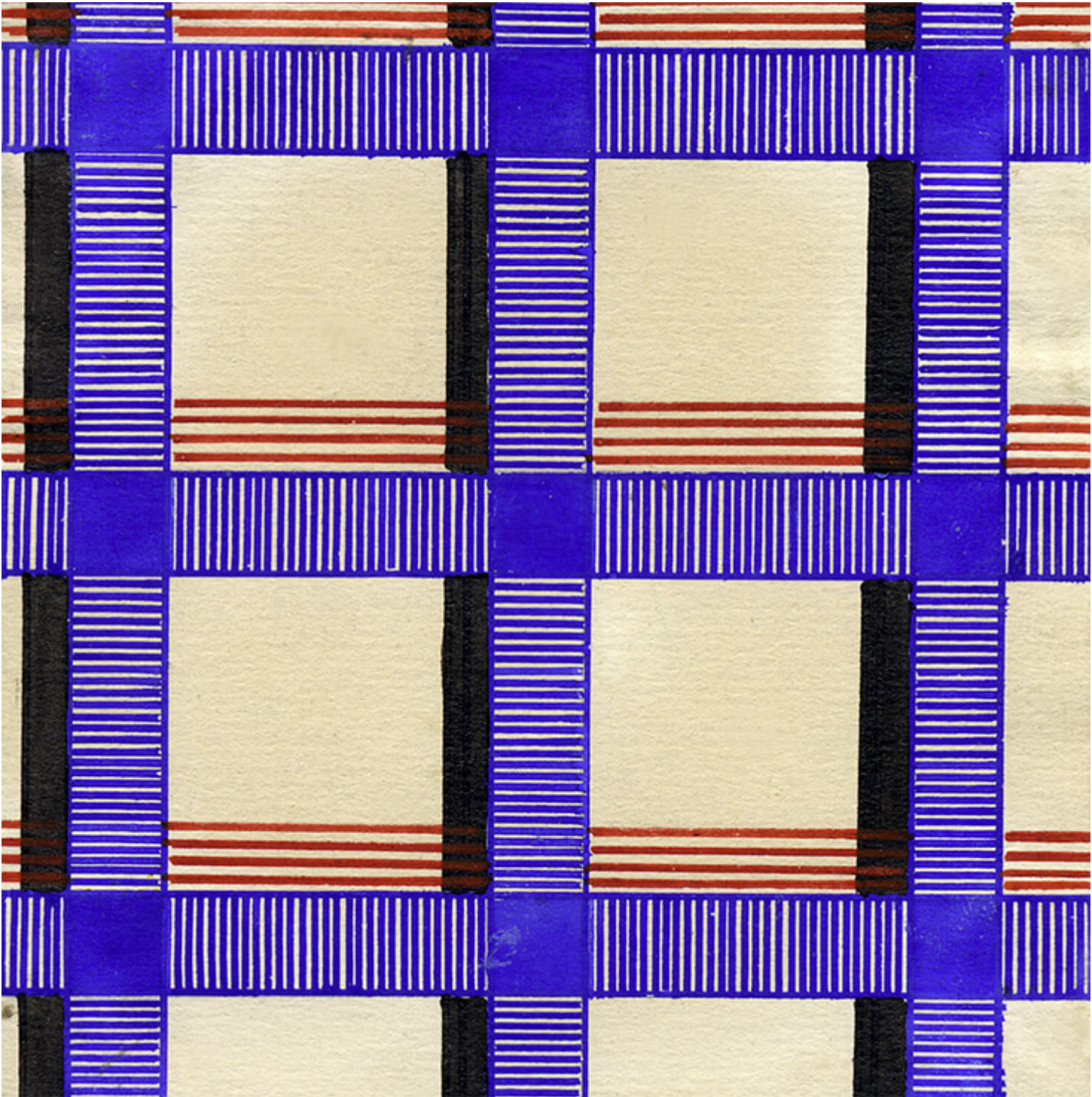




The Fabric of Life: Textile Designers Through Time

Description



Lubov Popova, artwork for textiles, 1923â1924

âWe live surrounded by cloth.â Kassia St Clair

It is hard to imagine what our lives would be without textiles. From the clothes we wear to the bedding we sleep in and the furnishings that adorn

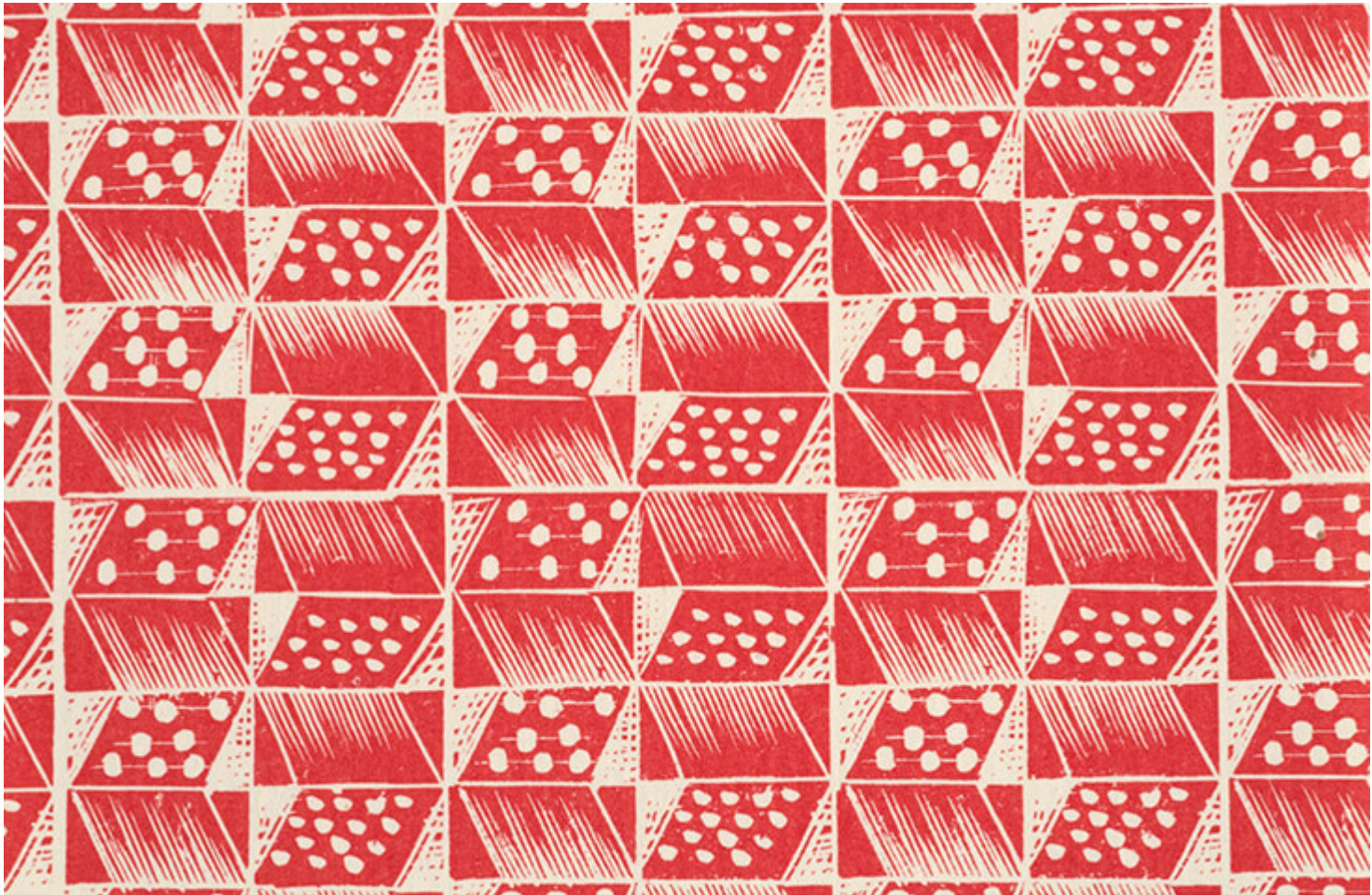
our homes and work places, sumptuous patterns and textures define the world we live in. Visionary textile designers through the ages have produced richly decorative and ingeniously inventive designs that have made their way into the spaces we inhabit, filling them with order, tranquillity, vitality and energy. In this new series, we will take a closer look at some of the most daring and influential textile makers and designers of all time, examining the lives and works of these trailblazing pioneers.



Varvara Stepanova, Artwork for textiles, 1924

Like many of her fellow Constructivists, Russian artist and designer Lyubov Popova (1889-1924) believed artistic endeavour and mass-produced,

utilitarian design should be merged into one in order for art to become truly democratic. Though she started out as a painter of what she called "spatial force constructions," the rhythmic geometric patterns and pared-back colour schemes in her art came to play out in her endlessly inventive textile designs, while her ideas filtered into fashionable textile designs for generations to come.



Enid Marx textile design

English textile designer Enid Marx (1902 - 1998) shared with Popova a love of energised geometry. Once hailed as Britain's "queen of patterns," she borrowed motifs from folk and popular art and brought them into some of the most widespread woven fabrics of all time, including the seat covers for Britain's tube trains and buses to be sat on by millions. Of a similar generation was English designer Lucienne Day (1917-2010), whose

progressive designs featuring dandelion clocks and calyx are still bestsellers amongst the British public today. Inspired by the 20th century abstraction of Vassily Kandinsky, Day merged elements of representation with simplified forms and brilliant colours. Though she started out designing fabric for dresses, her involvement with the Houses for People Movement led Day to design a much-loved range of carpets, table linen and curtains.

The British-based textile company Ascher was founded by Czech-born couple Zika and Lida Ascher in 1939 and they quickly earned a reputation for printing dazzlingly attractive patterns on a huge range of fabrics, with meticulous attention to detail. Their focus was on innovation, novelty and exuberance, injecting lively fun into the dull postwar British wardrobe with wild flowers, birds and swirly Op-art effects; they even commissioned leading artists including Henry Moore and Henri Matisse to produce printed patterns for them. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the Aschers went on to supply fabrics to the international fashion industry, attracting high-profile costumiers including Christian Dior, Cristobel Balenciaga and Yves Saint-Laurent.



Siirtolapuutarha, one of Marimekko's most famous textile motifs

Another prominent husband and wife duo who made textile history were the Finnish-based Viljo and Armi Ratia, whose 1950s lifestyle brand Marimekko produced some of the world's best-loved, hand-printed textiles. Fostering a spirit of innovation and freedom, their free-wheeling, organic textiles adorned clothing, furniture, wallpaper and home furnishings; two of their most iconic designs were the *Unikko (poppy)* and *Pallo (ball)* designs. Under new leadership following Armi's death in 1979, the Marimekko brand is still going strong today. Japanese textile designer Katsuji Wakisaka began his career with Marimekko in 1968, before returning to Japan to found his own textile

company SOUSOU. With a focus on innovative designs inspired by nature and Japanese art traditions, Wakisaka says his designs "add a fresh touch of colour to your everyday life."



1971

Another contemporary designer making waves within the textile industry today is Senegalese artist and designer Aissa Dione, whose exquisitely hand-crafted textiles are made on traditional looms with Senegalese organic cotton and raffia. Dione employs fifty Manjack master craftsmen to weave distinctly African inspired patterns featuring intricately layered zig-zags in muted, rustic colours, while her work is in high demand for fashion, home furnishings and furniture upholstery around the globe. Just a brief glance at some of the world's most prominent textile designers reveals how rich and vastly diverse the field of textiles continue to be, and how interwoven their fabrics are with our lives. Author, cultural historian and writer of *The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History*, 2018, Kassia St Clair argues, "Fabrics are man made and natural - they have changed, defined, advanced and shaped the world we live in."

CATEGORY

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2. TEXTILE DESIGN

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