

Decorative

There is a comfort in a contemporary design that is reminiscent, yet different, to an historic one. It gives all sorts of connotations to an interior and is a strong way to modernise a room, yet to retain a domestic scale. Decorative wallpaper has been in production and on our walls for centuries. Often utilising floral or repeat patterns, these papers were first manufactured in the eighteenth century, and versions of the flowery chintzes and small repeat patterns characteristic of this era are still popular today. The naturalistic floral papers from arts & crafts designer William Morris fall into this category and the quintessential Laura Ashley wallpapers, with their neo-Georgian repeats, kept this style alive throughout the latter quarter of the twentieth century. Cole & Son has literally kept this tradition alive, using the same prints and techniques as were in vogue in Victorian times. Linda Florence has revived the concept of Damask wallpaper, but given it a modern spin, with her use of silvery 'scratchcard' material that can hide or expose the traditional pattern underneath.

The flowering wallpaper has also received a more modern overhaul, Jane Gordon Clarke's Ornamenta company based in London, whose productions are very much in the Chelsea interiors style, also produces a site-specific paper range titled *Hot House Flowers*. These over-sized, super-real, exotic flower designs have often been reproduced in interiors magazines looking to highlight new interpretations of this most traditional style. In many ways it is simply the sheer scale of the design that makes them appear modern, though they retain a certain softness. This dramatic retelling of the floral wallpaper has been made possible by advances in reprographic techniques, which influenced many different styles of wallpapers, but few so dramatically as the floral genre.

Although decorative wallpaper is traditionally seen as an unassuming (even safe) choice for decorating, it remains multidimensional in purpose and effect. The chintzes and florals are seen as a feminine genre of wallpaper as their designs often parallel or mimic textile designs associated with dress fabrics. But the denser, darker, Victorian-style decorative wallpapers, designed to give weight and grandeur to a room are more masculine in effect, with the boldest of this style being the flocked papers, which were originally based on eighteenth century silk damask fabrics. Coming down off an initial high perch, they were often used in pubs and cheap hotels during the 1970s and 1980s when they were produced with lighter colour combinations, often gold and red, or gold and green. The flock wallpaper has recently been re-appropriated by high-end boutique clubs and retail spaces, where the paper can cleverly be carried off if used ironically. It is the subconscious recognition of a style, which draws us to these patterns, but it is the designer's eye that has re-drawn them for a new audience.

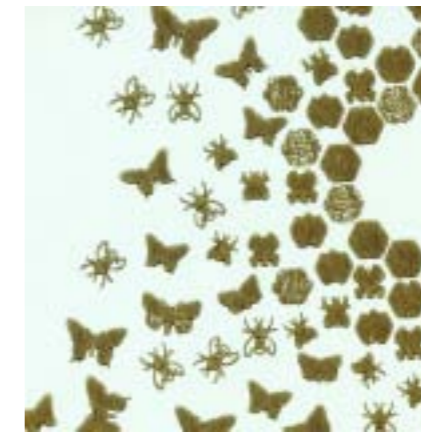
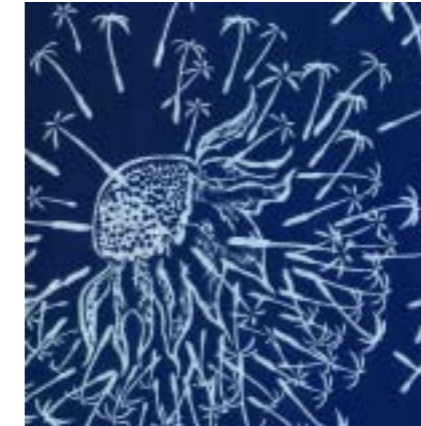
Absolute Zero°

Kenneth Stephenson was new to wallpaper when he founded *Absolute Zero°* six years ago. But his Seasons series, commissioned by *Places and Spaces* in 2004, revealed an acute sense of classic wallpaper patterning and contemporary fashion alertness.

This range of papers features patterns made from images of nature and seasonal transformation. Bees and butterflies diffuse out of honeycomb in *Summer*, while deer leap from a forest of bare trees in *Winter*, and autumn leaves merge into images of migrating swallows in *Autumn*, the piece that was most widely acclaimed when it came out in 2004.

These works, like the M.C. Escher drawings they make reference to, create a electric meeting of the organic and the geometric, with natural forms twisting in and out of symmetrical patterns. These designs seem to resemble fractal formations which draw attention to the mathematical regularity and homogeneity underlying plant and animal shapes. This tension produces a sleek, modern design, which explores the graphic language of pattern, pairing a mathematical symmetry with the vital energy of nature.

The wallpaper itself is printed on 80-year-old machinery by highly skilled print technicians. They blend the colours by eye, using china clay, which is added to the paint. This gives them a noticeably rich feel. A natural degree of movement in the roller ensures that the end result has a unique, hand printed quality.



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Timorous Beasties

With one foot firmly planted in the tradition of William Morris and another in the edgy world of urban grit, the award winning Timorous Beasties designs create a provocative feast of pattern and images. Their iconoclastic style is defined by uncompromisingly contemporary images intricately woven into the language of traditional print. When tramps, junkies and prostitutes are devilishly patterned into pre-revolutionary French toile designs, as with their Glasgow Toile 2004, one can't deny the dark wit behind their expert execution.

"Beasties" are a common facet of their designs, with insects and bugs often crawling or flying across the plane. Such embellishments are references to oriental influences. Their wallpaper prints consistently employ experimental concepts and colours juxtaposed with pre-modern and eastern themes. Often their carefully chosen colours serve to diffuse harsh lines and make the forms visually bleed into one another, becoming more a colour field than an articulated pattern.

Timorous Beasties design and produce their textiles and wallpapers under the same roof, maintaining the integrity of the product from design board to wall space. As designer-producers they crucially maintain control over all aspect of the pieces allowing them to fashion wallpaper that is in every way tailored to its specific environment. Whilst rooting their identity, through motif and practice, firmly in their native Glasgow, the 'Timorous Beasties boys' exercise a control over their works rarely possible in this age of mass-production.

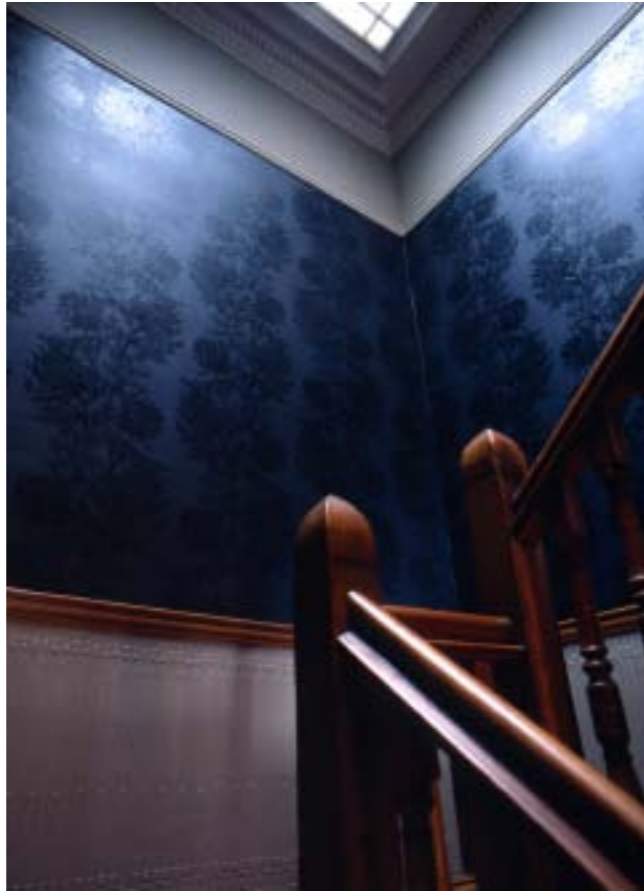
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Louise Body

Louise Body's designs are playfully nostalgic but decidedly contemporary. Using much the same painstaking process of hand printing and hand finishing that William Morris perfected over a hundred years ago, Body has updated the traditional floral patterned wallpaper for the post-modern homeowner. Her pressed flower patterns are simple and elegant silhouettes in earthy, warm tones, which are eye-catching and graphic, like Warhol paintings, but measured in their use of colour. These bold graphic elements are often paired with subtle, lacy patterns and highly tactile surfaces. Her more recent bird themed prints are reminiscent of nature magazine illustrations, which dissolve into pattern through their serial repetition.

Body's work has many touchstones: arts and crafts patterns, 1960's pop art, 70's colours schemes. Yet her work is far from mere kitsch, it conjures up childhood memories and creates a warm and homely atmosphere in whatever room its decorates.

Designs like *Flower* and *Birds* use a layering technique, taking a base of lace, or fern leaves, and printing over them with clear figurative drawings of birds in cages, or silhouettes of flowers. In *Floral* and *Birdies*, similar themes are explored, but in a more focussed space, creating a sense of movement and fluidity.

Body's company has been in business since 2003 when she received a grant from the Prince's Trust. All of her pieces are completed by hand, which makes them truly personal and unique. She uses only water-based inks and avoids using any hazardous solvents in the printing process. In addition, her paper comes from managed forests and any paper waste is recycled. In a way, her very traditional approach is a progressive one in that it allows her to think green and think sustainable.

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Cole & Son

Cole & Son is one of the oldest and most distinguished printing houses in the wallpaper industry. Dating back to 1873, this prestigious company has adorned the walls of the Palace of Westminster, the Brighton Pavilion, Buckingham Palace and even the White House. Many contemporary designers have developed new and exciting motifs, but much of Cole & Son's inspiration comes from their own illustrious back catalogue. All their designs are executed using much the same techniques they employed when the company was founded.

Block printing is the oldest of these techniques and is a painstaking process, which requires highly skilled printers and allows no room for error. It utilizes a thick ink, which gives their papers an almost relief-like quality. Their archive boasts over 1800 block designs from past and present. The majority of their designs utilise the surface printing technique in which ink is applied with a roller by a very steady hand. The final printing method is screen-printing. Cole and Son set up one of very first screen-printing studios in the late 1940's. Screen-printing produces highly detailed patterns by forcing ink through a blocked off design in thin silk or gauze. Flocking, which simulates velvet by applying glue and wool particles (see page xxxx), was rediscovered by Cole & Son owner John Perry in the 1870's.

It is perhaps the postmodernist revival of once outmoded forms, which has made Cole and Son more popular than ever. Now these prestigious wall coverings find homes on the walls of stately homes as well as urban design conscious apartments. And with tailor-made colours and patterns anyone can have wallpaper that is both original and authentic.



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Manuel Canovas

Using modern technology and a modern sensibility, Manuel Canovas makes faithful reproductions of classic toile-de-jouy fabric prints. Toile-de-jouy refers to the 18th century method of fabric printing using engraved copper plates. This huge leap in technology allowed textile designers to reproduce highly detailed images accurately and cheaply. French craftsmen appropriated images from famous paintings and contemporary prints, introducing an element of narrative into the otherwise static world of textiles. Continuing in this very prestigious and very French tradition, Canovas has adapted the distinctive look of Toile-de-Jouy fabrics for paper wall coverings. He uses similar motifs such as romantic gardens, flirting lovers and rural idlers as well as oriental and exotic themes, often culled from actual eighteenth century French art of the same vintage. What separates his designs from the Toile originals is his daring use of colour, a far cry from the conservative and naturalistic palette of Rococo France. His vibrant tones dominate but don't overpower the rooms they fill. Combinations like a pink engraving on an army green background or grey flowers over tomato red make the subtle engravings dynamic and modern.

As well as these clear references, his work is also informed by his interest in Japanese design, American folk art and even a curiosity in Botany. In business since 1963, the Manuel Canovas fabric house has applied these designs to not just walls but textiles, pillows, chairs and even swimwear. Whatever the format, a Canovas pattern is instantly recognizable and his penchant for tasteful and sophisticated images and vivid colour has made him an international success.



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Neisha Crosland

Neisha Crosland is something of a polymath. Her design range encompasses clothing, fabric furnishing, underwear, and of course, wallpaper, and her popularity has skyrocketed in recent years. Her delicate floral designs have a hand drawn feel to them, which conveys a warmth and an individuality to a room. The prints are hand-painted on silk, with a luxury finish, and all this has made them increasingly desirable.

The influences on Croslands designs are varied. *Clematis* indicates an awareness of the Chinoiserie tradition. The spaced patterning and fluid curves of the stems are reminiscent of the brush-strokes of traditional Oriental art. *Caravan* is an intelligent interpretation of 1970s design, specifically that found in mobile homes of the period. In all her prints, the use of colour is carefully considered. Unlikely combinations such as blue and orange or pink and green are so delicately treated, that they manage to be simultaneously pleasing and eye-catching. The muted motifs are brought to life with white highlights and a careful balance of strength and softness. The relative proportions between the shapes and the way that they sit on the background indicates the touch of a master.

Croslands portfolio has reached the mainstream with her *Romagna* collection, developed with Osbourne and Little (this includes the famous 'star' wallpaper), however her independent range, which remains under her own name remains resolutely exclusive.



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Linda Florence

Central St. Martins graduate Linda Florence's innovative wallpaper designs have proved a great hit with collectors and high end companies. Using gold leaf, leather and other exotic materials, her wallpaper has a tactile quality to it that speaks of luxury and also questions the way we perceive luxury. Her *Morphic Damask* wallpaper series borrows the bold tones and luxurious materials of eastern textiles but mixes the traditional with computer-generated patterns and 80's day-glow colours.

Her *Scratchcard* series is another modern interpretation of Damask, substituting what would have been hand woven sections of gold and silver thread with the silvery foil material of Lottery scratchcards. The home-owner can scratch off the foil to reveal the colours of the design underneath – or can leave it partially unscratched to create a mottled effect. The child-like anticipation that everyone experiences when finding out whether they've won is rewarded every single time. The prize becomes not what's underneath, but the anticipation and excitement itself.

The layering of patterns and colours in Florence's designs, give her traditional designs a spatial depth that challenges the viewer and demands closer examination and engagement.

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Fromental

Fromental's hand made, bespoke wallpapers are designed to the precise specifications of the walls they are intended to cover. Printing on both paper and silk, the distinctive prints are panoramic and non-repeating. They have 16 ranges, each finding their inspiration in different sources; 1930s florals, 1950s conversational features, and eighteenth century Chinoiserie. This latter term refers to a popular style in the 1750s and 60s, which was inspired by the porcelain, silk and lacquerware, which was starting to be imported from China and Japan, and which caused a spate of emulations by English designers.

The embroidered silk collections feature hand sewn patterns in silk thread onto a fine silk background. The launch collection was a selection of stripes, stitched in an almost infinite range of colours, with part printed, part embroidered delicate butterfly and blossom tree pattern. The Asiatic themes speak of tradition mixed with experimental flair.

Each panel takes weeks to produce by craftsmen in China, and the resulting luxury is literally tangible. A recent installation for private villas at the Wynn in Las Vegas required approximately 160,000 yards of silk thread and 20,000 hours of work. Although embroidery is not usually associated with contemporary design, the result of their painstaking work is a very chic product that does not vie for space, but quietly lends a room a subtle air of opulence.

Tim Butcher and Lizzie Deshayes run the company from the headquarters in West London. Butcher has his background in the renowned Chinoiserie house, de Gournay, hence the Chinese influence. "I wanted to make something that had the same fine detail and craftsmanship but was very contemporary and clean", he says. The company is very new to the market but has been very well received by design critics the world over, and has been widely publicised in decoration magazines.



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Jane Gordon Clark

Jane Gordon Clark's work is not constrained by the muted colours and patterns of traditional wall coverings. Working under the design label Ornamenta, Jane is best known for pioneering large-scale printed wallpapers, in which digital images are applied like a mural to an entire wall. The first of this series, 'Hot House Flowers' is photographs of tiny flowers printed on a monumental scale. These wall sized images barely read as flowers, instead forming a pattern, albeit an irregular one, out of colours and shapes. This concept takes the idea of the floral motif literally – presenting the flowers themselves unaltered. The only patterns are those already present in nature.

Using more traditional design elements, the 'Spatial Graphics' line features common patterns like diamonds, wavy lines or rectangles printed in metallic inks on rich toned-backgrounds which gradually shift in colour from floor to ceiling. This odd combination of materials makes her shapes jump out and the subtly shifting tones oscillate up the walls. Often the patterns themselves create the illusion of indents and niches in the walls.

Aside from her digital prints, Ornamenta's papers are generally hand printed and individually tailored to specific environments. This hand made feel is especially evident in her 'Natural Petals' line, which is made out of Mulberry bark mulch to create a unique texture full of natural variations and accidents.

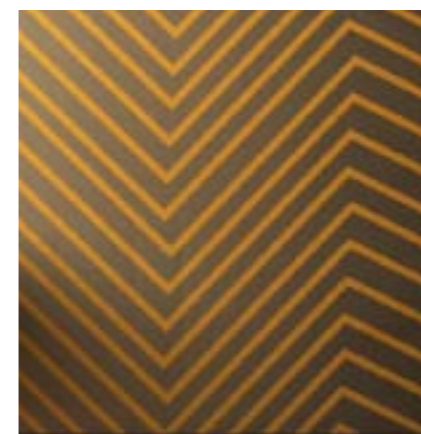
While her patterns have an almost austere elegance and traditional character, they are a dominant force in any room and suggest bold new possibilities for matching decoration and furnishings.



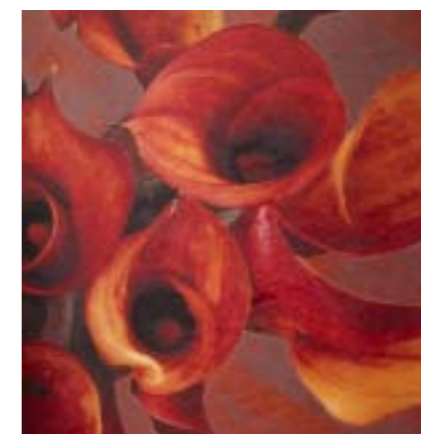
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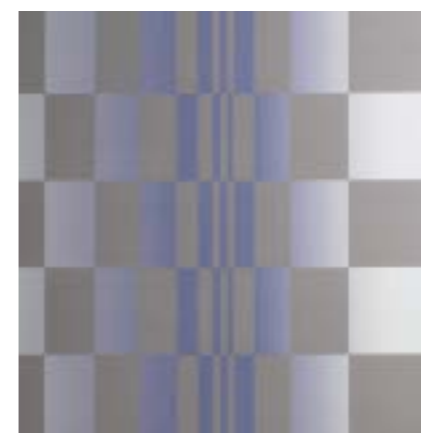
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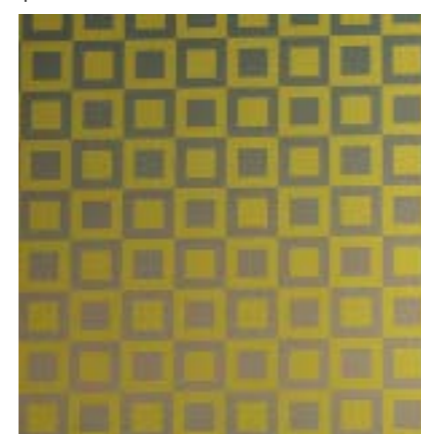
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Hemingway design

The husband and wife duo of Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway are probably better known as the fashion label Red or Dead which dominated British fashion runways for over 20 years with their street style designs. Starting as a modest stall in the Camden market making outfits for the disco, new-wave, and new romantic scene, Red or Dead soon became a major label, and was sold off in 1999. The Hemingways have since set up a new label called Hemingway Design, which continues their mission to make good design that is accessible to everyone, and whilst their colour palette may have become tempered over the years but their rebellious attitude toward design has not.

Their 4walls range for Graham and Brown is an example of large-scale design, which is intended to create an impact in a room. Some of the range contains intelligent and considered referencing to the designs of previous decades. *Tiffany* openly alludes to the Art Nouveau swirls and curves of the infamous jewellers. *Matchstick* indicates an inspiration by 1950s geometric patterning, and *Barking*, which is a bold emulation of inlaid wood, looks like it could have been found on the reck room walls of a house in the 1970s. By acknowledging these influences, but reinterpreting them to tally with the design sensibilities of the twenty-first century, the kitsch aspects are toned down, and with a small nod to irony, the designs take on a whole new slant, best suited to feature walls, or for large spaces.

Their other designs, such as *Hula Hoop*, *Pixel* and *Stripe* are conceptually simple ideas embellished with careful arrangements of colour and texture. The former two are flamboyant designs, which have been softened by the tasteful choice of earth-tones, whilst the latter makes few concessions to minimalist design, but provides a context which the room can be designed around (as depicted). The wallpaper is priced to reflect Hemingways left-leaning politics. "We've got mass-market taste," says Wayne proudly, "which is why, rather than doing wallpaper for £60 a roll, we design – and use – wallpaper that costs £14.99 a roll from a DIY store."



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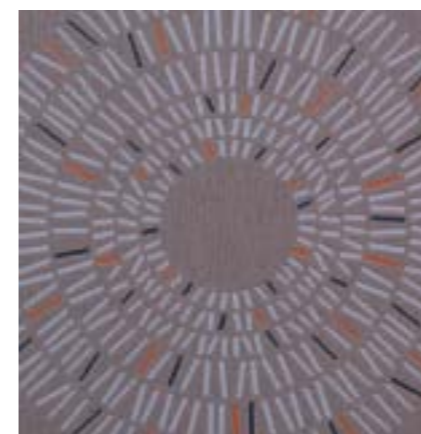
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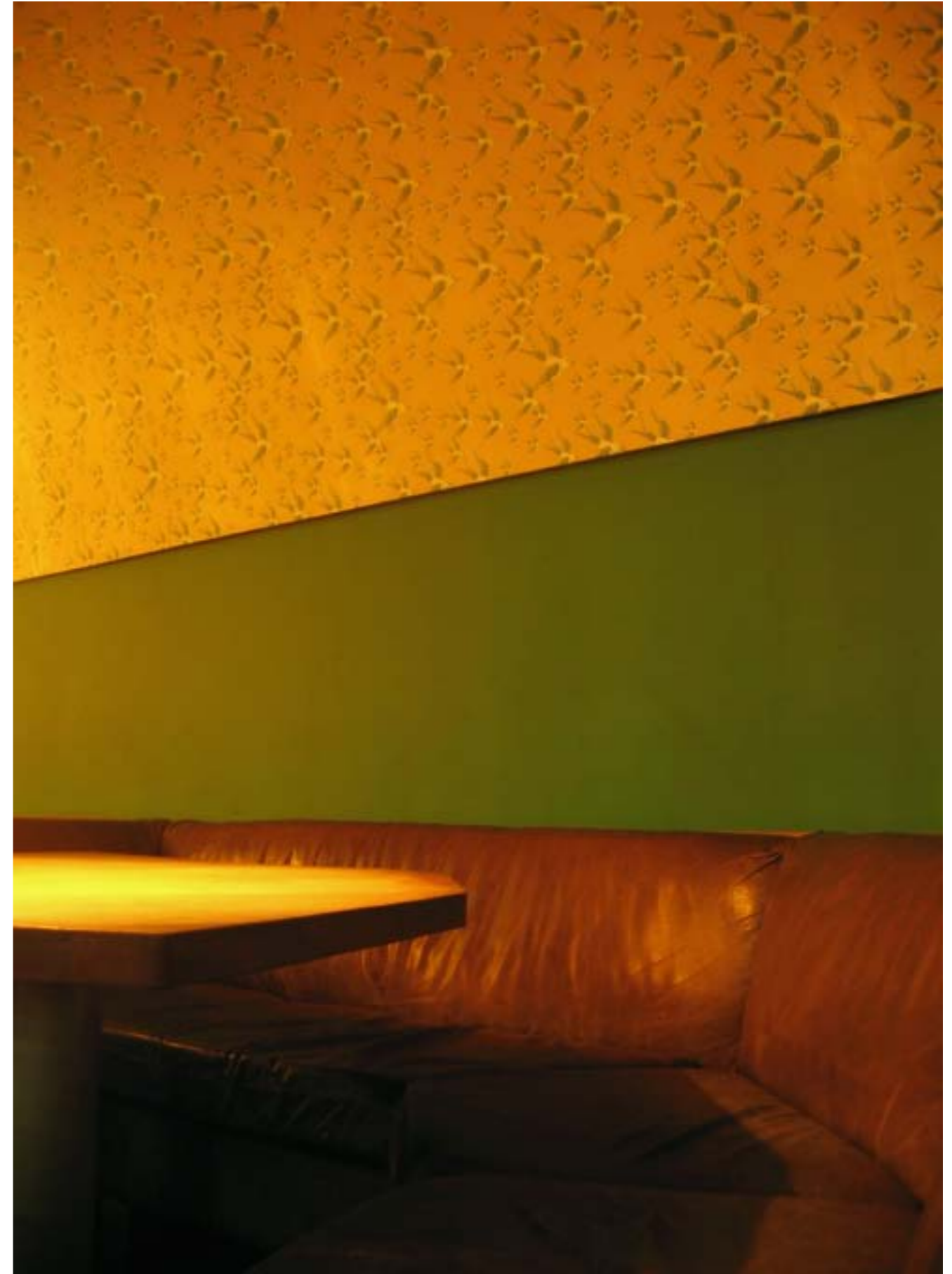
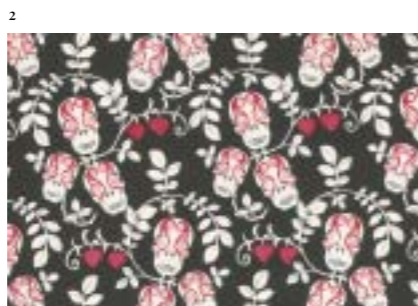
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The Magnificent Chatwin Brothers

Anselm and Sam Chatwin, a.k.a. The Magnificent Chatwin Brothers are a London-based duo, whose distinctly individual look has proved very popular amongst the London design set.

Coming from a fashion design and a graphic design background, respectively, the brothers are clearly influenced by traditional British design, however, they also cite Rockabilly, Americana, comics and tattoos as sources of inspiration. Their *Skulls* wallpaper was based around a traditional Russian sailor tattoo. The faintly tribal death-heads are interwoven with delicate vines and hearts, which from far away looks oddly traditional, and almost Morris-like. *Swallows* also started life as a naval tattoo. The simple dark brush-strokes of the stylised swallows creates a layering effect on the bold colour backgrounds.

Both *Skulls* and *Swallows* are hand-printed wallpapers that come in a range of colours (*Skulls* even has a limited edition glow-in-the-dark version), but the brothers have a second range of less exclusive, digitally-printed papers. The most popular of these is *Lightning*. With a very different feel to *Swallows* and *Skulls*, this is a very cool contemporary, two-colour print. The lightening bolts are cleverly interleaved with one another, facing in both directions, creating a pattern that initially seems like a chaotic scribble and only reveals its geometry upon closer inspection. Printed in cool colours such as lilac and peppermint green, the result is a dynamic pattern that lends a contemporary, fun look to a room without overpowering it.



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Nama Rococo

Karen Combs of Nama Rococo uses wallpaper as a vehicle to explore the possibilities of art on a large scale. Although she is well versed in the wallpaper of the past, she approaches it with a fresh perspective. Her papers are not mass-produced, they are hand printed and finished like individual works of art.

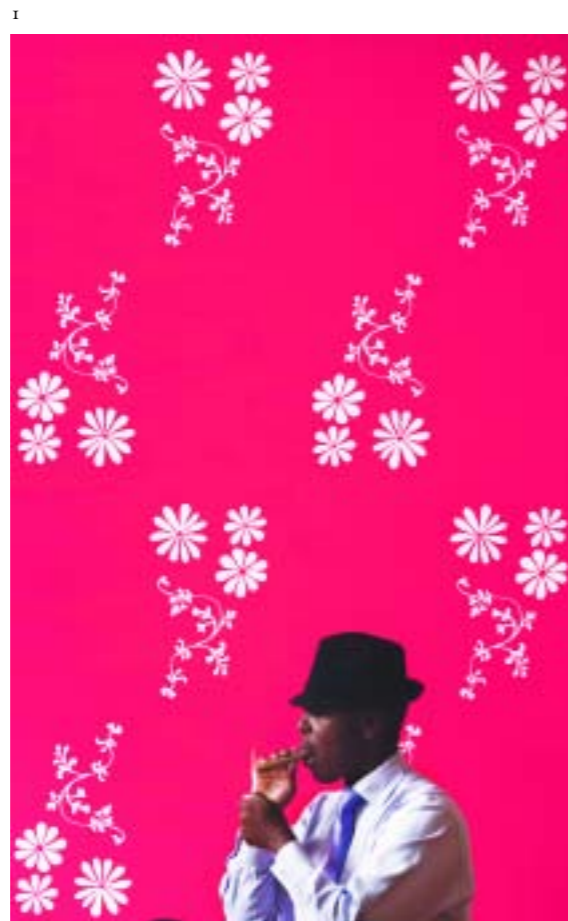
The *French Dot* design features one of a kind watercolour-like washes painted by hand and overlaid with a bold pen and ink style pattern. The colour scheme is playfully referred to as 'Ooh-la Black'. *Random Geometry* is a jumble of impossible origami creations and dripping ink blots in a variety of bold shades. *Serious BoKay* functions like a traditional diamond pattern but these geometric shapes are actually made out of clusters of cottony cloud-like objects. The diamonds are carefully staggered to break up the rigid lines, which cut across the wall. *Tokyo Vine* is a minimal and elegant floral pattern on day-glow red, which betrays her penchant for Japanese design.

As the name of her company suggests, Nama Rococo takes up the opulence of rococo but employs a contemporary visual vocabulary. Intended for large spaces like lofts which can often be cold and anonymous, these designs bring a welcome warmth and a sense of fun to the modern urban environment.

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Twenty2

Brooklyn based company Twenty2 skilfully straddles the wallpaper market, catering to both contemporary and more conservative tastes. Husband and wife duo, Robertson and Kyra Harnett, design wallpaper which is meant to work with most any interior instead of competing with it for attention. Their designs draw on modern motifs from the 1950s 60s and 70s which are refined, updated and stripped of their kitsch connotations.

Many ranges like their grasscloth papers evoke fond memories of grandparent's homes, minus the dated colour scheme. Other ranges, which might have once decorated a classic American dinner, are made more agreeable by fainter lines and softer colours. Elsewhere retro 50's palettes are applied successfully to more contemporary designs.

Even their avant-garde leanings are tempered by their characteristic restraint. Tangential lines and subtle colours break up what could have been a stark Mondrian like grid. Other daring patterns are closed off in tiny circles or within their favourite recurring motif of a ginkgo leaf. Although Twenty2's designs are highly versatile and intended to fit with a variety of decorative styles, the Harnetts understand the importance of personalized design and continue to fulfil private commissions and tailor their designs to individual settings. A far cry from some of the uncompromising and sometimes brash wallpaper experiments of their contemporaries, Twenty2 fashions practical designs for use in the average home and celebrates the quaint American vernacular style.



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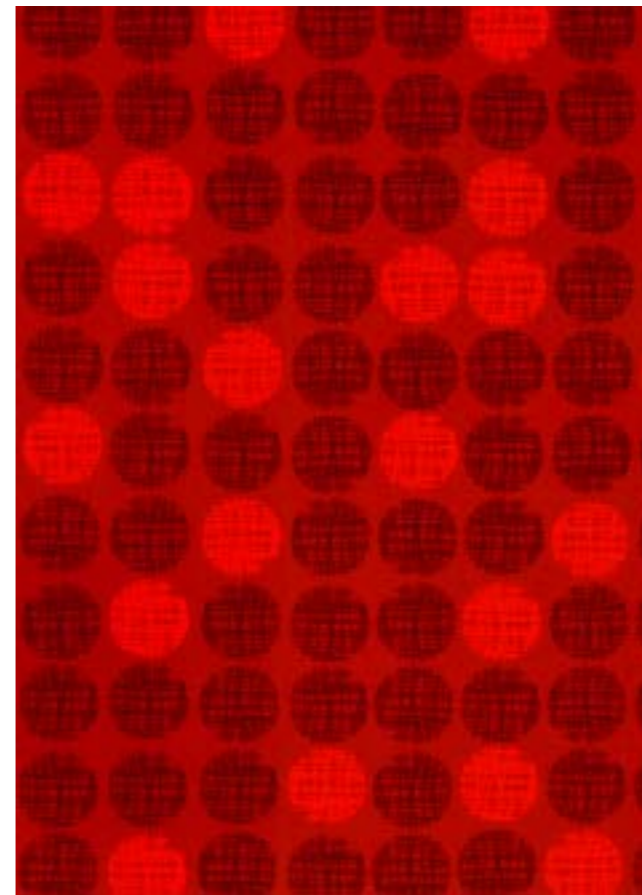
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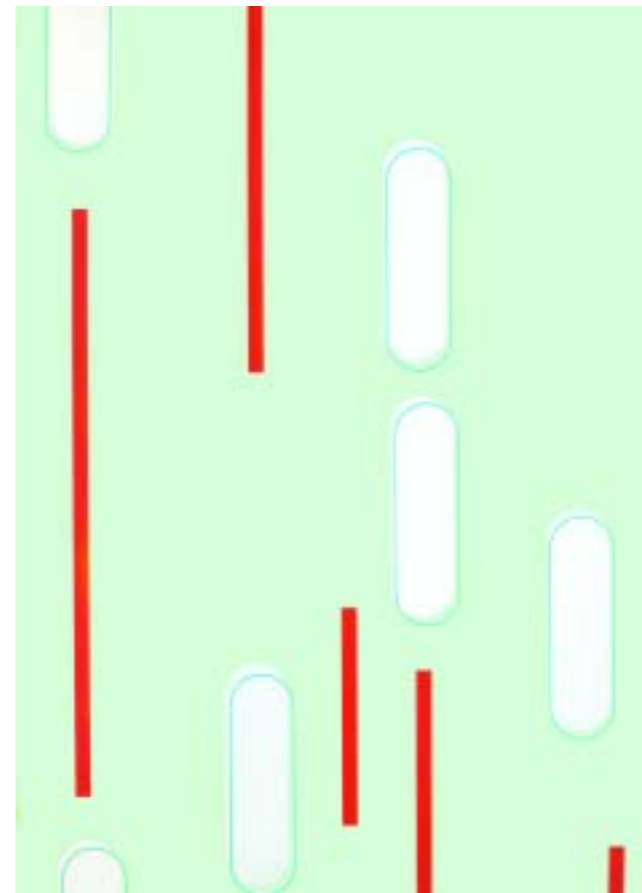
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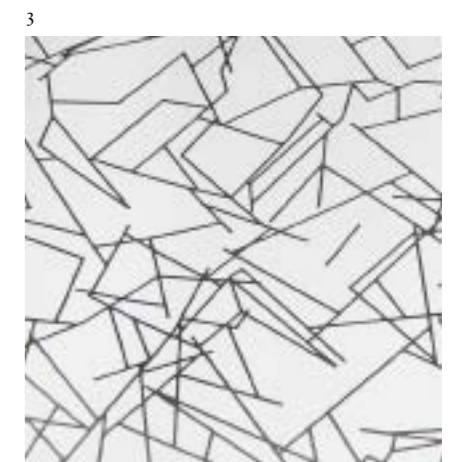
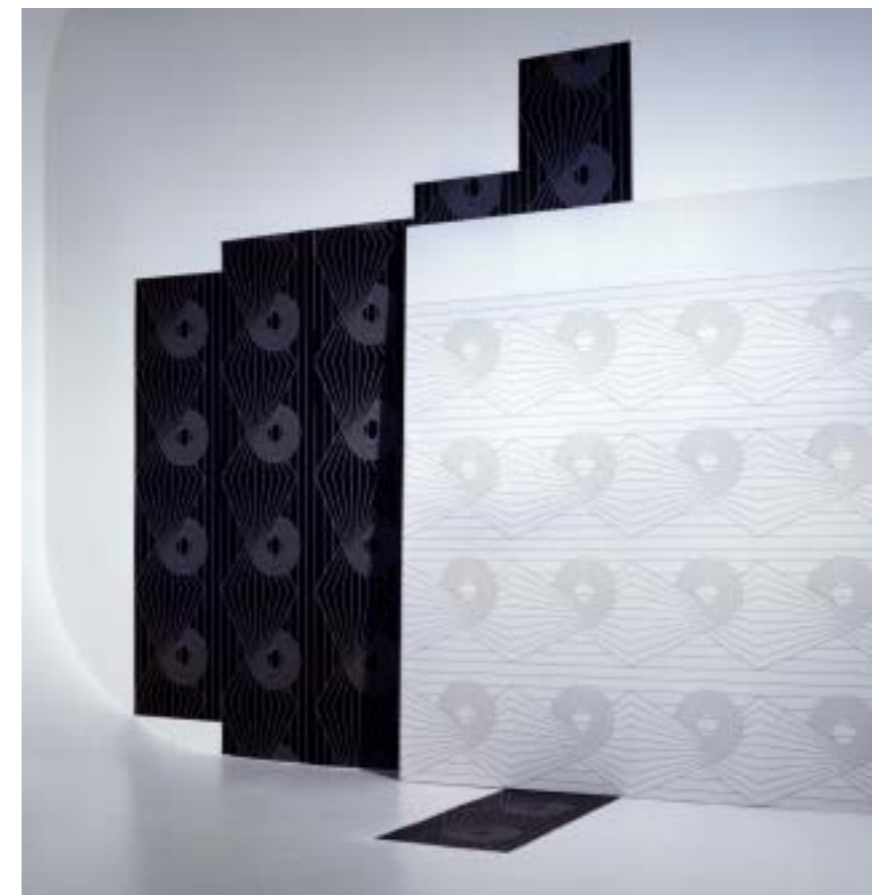
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Erica Wakerly

Erica Wakerly's background in illustration clearly shows through in her work. Her first collection has a quirky, varied and fresh feel, and plays with ideas of perspective, reflection and contrast. Her *Angles* design is a bold, geometric pattern in a sophisticated repeat, that when hung becomes subtle and ethereal, its metallic lines seeming to conduct light across the surface of the wall like a kind of geometric cobweb.

Her *Houses* design, on the other hand, has a completely different feel and effect. This is a playful yet haunting design of different types and shapes of houses, each set in their own space and separate from one another. Many of the buildings seem to lean dangerously or have a skewed perspective that gives an unbalanced, unsettling effect, creating a weird tableau of isolation, that highlights the way we demarcate our personal space.

Spiral again plays with the idea of perspective and creates a 3-dimensional effect through a clever use of pattern. The paper can be hung both vertically or horizontally, depending on the space available, and gives two very different looks. The pattern is a geometric yet organic design that has a strong visual impact, and is both is subtle and calming. Wakerly achieves this by giving the design a strong, circular focal point that draws in the eye and creates a kind of 'eye of the storm' tranquillity that belies the geometric patterns surrounding.



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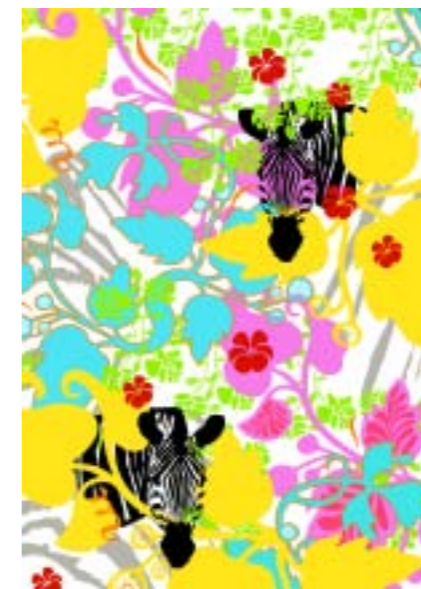
Hanna Werning

Whether it be classic monochrome, floral chic or folkish, fairy-tale imagery of forests and woodlands, Hanna Werning's prints boast, bold, clearly articulated designs. Her work marries technology and craft. In *Electric Jungle*, digital printed cloth was embellished with cross stitch in an intricate and meticulous patterning. In *Apparat No. 1*, a wallpaper drawing machine used black permanent markers to create patterns at random repeat.

This hi-fi low-fi dichotomy is further explored with the formats of her mass-produced wallpaper. Rather than packaging her work in rolls, as is customary, Werning designs many of her wallpapers in posters. The decorator has the choice to past a number of sheets together to cover a wall or to use them as individual posters. These brightly coloured papers are dense collages of plant and creature silhouettes layered together as free-floating graphic elements rather than a naturalistic forest scene. Often the shapes are taken out of context such as her pairing of seahorses with pumas and jungle plants. Deer skip freely across a scape of magnified palm leaves. These saturated designs are oddly subtle and peaceful, despite the initial, frenetic impression that they make.

A Swedish native, Hanna studied graphic design at Central St Martins College in London. She has worked in both print and moving image design, as well as developed a range of textiles. Her first wallpaper in rolls has recently been produced with Swedish wallpaper manufacturer Bor Stapeter.

Hannah sees her work as falling under two categories, designs that are driven by ideas, and those that are intuitively driven by colour and rhythm. We can see both aspects at play in her iconic wallpaper motifs of flowers and birds sleekly incorporated into lively colour fields.



- 1 *Title*, the pattern of drapery and fanciful pilasters forms an integrated ensemble with borders.
- 2 *Title*, an irisé and block-printed paper.
- 3 *Title*, a Wallpaper imitating silk in which irisé is used both for the ground impression.
- 4 *Title*, the pattern of drapery and fanciful pilasters forms an integrated ensemble with borders.
- 5 *Title*, a Wallpaper imitating silk in which irisé is used both for the ground impression.