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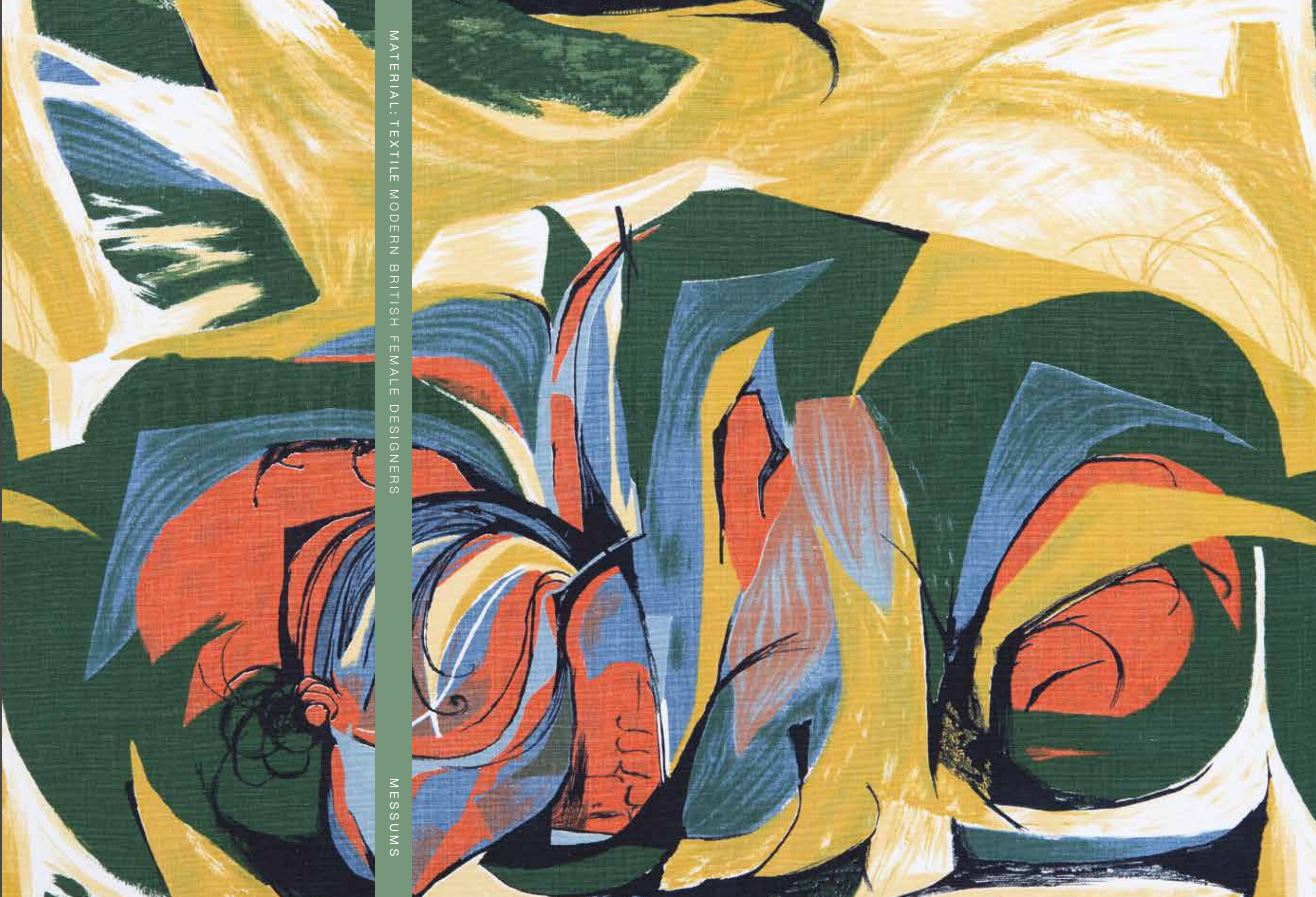
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MATERIAL: TEXTILE MODERN BRITISH FEMALE DESIGNERS

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MATERIAL: TEXTILE Modern British Female Designers



MATERIAL: TEXTILE

# Modern British Female Designers

MATERIAL: TEXTILE Modern British Female Designers celebrates the bold vision and style of a pioneering group of women who were destined to revolutionise design worldwide for decades to come. This publication brings together authoritative essays, comments and interviews from leading historians, curators, designers and collectors and presents their powerful textiles as Fine Art in their own right.

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*Curator*

Hannah Hooks  
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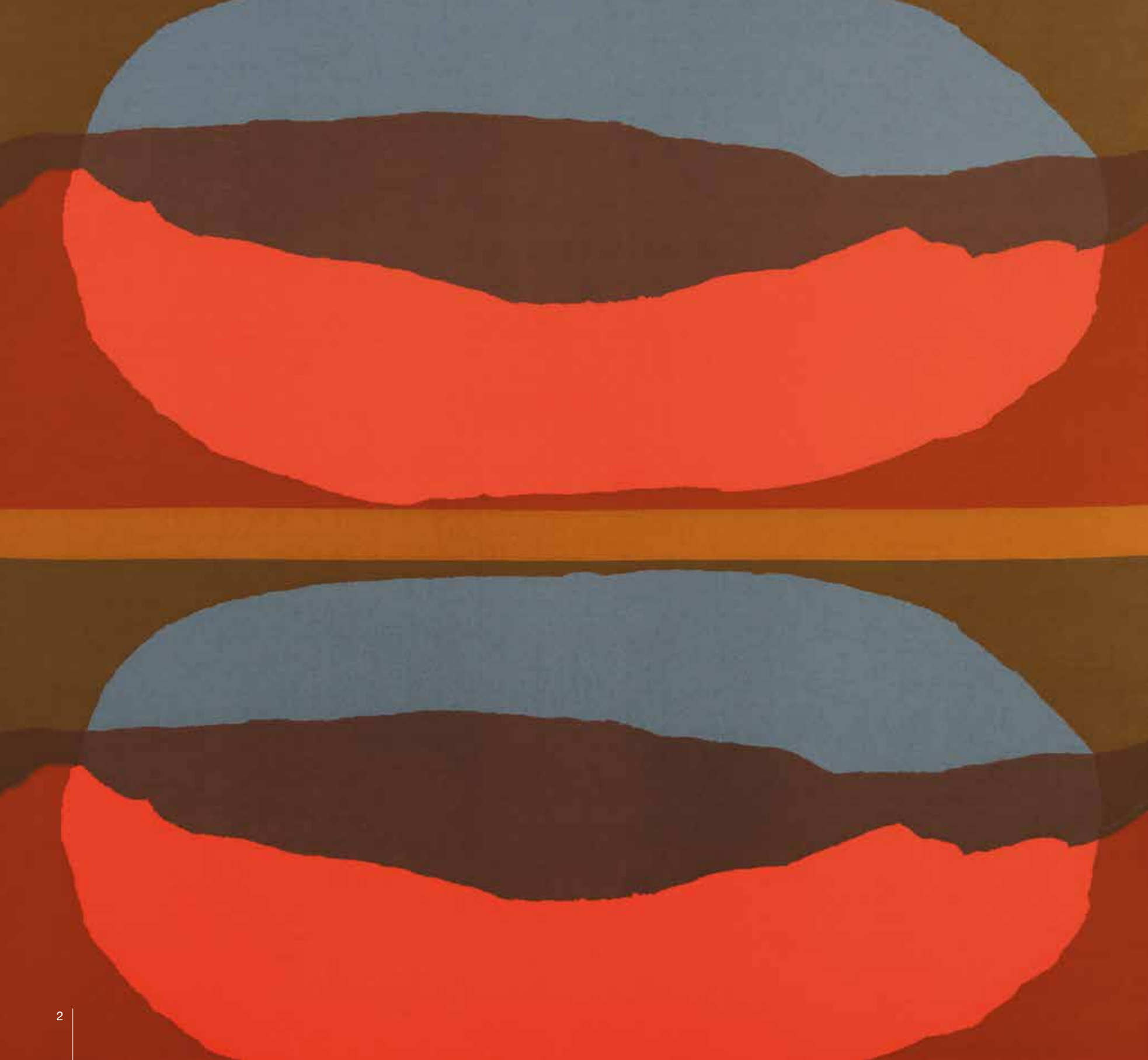
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An Outbreak of Talent: Women Textile Designers in Britain 1950-1970 by Lesley Jackson

Paul Nash (1889-1946) memorably referred to ‘an outbreak of talent’ at the Royal College of Art during the mid 1920s when Eric Ravilious (1903-1942), Edward Bawden (1903-1989), Edward Burra (1905-1976), Barnett Freedman (1901-1958) and Enid Marx (1902-1998) were all students.<sup>1</sup> The same evocative phrase could be applied to the explosion of creativity in British textiles by a host of women designers after the Second World War, many of whom studied at the RCA. Lucienne Day (1917-2010) was a student from 1937-1940 and embarked on her career as soon as the war was over. Barbara Brown (b.1932) attended from 1953-56, Althea McNish (b.1933) from 1954-57, and Shirley Craven (b.1934) and Doreen Dyall (b.1937) from 1955-58. Following hot on their heels were Fay Hillier (b.1936) from 1956-59, Nicola Wood (b.1936) from 1957-60, Janet Taylor (b.1936) from 1958-61 and Zandra Rhodes (b.1940) from 1961-64. The latter, although best known as a fashion designer, originally cut her teeth in printed textiles. The others all pursued successful careers as freelance textile designers, collaborating with enlightened companies such as Heal Fabrics, Hull Traders, Edinburgh Weavers and Liberty.<sup>2</sup>

This remarkable surge of artistic activity prompts the question why so many women were channelled into textiles at this date rather than into fine art. The answer lies in the fact that, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opportunities for women were extremely limited. Although art teaching was regarded as an acceptable female profession, any woman who aspired to become an independent artist would have faced an uphill battle. As well as educational restrictions and financial constraints, women artists were often discouraged by their own families and encountered prejudice within the male-dominated artistic profession.

Although the situation had improved somewhat by the 1930s, female art students were more likely to be steered towards the applied arts, particularly areas deemed to be intrinsically ‘feminine’, such as textiles. The presumption that women had a natural propensity for designing fabrics because of a supposed predisposition towards fashion was a common gender stereotype. Women were also traditionally regarded as tastemakers in the home. Even at the otherwise liberated Bauhaus during the 1920s, female students were specifically channelled into weaving. Iniquitous though this was, ironically the outcome was incredibly positive for textiles, which were championed by Anni Albers (1899-1994) and Gunta Stölzl (1897-1983) as a vehicle for fine art.

When female artists began to make a name for themselves in Britain during the interwar years, it was often in textiles that they made their mark.<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Barron (1890-1964) and Dorothy Larcher (1884-1952), who spearheaded the flowering of hand block-printed textiles during the 1920s, both originally trained as artists, Barron at the Slade, Larcher at Hornsey School of Art. Their protégé, Enid Marx, who was part of the ‘outbreak of talent’ identified by Paul Nash, adopted the same medium, but also crossed over into industrial textiles through her Modernist upholstery fabrics for London Underground in 1937.

The most pre-eminent and influential female textile designer in Britain during the 1930s was American-born Marion Dorn (1896-1964). After moving to London in 1923, Dorn originally practised as a batik artist before turning her attention to rugs from 1926. Celebrated as the ‘architect of floors’, she was

acclaimed for her large-scale abstract carpets for hotels, liners and private houses.<sup>4</sup> Dorn also designed Modernist furnishing fabrics during the 1930s for leading firms such as Edinburgh Weavers, Old Bleach Linen Company and Warner & Son, featuring stylised birds, leaves and figurative motifs pared down to their simplest elements.

This predilection for organic design can also be seen in the work of Dorn’s successor, Lucienne Day, with her fondness for abstracted plant forms.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, one of Day’s favourite haunts during the 1930s was Gordon Russell’s showroom on Wigmore Street in London, where Modernist textiles and rugs by Marion Dorn and Marian Pepler were displayed. For Lucienne Day, as for many women designers, the social changes triggered by the war had a liberating effect. As well as creating new professional openings, the war acted as a catalyst for cross-fertilisation between the fine and applied arts.<sup>6</sup> At the Festival of Britain in 1951, Day seized the opportunity to present her ground-breaking screen-printed textile *Calyx*. Produced at Day’s instigation by Heal Fabrics, *Calyx* was revolutionary in imagery, colour and style, epitomising the forward-looking ‘Contemporary’ style. Although notionally based on flower forms, the cup-shaped motifs reflected her keen awareness of modern art, particularly the work of Paul Klee (1879-1940), Joan Miró (1893-1983) and Alexander Calder (1898-1976).

Calder’s engaging mobiles epitomised the buoyant mood of the post-war period. Although avant-garde, they appealed to art lovers and the general public alike. The crescents, stars, antennae and kidney motifs in Miró’s paintings also had a direct visual attraction and were echoed in 1950s textiles. Lucienne Day paid direct homage to Miró in her design *Herb Antony* (1956) for Heal Fabrics with its spindly plant forms and primary colour highlights. She herself singled out Paul Klee as her primary influence, however, and the attenuated figurative motifs in *Spectators* (1953) conjure up the essence of Klee’s quirky graphic style.

The same trio of artists – Klee, Miró and Calder - were also inspirational for two leading European émigrés working in Britain during the early post-war period, Jacqueline Groag (1903-1986) and Marian Mahler (1911-1983). Calder’s influence is particularly apparent in their roller-printed fabrics for David Whitehead from the early 1950s, which contain decidedly Calder-esque elements. Mahler already had an established career in her native Austria before moving to the UK in 1937. Her familiarity with European modern art should come as no surprise, given that she had studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna under Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956), co-founder of the Wiener Werkstätte (1903-32), a hothouse for artist-designed textiles.

Czech-born Jacqueline Groag also trained at the Kunstgewerbeschule under Hoffmann during the mid 1920s and subsequently designed for the Wiener Werkstätte, as well as various French and German textile firms. Like Mahler, Groag was obliged to make a fresh start in Britain after fleeing Austria in 1939 with her husband, architect Jacques Groag (1892-1962). A friend of Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980) and a great admirer of Paul Klee, Groag retained a distinctive continental flavour in her vibrant, playful designs for David Whitehead and Cavendish Textiles during the 1950s and 1960s. Although childlike in their simplicity, the faux-naïf qualities of Groag’s patterns belie their visual sophistication.<sup>7</sup>

1 Paul Nash, ‘*New Draughtsmen*’, Signature, November 1935. Nash taught in the Design School during 1924-25. Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth were also at the Royal College of Art at the same time.

2 Lesley Jackson, *20th Century Pattern Design: Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*, Mitchell Beazley, 2002, Chapters 4 and 5, pp.94-160.

3 Lesley Jackson, 2002, op. cit., pp.68-71.

4 Christine Boydell, *The Architect of Floors: Modernism, Art and Marion Dorn Designs*, Schoeser, 1996.

5 Lesley Jackson, Robin and Lucienne Day: *Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Mitchell Beazley, 2001.

6 Lesley Jackson, *The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Thames & Hudson, 1991.

7 Richard Chamberlain, Geoffrey Rayner and Annamarie Stapleton, *Jacqueline GroAGTextile & Pattern Design: Wiener Werkstätte to American Modern*, Antique Collectors’ Club, 2009.



The combined impact of experienced European émigrés practising alongside a new generation of art school-trained designers led to a wave of innovation. Having been starved of colour and pattern during the war, the hitherto conservative British public proved remarkably receptive to ‘Contemporary’ design. This, combined with the booming market for home furnishings, which encouraged manufacturers to put more daring designs into production, explains why the 1950s was such a dynamic period for British textiles.<sup>8</sup>

By the late 1950s a second wave of abstract patternmaking was beginning to take hold, inspired by American Abstract Expressionism and its European equivalent, Tachisme (from the French word ‘tache’, meaning blot or stain).<sup>9</sup> It is easy to see why the rhythmic swirling effects in the action paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and the splashes and drips in the work of Sam Francis (1923-1994) excited the imagination of young designers, who adopted similar techniques in their textiles. The liberating effect of Abstract Expressionism is unmistakable in Dorothy Carr’s *Oak* (1958) and Doreen Dyall’s *Reflections* (1960), both for Heal’s.

Also influential at this date were abstract painters from the School of Paris, such as Nicolas de Staël (1914-1955) and Roger Bissière (1886-1964). De Staël’s impasto compositions featured blocks of colour in dynamic configurations, while Bissière created carefully wrought abstract grid patterns. The impact of such paintings can be detected in Barbara Brown’s *Symmetry* (1962) for Heal’s and in the work of the Italian designer Friedlinde di Colbertaldo Dinzi, who designed for several British textile firms. British painters such as Donald Hamilton Fraser (1929-2009) and William Gear (1915-1997) also pioneered new forms of abstraction, melding vigorous textures with audacious use of colour. An exhibition called Painting into Textiles held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in 1953 led to three of Gear’s artworks being screen-printed as furnishing fabrics by Edinburgh Weavers the following year.<sup>10</sup>

Sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) was another artist whose experiments in a textural mark-making influenced contemporary textile designers. Paolozzi himself teamed up with Nigel Henderson (1917-1985) in 1954 to produce a collection of graffiti-like screen-printed fabrics for their company Hammer Prints (later produced by Hull Traders).<sup>11</sup> Althea McNish, whose designs for Liberty, Heal Fabrics and Hull Traders combine dazzling hot Caribbean colours with loose painterly compositions, was taught by Paolozzi at the Central School. Such crossovers were commonplace at the time, with painters such as Paule Vézelay (1892-1984) designing textiles for Heal Fabrics, and artist-designers such as Nicola Wood switching freely between painting and textiles.

Shirley Craven, a key figure in the ‘outbreak of talent’ at the RCA, embodies the wilfully independent character of the post-war generation. Her extraordinary designs for Hull Traders, which were hand screen-printed in vivid colours on cotton cloth, have more in common with Abstract Expressionism than domestic interior design.<sup>12</sup> The fractured ovoid forms and unusual palette of *Kaplan* (1961) evoke comparisons with the paintings of Mark Rothko (1903-1970), while the fluid sinuous *Detour* (1965) and *Lomax* (1965), with their gigantic repeats, suggest parallels with the huge abstract canvases of Clifford Styll (1904-1980).

Fearlessly original, Craven was a free spirit who defied convention, constantly reinventing her aesthetic. While some designs, such as *Shape* (1963), are composed of flat planes of colour, others, such as *Simple Solar* (1967), are consciously graphic and frenetic. Although nominally intended as furnishing fabrics, Craven’s textiles have the visual immediacy of large-scale abstract paintings with their irregular forms and enormous patterns spanning the whole full width of the cloth. The radical nature of Craven’s compositions was reflected in the creative process. Instead of working at a drawing board, she painted directly on wide rolls of paper. As well as facilitating spontaneity, this enabled her to gauge the full impact of her designs, both widthways and lengthways.

In her capacity as Hull Traders’ art director, Shirley Craven was responsible for shaping the firm’s collection as a whole. Alongside her own work, the company showcased many other striking designs by Doreen Dyall, Althea McNish, Ann Ogle and Molly White. In *The Sense of Order* (1979), E.H. Gombrich observed: ‘Any number of Ph.D theses await being written about the influence of Cubism, of Tachism, of Op or Pop art on fabrics and wallpaper and about the decreasing time lag with which these inventions are taken up and spread through industry.’<sup>13</sup> This was certainly the case with Hull Traders, where cross-pollination between contemporary art and textiles was proactively nurtured in a completely free and unfettered way.

One of the positive knock-on effects of this healthy two-way exchange between the fine and applied arts during the post-war period was the democratisation of art and design. Speaking of her subtle minimalist abstract designs for Heal’s, Paule Vézelay observed that ‘many people... would be bewildered by the same design if it were an oil painting and shown in an art gallery.’<sup>14</sup> New genres such as Op Art were more rapidly assimilated because of their widespread adoption within textiles. Barbara Brown’s abstract geometric designs for Heal Fabrics are a case in point. Although some of her early patterns, such as *Recurrence* (1962), were indebted to Victor Vasarely (1906-1997), Brown went on to develop a highly distinctive personal voice. In dynamic designs such as *Frequency* (1969) and *Spiral* (1969), she pushed Op Art to the limit in a unique interpretation all of her own.<sup>15</sup>

For a brief halcyon period between 1950 and 1970, British textile manufacturers led the world in the scale and ambition of their furnishing fabrics by championing modern art. Women textile designers were at the forefront of these ground-breaking innovations. Like their 1920s predecessors, the post-war ‘outbreak of talent’ seized the day and made a lasting impact on art history. Without acknowledging the achievements of women textile designers, the story of post-war British art is only partially told.

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8 Lesley Jackson, 1991, op. cit., pp.29-31; and Lesley Jackson, 2002, op. cit., pp.94-105.

9 Lesley Jackson, 1991, op. cit., pp.61-71.

10 Lesley Jackson, *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers: Visionary Textiles and Modern Art*, V&A Publishing, 2012, pp.204-208. An abstract painting by Donald Hamilton Fraser was subsequently transposed into a printed textile by David Whitehead in 1960, illustrated in Lesley Jackson, 1991, op. cit., p.71.

11 Lesley Jackson, *Shirley Craven and Hull Traders: Revolutionary Fabrics and Furniture 1957-1980*, Antique Collectors’ Club, 2009, pp.113-125.

See also Lesley Jackson, ‘Inside Out – Outside In: The guerrilla fabrics of Hammer Prints’, in Michelle Cotton, ed., *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer Prints Ltd, 1954-75*, Firstsite, 2013, pp.94-111.

12 Lesley Jackson, 2009, op. cit., Chapter 3, pp.42-111.

13 E.H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order*, Phaidon, 1979, p.62.

14 ‘Textile design inspired by paintings’, *Furnishing World*, August 1959, p.31.

15 Lesley Jackson, *The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Phaidon, 1994, pp.84-90.







Reassessing the art of mid-twentieth century screen-printed textiles *by Mary Schoeser*

Pondering the topic of why women designers played such a prominent role in the provision of artistic patterns for printed textiles of the mid-20th century, one can turn to four inter-related factors: demography, educational reforms, printing technology and publicity. All four came into play after WWI, when 700,000 deaths created a large gap between the male and female populations of people aged 25 to 34. With 1,158,000 unmarried women versus 919,000 unmarried men, according to the 1921 census, this discrepancy was not in itself a new phenomenon except for one feature: the higher social status of the women remaining unmarried as a result of the significant number of officers who had been killed. Sensationalised by the press as “surplus” women,<sup>1</sup> the better appellation would be “enterprising” women, who, emboldened by the British arts and crafts ethos – itself promulgated by art colleges who took in increasing numbers of females – set about creating workshops, galleries and collectives that did much to define the artistic landscape by mid-century.<sup>2</sup>

Of particular importance was the rise of “self-made” printed textiles, as distinguished from the established method of large-scale production, namely engraved roller printing. From the early 1900s it was batik, stencilling, lino-printing and, by the later 1920s, hand-screen printing, that provided a means of mark-making entirely novel in its directness. Freed from the mediation of the highly technical transfer of designs to copper rollers, such methods were attractive to those who wished to control their artistic outcomes. In retrospect, it is clear that women took greater advantage of these possibilities, which did not require large premises or vast investments. This legacy remained when hand-screen printing was taken up in the early 1930s by firms already hand-block printing, as well as by firms newly established soon afterwards especially to produce artist-designed printed textiles, such as Allan Walton. By the early 1950s, despite the fact that the ratio of British men to women was still low – 92.5 to 100<sup>3</sup> – one cannot argue that the visibility of creative women was due solely to their single status, nor to a shortage of male competition. No, it was to do with their much closer involvement in the experimental developments surrounding hand-screen printing. That this technique offers a unique capacity to translate faithfully a myriad of small studio or “kitchen sink” artistic mark-making to cloth is borne out by the sensitive replication of batik (for example Nicola Wood, *April Showers*), oil, gouache and watercolour painting (Barbara Brown, *Sweetcorn* and Colbertaldo Dinzi, *Orpheus and untitled*), collage (Jacqueline Groag, *Traffic Light*), stamping (Mo Sullivan, *Garland*), sgraffito (Mary Warren, *Nautilus*) and mono-printing (Lucienne Day, *Linden*). In addition, screen printing could accommodate printing with surface pigments, as opposed to cloth-saturating dyes. Best known for using this approach was the newcomer in 1957, Hull Traders, who made sensitive use of pigments to create intense and flat expanses of colouration (Shirley Craven, *Kaplan*) as well as impasto-like effects (Althea McNish, *Rubra*).

How do we know? The evidence survives within archives, museum and private collections, but at the time was being made visible through influential media vehicles such as *The Studio*, founded in 1893 by Charles Holme and under his editorship from 1895-1919, and thereafter until 1964 maintaining an Arts & Crafts ethos of equality between media and methods. Founder Holme had been a silk manufacturer so it is no surprise that amid the mix of media, textiles received fair coverage. It sought to create an international means of communication, meaning that it was well illustrated, often showing work by women.

This role might be said, certainly for textiles, to have been supplanted postwar by the magazine, *The Ambassador*. From 1946-72 (from 1961 a Thomson Publication), its founder Hans Juda and his wife, Elsbeth – responsible for much of the magazine’s striking photography – vigorously promoted British exports through their monthly publication in English, German, French and Portuguese. Its success demonstrated that publicity, more so through editorials and exhibitions than advertisements, was an essential component in the campaign to bring good design to the people. And judging from the number of women both depicted and represented as designers, ‘the people’ – that is the consumers – were understood as more likely to be women.<sup>4</sup>

Overseas sales mattered and, as a result, overseas tastes. The taste in postwar America was for art, especially expressed through manufactured goods such as textiles. As early as 1946 the art critic Walter Abell was to conclude: ‘Today industry appears to have established itself as the largest single source of support for the contemporary American painter.’<sup>5</sup> Aware of this trend, both the Judas and organisations such as the Cotton Board’s ‘Colour, Design and Style Centre’ in Manchester sponsored exhibitions aimed at inducing British textile manufacturers to back the (pre-War) principle of ‘art into industry’. While the Style Centre’s export-focused 1941 exhibition, ‘Design for Textiles by Twelve Fine Artists’, was remembered for the inclusion of works by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Paul Nash, John Piper, Eric Ravilious and Graham Sutherland, by the 1950s their support for artists’ designs looked beyond the establishment. Its ‘Living in Cotton’ exhibition in late 1961 declared ‘Suddenly, British cottons have found a design hand-writing. ...Perhaps the most significant feature of the fabrics is the new bold use of colour. Young designers have contributed largely to this.’ And the gender ratio had also changed. Of the ten Design Award fabrics featured, seven were by women, predominantly students (or graduates) at the Royal College of Arts and the Central School of Arts & Crafts.<sup>6</sup> Subsequent exhibitions – ‘Young Ideas’ and the ‘Inprint’ and ‘Texprint’ series which continued into the early 1970s– had a similar flavour. ‘Inprint Infact’ of 1964-5, for example, featured 35 furnishing fabrics by two men and nine women, including Pat Albeck, Barbara Brown, Colleen Farr, Natalie Gibson, Fay Hillier and Althea McNish.<sup>7</sup> A lively exchange between the Style Centre, the Design Council and colleges ensured a sustained promotion of young, talented women, all with “hands-on” experience. Barbara Brown, for example, had taught Zandra Rhodes at Medway College and encouraged Tom Worthington at Heal’s to take on the three Rhodes’ designs the firm produced for their 1964 and 1965 seasons, including Zandra’s first, *Top Brass*.

While exceptional roller-printing firms, such as David Whitehead Fabrics Ltd., had been producing artist-designed printed rayons since 1951, the majority were hand-screened on cottons, linens or (if scarves or for fashion) silk, and thus more costly – effectively limited editions. This changed once flat-bed ‘automatic’ screen printing was introduced by several printers, including Whitehead’s in 1958. Now, ‘they are able to offer “expensive” furnishings at roller-print prices. They can print small quantities for sampling and thereby incorporate more experimental designs and colourings; there is no need for the burden of the heavy run required by roller printing.’<sup>8</sup> This, just as Pop Art was emerging in Britain and then America, gave a convincing and quantitatively

1 [http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/unconventionalsoldiers/"surplus-women"-a-legacy-of-world-war-one/](http://ww1centenary.oucs.ox.ac.uk/unconventionalsoldiers/). Accessed 24 January 2020.

2 See Mary Schoeser, ‘Following the Thread’ and ‘Spreading the Word’ in Sylvia Backemeyer, *Making Their Mark: Art, Craft and Design at the Central School 1896 - 1966* (A & C Black: 2000)

3 [www.ons.gov.uk › articles › overviewoftheukpopulation](http://www.ons.gov.uk/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation) › february 2016. Accessed 24 January 2020.

4 See Chris Breward and Claire Wilcox (eds.), *The Ambassador Magazine: Promoting Post-War British Textiles and Fashion* (V&A Publishing: 2012)

5 Abell, W. ‘Industry and Painting’, Magazine of Art, March 1946, p.89, cited in Dilys Blum, ‘Painting by the Yard: American artist-designed textiles 1947-57’ in Schoeser and Boydell (eds.), *Disentangling Textiles: Interdisciplinary Techniques in the Study of Design* (Middlesex University Press: 2002), pp.109-110.

6 The Cotton Board Colour Design and Style Centre, *Living in Cotton: December 14, 1961 to January 19, 1962*, typescript catalogue, pp.1-2, collection of the author.

7 The Cotton Board Colour Design and Style Centre, *Inprint Infact: December 15, 1964 to January 22, 1965*, typescript catalogue, pp.1-3, collection of the author.

8 ‘David Whitehead Fabrics Ltd.: Automatic Screen Prints’, *The Ambassador*, 12:57, p.45.

far more visible expression of artists’ engagement with new types of subject matter, as well as new ways of presenting it. Having emerged from interwar explorations of individualistic textiles – call them series or limited editions – these screen prints had a longer pedigree than serigraphy on paper. In addition, other ground breaking art-into-textiles movements had also occurred during the interwar years, notably the initiatives in France of Marie Cuttoli (1879–1973), who engaged artists with a new, simplified form of tapestry making.<sup>9</sup> Postwar, this entrepreneurial role was taken up in America by Gloria F. Ross (1923-1998), who ‘described her work as the translation of paint into wool’, from 1965-96 commissioning innovative weavers in France, the Southwestern United States and at the Dovecot Studios in Scotland.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Cuttoli, Ross commissioned women artists too, including her sister, Helen Frankenthaler. Although in all countries the tapestry artists were more often men, what mattered for our story was another textile-based confrontation of the supremacy of easel painting and validation of the series as a legitimate artistic enterprise. In addition, women had led the way from the late 1950s onwards in the emergence of experimental wall hangings, or fibre art – critically and once again made by their own hands rather than by others, whether in an atelier or industry – and within a decade, wearable art.<sup>11</sup> Thus textiles of several sorts were, from the 1930s at least, the site of the first post-modernist initiatives and, within these, women played a foremost role. Mid-twentieth century screen printed textiles, now rather taken for granted, need to be reconsidered in this light.

*Mary Schoeser is a writer, textile historian and President of the Textile Society*

9 See K. L. H. Wells, *Weaving Modernism: Postwar Tapestry Between Paris and New York* (Yale University Press: 2019).

10 See Ann Lane Hedlund, *Gloria F. Ross and Modern Tapestry* (Yale University Press: 2010) and Elizabeth Cumming, *The Art of Modern Tapestry: Dovecot Studios Since 1912* (Lund Humphries: 2012).

11 See Dilys Blum, (ed.) *Off the Wall: American Art to Wear* (Philadelphia Museum of Art/ Yale University Press: 2019).



'This exhibition deservedly brings some new names to the public's attention, pattern makers so good that manufacturers hovered at degree shows to pluck the fruit straight from the tree. It also reminds us just how close the ties were between the world of fine art and textile design during this period, through works such as those of Althea McNish and Shirley Craven who were essentially using the textile as painter to blank canvas.'

*Victoria Bradley*

*Curator, Department of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion, V&A*

# Barbara Brown (1932 - )

Barbara Brown studied at Canterbury College of Art and then the RCA. Whilst at the RCA, Brown sold her first fabric to Heal's and subsequently designed for them for the next two decades. Like Lucienne Day, she was working for Heal's 'without contract on an exclusive basis'. Her 'Complex' pattern won the CoID (Design Centre) Award in 1968 and 'Spiral' and 'Automation', two printed furnishing fabrics for Heal's, won two CoID awards in 1970. Her success earned her the title 'Heal's Golden Girl'. Her strongly geometric designs were synonymous with 1960s Britain. Brown also acted as a consultant for other companies in Europe and USA. In 1964, she created 'Focus', a pattern for a range of ceramic tableware designed by David Queensberry and made by W R Midwinter Ltd. Brown taught in the 3D design department at Guildford School of Art in Guildford, Surrey, at Hornsey College of Art in Crouch End and Medway College of Art.

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*The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998*

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## EXHIBITIONS

*Barbara Brown at the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 2017*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

### Sweet Corn

1958

Screen Printed Cotton

45.5 x 66cm

Heal Fabrics









Barbara Brown (1932 - )

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*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2007  
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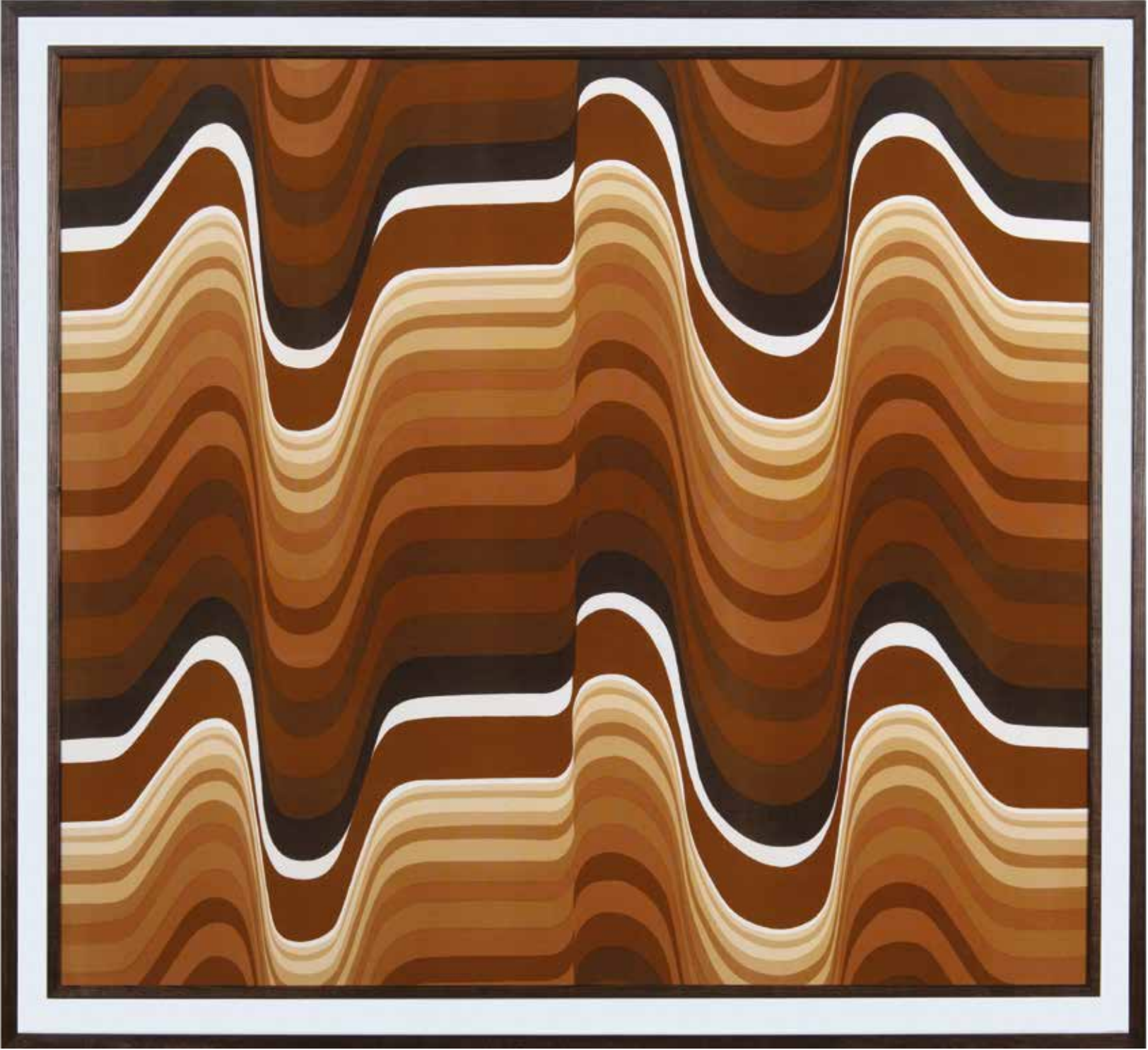
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*Barbara Brown at the Whitworth Gallery Manchester*, 2017

COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*  
*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*  
*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse*, Denver, Colorado, USA

**Frequency**  
**1969**  
Screen Printed Cotton  
118 x 121cm  
Heal Fabrics







# Barbara Brown (1932 - )

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## EXHIBITIONS

*Twentieth Century Textiles, Francesca Galloway Gallery, 2007*

*Barbara Brown at the Whitworth Gallery Manchester, 2017*

## COLLECTIONS

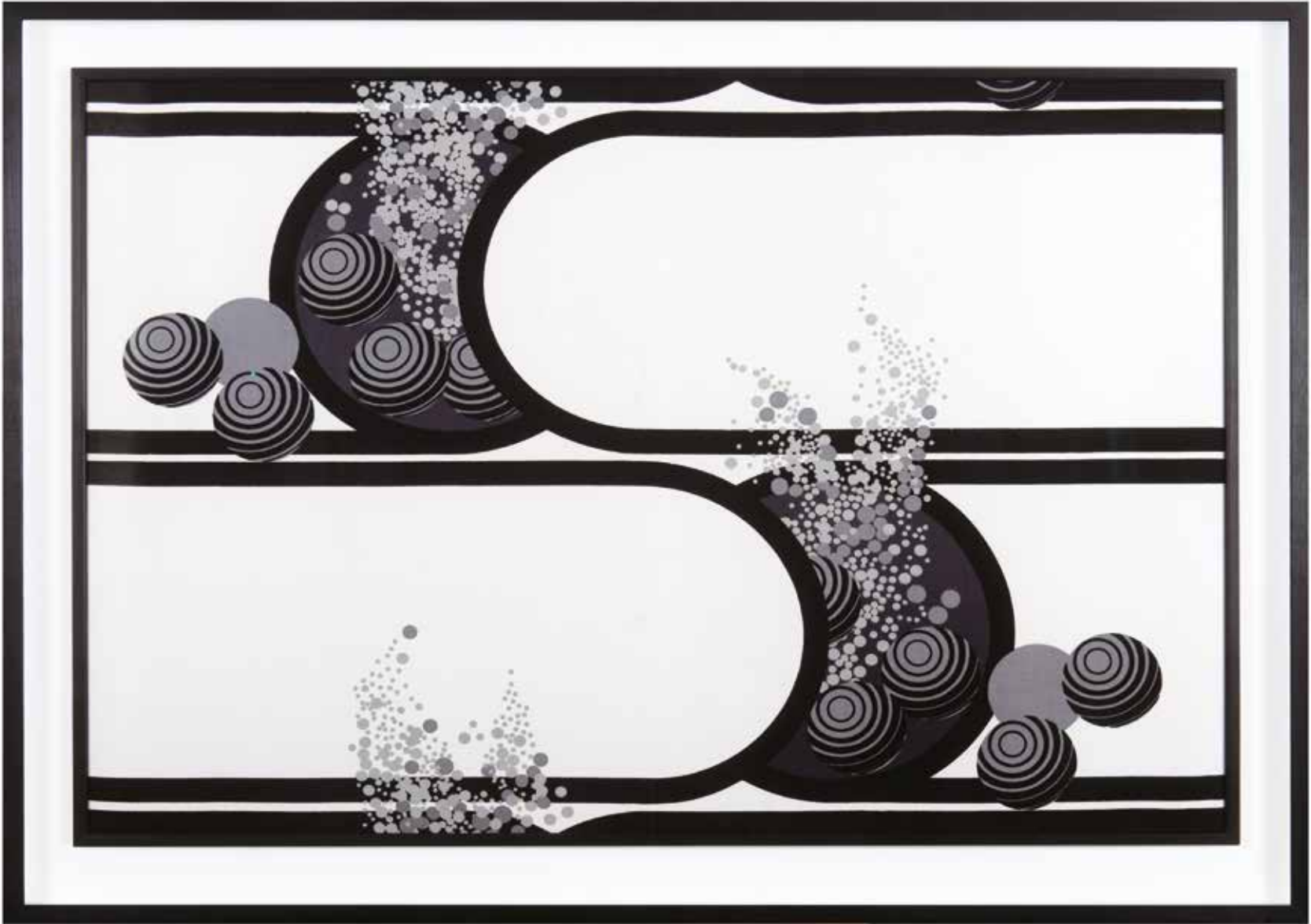
*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*Minneapolis Institute of Art, USA*

### Ikebana 1971

Screen Printed Satin Cotton  
77 x 116cm  
Heal Fabrics







Barbara Brown (1932 - )

LITERATURE

*The Sixties*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon Press Ltd, 1998

*The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, British Textile Design From 1940 to the Present*

*Ngozi Ikoku*, V&A Publications, 1999

*British Textiles, 1700 to the Present*, Linda Parry, V&A Publishing, 2010

*V&A Pattern - Heal’s*, V&A Publishing, 2012

*Pattern Design*, Elizabeth Wilhide, Thames & Hudson, 2018

EXHIBITIONS

*Barbara Brown at the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 2017*

COLLECTIONS

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

**Recurrence**  
1962  
Screen Printed Cotton  
74 x 111cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Barbara Brown (1932 - )

## LITERATURE

*The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, British Textile Design  
From 1940 to the Present, Ngozi Ikoku, V&A Publications,1999*

*British Textiles, 1700 to the Present, Linda Parry, V&A Publishing, 2010*

*V&A Pattern - Heal’s, V&A Publishing, 2012*

*Pattern Design, Elizabeth Wilhide, Thames & Hudson, 2018*

## EXHIBITIONS

*Barbara Brown at the Whitworth Gallery Manchester, 2017*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

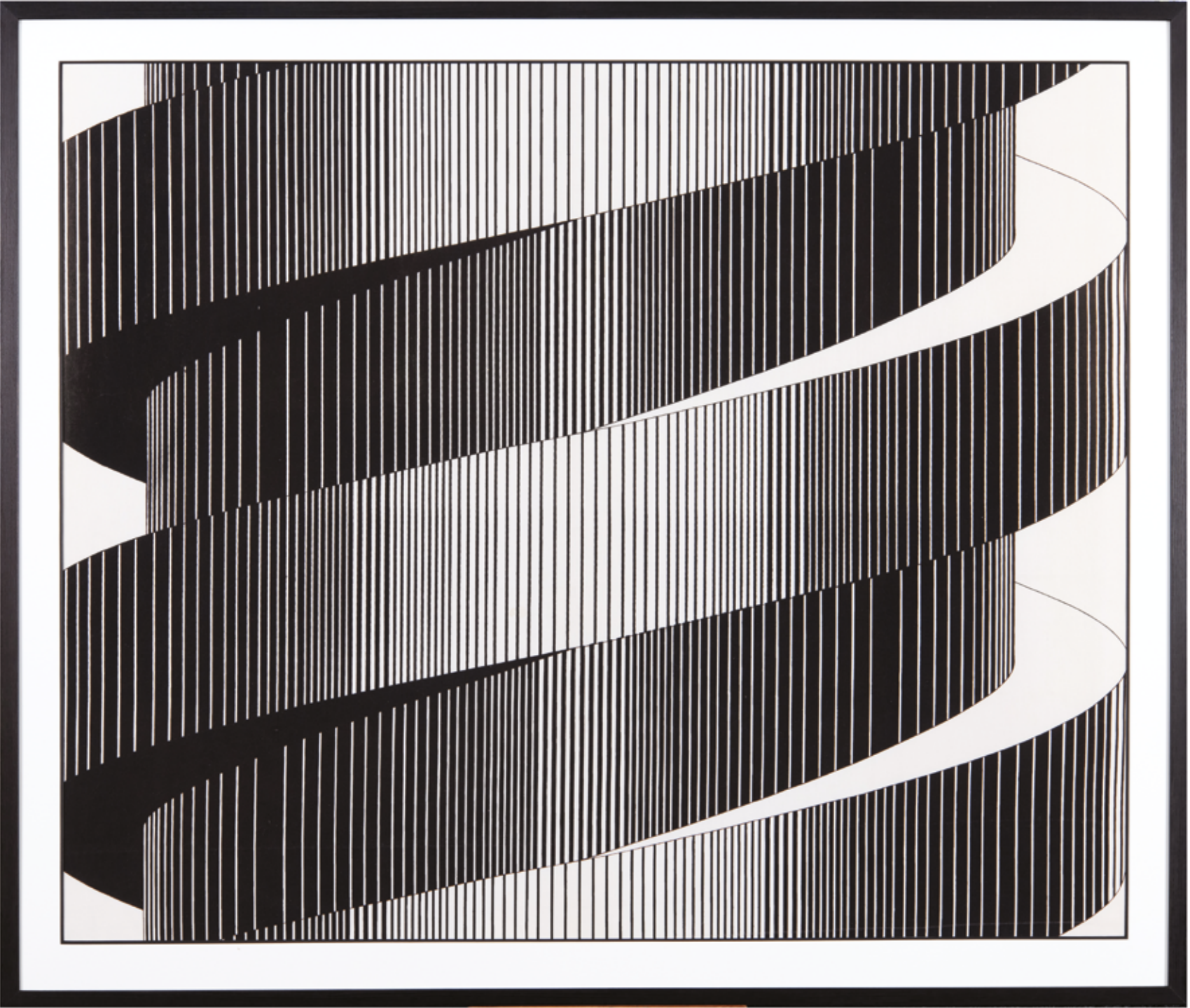
*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*

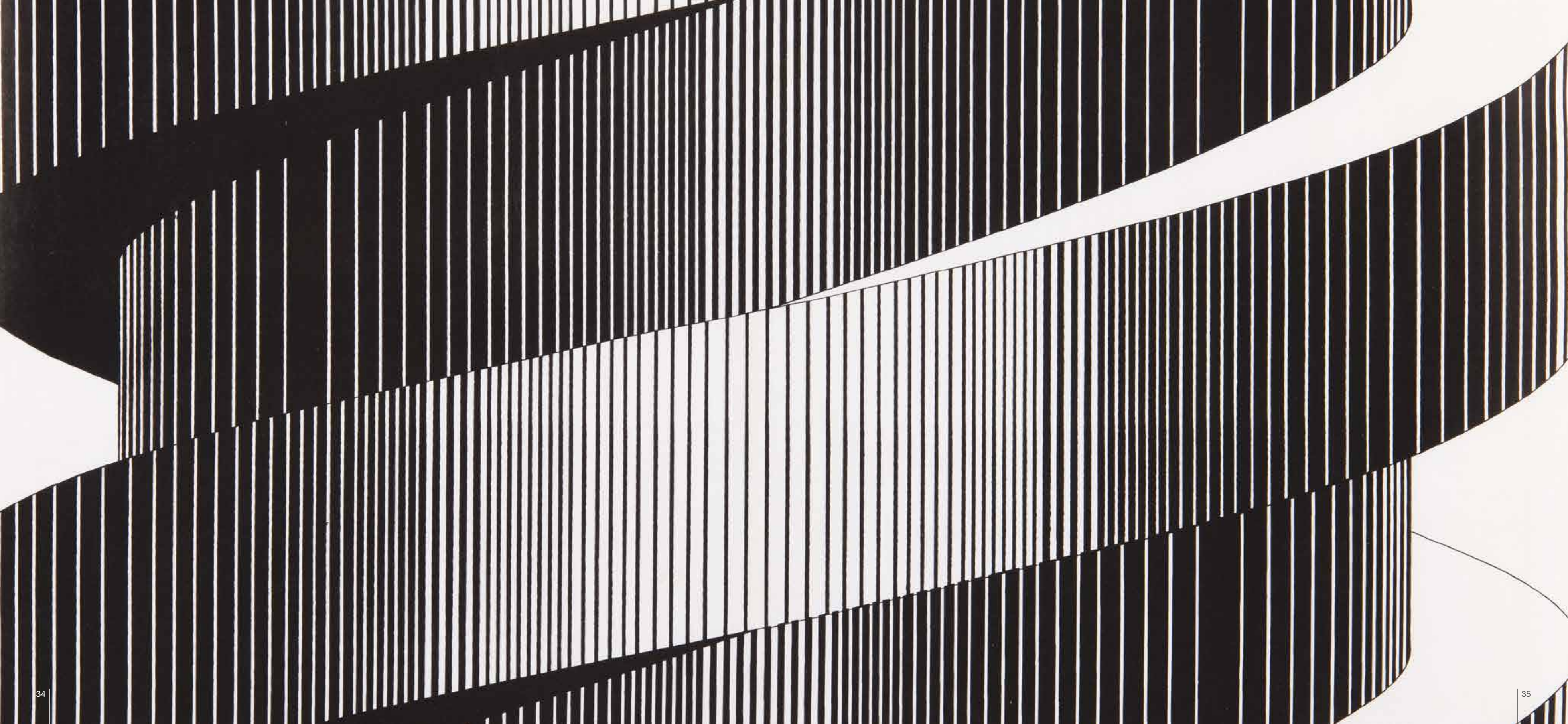
*Minneapolis Institute of Art, USA*

### Spiral 1969

Screen Printed Cotton  
97 x 117.5cm  
Heal Fabrics









# A Conversation with Barbara Brown

Ashley Gray	Hello Barbara, thank you so much for speaking with me today. Can we talk about your experience of art school prior to the Royal College?
Barbara Brown	I was at school in Ashford first of all and travelled to Canterbury by train each day to attend the Art School there before finally finding digs in the town. I did the Intermediate and the National Diploma and wanted to be a sculptor but they said to me “you cannot be a sculptor because you are a woman!” It was very much like that in those days. They said, “you can do textiles” so I did textiles. I did what I was told as that had always been my background. Sculpture was really my first love, Textiles were my second. There were very few of us doing Textiles at Canterbury.
AG	Yet it was textiles that brought you to the Royal College?
BB	It was wonderful, I loved the Royal College. The atmosphere, everything, Humphrey Spender who taught there influenced me.
AG	He designed for Alistair Morton’s Edinburgh Weavers too?
BB	Yes, Humphrey Spender was lovely, I got to know him very well and we became great friends. We taught at the Royal College together later. I taught for twenty years there.
AG	The earlier textiles like <i>Sweet Corn</i> (1958) were more painterly?
BB	I was really mucking around in a way, having a good time. Trying to get away from very recognisable things. It was not until later after I left the Royal College that I started doing the very abstract things. Those are the things I still respond to – the abstract things.
AG	You met Tom Worthington, a legendary figure at Heal’s whilst at the Royal College?
BB	Yes, he would come to the degree shows and bought what he saw at that time. Later he commissioned things from me.
AG	What was your next step after the Royal College?
BB	I went to teach. First at Medway where Zandra Rhodes was one of my first students.
AG	She told me you were a great influence on her.
BB	She has always been so nice about that, she was a fantastically hard worker, she never stopped. She was one of my first students. I got quite a few students into the Royal College at that time. I also taught visual research at Hornsey. This meant looking at different ways of drawing using microscopes and all sorts. I had a wide range of different students, painters, sculptors, everything. I was teaching in the same way also at Guildford.
AG	Was this a time of evolution for you personally in your own work, I know you were interested in Victor Vasarely, Bridget Riley and others?

BB	Yes, I was very influenced by them and I was looking at things in a very different way. I loved American art at that point too.
AG	This influence also seems to have allowed you to work on a much larger scale than previous designers.
BB	I never thought of these things as hanging in somebody’s front room. I always saw them as something for big spaces, to the extent that one of the big black and white ones was bought by Manchester University and put in their lecture hall. Apparently, all the students complained because it was so strong that they could not focus on the lecturer! It was much too commanding and distracted them all.
AG	A great example of Op Art!
BB	I always knew that the cloth was 48 inches wide so I always tried to work at 48 inches. I used to make the repeat to the full width so when you joined them up it became even bigger. I was interested in making images. That’s why I was never very good at repeat.
AG	Was it the fact that you were not a traditional textile designer that drew Tom Worthington at Heal’s to your designs?
BB	He came to my flat after the first view and saw what I was drawing. Bits of paper I was playing around with and he would say, “I like that, or I like that” and I would develop them from that. He did not arrive and say, “I want to see some textiles”.
AG	He was a powerful force in bringing Modernism into the home.
BB	He had a really wonderful vision, he was a brilliant man at his job. He really did know what he wanted and what he was going for. It shows in the sort of things he picked.
AG	He seemed to have that genius of moving and leading trends at that time.
BB	Very much, he was very much the leader of it all, he picked all sorts of strange things that were wonderful. He did not go for pretty flowers in repeat! He had a lovely vision.
AG	In 2017 there was the wonderful retrospective of your work at the Whitworth in Manchester. What was your reaction to seeing that work shown on such a grand scale?
BB	It was great, I liked it a lot and I very much liked the way they had hung them. You got the feeling of what I was after in terms of the scale of them all.
AG	Let’s discuss a few of these key textiles, but am I right in saying that the titles were actually given by Heal’s?
BB	Yes, that’s right.
AG	So, starting with the first for Heal Fabrics; <i>Sweet Corn</i> (1958), tell us a little about this piece?



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BB	This was the first one that I ever sold. It came from my degree show at the Royal College and Tom Worthington from Heal's came and bought it. There was more than one colour way even then I did not like colourways!
AG	<i>Recurrence</i> (1962) - very diffident to the painterly quality of <i>Sweet Corn</i> !
BB	This is the first of all my abstract ones, very geometric and I like it a lot. It was also done for ceramics for Midwinters, <i>Recurrence</i> and <i>Reciprocation</i> with smaller circles was from the same time. <i>Recurrence</i> I liked best because it was very simple and I like them when they are very simple.
AG	<i>Frequency</i> (1959), a very different approach tells us about this design.
BB	I became very interested in geology and earth movement. Here you get the strata and the folds in the rock. Heal's photographed it really well and hung it with chimneys above it – it was rather wonderful, it became part of the landscape. It is very much about strata and mountain moving.
AG	<i>Spiral</i> rather later (1969), again for Heal's, was very dynamic. Tell us about this.
BB	This one I really like a lot, there was one similar to this one called <i>Automation</i> . They were very much about engineering drawing. So this one is a great big screw and <i>Automation</i> was from the idea of a building. I was very pleased with these and I particularly like them in black and white because it makes more sense and I like the scale of them.
AG	So, we enter the early 1970s here with <i>Ikebana</i> (1971).
BB	This is very much about movement, these two big blocks of white coming from the left are moving the balls. So, like frequency it is about earth movement and how it is affected by water. You get the water bubbling up between the rock. It's very much about earth movements again but in a very geometric way. You see these great huge white lumps coming through which move the water.
AG	Barbara, thank you so much.



Diane Bell (1948 - )

Diane Bell’s ‘Carillion’ was one of the final commissions from the legendary Tom Worthington who finally retired from Heal’s in 1971.

COLLECTIONS

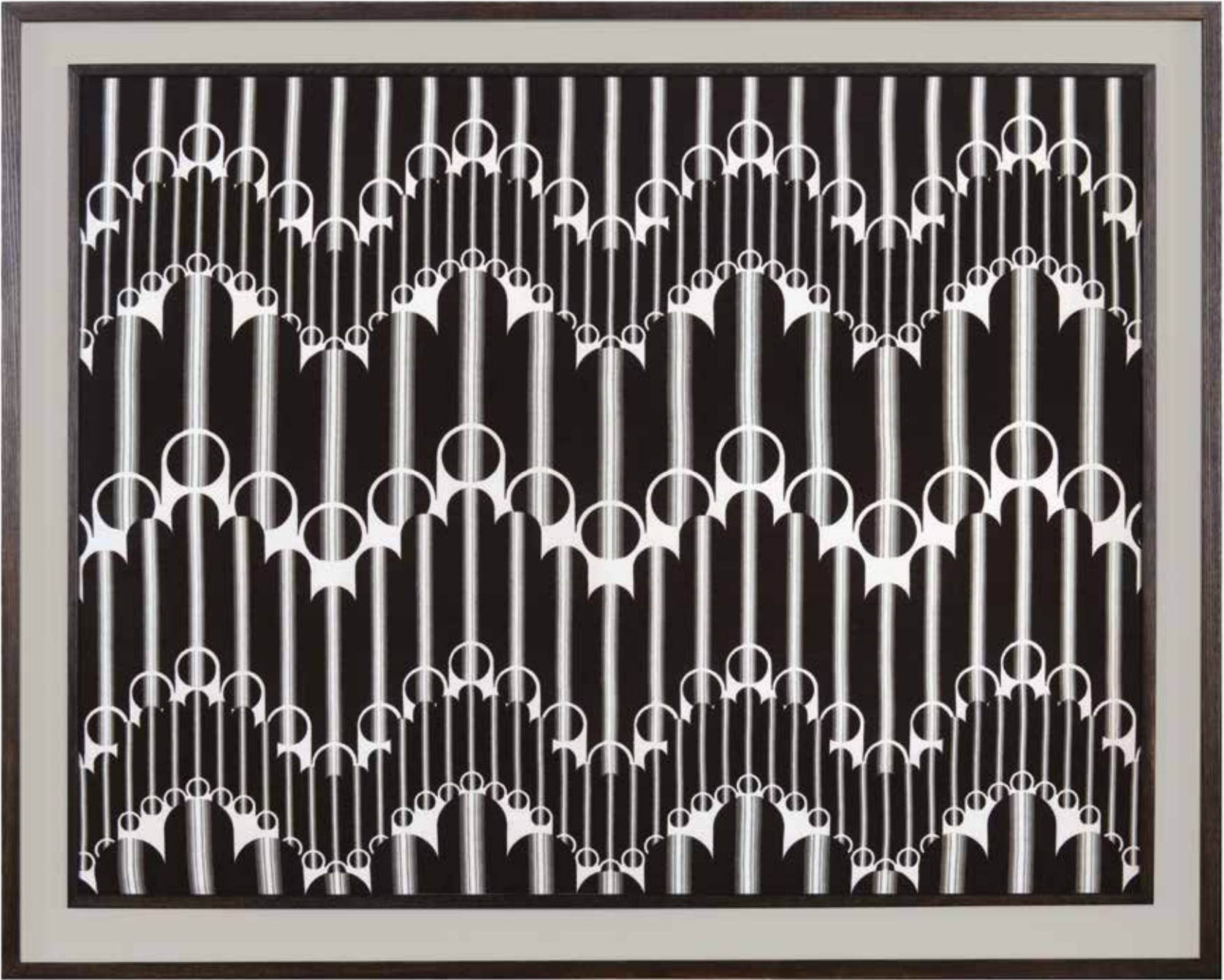
- The Victoria & Albert Museum*
- The Textile Collection, University for the Creative Arts, Farnham*
- Minneapolis Institute of Art, USA*

LITERATURE

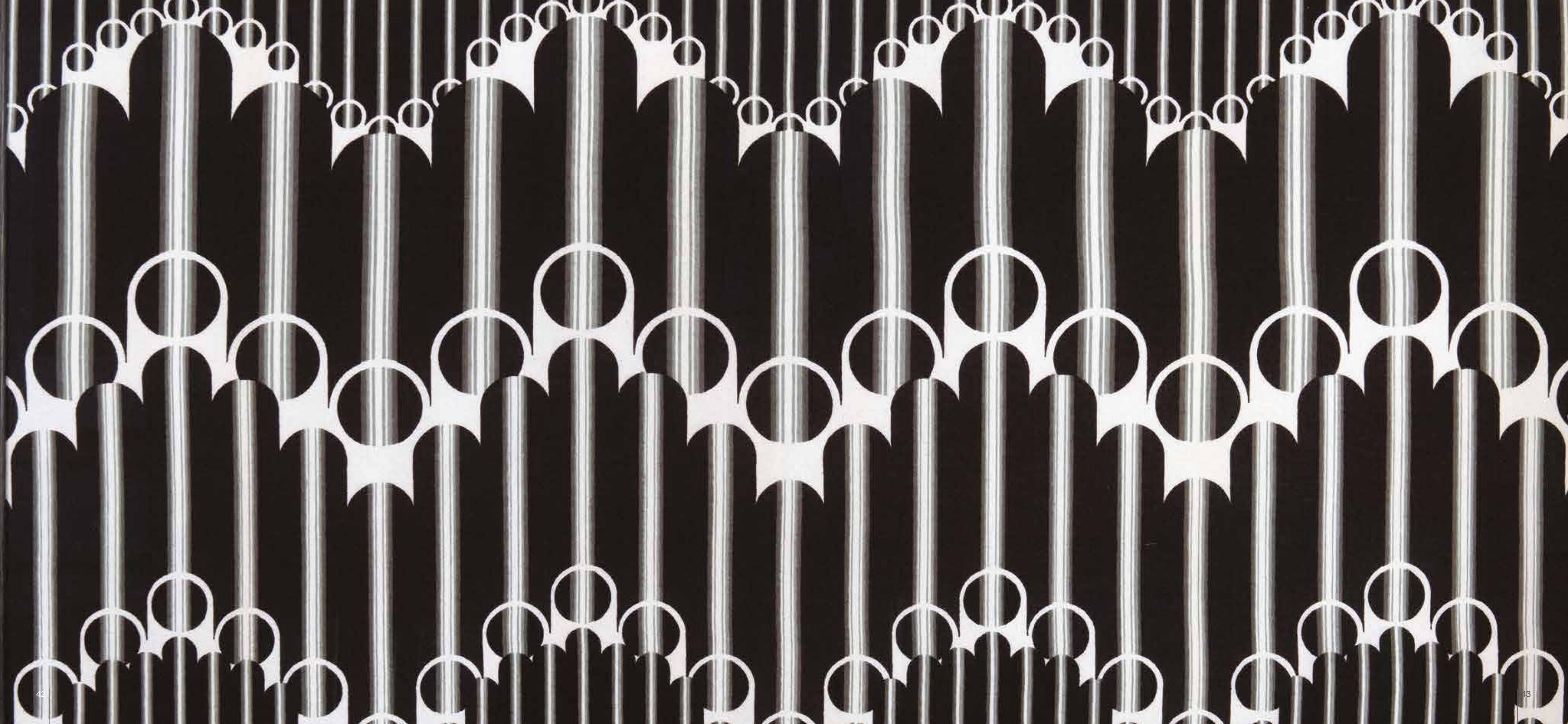
*20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002*

Carillion  
1970

Screen Printed Cotton  
89 x 116cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Contessa Friedelinde de Colbertaldo Dinz

Italian artist and fashion designer from the 1950s, Countess Friedlinde di Colbertaldo Dinzi lived on the shores of Lake Garda. Her textiles are held in the permanent collections of both The Victoria & Albert Museum, London and The Cooper Hewitt (Smithsonian Design Museum), New York. She also designed a range of textiles for Edinburgh Weavers, David Whitehead & Heal's throughout her career.

## LITERATURE

Lesley Jackson, *The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Thames and Hudson, 1991

## EXHIBITIONS

*The New Look - Design in the Fifties*, Manchester City Art Galleries and Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, 1991-1992

### Orpheus

c1950s

Screen Printed Cotton

74 x 96cm

O'Hanlon Fabrics









# Shirley Craven (1934 - )

Born in Hull in 1934, Shirley Craven studied art at Hull College of Art and The Royal College of Art, 1955-58. In 1959, aged 25, she started work at Hull Traders. In 1963, she became Chief Designer and a Director of the firm, where she worked for nearly two decades. In 1960, Design Magazine described the company as having a ‘high reputation for producing adventurous and exciting designs’, which they attributed to the tight control of Craven, who displayed a ‘dramatic and original handling of colour and pattern’ (Design, 1960, p.185). During this time, Althea McNish and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi also produced designs for Hull Traders. According to the Textile Society, Craven ‘pioneered an aesthetic more akin to painting than textiles’, breaking ‘all the rules’ and ‘revolutionising post-war furnishings with her dramatic, unconventional large-scale designs’. Her bold patterns and colours were commercially successful, capturing the style of the swinging sixties and received critical acclaim. She won The Design Centre Awards three times: 1960, for ‘Le Bosquet’; 1964, for ‘Shape’, ‘Division’ and ‘Sixty-Three’; and 1968 for ‘Five’ and ‘Simple Solar’. Craven was a member of The Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (now CSD) and married to the designer Bernard Holdoway (1934-2009).

## LITERATURE

*The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998

*20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002

*Shirley Craven and Hull Traders: Revolutionary Fabrics and Furniture, 1957-1980*, Lesley Jackson, Antique Collectors’ Club, 2009

*Pattern Design*, Elizabeth Wilhide, Thames & Hudson, 2018

## EXHIBITIONS

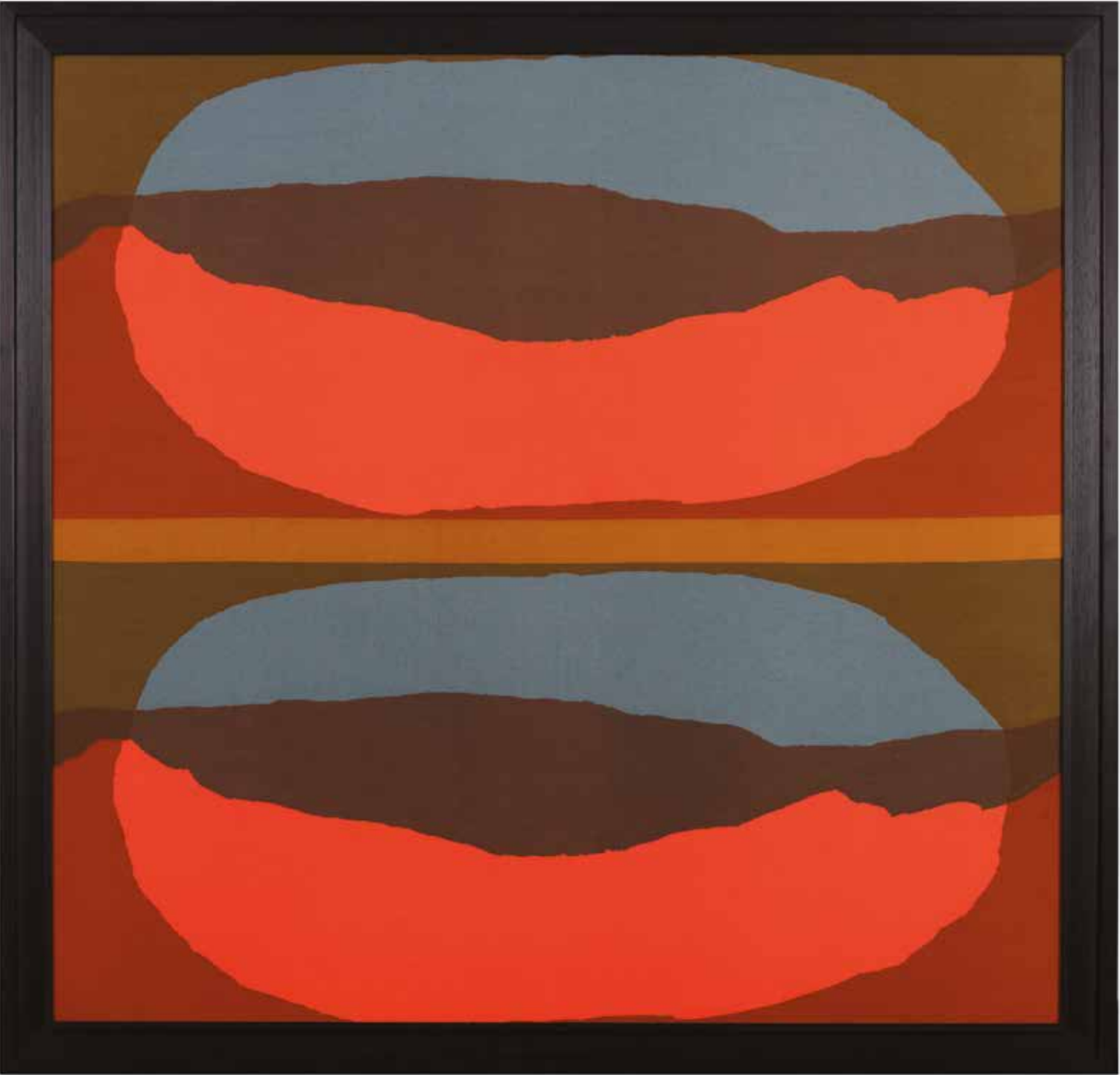
*Shirley Craven and Hull Traders – Revolutionary Post-War Fabrics and Furniture*, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, 2009; King’s Lynn Arts Centre, 2010; Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, 2011

## COLLECTIONS

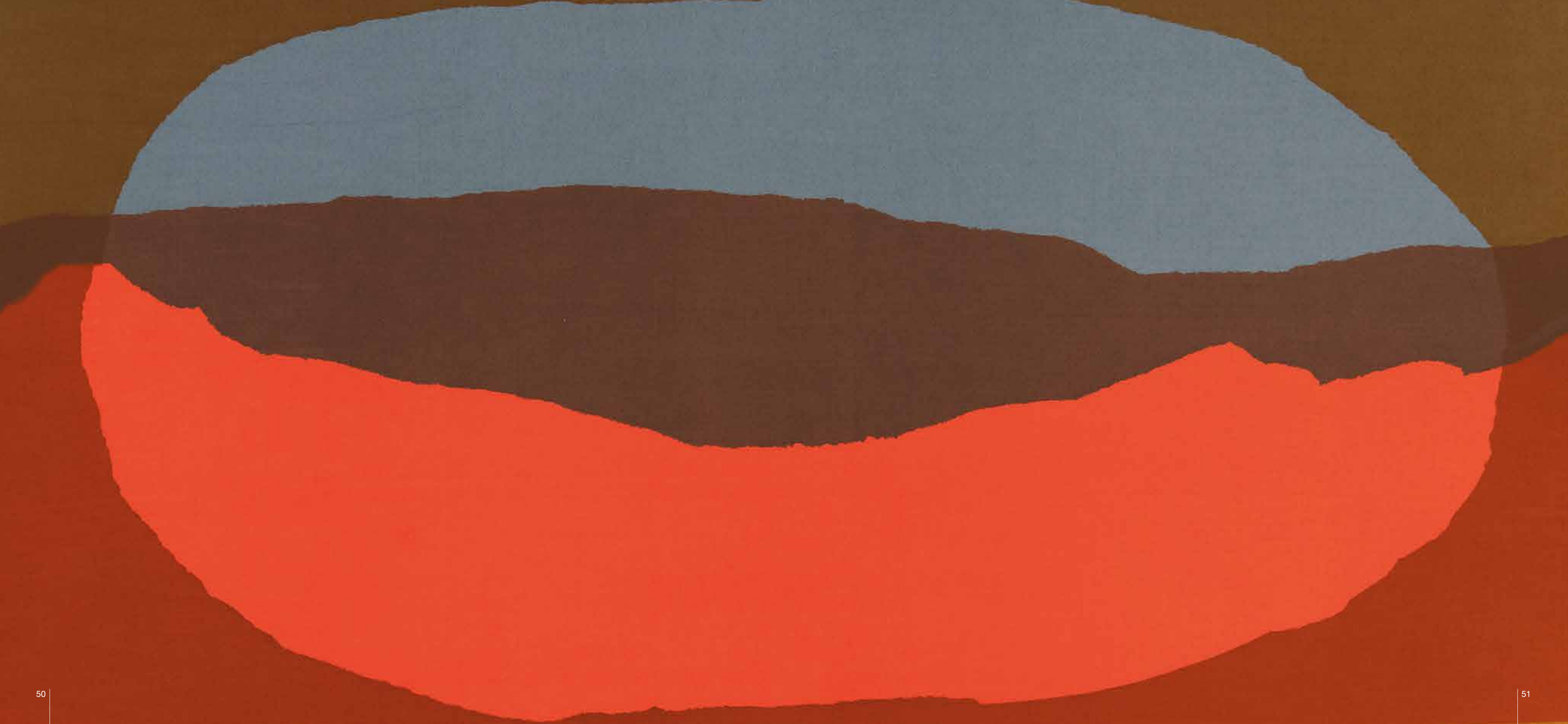
*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

**Kaplan**  
**1961**  
Screen Printed Cotton  
115 x 120.5cm  
Hull Traders









# Jane Daniels

## LITERATURE

*David Whitehead Ltd, Artist Designed Textiles 1952-1969, Alan Peat, Oldham Leisure Services, 1993*

## EXHIBITIONS

*David Whitehead Artist Designed Textiles 1952 – 1969, Oldham Art Gallery, 1994*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

### Bologna

1960

Screen Printed Cotton

80 x 118cm

David Whitehead Ltd









# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

Lucienne Day is one of the best-known post-war textile designers. Born in Surrey, she studied at Croydon School of Art and The Royal College of Art in London. During her career she won many awards, including the Gran Premio prize at the Milan Triennale 1954. She is noted for using Surrealist imagery as a key influence in her designs. Her design ‘Calyx’, presented at the 1951 Festival of Britain, is her most famous work. She was married to furniture designer Robin Day, and became a Royal Designer for Industry in 1962.

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991

*The Sixties*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon Press Ltd, 1998

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2007

*V&A Pattern - Heal's*, V&A Publishing, 2012

*Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

*Pattern Design*, Elizabeth Wilhide, Thames & Hudson, 2018

## EXHIBITIONS

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1991

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Glasgow Art Gallery, 1992

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Francesca Galloway Gallery, Dover Street, London, 2007

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles*, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture*, Middlesex University

*The Whitworth Art Gallery*, Manchester

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse*, Denver, Colorado, USA

*The Art Institute of Chicago*, Chicago, USA

## Herb Anthony

1956

Screen Printed Cotton

67 x 61cm

Heal Fabrics









# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001*

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991*

*Twentieth Century Textiles, Francesca Galloway, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2007*

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Textile Design, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014*

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010*

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012*

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001*

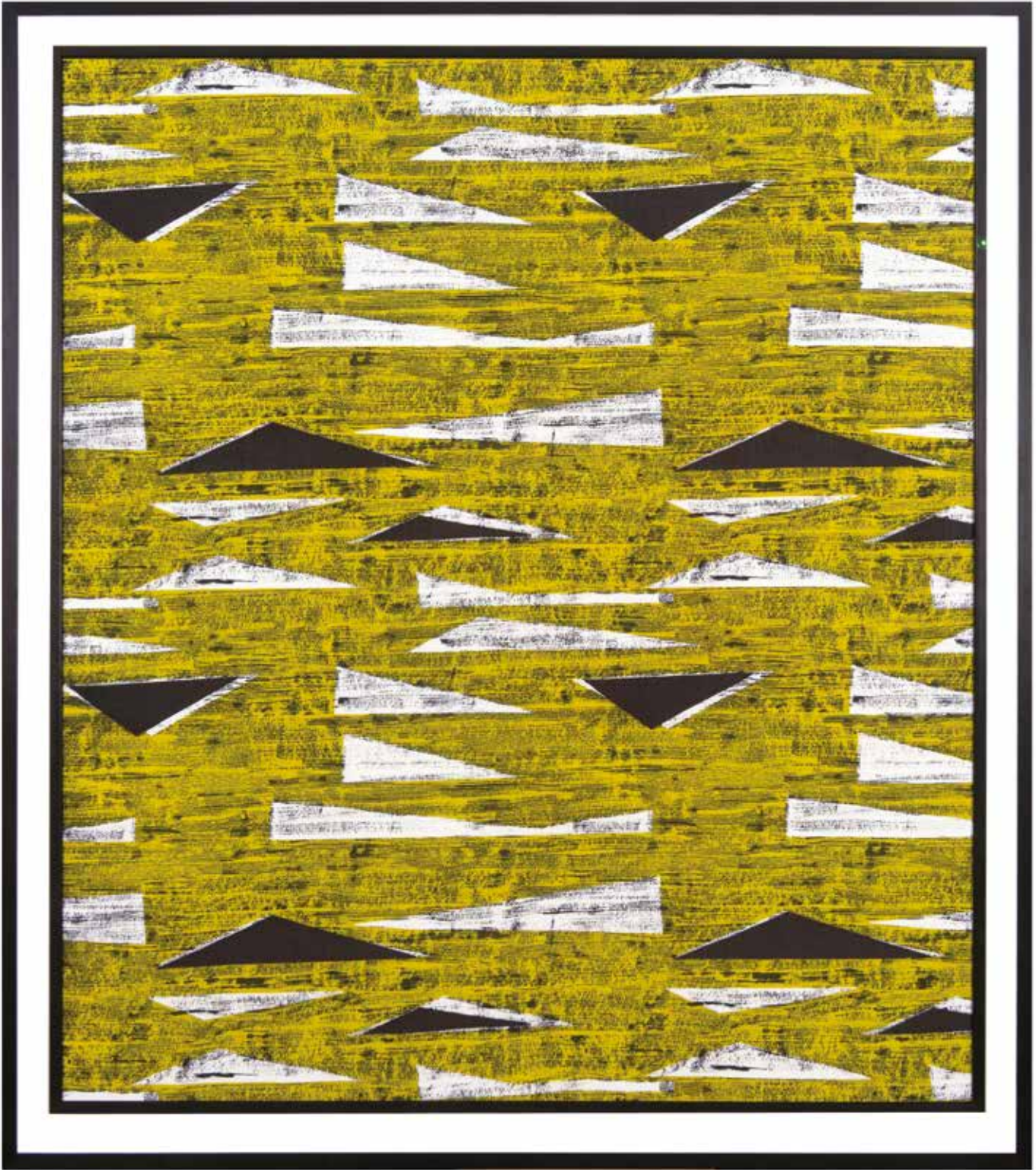
## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

### Cedar 1958

Screen Printed Cotton  
124 x 109cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991

*Printed Textile Design*, Terence Conran, Studio Publications, 1957

*Austerity to Affluence, British Art & Design 1945 – 1962*, Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1997

*The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, British Textile Design From 1940 to the Present*, Ngozi Ikoku, V&A Publications, 1999

*20th Century Pattern Design, Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, Antique Collectors Club, 2007

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*V&A Pattern – The Fifties*, V&A Publishing, 2009

*British Textiles, 1700 to the Present*, Linda Parry, V&A Publishing, 2010

*V&A Pattern - Heal’s*, V&A Publishing, 2012

*Textile Design, Lucienne Day*, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

*Mid-Century Modern Complete*, Thames & Hudson, Dominic Bradbury, 2014

*Spectrum, Heritage Patterns & Colours*, Thames & Hudson / V&A, 2018

## EXHIBITIONS

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1991

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Glasgow Art Gallery, 1992

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Francesca Galloway Gallery, Dover Street, London, 2007

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Art by the Yard, Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, 2010

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles, Fashion and Textiles Museum*, London, 2012

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

## AWARDS

Milan Triennale Gold Medal 1951  
  
International Award of the American Institute of Decorators, Best Design 1952

## COLLECTIONS

The Victoria & Albert Museum  
  
The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester  
  
H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA  
  
The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA



### Calyx (Blue)

1951  
Screen Printed Linen  
85 x 107.5cm  
Heal Fabrics





“The relationship between designer and manufacturer is as critical as the one between printmaker and press or between sculptor and foundry. The interpretation of the artist’s vision crafted by the industry’s experts is truly a collaboration, and not always an easy one. For instance, while Day favoured the black and white repeat, she selected the colourways for each herself and refused the offer of her textile manufacturing company Heal Fabrics to select the colour for her. Notwithstanding such normal differences that exist between designer and manufacturer, Day enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with Heal Fabrics, which began with the textile *Calyx* (1951), which was introduced and featured at the Festival of Britain and won numerous awards. Heal Fabrics took a risk by producing the design, which is quite bold even by today’s standards. Heal’s gamble proved wise, as *Calyx* is generally recognised by textile historians as the design that opened the flood gate to many of the innovative textile designs that followed in Britain.”

Quoted from Shanna Shelby, Curator-  
The Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III Collection of British Textiles  
Denver, September 2008



# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991

*Printed Textile Design*, Terence Conran, Studio Publications, 1957

*Austerity to Affluence, British Art & Design 1945 – 1962*, Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1997

*The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, British Textile Design From 1940 to the Present*, Ngozi Ikoku, V&A Publications, 1999

*20th Century Pattern Design, Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, Antique Collectors Club, 2007

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*V&A Pattern - The Fifties*, V&A Publishing, 2009

*British Textiles, 1700 to the Present*, Linda Parry, V&A Publishing, 2010

*V&A Pattern - Heal’s*, V&A Publishing, 2012

*Textile Design, Lucienne Day*, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

*Mid-Century Modern Complete*, Thames & Hudson, Dominic Bradbury, 2014

*Spectrum, Heritage Patterns & Colours*, Thames & Hudson / V&A, 2018

## EXHIBITIONS

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Manchester City Art Gallery, 1991

*The New Look Design in the Fifties*, Glasgow Art Gallery, 1992

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Francesca Galloway Gallery, Dover Street, London, 2007

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Art by the Yard, Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, 2010

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles*, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

## AWARDS

Milan Triennale Gold Medal 1951

International Award of the American Institute of Decorators, Best Design 1952

## COLLECTIONS

The Victoria & Albert Museum

The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA



## Calyx (Chocolate)

1951

Screen Printed Linen

56 x 123cm

Heal Fabrics







# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001*

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991*

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Textile Design, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014*

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010*

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012*

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

*The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA*

### Tarn

1957

Roller Printed Cotton

120 x 97cm

Heal Fabrics









# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles*, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

**Linden**  
1960  
Roller Printed Cotton  
97 x 91cm  
Heal Fabrics









Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

LITERATURE

- Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001
- The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

EXHIBITIONS

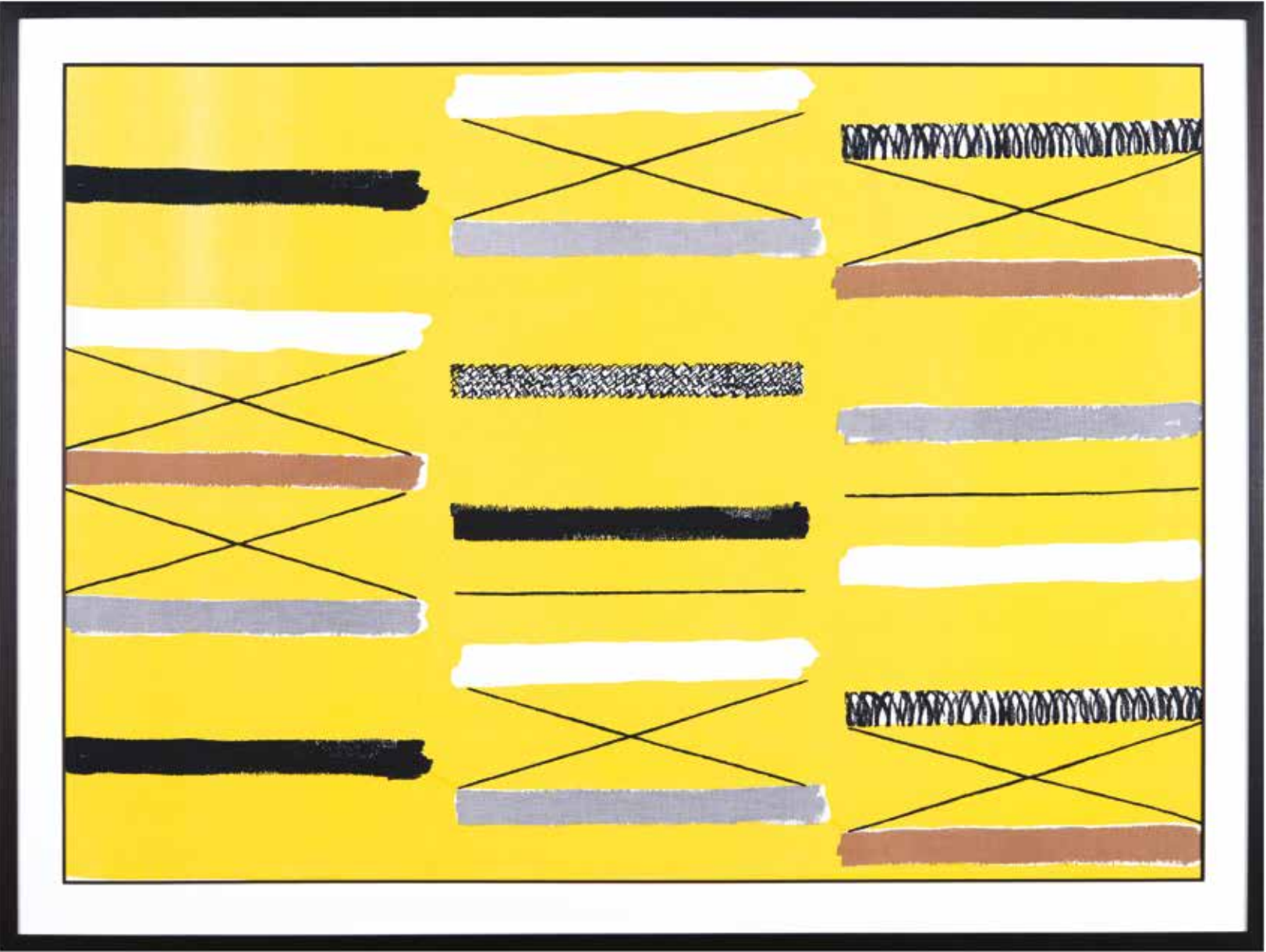
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010
- Designing Women - Post War British Textiles*, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012
- Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

COLLECTIONS

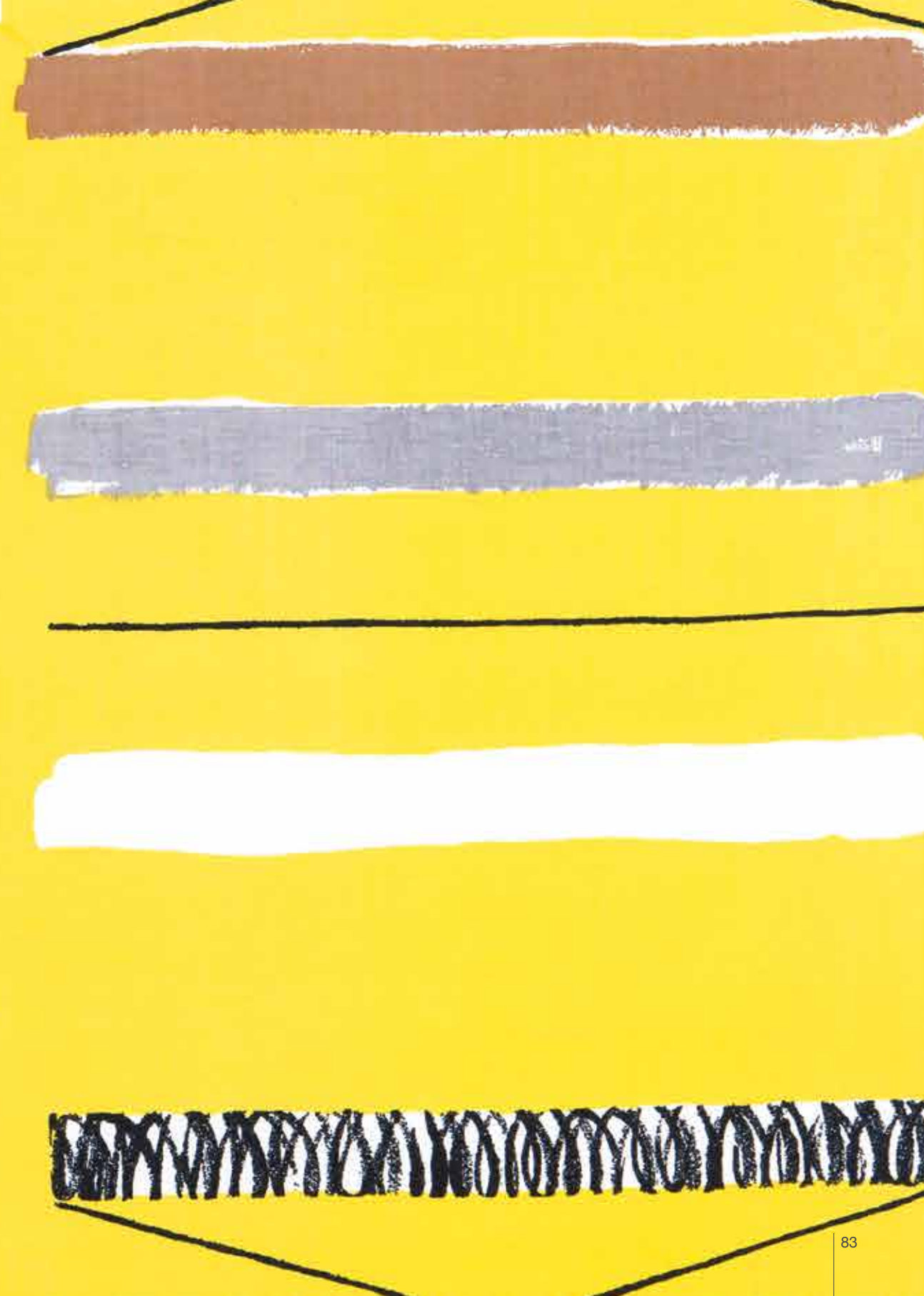
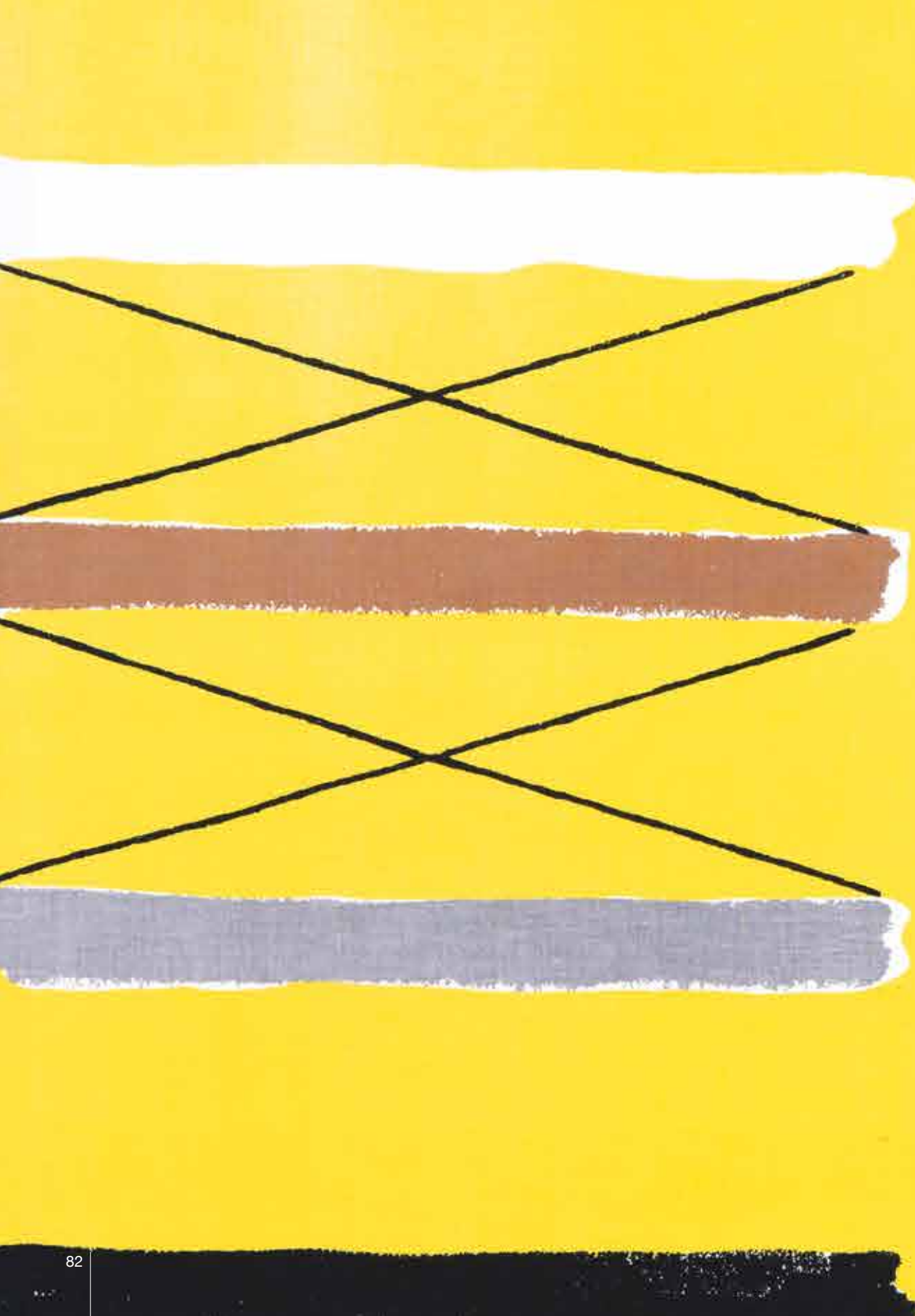
- The Victoria & Albert Museum*
- The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*
- H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

Mezzanine (Yellow)  
1958

Screen Printed Cotton  
118 x 81.5cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Lucienne Day (1917 - 2010)

## LITERATURE

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2001

*The New Look: Design in the Fifties*, Lesley Jackson, Thames and Hudson, 1991

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles*, Fashion and Textiles Museum, London, 2012

*Robin and Lucienne Day: Pioneers of Contemporary Design*, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2001

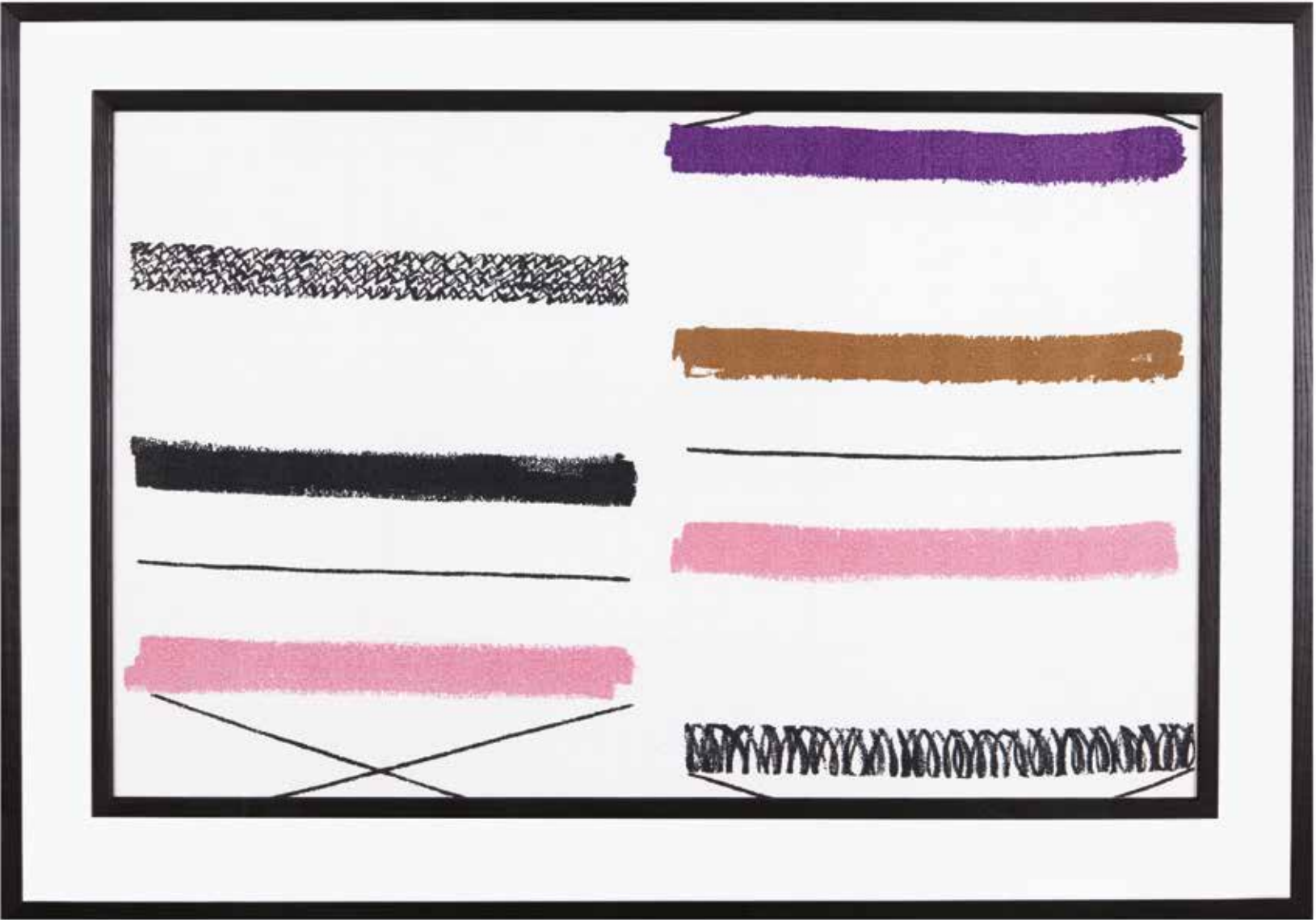
## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

**Mezzanine (Pink)**  
1958  
Screen Printed Cotton  
77 x 51cm  
Heal Fabrics





“In 2010, *The Art by the Yard: Women Design Mid-Century Britain* exhibition at The Textile Museum in Washington D.C. reflected the current trend to re-examine mid-century Modernism and its historical significance. In the post-World War II period, design was gaining respect and designers were becoming recognised as celebrities. Lucienne was a star personality. She was largely responsible for a major shift in textile design shaping visual styles and influencing popular culture, pioneering an innovative, modern idiom in pattern and colour. Like Modern artists of the period, Lucienne was no longer interested in traditional approaches to design and pattern. She passionately sought a new perspective that harmonised design and function in a dynamic and engaging way. Lucienne and her husband, furniture designer Robin Day (b.1915), became key arbiters of taste as Britain’s most celebrated designer couple, and together they popularised a sleek new aesthetic in British interiors. Like many designers in the optimistic post-World War II period, Lucienne and Robin believed in modern design’s transformative power to shape a better world, and sought the challenging mission to create beautiful, useful objects accessible to people at all income levels.

We had the opportunity to meet Lucienne, and her charming husband Robin, in 2008. I was surprised by the intensity of her passion for well-designed textiles and her quick opinions about 1950s design. I am saddened that she will not experience the current momentum of interest in her career. With increasing interest in Modern Textiles worldwide, I can only guess that she would be pleased, yet unsurprised, with the current enthusiasm for good design.”

Taken from *Art by the Yard - Women Design Mid-Century Britain*,  
Guest Curator’s Introduction by Shanna Shelby; Curator,  
The Jill A. Wiltse and Kirk Brown III Collection;  
Denver, Colorado, U.S.A. 2010





# Jacqueline Groag (1903 -1986)

Jacqueline Groag was a hugely influential post-war designer. Originally Czech, Groag studied in Vienna and designed for the Wiener Werkstätte before moving to Paris in 1929, where she worked on dress fabrics for fashion houses such as Chanel. She moved to London in 1939. In addition to working with some of the foremost textile manufacturers and retailers of the era in Britain and America, Groag created a large number of textile designs for the ‘Britain Can Make It’ exhibition at The Victoria & Albert Museum in 1946.

## LITERATURE

*The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998

*20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002

*David Whitehead Ltd, Artist Designed Textiles 1952-1969*, Oldham Leisure Services, 1993

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Textile Design Jacqueline Groag Rayner*, Chamberlain, Stapleton, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2009

*Jacques and Jacqueline Groag Architect and Designer*, Ursula Prokop, Doppel House Press, 2019

## EXHIBITIONS

*David Whitehead Artist Designed textiles 1952 – 1969*, Oldham Art Gallery, 1994

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

### Dolls

1953

Roller Printed Rayon

32 x 61cm

David Whitehead Ltd









Jacqueline Groag (1903 -1986)

“Jacqueline Groag’s Wiener Werkstätte roots are clearly evident in the shapes and composition of this lively, abstract pattern with its imaginative and stimulating colourway.” Lesley Jackson, 2002

LITERATURE

- The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998
- 20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002
- English and American Textiles, from 1790 to the present*, Mary Schoeser & Celia Rufey, Thames & Hudson,1989
- 20th Century Pattern Design, Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002
- Twentieth Century Textiles*, Sue Kerry, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2007
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Textile Design Jacqueline Groag Rayner*, Chamberlain, Stapleton, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2009
- Jacques and Jacqueline Groag Architect and Designer*, Ursula Prokop, Doppel House Press, 2019

EXHIBITIONS

- David Whitehead Artist Designed textiles 1952 – 1969*, Oldham Art Gallery, 1993
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010
- Twentieth Century Textiles*, Francesca Galloway Gallery, Dover Street, London, 2007

COLLECTIONS

- The Victoria & Albert Museum*
- The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*
- H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse*, Denver, Colorado, USA

Traffic Light  
1953

Roller Printed Rayon  
55 x 84cm  
David Whitehead Ltd





“Jacqueline Groag developed her design vision through the use of collages and sketches. Unlike Lucienne Day, who destroyed her preliminary design drawings and sketches, Groag preserved her works on paper. The translation of Groag’s design vision from a two-dimensional work of art into a tactile home furnishing, where repeat and colourway transform the initial concept, is fascinating. The wild variety found in her textiles point to Groag’s dealings with several different manufactures. The textiles Groag produced with the British textile manufacturer David Whitehead Ltd. and several other manufacturers are very different in style. Jacqueline Groag had an exceptional ability to fulfil the unique demands of each manufacturer.”

Quoted from Shanna Shelby Catalogue essay for:  
Designing Women of Postwar Britain: Their Art and the Modern Interior.  
Selected works from the collection of Jill A Wiltse & H. Kirk Brown III  
Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, September 2008





# Althea McNish (1933 -)

Althea McNish FCSD is a British textile designer of Trinidadian origin who has been called the first British designer of African descent to earn an international reputation. Born in Trinidad, McNish moved to Britain in the 1950s. She attended the London School of Printing and Graphic Arts, Central School of Arts and Crafts and the Royal College of Art. She was associated with the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM) in the 1960s, participating in CAM’s exhibitions and seminars and helping to promote Central School of Arts and Crafts, Caribbean Arts to a British public. She was commissioned by Liberty, Ascher for Dior, Hull Traders and Cavendish Textiles. Her work is represented in the collections of The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, The Whitworth Museum, Manchester, The Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Cooper-Hewitt (Smithsonian Design Museum), USA.

McNish is a Fellow of the Chartered Society of Designers and an Honorary Doctor of Fine Art at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. She was married to the jewellery designer John Weiss (21 June 1933 – 9 November 2018).

## LITERATURE

*Shirley Craven and Hull Traders – Revolutionary Post-War Fabrics and Furniture, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, 2009, King’s Lynn Arts Centre, 2010; Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston, 2011*

*Revolutionary Fabrics and Furniture 1957-1980, Shirley Craven and Hull Traders, Lesley Jackson, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2009*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*

**Rubra**  
1960  
Screen Printed Cotton  
72 x 56cm  
Hull Traders









# Marian Mahler (1911 - 1983)

Marian Mahler was born in Vienna and studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule. She moved to Britain in 1937. In the 1950s she worked for Allan Walton, Edinburgh Weavers and Donald Brothers. At David Whitehead Ltd she was given a mandate to reinvigorate the company by producing affordable textiles with good design. The new roller-printed manufacturing process enabled her sophisticated designs to be reproduced quickly, in rayon and cotton, and at a price that appealed to a younger clientele.

## LITERATURE

*The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998

*20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002

*David Whitehead Ltd, Artist Designed Textiles 1952-1969* Alan Peat, Oldham Leisure Services, 1993

*The Victoria & Albert Museum’s Textile Collection, British Textile Design From 1940 to the Present*, Ngozi Ikoku, V&A Publications, 1999

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*V&A Pattern – The Fifties*, V&A Publishing, 2009

*British Textiles, 1700 to the Present*, Linda Parry, V&A Publishing, 2010

*Mid-Century Modern Complete*, Dominic Bradbury, Thames & Hudson, 2014

## EXHIBITIONS

*David Whitehead Ltd, Artist Designed Textiles 1952-1969*, Oldham Museum & Art Gallery, 1993

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse*, Denver, Colorado, USA

### Mobiles 1950

Roller Printed Rayon  
70 x 108.5cm  
David Whitehead Ltd





“The cohesion of [Marian] Mahler’s designs is in part due to the relationship with David Whitehead Ltd. who produced her best known textiles. The advantage of using the roller printing method was the capacity to produce economical runs of one pattern. In addition, small scale motifs and tight arrangements of forms were more versatile and appealed to a broader audience. Mahler’s textiles were the ideal combination of these two important considerations of the manufacturer. The popularity of Mahler’s textiles also reflect her receptiveness to new inspirations like architecture as in *Untitled (Temple)* ca. 1951, modern art and sculpture as in *Untitled (Mobiles)* ca. 1952.”

Quoted from Shanna Shelby Catalogue essay for:  
*Designing Women of Postwar Britain: Their Art and the Modern Interior.*  
Selected works from the collection of Jill A Wiltse & H. Kirk Brown III  
Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, September 2008





# Marian Mahler (1911 - 1983)

## LITERATURE

- The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998
- 20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002
- V&A Pattern – The Fifties*, V&A Publishing, 2009
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

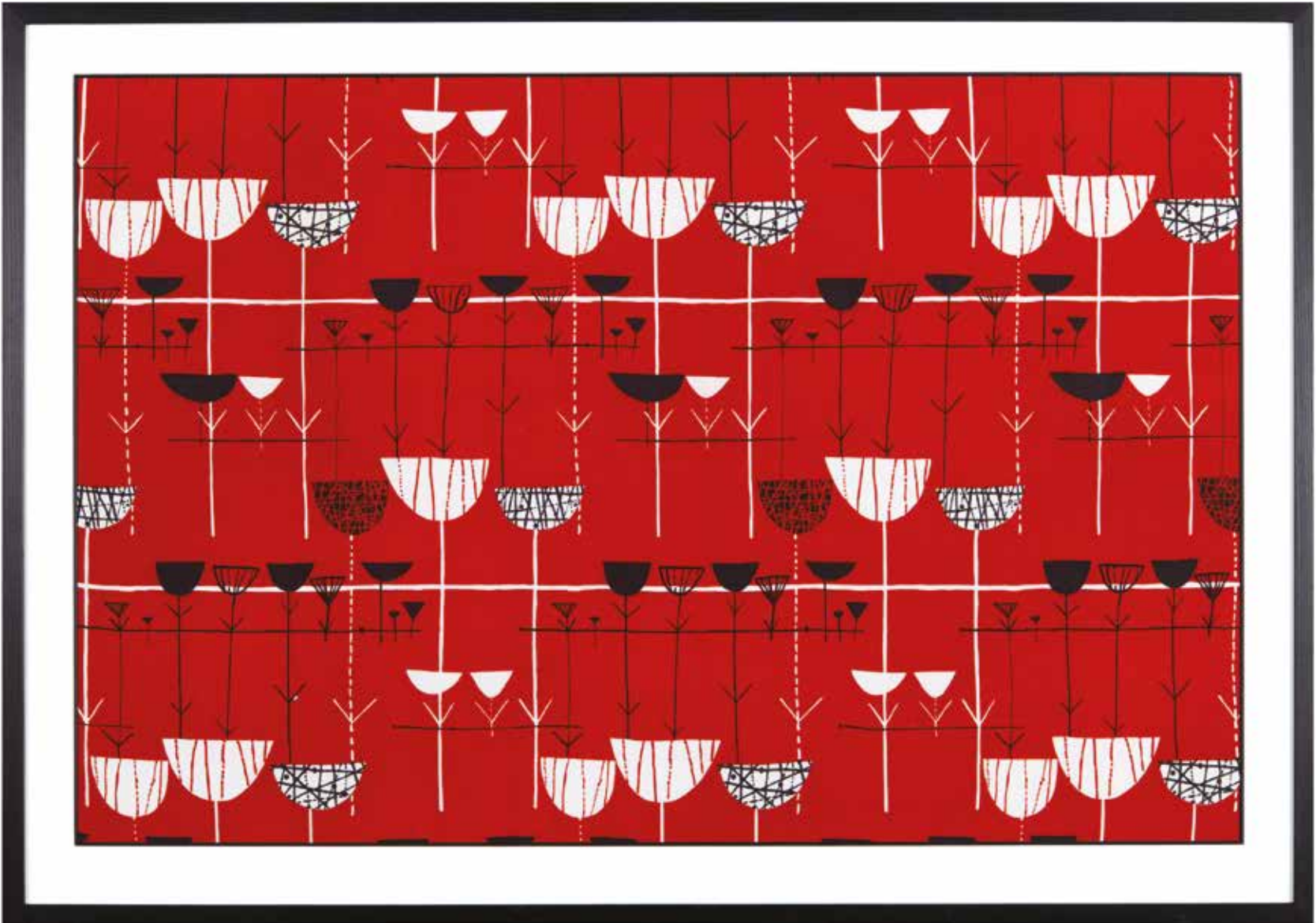
## EXHIBITIONS

- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

## COLLECTIONS

- The Victoria & Albert Museum*
- The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester*
- H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*
- Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University*

**Linear Flowers**  
1953  
Roller Printed Rayon  
69 x 105cm  
David Whitehead Ltd









# Marian Mahler (1911 - 1983)

## LITERATURE

- The Sixties: Decade of Design Revolution*, Lesley Jackson, Phaidon, 1998
- 20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers*, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002
- David Whitehead Ltd, Artist Designed Textiles 1952-1969*, Oldham Leisure Services, 1993
- Austerity to Affluence – British Art & Design 1945 – 1962*, Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1997
- Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Textile Design*, Lucienne Day, Andrew Casy, Antique Collectors Club, 2014

## EXHIBITIONS

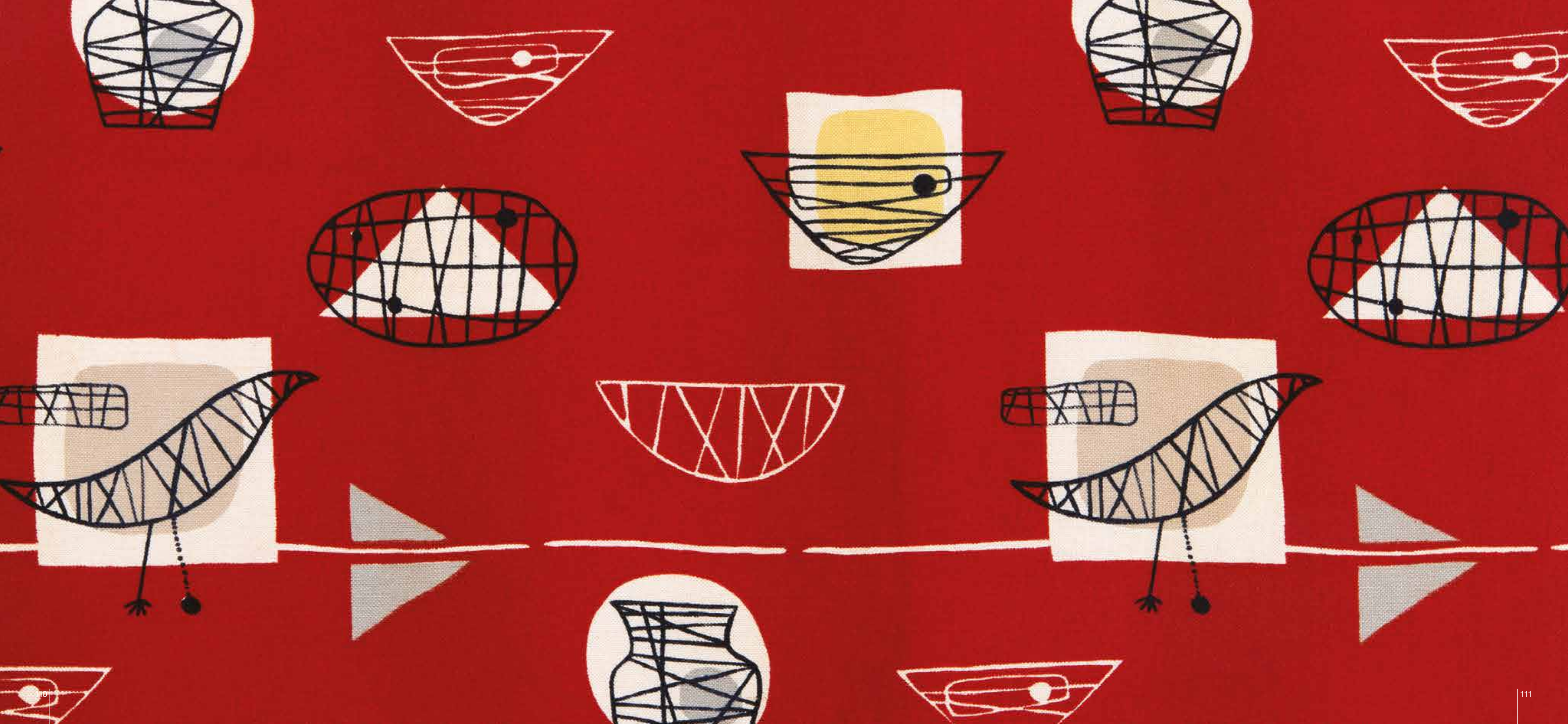
- David Whitehead Artist Designed textiles 1952 – 1969*, Oldham Art Gallery, 1994
- Designing Women of Post War Britain* Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008
- Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

### Bird Chair 1952

Screen Printed Rayon  
54 x 62cm  
David Whitehead Ltd









# Zandra Rhodes DBE (1940 - )

*‘Heal Fabrics purchased this design ‘Top Brass’ from Rhodes’ first year degree show in 1964 at the Royal College of Art. The design epitomises the swinging sixties when colourful military jackets were in vogue. Rhodes chose medals as her theme, a popular theme of the Swinging Sixties, when youth wore military jackets and the Beatles Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band was released. ‘Top Brass’ was one of a group of four prints produced. Influenced by the works of third year student David Hockney, in particular Hockney’s ‘A Grand Procession of Dignitaries’ 1961. This painting shows little medal like shapes along the border. ‘From the way the picture was created it was the medals that first caught my eye,’ said Rhodes. She sketched medals at the Wellington Museum and Imperial War Museum in preparation for the design. Rhodes went on to establish the Fashion Museum in Bermondsey, London in 2003.’ Meg Andrews*

Upon graduation from The Royal College of Art, School of Textile & Design in 1964 Rhodes opened her first shop ‘The Fulham Road Clothes Shop’ with the fashion designer Sylvia Ayton. In 1969 she set up on her own and took her collection to New York where Diana Vreeland featured her garments in American Vogue, after which she started selling to Henri Bendel in New York, followed by Sakowitz, Neiman Marcus and Saks. In the UK, Rhodes was given her own area in Fortnum & Mason. She was awarded Designer of the Year in 1972 and in 1974 Royal Designer for Industry. In 1975 she founded her own shop off Bond Street and a boutique area in Marshall Fields, Chicago. The signature of all her designs was the hand printed fabric. In 1997, she was made a Commander of the British Empire in recognition of her contribution to fashion and textiles and in 2003 set up the Fashion & Textile Museum dedicated to showing the work of fashion and textile designers from the 1950s onwards. The V&A hold a number of original designs and clothing and her work has been included in a number of important retrospective exhibitions. In 2014 she was made a Dame.

## LITERATURE

*The Ambassador Magazine No 2, 1964*

*Zandra Rhodes and Anne Knight, The Art of Zandra Rhodes 1985,*

*Artists Textiles in Britain 1945 – 1970, The Fine Art Society, London, 2003*

*Textile Design, Textile Revolution: Medals, Wiggles & Pop 1961-197, Samantha Erin Safer, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2010*

*Textile Design, Artists’ Textiles 1940-1976, Rayner, Chamberlain & Stapleton, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2012*

## COLLECTIONS

- MoMA, New York, USA*
- Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA*

**Top Brass**  
**1964**  
Screen Printed Cotton  
67 x 121cm  
Heal Fabrics









# A Conversation with Zandra Rhodes

Ashley Gray	Hello Zandra, I wanted to talk to you about the incredible moment of creativity that you were a central part of in the decades from the 1950s to the 1970s. A period that saw this country come out from under a cloud of austerity into a ‘Brave New World’. Going right back I know your mother worked as a fitter for the high-end couture house ‘House of Worth’ in Paris.
Zandra Rhodes	I was around fabrics all the time. She worked there before she was married before the war. When I was a child I remember the French fashion magazines always being around the house so even as a young child I was aware of her fitting garments and sewing at home. I had a background with fabrics from the start, I was always painting and drawing.
AG	The first formal schooling being Medway College of Arts?
ZR	My mother taught there. I did not every acknowledge her, I did not tell people she was my mother.
AG	So a typical teenager!
ZR	She taught dress-making. But my specialities were lithography and textiles.
AG	At Medway College, which of your teachers most inspired you?
ZR	I was really influenced by this amazing teacher Barbara Brown whose fabrics you have in the exhibition. That was what got me into doing textiles. She was a really vivacious, arty lady and she encouraged me. “You can go further than this,” she would tell me. “You can get to The Royal College of Art”. Barbara was a very dynamic woman and she encouraged the best of me. She really got me into textiles
AG	So, the road for the Royal College was becoming clear and you won a scholarship to attend?
ZR	Yes, two of us got into The Royal College for Textiles from Medway College. Myself and David Green. David went on to teach in Australia. Hundreds apply but they only accepted eight. We were just very enthusiastic, I was very hard working, I always spent my time sketching.
AG	How did you find the Royal College?
ZR	At that time, it was the era of furnishing fabrics. The people in my year all did furnishing fabrics, dress fabrics were forgotten. It was not until my second year that I really became interested in doing fabrics on garments.
AG	This was something new?
ZR	I was at the forefront; all the rest were doing furnishing fabrics. This was a defining moment for me, realising that I wanted to do patterns that would go onto fabrics for garments. The tradition was for little ‘sprigs’ like at Liberty’s while I was more drawn to Pop Art!
AG	Was The Royal College supportive of this sort of radical new design?

ZR	The Royal College were always very supportive of me. I did not get very close to tutors like John Drummond or Dickie Chopping until after I left. I was just a very boring student! But they liked my work and I got a first-class honours degree and Tom Worthington from Heal’s Fabrics bought my textile <i>Top Brass</i> . I also sold a few designs to Ascher, he was God! But I loved my work and just got on with it. You did not have to worry like today about who was coming around. When I look back, my work was just different from everyone else’s but they encouraged me, I owe a lot to ‘The Royal’.
AG	And after ‘the Royal’?
ZR	They certainly encouraged me to visit new designers on Carnaby Street. So, I went to Foale and Tuffin with my designs and they liked them but I had to learn about commission printing and doing my own coda traces. I became a converter, I commissioned the printing, got the printing done. I learned all about that much earlier than many people who were then at the Royal.
AG	So real practical experience.
ZR	Yes practically, a lot of it was very practical, until very recently I still worked on my own coda traces transferring them into screens.
AG	What comes first, the structure of a garment or the design of the textile?
ZR	The design on the textile is what influences what the garment becomes, for me. The pattern is an intrinsic part of the garment. You create the design and begin to think how it would work as a garment. I look at how the fabric would look and then plan what it would look like as a garment. I suppose the influence was really from my mother from when all those fabrics were lying around.
AG	Where were you living at this time?
ZR	I had a really nice bed sit in Earls Court near Gloucester Road tube and I was there for all my three years at the Royal College of Art. I then had my Paddington studio, which I shared with Alex MacIntyre who I lived with. He went on to do television design.
AG	Is this when you met another influential figure of British Fashion, Sylvia Ayton?
ZR	Sylvia Ayton was in the same year as Sally Tuffin and Marion Foale. I got to know her as she was teaching at Ravensbourne at the same time as I did. We got talking and in the end, we did a collection together. Then through some friends of mine we met Vanessa Redgrave and she backed us a bit and we opened The Fulham Road Clothes Shop. We got bits of press in different magazines like Petticoat Magazine and others
AG	Petticoat was very much at the heart of the ‘swinging sixties’ crowd, wasn’t it? So, what then?



ZR Well the shop opened with a lot of pizzazz and it stayed open one year then Sylvia was offered a job with Wallis Fashion Group. I had had enough of teaching so I went on to do a collection. There was a wonderful girl called Marit Allen who believed in me on British Vogue. She had the collection photographed and gave me letters of introduction to American Vogue. That's when they photographed the garments on Natalie Wood. It then started to keep happening!

AG So Henri Bendel, Saks, Neiman Marcus.....

ZR Mainly Henri Bendel first of all then gradually others. It was then I also did a range of wallpaper and furnishing fabrics for the renowned interior designer Angelo Donghia and his Vice Versa collection in New York. I was introduced to him at his studio by the friend I was staying with in New York. At that time, I wore high wide boots, chiffon blouses and blue sewn trousers and a scarf round my head and red lipstick curls drawn on my face and he said to me, "if you look like THAT what do you do?" And I said, "I am a textile designer" and I showed him my work and he commissioned me to do a collection.

AG That is fantastic! Nicola Wood told me that she found New York rather conservative compared to the '60s in London where there was such a wave of innovation and creativity, would you agree?

ZR I think it did come from London, yes. It was a blossoming in London. We were riding the crest of a wave and we did not know it. I don't think we mishandled it, we were just lucky enough to 'be' the crest of the wave.

AG And Australia followed?

ZR It was exactly the same when I toured Australia in 1971 - it was my first really big publicity campaign, with 'Australian Women's Weekly' the biggest magazine in Australia. I did Sydney, Melbourne and a big event at the Australia Races, I was a byword in Australia at that time. I had green hair that they wanted me to change – but I didn't. I went back in 1973 and filled my sketch books.

AG You have an impressive collection of sketch books where are they from?

ZR Japan, I found them in Japan and have used them ever since. I have about 50 now. They are rice paper typing pads and I like the way they react to a pen and a brush pen. I first went from Australia to Japan in 1971, the year after the Tokyo Expo. Issey Miyake raved about my stuff and organised a big show for me for Sabo. Antonio Lopez the fashion illustrator and Karl Lagerfeld were there at the time, we were all there together. I had a lovely time.

AG Do you still dip back into your collection of sketch books for inspiration even now?

ZR I always refer to them. On the first day of self-isolation I used the Japanese sketch book to draw my camellias in front of the Shard here in Bermondsey.

AG When did you produce *Ayers Rock* that was worn by Lauren Bacall and Jackie Onassis?

ZR 1974. The dress is actually called *74/5/c*. I know that as it is a real classic. It's gone on year after year so it has its own number that it kept.

AG Tell me about the conceptual chic that was a strong influence in the mid 1970s

ZR That's '76. At that time, you had the Punk Revolution with Vivienne Westwood and things like that, but my influence came from a very different direction. My friend, the Postmodernist artist Duggie Fields, encouraged me to try to reconceive as I had been known for doing prints and things like that. Why not try doing real tears in the fabric? I had always admired 'The tears dress' by Salvador Dali and Schiaparelli with the tears drawn on it. Why not do dresses with real tears or cuts that look like tears? For some reason this just got massive publicity. It was one of those things that one gets remembered for.

AG It was looking at it on another level, real innovation.

ZR Perhaps we were part of a movement. In dress textiles, I was involved in the finished product. But I remember taking some designs to Sanderson in 1971 when Eddie Pond was running Central Studio. I said to him, "I do hope you will buy some of the designs as I am working on these very commercial group of fabrics." He said, "They are not commercial at all! You are either going to make it really big or fall flat on your face." I always think of a textile designer as a tight rope walker. I walk on a tight rope and I have to come up with an idea and I have to hope that the market will like it. They are either going to like it or not like it at all. I don't think my designs are that compromising. Yet as a designer you are often working in the dark really. You don't know if people are going to take to what you do or whether you are commercial enough.

AG You have always been very true to yourself, you found your own language.

ZR I could not do it in any other way. If could think, 'today I am going to do roses' but whatever I do it always turns out like me.

AG: Tell me briefly about the design work for Opera in San Diego and Houston.

ZR First I was asked to do the costumes for *The Magic Flute* for which I was able to refer to my sketch books and all the different things I had done in the past, which was great. Then they asked me to do sets and costumes for *The Pearl Fishers* which were really glorified textile designs. I could buy the fabric cheap and bring them back to my studio to print it so I could use all my textiles for it so it was a lovely project to do. Same with *Aida*, I had done an Egyptian collection so I could go back to the work I had done and take it further. It was fabulous. It was a real Zandra Rhodes textile experience!

AG Thank you so much Zandra it has been a real pleasure.



# Mo Sullivan

Mo Sullivan was colour consultant at Fidelis Furnishing Fabrics from 1961, who also collaborated with Courtaulds.

LITERATURE  
*20th Century Pattern Design: Textile & Wallpaper Pioneers, Lesley Jackson, Mitchell Beazley, 2002*

**Garland**  
**1965**  
Screen Printed Cotton  
69 x 113cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Paule Vézelay (1892 - 1984)

*The Tate Gallery included Vézelay’s textile designs in its 2017 retrospective exhibition on her work. She had already been commissioned in the late 1940s by Ascher and in the 1950s she created a series of simple but striking abstract patterns for Heal Fabrics composing of flat shapes floating on dark backgrounds. Vézelay was considered by many, including Paul Nash, to be a key figure of the Modern Art movement.*

In 1926, the British artist Marjorie Watson-Williams moved to Paris and adopted the name ‘Paule Vézelay’. By the early 1930s she had become an active member of the Parisian avant-garde. In France, Vézelay lived with the Surrealist artist André Masson and met Kandinsky, Mondrian, Miro, Magnelli and Jean Arp. In 1934, Vézelay joined Abstraction-Création and exhibited in France, Italy and Holland. The artists of Le Groupe Espace, founded in Paris in 1951, were concerned with space in art and were influenced by the pre-war movements of Constructivism and Neo-Plasticism. Vézelay exhibited with them and became president of the British branch of Le Groupe Espace. Her early work was figurative, but apart from her Surrealist-inspired works from the early 1930s and her wartime drawings, she became one of the first British artists to commit to the abstract movement. Vézelay lived in France until forced by the war to return to England in 1939. She continued to exhibit regularly in France after the war. She provided designs for textiles for Edinburgh Weavers and almost disappeared from public view until The Tate Gallery retrospective exhibition of her work in 1983, held the year before she died.

## LITERATURE

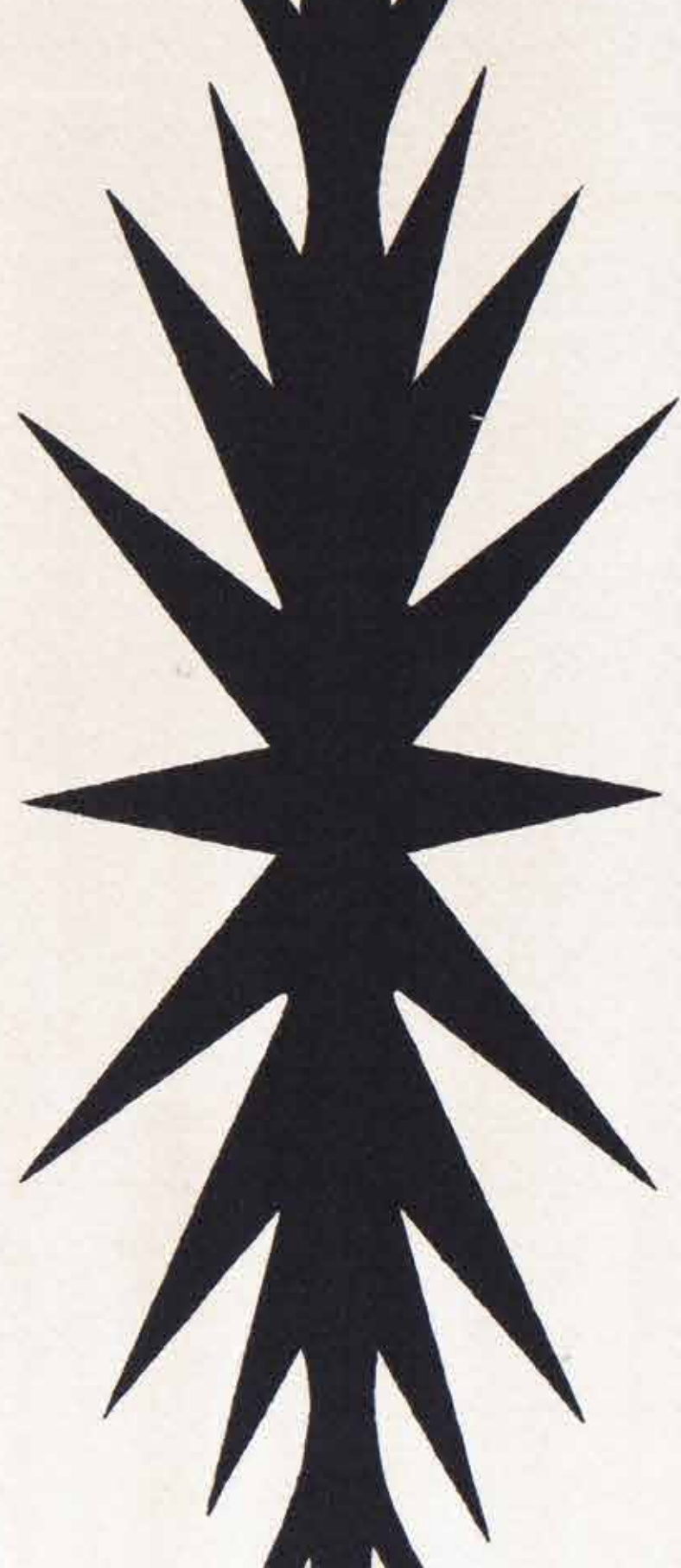
*Lesley Jackson, The New Look: Design in the Fifties, Thames and Hudson, 1991*

### Duet 1955

Screen Printed Plain Weave Cotton  
64 x 111cm  
Heal Fabrics









# Mary Warren

## LITERATURE

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Textile Design, Artists’ Textiles 1940 - 1976, Rayner, Chamberlain & Stapleton, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2012*

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Designing Women - Post War British Textiles, Fashion & Textile Museum, 2012*

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

*Art Institute of Chicago, USA*

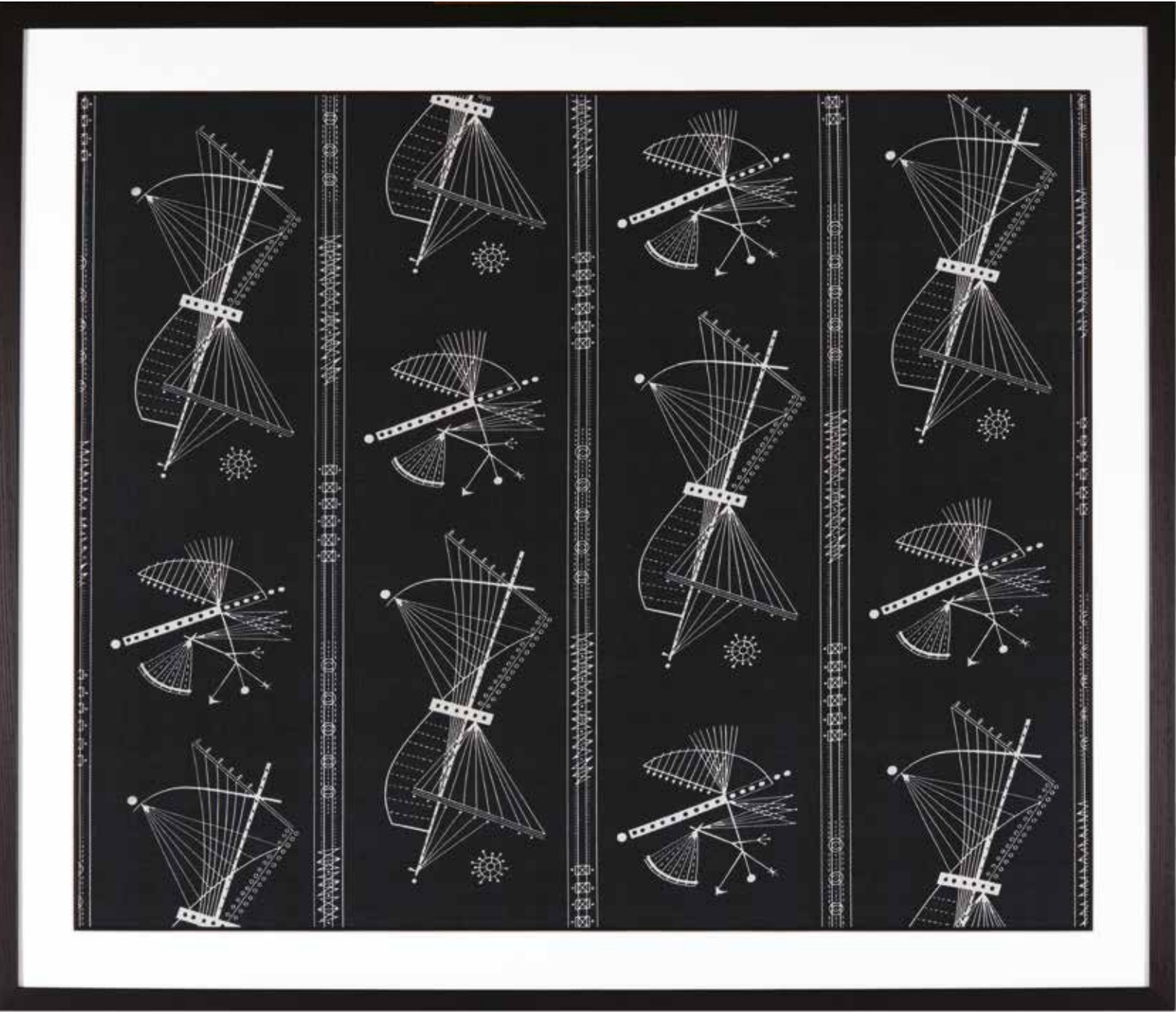
### Nautilus

1955

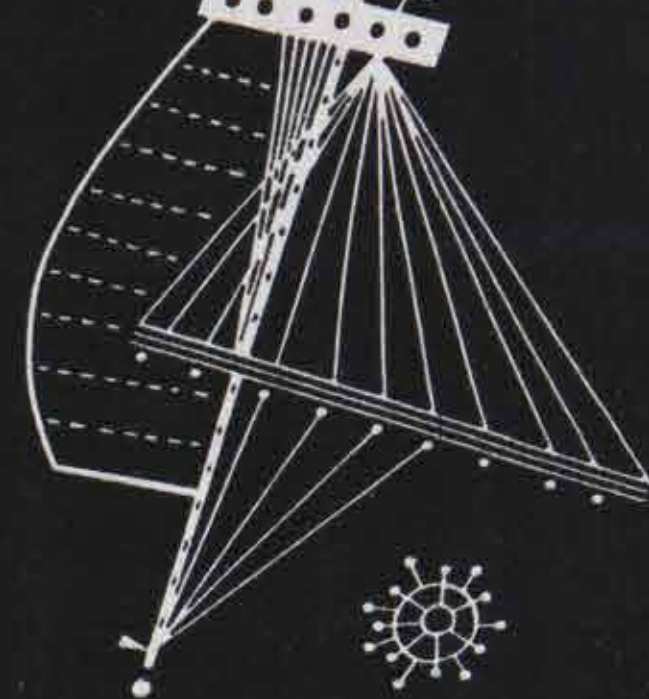
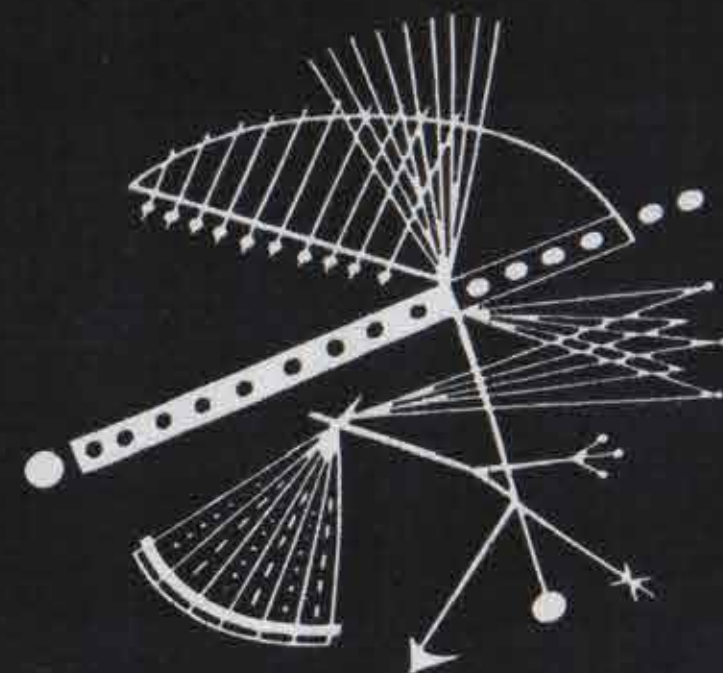
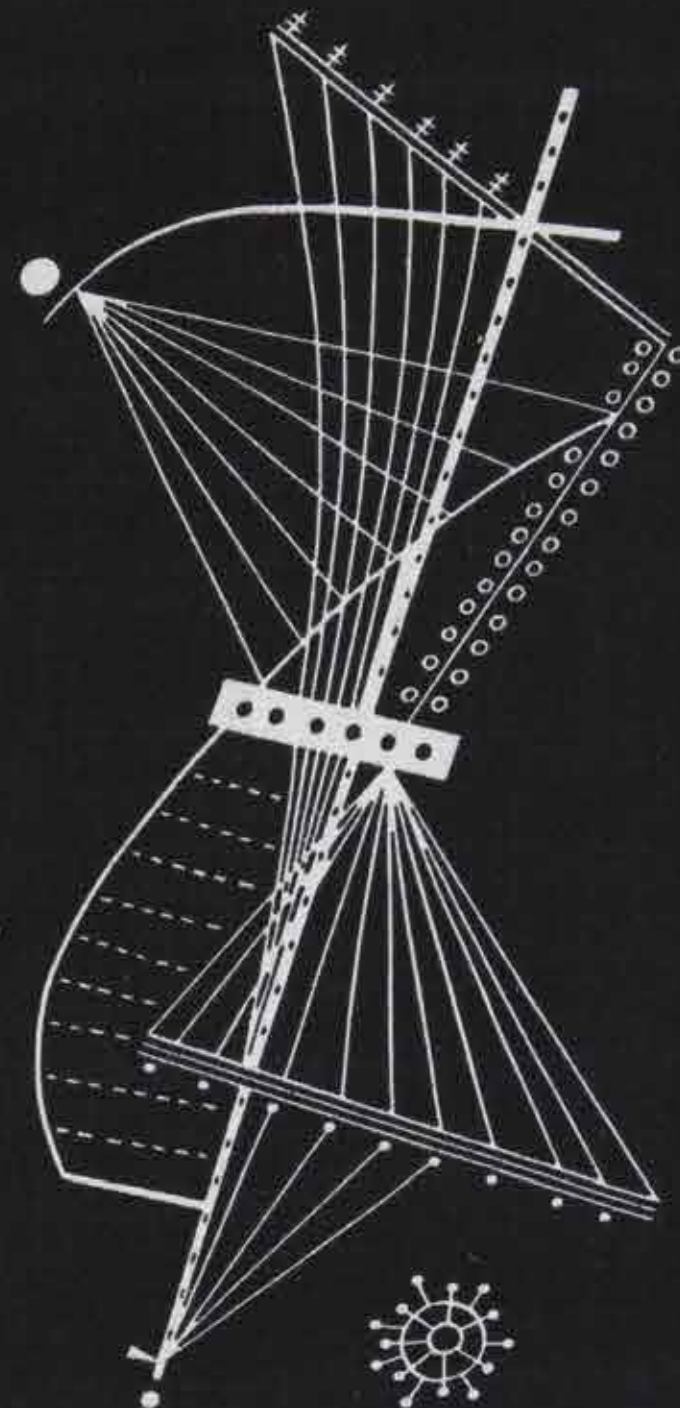
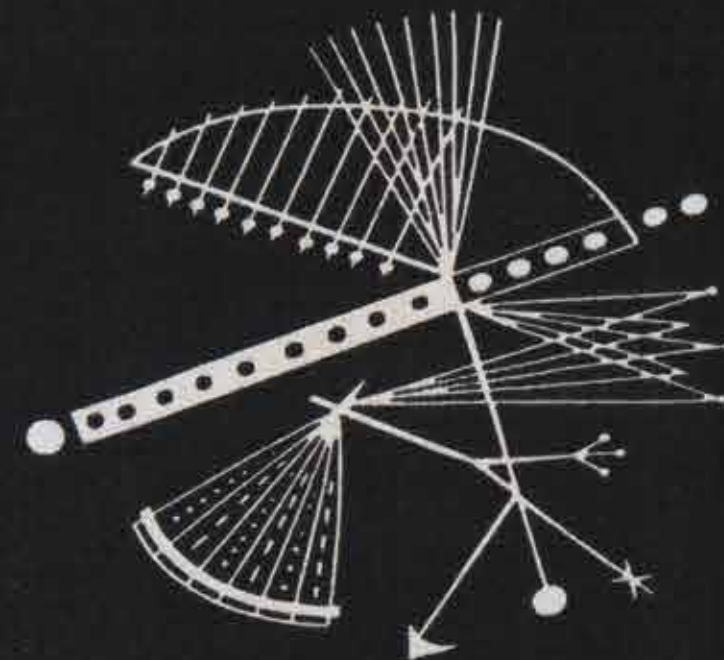
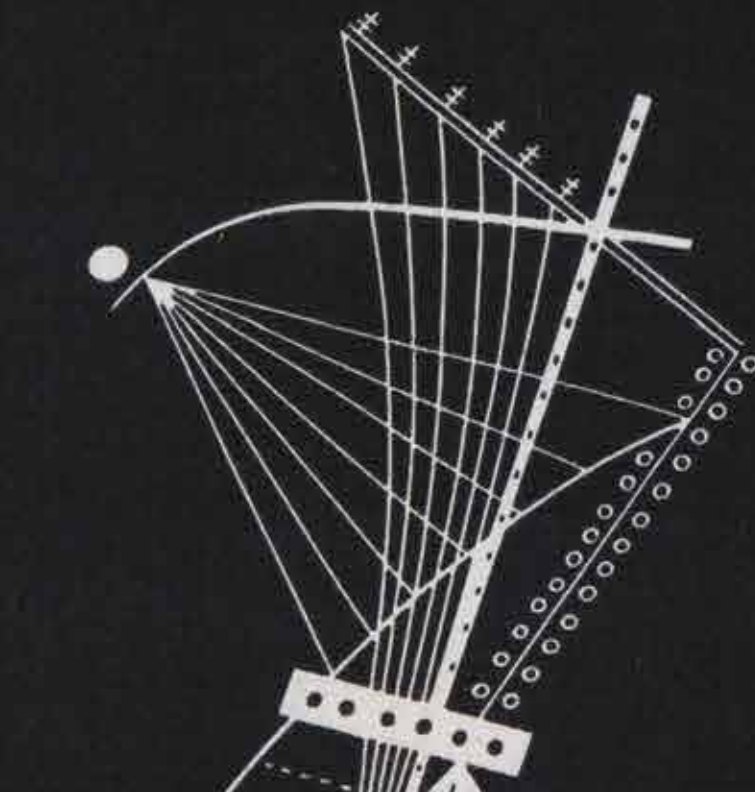
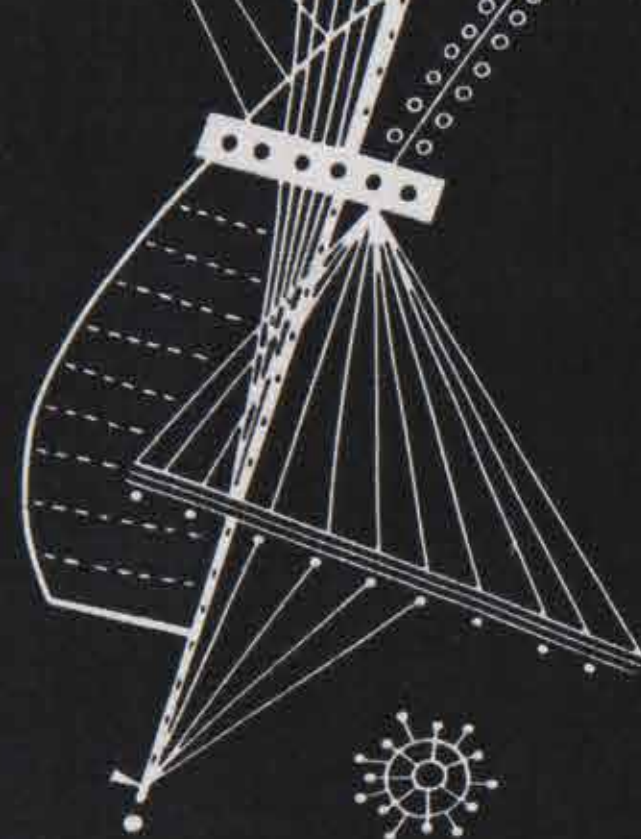
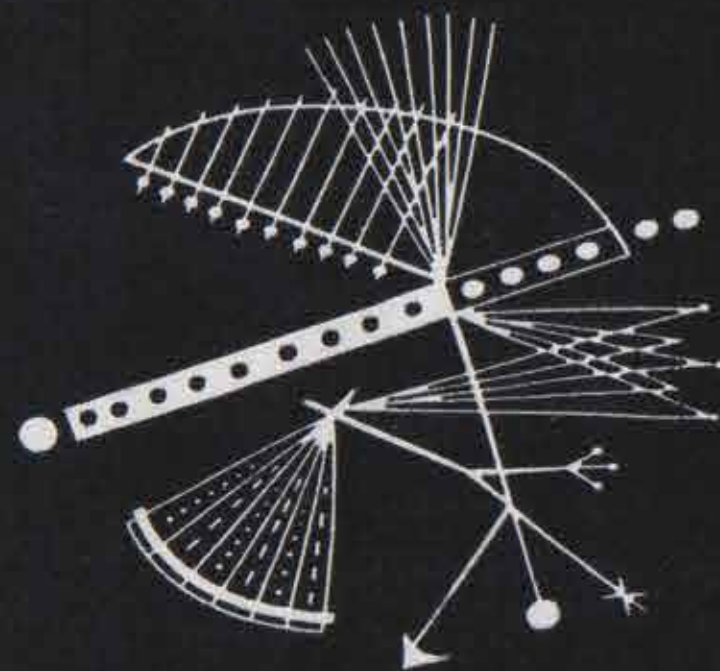
Screen Printed Cotton

82.5 x 68cm

Heal Fabrics









# Nicola Wood (1936 -)

Nicola Wood’s extraordinary talent for drawing was spotted by teachers at the age of 10 whist at school in Crosby north of Liverpool. She attended Southport School of Art and Manchester College of Art where she graduated with First Class Honours in Textile Design. She arrived at The Royal College of Art in 1957. She studied at the same time as Zandra Rhodes, Derick Boshier, Pauline Boty destined to be icons of the Pop Art movement, Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, and Jane Percival were also classmates and friends. Her extraordinary talent was rewarded with a Fulbright Scholarship to Parsons School of Art in New York. Here she designed book covers and full page advertisements for the New York Times. On return to London in 1964 she produced designs for Heal’s, Liberty’s and Biba as well as commissions from the German Firm Rasch Textil. She emigrated to the USA in 1984 becoming a celebrated artist in her own right with work in museums and collections across the USA.

## COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

### Armada 1965

Screen Printed Cotton  
78 x 123cm  
Heal Fabrics









Nicola Wood (1936 -)

LITERATURE

*Twentieth Century Textiles*, Francesca Galloway, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 2007  
*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008

EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain*, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008  
*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain*, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010

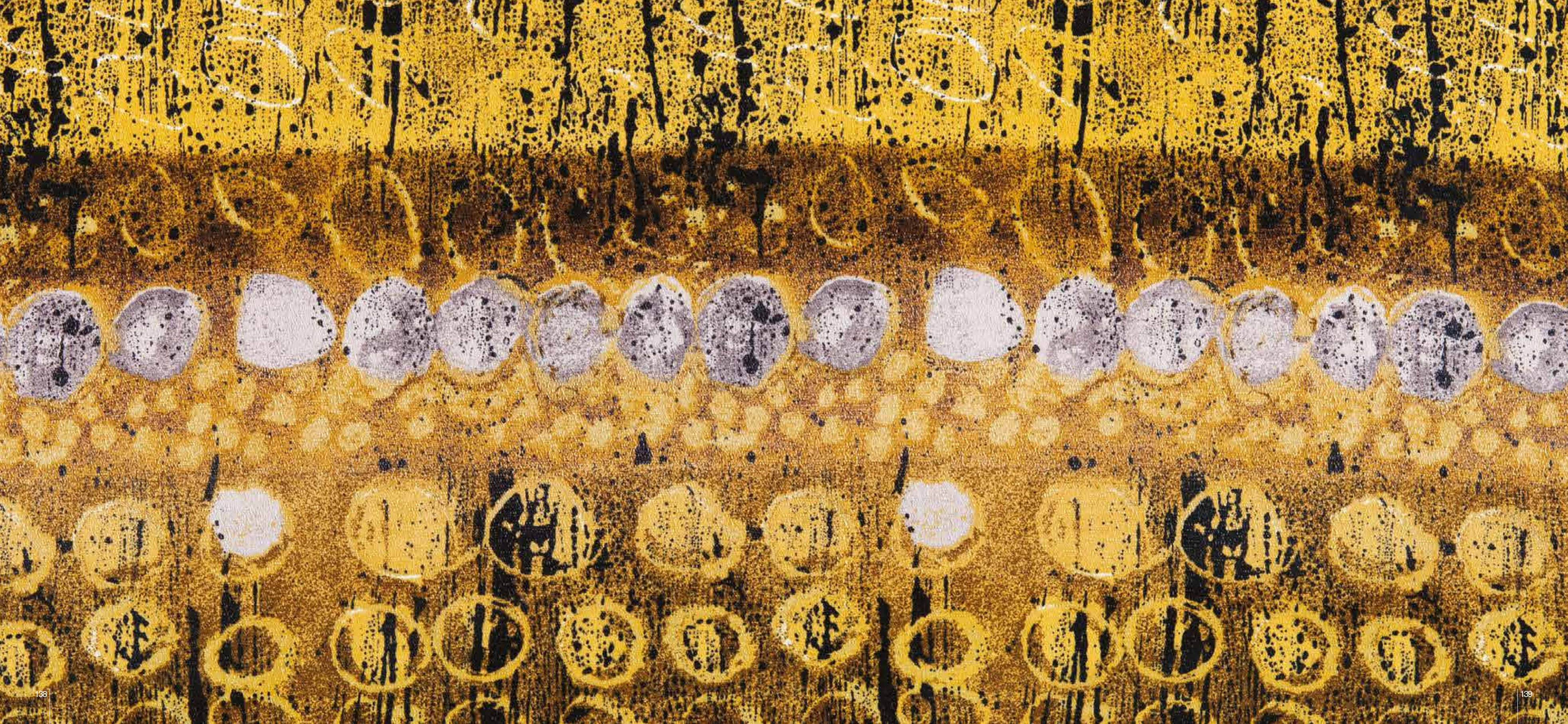
COLLECTIONS

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse*, Denver, Colorado, USA

April Showers  
1964/5  
Screen Printed Cotton  
68 x 82cm  
Heal Fabrics







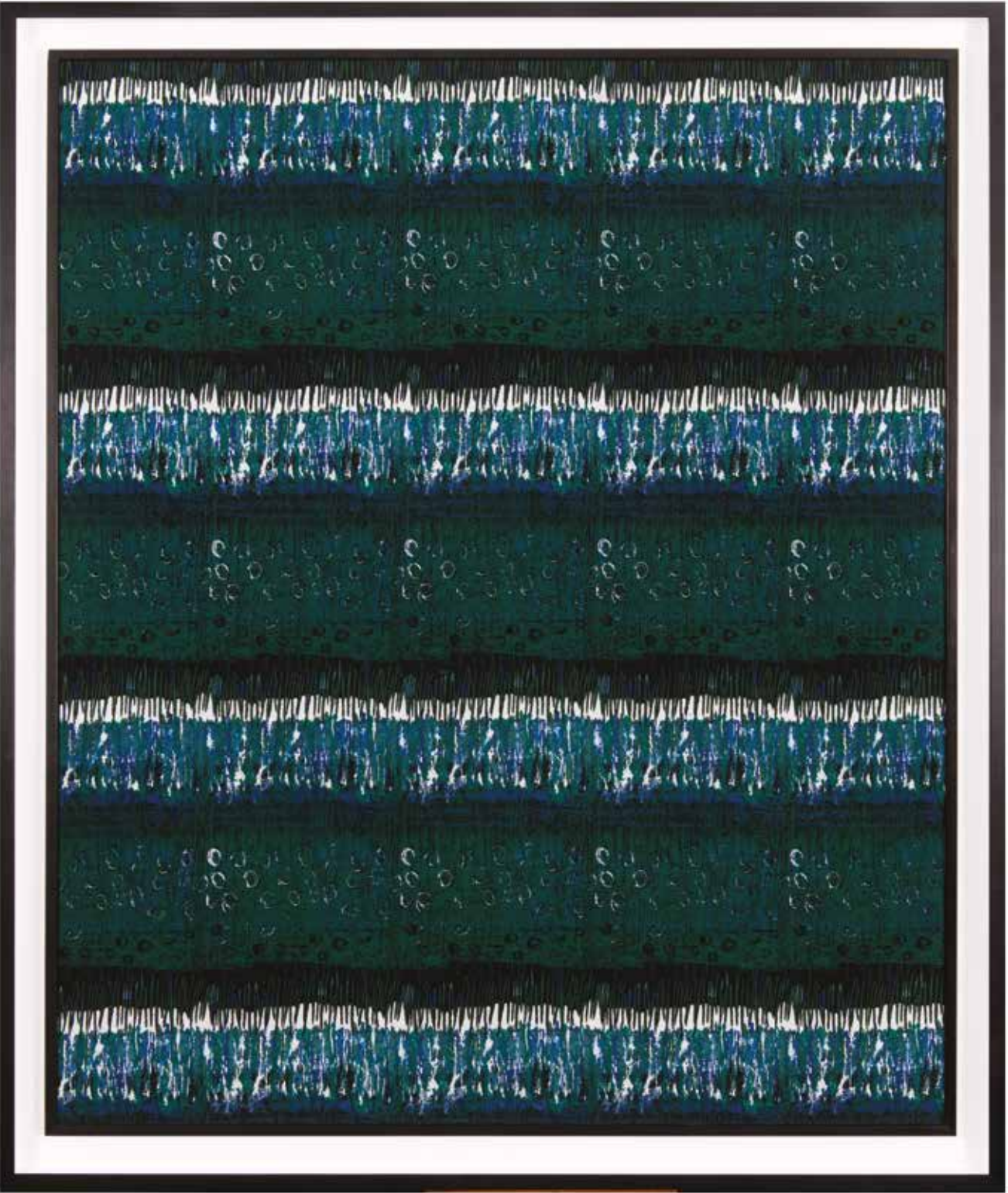


Nicola Wood (1936 -)

COLLECTIONS

*The Victoria & Albert Museum*

**Vibration**  
1964  
Screen Printed Cotton  
131 x 109cm  
Heal Fabrics









# A Conversation with Nicola Wood

Ashley Gray	<p>Thank you so much for talking to us and I am delighted that your textiles are included in this important exhibition, Material Textile: Modern British Female Designers with <i>Vibration</i> from 1964, <i>April Showers</i> from 1965 and from the same year <i>Armada</i> in fiery reds and oranges.</p> <p>Can I take you back to the early days as your journey as a designer and artist has been quite unique. It was your very earliest drawings that were spotted by one of your teachers that set you on your life's journey?</p>
Nicola Wood	<p>Yes, absolutely, Mr Aspdidge at Forefield Lane school in Crosby. I didn't know that he thought I was a good artist. I lived near to the school. I could see the school yard from my bedroom window. In the summer holidays I would take a tennis racket and play against the wall in the school yard. He encouraged my mother to send me to Southport School of Art. I was 15.</p>
AG	<p>How did you find Southport?</p>
NW	<p>I worked at the cinema in Southport when I was at the Art School there in the early '50s. I used to sell the ice creams in the interval. The films were mostly American, and they shone with resplendent landscapes of sun, beaches, swimming pools, palm trees, and chrome-laden automobiles; nothing was rationed; all was colour 'opulence'. I loved them. At Southport, the training was strictly 'classical', life drawing and anatomy, attention to 'the line' was embedded in my classes: lines of the human body, the cut of clothing, the contours of landscape, and the lines of architecture.</p>
AG	<p>Were you able to specialise on the course?</p>
NW	<p>Yes, I was told to do Fashion and Textiles. I wanted to be in the Painting School but was told – “no, no, no, Fashion and Textiles, you're a girl, you should do Fashion and Textiles.” I was young, I did not object of course. I couldn't, I had always been told what to do and I did it. I did not like cutting patterns. I saw the Textile department were splashing paint around so I transferred to Textiles so I too could splash paint around.</p>
AG	<p>That was a good move. When I think of your later textiles for Heal's - <i>Vibration</i> and <i>April Showers</i> - it is their wonderful painterly quality that gives them their vitality. So painting was freedom for you?</p>
NW	<p>Absolutely, yes, yes. I can remember one thing that I did there, looking through a microscope at a cut-up bumble bee – all the colours and abstractions in that inspired me. You can imagine a bumble bee just the wings – extraordinary abstract shapes. I would just look in the microscope and do a painting.</p>
AG	<p>It was around this time that you first visited the Royal College of Art in London?</p>
NW	<p>Yes, I had heard about the Royal College, that it was the tops, the place to aim for. I had heard about London and I was curious. When I passed my intermediate exam at Southport, I don't know how I did this! I went to London for the first time on the charabanc. A 9-hour journey, to see if I could get into the Royal College of Art. Not knowing you had to apply formally. I found myself on Tottenham Court road not knowing where I was going to live and I just asked people and finally a policeman's wife took me in. I must have been about 17.</p>

AG	<p>Did you get to the Royal College?</p>
NW	<p>Yes, indeed. Textile Professor Robert Nicholson took me into his office one day and the only sentence I remember him saying to me was: “It's pointless teaching women art, all they do is get married and have children”. I get goose bumps thinking of that moment.</p>
AG	<p>Yet in this exhibition we see living proof that it was women designers who changed the cultural face of Britain. Bringing your designs into people's homes that radically changed the way that people felt about, and lived, their lives.</p>
NW	<p>Right! But I still got a First-Class Honours from the Royal College. During the period I was at the Royal College I designed a lot, I was very inspired by the Thames &amp; Hudson book published in the late 1950s or early '60s, Art since 1945, which covered Abstract Expressionist paintings from America and I got involved with Abstract Expressionism and really went to town on it. It was wonderful. I made a lot of designs and sold a lot that had this abstract feeling. It was the key inspiration of this period of my life. I was discovering texture and abstract shapes as opposed to conventional flowers that had always been very popular. We did, I now realise, change the course of design history. Tom Worthington of Heal's who bought these and produced them to begin with was the instigator of all of this.</p>
AG	<p>Your work at the RCA was recognised by the visionary Sir Robin Darwin, one of the most revered figures in the RCA's history?</p>
NW the	<p>Yes, prior to graduation, Sir Robin introduced me in the Senior Common Room, announcing that I was to be a Fulbright Scholar to the Parsons School of Design in New York. I was only 21 and had never been to New York.</p>
AG	<p>How did it contrast to your experience in London?</p>
NW	<p>Oh, it was contrasting. I showed up to class wearing trousers and was told to go home and change into a skirt. The world was behind London when it came to the 1960s and the mini skirt. Everything was changing, fashion changed, textile design changed, painting changed, everything was in change. It was exciting. When I got to Parsons School, they put up a big exhibition of my abstract textile designs in the lobby of the Art School, which was very nice. I had a wonderful teacher called Emil Antonucci a graphic designer, a magnificent creative man and he believed in me. He taught me how to do book jacket design and how to set type.</p>
AG	<p>You won commissions in New York?</p>
NW	<p>Yes, I had more work than I could handle, and I was supposed to be only studying. Endless book jackets like the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Tennessee Williams Night of the Iguana. Full page advertisement artwork for CBS TV. It never occurred to me that I might be a graphic designer.</p>
AG	<p>So, when the scholarship was completed, how did you feel about having to return home to London from New York after having achieved so much?</p>



NW

I did not want to go back; I was not finished. I was living in Greenwich Village on Bleeker Street, which was the hub of whatever was happening with the youth in New York. All the artists hung out down there. I had the most wonderful time and I did not want to go back to England. But I had to go. I was dating a man who I had fallen in love with. He came back with me on the Queen Mary. We were married at the Registrar's Office in Chelsea on the Kings Road. He got work as a copy writer at an advertising agency. I still have the trunk that we used for the crossing with the Cunard Line stickers all over it.

AG

What of your fellow Royal College classmates?

NW

Dereck Boshier, Pauline Boty destined to be icons of the Pop Art movement, Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney and Jane Percival, Zandra Rhodes were classmates and friends. We all saw ourselves as ‘one and the same: artists’. We all lived in Notting Hill Gate - Zandra, Hockney, Ossie Clarke who lived a couple of doors down from me. Michael Hastings the playwright lived upstairs.

AG

Were you conscious of it being such a unique time?

NW

No, no. It was just life. If I had been conscious of it, I would have respected it more. I would never have guessed that the people I was at college with would become so famous. We were just all so involved in our own work.

AG

So, the commissions started to come in from Heal's, Liberty's, John Lewis and Barbara Hulanicki's Biba.

NW

Oh yes, but Heal's had already discovered me while I was at the Royal College. They bought work from my diploma show. I remember later walking back to my studio on Blenheim crescent and seeing to my surprise and delight my designs on the curtains in a window of a big house. *Vibration*, the one in the exhibition, was an early one from 1964, Tom Worthington, the Heal's buyer and later Managing Director, even sent staff to New York to try and get me to give them more designs.

AG

Who else commissioned your designs?

NW

I had a runaway hit with Rasch in Germany. I did not realise how successful it was until I got a cheque in the mail. I didn't know if it was for £1 or £100. I took it to Barclays and asked them to deposit it and the lady said, “Oh it's for £1,000!” My designs had sold so well for them that they put me on a royalty agreement. I was exclusive with them so I couldn't design for anyone in England any more. They advertised me and the work all over Germany.

I am still in touch with the family, we talk as if I was family. After all they commissioned me for over 25 years. I only stopped when I started painting my oil paintings in L.A. I still visited Germany twice a year.

AG

So, in 1978 you flew across the Atlantic and settled in Southern California?

NW

I was invited to LA for a while and I liked it so much that I kept putting off going back and I stayed. I continued sending designs to Germany, I had wanted to become a poster designer. Then in 1984 in the middle of painting, I glanced out a window of my apartment in Hollywood, and caught a glint of sunlight reflected off the chrome of a car parked on the street below. The car was a 1959 Cadillac. I grabbed my camera and raced downstairs to photograph the car feeling as if its gleaming chrome and swoopy contours were magnetic forces pulling me. I knew I had to paint the car and that I would no longer be a textile designer. That was artistic epiphany. From that moment everything changed.

my

AG

25 years as the only woman member of the Automotive Fine Arts Society in the United States?

NW

Yes, the renowned Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles exhibited a selection of my paintings in which the actual automobile featured in each painting was staged with my painting of the car. That exhibition was sponsored by Cadillac. I was commissioned by other automobile manufacturers to create paintings of their cars; Aston Martin being one of those firms. So, all those American Movies, featuring American cars and American landscapes, the films I used to watch in Southport, they never went away.



# Mary White (1926 - )

Mary White was known for several iconic textile prints of the 1950s. She studied textile design at Thanet School of Art and Crafts and worked with the design studio of David Whitehead. White was designing during the same period as British textile designer, Lucienne Day. Her textiles were also commissioned for RMS Queen Mary and Heathrow Airport. White drew on the work of William Morris, books of flowers and the countryside where she grew up, to create hundreds of designs in her career. Some of her most famous creations were ‘Coppice’, ‘Cottage Garden’ and ‘Zinnia’ commissioned for Liberty and Heal’s. Many of White’s designs are held in the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Warner Textile Archive in Essex and the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester.

## LITERATURE

*V&A Pattern – Heal Fabrics, V&A Publishing, 2012*

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Spectrum, Heritage Patterns & Colours, Thames & Hudson / V&A, 2018*

## EXHIBITIONS

*Designing Women of Post War Britain, Colorado Springs Fine Art Centre, USA, 2008*

*Women Design, Mid-Century Britain, The Textile Museum, Washington DC, USA, 2010*

## COLLECTIONS

*H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse, Denver, Colorado, USA*

### Coppice 1954

Roller Printed Cotton  
38 x 68cm  
Heal Fabrics









“With regard to the background of how our ‘collection’ of post-WWII British women came to be, we can say the following: the act of ‘collecting’ does not always begin as a conscious decision to try and assemble a group of related objects. Sometimes a collection just becomes one after you realise one day that you have been drawn to these types of objects over a period of years, and have acquired a lot of these, and the amassed group is large enough to be called a collection. And of course, once you become conscious of the fact that you have the makings of a collection, you must then decide, “shall we try and make this a real cohesive collection by acquiring the most important and representative designs by specific designers, or shall we just continue to collect randomly when we see designs we like, regardless of the designer?” In the case of British women designers (and British men designers, but that is the subject, and possible exhibition, for another time), we did what any compulsive collectors would do: we collected both systematically and randomly. And these perceptions of our collecting style and habits fairly well sum up how we came to have the collection of what we think are beautiful and stunning textiles by post-WWII British women designers.

Finally, we believe these women designers and their beautiful designs deserve much greater recognition than they have heretofore received, over the last decade examples of their original textiles from our collection have been exhibited worldwide and we hope, those who have seen them will come away from the exhibitions with the same opinion.”

Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown III, Denver, Colorado, U.S.A Collectors’ Comments for  
*Art by the Yard - Women Design Mid-Century Britain, The Textile Museum, Washington DC 2010*

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