

# WOMEN TO WATCH

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March, we've invited nine leading women in design to tell us about the emerging talents they admire most

Words DEBIKA RAY



## Lizzie Deshayes

Together with Tim Butcher, Deshayes is the founder of Fromental, which makes exquisite hand-painted and bespoke wallpapers (fromental.com)

Because we make wallcoverings at Fromental, I find pattern or design on any surface very interesting, which is why I responded to Jasmine's work. Her draftsmanship skills and the way she handles a paintbrush are extraordinary, especially because she paints directly onto the round surface of an object. Her work is also very mature for her age – you can see in photographs the progress she has made and how she has blossomed in just a year. Her ceramics are very beautiful, tactile objects, but I also saw some work she did during the lockdown. She didn't have many materials at her disposal, so she made sculptures out of packing tape, using a combination of clay modelling and origami techniques. There's something really spontaneous about the way she works.



Jasmine and her 'Zoological Stories' plates

### ONE TO WATCH

#### JASMINE SIMPSON

**What drew you to ceramics?** I was raised and studied in Stoke-on-Trent, and my grandparents worked at the Potteries. From a young age, I was encouraged to use clay. For me, it's like sketching in 3D.

**Tell us about your use of animal imagery...** We often use animals to represent ourselves and I like to explore this idea in my work. I'm inspired by literature, such as *Crow* by Ted Hughes and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Initially, I capture an expressive snapshot of live subjects through drawing, painting or paper sculpture. I then abstract these into ceramic figures or use my drawings to inform the surface designs for my murals, platters and vessels.

**How do you plan to develop your work?** I'd like to apply my style of painting to even larger murals, vessels and ceramic furniture. [jasminesimpsonart.cargo.site](http://jasminesimpsonart.cargo.site)



## Kirath Ghundoo

Renowned for her bold and graphic wallpapers, Ghundoo has been at the leading edge of surface design for 10 years (kirathghundoo.com)

I discovered Diane's work on Instagram in early 2020, and was drawn to her exquisite paintings. It's mesmerising watching her create bespoke wallpaper panels, mixing the traditional art of chinoiserie with her own vibrant and sophisticated approach to colour. Her attention to florals and nature is meticulous and awe-inspiring. There is an authenticity to her style as an artist, which – alongside sharing the realities of running a small creative business – has helped her grow a devoted Instagram following. Our paths may cross one day within interiors – I'm thinking a chinoiserie/geometric-inspired wallcovering could be rather cool!

### 'IT'S MESMERISING WATCHING DIANE CREATE HER WALLPAPER PANELS'

PICTURES: SARAH HOGAN PHOTOGRAPHY

### ONE TO WATCH

#### DIANE HILL

**What drew you to chinoiserie?** I first discovered it at university and liked how chinoiserie wallpapers were non-repeating panoramics. I also love nature. When I joined a handmade chinoiserie wallpaper firm in the UK, they sent me to China to learn to paint on silk with natural brushes.

**Tell us about your approach.** Chinoiserie wallpapers are so lavish, and often only available to the extremely wealthy. I want to share them with the world at a more affordable price. My technique is quite unique in that I paint onto pure silk, which is specially treated and backed with paper, using watercolours. I use two brushes, one loaded with paint and the other water to create a perfect gradient. I then paint very fine details with a precision brush.

**Where do you draw your inspiration from?** Mostly 18th-century Chinese and Japanese art, particularly woodblock printing for the beautiful compositions and colours, as well as Indian miniature paintings. [dianehill.co.uk](http://dianehill.co.uk)





## Oona Bannon

Bannon co-founded furniture brand Pinch with husband Russell in 2004, heralding a new wave of contemporary, crafted British design ([pinchdesign.com](http://pinchdesign.com))

Emily is part of the Pimlico Road community, where our shops

are based, and her work is motivated by similar factors to ours – the desire to create simple, beautiful, well-made pieces, with an emphasis on materiality. Her work is intricate and passionate, with a strong sense of British craftsmanship. Her wall hangings in particular are pieces to treasure – they add warmth and texture to the home, as well as being stunning in their modernity and graphic strength. I love her use of diagonals within the weave, and the fact she uses nature, but also construction as inspiration – whether that's a dry stone wall or a piece of engineered metal. Finally, her Instagram offers some therapy – following the cycle of animal, landscape, inspiration, process and beautiful product.

**'EMILY'S WORK IS INTRICATE AND PASSIONATE, WITH A STRONG SENSE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP'**



## Alice Rawsthorn

The critic, author and speaker is one of the world's most revered design commentators ([alicerawsthorn.com](http://alicerawsthorn.com))

I encountered Meghan's work last year when I did a series of crits at Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands. Her graduation project, *This Work of Body/This Body of Work*, addresses key issues in contemporary design, including its complex relationship with the textile industry and gender identity. Historically, textile design has produced remarkable work, often by women, at a time when they were excluded from other fields. But it has a parallel history of pollution, criminality and labour exploitation. It's incredibly difficult to reflect that in one project, but Meghan did so beautifully.

## Nipa Doshi

As co-founder of Doshi Levien, she has created designs for a raft of international brands, from B&B Italia to Kvadrat ([doshilevien.com](http://doshilevien.com))

Marion worked with us at our studio from about 2009 to 2012 and during that time I was struck by the fact that she enjoyed the process of design and creation as much as the final product. The quality is still clear in her practice, as is her playfulness and the sophistication of her thinking. She often uses quite humble materials like paper, so there's a sense of ephemera and transience in her work, which I think is another way of her enjoying the process. Her graphic approach chimes with my own, which is very rooted in drawing, colour and collage. Marion's range of references is also interesting – often industrial designers can be narrow in their references and have a rigid emphasis on functionality and engineering. In the future, in addition to her producing interactive installations, I can see Marion doing a very broad spectrum of work, from creating interactive, technology-embedded surfaces and medical textiles, to projects for children and educational purposes.

**'MARION ENJOYED THE PROCESS OF DESIGN AND CREATION AS MUCH AS THE FINAL PRODUCT'**



**ONE TO WATCH**

### EMILY WATTS

Tell us about your brand...

I wanted to show that British wool is a beautiful material not to be dismissed and relevant to contemporary design. My philosophy is to celebrate local, sustainable materials in their purest form. I use undyed British wool in natural shades, some of which I commission myself from small, family-run mills.



**How do you transform the material into objects?** My grandmother introduced me to knitting when I was young and, since then, I've always looked at things and wondered how they are made. I view textiles as a form of construction. The patterns featured in my textiles are woven in by hand as the fabric is knitted – it's almost like drawing and results in something very tactile. The pieces are always finished with hand stitching.

**What do you hope to achieve next?** My ambition is to employ more women to work alongside me. I also want to produce more pieces on a larger scale and make bigger 3D shapes, while still maintaining the handmade quality of my work. [@thegoodshepherduk](http://thegoodshepherduk)

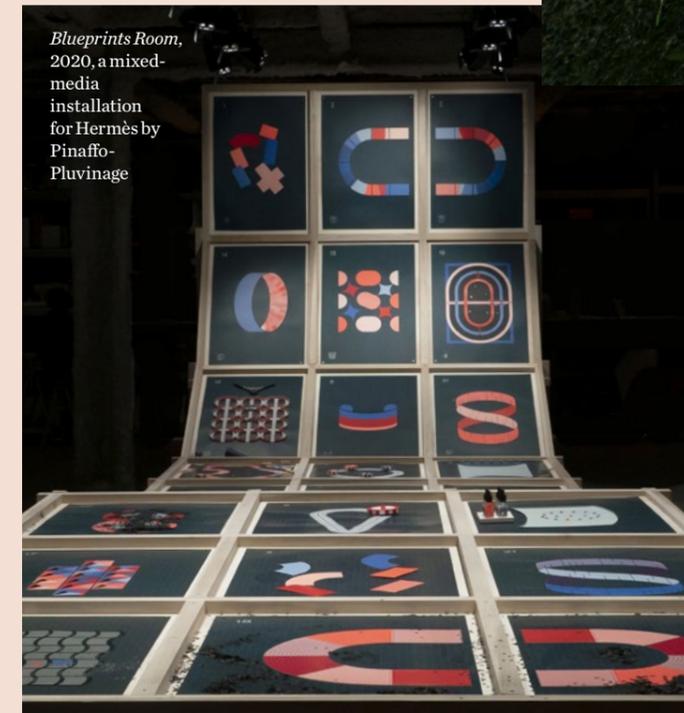
**ONE TO WATCH**

### MEGHAN CLARKE

**How did you come to work with textiles?** I've worked with textiles in a non-formal way for a long time before studying the subject during my degree. I developed my current methodology on the Contextual Design course in Eindhoven.

**Tell us about your master's project...** *This Work of Body/This Body of Work* is inspired by factory workers who reclaim time through sabotage. I work with discarded textiles that have a family history, and subject them to a slow process of undoing and redoing. I refer to it as 'non-productive productivity'.

**What are your ambitions?** I think of my work as the first of many contributions to a larger discourse about sustainability and the value of material and labour. [meghanclarke.cargo.site](http://meghanclarke.cargo.site)



*Blueprints Room, 2020, a mixed-media installation for Hermès by Pinaffo-Pluvinage*

PICTURES: MICHAEL LECHE, ALLUN CALLENDER, RODRIGO CARMATEGA, SIMONE PERCIARI

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### MARION PINAFFO

**What drew you to design?**

I've always loved to invent things. I went to school in Paris and then worked for Doshi Levien in London, where I discovered a world of shapes, colours and a passion for hand-drawing.



**How would you describe your work?** I trained in industrial design, but discovered print at the start of my career. Now I love to use the endless possibilities of print to make graphic, functional objects in paper or cardboard. I set up my studio with Raphaël Pluvinage in 2015. At that time we were developing a book of toys made with conductive ink. Since then, we've been working on technological, playful and graphics objects, some for clients such as Hermès.

**What are your long-term ambitions?** As a studio, we'd love to develop our approach internationally and work with new materials and technologies. [pinaffo-pluvinage.com](http://pinaffo-pluvinage.com)



## Eva Sonaïke



Through her London-based studio, Sonaïke creates home furnishings and textiles inspired by vibrant West African designs ([evasonaïke.com](http://evasonaïke.com))

I came across Freya in a magazine shoot featured on Instagram and fell in love with her work. I've always been obsessed with ceramics, and I find hers so serene, beautiful and timeless. A lot of people these days are inspired by Scandinavian or Japanese simplicity, but her pieces are very opulent and quite traditional. I particularly like her

recent collaboration with Studio Krokalia – the works catch your eye and are contemporary, while at the same time being classic, almost echoing the shapes of ancient Greek vessels. Her use of colour and pattern is phenomenal. There's a synergy with the way I work in the way she draws, sketches and lays out patterns, even if the end product is totally different. She shares a studio with her father and sister and they all teach ceramic classes to adults and kids, which I also find inspiring. Our aesthetic is very different, but I can see her work complementing mine in a shoot, or sitting in a space I've created as an interior designer.

**'FREYA'S CERAMICS ARE SO BEAUTIFUL... HER USE OF COLOUR AND PATTERN IS PHENOMENAL'**



## Sally Mackereth

The award-winning architect is known for her storytelling-led approach ([studiomackereth.com](http://studiomackereth.com))

Natasha caught my eye because of her project related to the housing crisis. Her research deals head-on with subjects we urgently need to tackle, such as urban density, tenure and budgets. It also captures the zeitgeist of the post-Covid world, for example by challenging the design of typologies like the office. Her project, 'The Loneliness Lab', couldn't be more relevant, and the importance she places on a sense of belonging is also of the moment. She isn't afraid to embrace words that relate to emotion and intimacy – architects, as builders of cities, have a responsibility to design for human qualities such as sociability. I admire her energy and her belief in architecture as a force for positive change.

## Bethan Gray

Celebrated homeware and furniture designer Gray spent 10 years as Habitat's design director before founding her eponymous firm in 2008 ([bethangray.com](http://bethangray.com))

I came across Beth's work on the website for the New Designers exhibition, which is close to my heart because I won a prize there myself when I graduated. I was drawn to her glass vessels because colour is very important to me, and I love her use of strong hues and bold combinations. I also adore the thickness and chunkiness of her pieces. Glass-blowing is done using very traditional techniques, but she has a contemporary take on the craft. I'm not a glass artist, but I have worked with glass blowers on a couple of projects, so I understand how difficult it is to get the kind of fluidity you can see in Beth's work, as well as the sense of simplicity embodied in her vessels. Simplicity is actually very difficult to achieve.

**'I LOVE BETH'S USE OF STRONG HUES AND BOLD COMBINATIONS'**

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#### BETH GATES

**How do you design your glass vessels?** I'm inspired by landscapes: I capture beautiful sunsets and sunrises, as well as fields, through photography, sketching or printmaking. I then use the colours in my sculptural glass vessels.

**What is your glass-making process?** I use an old Venetian technique called 'submerso', which normally involves lots of different furnaces with pots of colour in them, which are gathered and layered on top of each other. I've transformed that process because hot shops today don't have the capacity to have lots of furnaces, so instead I layer solid pieces of coloured glass on top of each other.

**Are you influenced by particular artists?** The shapes of master glassmaker Lino Tagliapietra influenced a lot of my early work, and the bright colours of Neil Wilkins are similar to mine. I'm also inspired by the glass-blowing of the late 1960s, when artists started making more robust, statement pieces, and Swedish, Danish and Czech artists, whose work is thicker and more dense than those of English and Venetian craftspeople. [bethgatesglass.com](http://bethgatesglass.com)



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#### FREYA BRAMBLE-CARTER

**What drew you to ceramics?** My father is a sculptor, and I used to help him out in his studio in my early years. I then studied fine art at Chelsea College of Arts, where I played around with clay in the ceramics studio. When you first experience clay, it's like everything is relaxed – you melt into the material and it absorbs all of your woes.

**How would you describe your approach to your work?** For me, the process is as valid as the final piece. It takes time and when the piece is fully glazed, fired and finished, there is a stillness that compels me to move on to the next.

**You also teach ceramics – how does that fit into your work?** I'm drawn to helping people and during the last lockdown I was teaching every day. I want to help ease the fear and desperation people are feeling while stuck at home and I know pottery is a therapy for many. This is a really important aspect of my work. Selling the final objects is just the cherry on top. [freyabramblecarter.com](http://freyabramblecarter.com)



PICTURES: COLIART, THOMAS GALE

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#### NATASHA REID

**Tell us about your practice, Matter Space Soul.** Our aim is to advance how the places we create can improve quality of life and wellbeing. In 2015, we won a competition for innovative solutions to the housing crisis. Our concept related to how large-scale development can be done at a human scale by paying attention to how people want to live and creating a sense of community. Since then we've implemented different aspects of this through various projects. **What are the challenges facing cities?** We'll soon start to see the long-term impacts of the pandemic, with the reimagining of offices and high streets, and the strengthening of neighbourhoods. There is an opportunity to bring about new approaches in this moment of disruption. [matterspacesoul.com](http://matterspacesoul.com)

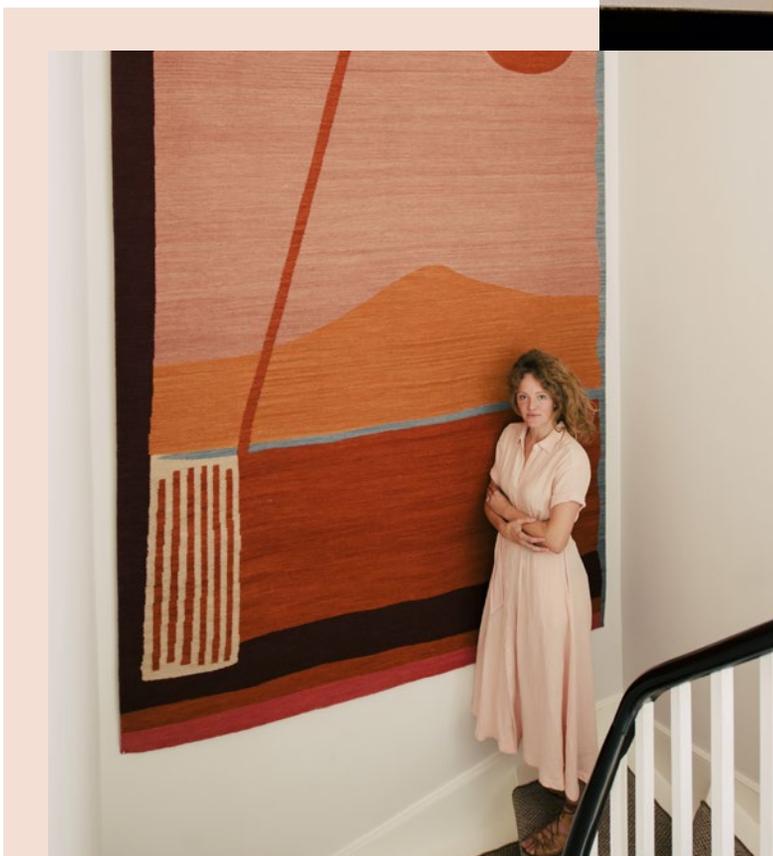


# Tatjana von Stein

Director of interior design firm *Sella Concept*, von Stein's distinctive schemes are sought after in hospitality, retail and homes across the globe ([sella-concept.com](http://sella-concept.com))

Sussy is an interior designer and one of my most talented friends so it's wonderful to see her launching the rug side of her business, which is an expression of her artistic side. Her designs are fluid, painterly, emotive and rich in texture. A lot of rugs look like the product of mass consumerism, but hers feel like pieces of art. It's almost a shame when you start putting furniture on her rugs, which is why it's so lovely to see them as wall hangings. Even the sketches she makes for the designs are beautiful – I would love to frame them all. While she's mostly responding to commissions at the moment, I believe she'll release a ready-to-buy range, which will be just as inspiring as her current works.

**'SUSSY'S DESIGNS ARE FLUID, EMOTIVE AND RICH IN TEXTURE. HER RUGS FEEL LIKE PIECES OF ART'**



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### SUSSY CAZALET

**Tell us about your work...** As an interior designer, I work with traditional materials and artworks, and need an emotional connection with each piece. I started designing my own furniture a few years ago and I'm launching a collection of rugs this spring. Making custom rugs allows me to paint, collage, work with other designers, travel and support women weavers in Jaipur, India.

**How does your initial training as a classical musician feed into your work?** There are no boundaries between the arts. They all feed into one another. Music has been an anchor throughout my life – beautiful music and beautiful design have a similar effect on the soul: they lift the spirit and change a situation or place for the better.

**Who or what are your design influences?** I'm influenced by Brazilian modernists such as Lina Bo Bardi and Martin Eisler; Sergio Scaglietti, who sculpted the classic 1950s and 60s Ferraris; furniture by Charlotte Perriand; tapestries by Alexander Calder; and the life and work of woodworker George Nakashima. [sussycazalet.co.uk](http://sussycazalet.co.uk) **ED**