Made by Hand: Ellen Merchantâ??s Printed Textiles

# Description

Ellen Merchant in her studio.

One of Britainâ??s most exciting and adventurous textile and wallpaper designers working today, Ellen Merchant places traditional print processes and high-quality materials at the heart of her creative practice. Inspired by the Arts and Crafts emphasis on hand-made design over mass-produced goods, her work embraces traditional, hand-block printing techniques and features intricate, ornate, botanical designs with a playful, whimsical quality. Her design and upholstery studio is situated in the town of Winchelsea, on the coast of East Sussex, where she creates high-quality products alongside her husband, and owns a homeware shop and showroom.

# Nomad fabric 100% Linen

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Merchant has had a lifelong interest in art and design, a passion that spilled out into her future ambitions. She says, â??Growing up I was particularly interested in drawing and decorating things, and over time that naturally evolved into designing patterns.â?• She adds, â??When I started designing textiles it felt like all my interests aligned! I learn best by trial and error, by experimenting with different processes within print.â?•

Ellen Merchant hand-painting textiles during her time as a student at The Royal

Merchant trained at Londonâ??s Central Saint Martins, followed by Camberwell College of Art, and the Royal College of Art, graduating in 2019, before winning several prominent prizes that launched her career in textiles. From her student days Merchant has worked with hand drawn designs, mapping out the initial emblems, or â??tilesâ?? for her repeat patterns in a sketchbook. She says, â??I like to plan out the repeats traditionally using grids on paper and stick them on the walls rather than using a computer.â?•

She spends hours hand carving these tile designs onto blocks of lino or wood, and each one features more than one colour, needing several layers to create the final logo. Merchant says, â??Each colour must be printed individually and layered over each other, so each one requires a different block or tile.â?• Rather than trying to be completely perfect, she embraces the hand-made irregularities that can occur during this process, observing, â??It is the irregularities of the prints that make them look so charming and evidently hand-made!â?•

## Palmette fabric 100% Linen

All Merchantâ??s textiles are silk-screen printed entirely by hand at a West London print and wallpaper company, who use water-based inks on linen to create high-quality, luxurious fabrics designed with durability and longevity in mind. Merchantâ??s practice of working with reasonably local manufacturers, non-toxic materials, and keeping print runs small-scale is in line with her ethically aware values, as she explains, â??We are dedicated to working towards a sustainable future so we strive to constantly learn and evolve, continuing to focus on how our processes can have minimal impact on our environment, without ever compromising on design and quality.â?•

# Bluebells fabric 100% Linen

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Perhaps unsurprisingly, Merchantâ??s greatest influences include the decorative design work of Arts and Crafts pioneers William Morris and C.F.A.

Voysey, who first ignited the first spark of passion in her for pattern-making. She also draws in influences from travel, as she explains, â??I have a lot of ideas for prints jotted down that I pick up from all over the place â?? often from travelling, finding beautiful old objects in markets and also from vintage fashion or antique textiles.â?• She merges these charming, old-school references with contemporary references, giving her work a rich visual complexity.

Merchantâ??s work has featured in prestigious luxury magazines including House & Garden, Elle Decoration, and Country Life, cementing her place in the realms of contemporary British textile design, and marking her out as a refreshing contrast to mass-produced fabric. And much like the Arts and Crafts designers, Merchantâ??s work adorns interior spaces with a hit of luxury and quality, underpinned by a deep respect for the human hands that have made them.

## CATEGORY

1. TEXTILE DESIGN
2. TUTORIALS

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