making. Whether it is a known fashion design house launching a signature print collection, or a small-scale local designer utilizing the practice of a traditional artisanal craft, textiles and textile production are at the forefront of contemporary innovation. •

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