THE FABRIC OF YOUR LIFE: TEXTILES IN FINE ART, FASHION, INTERIORS, TRAVEL AND SHOPPING
Welcome

WELCOME TO THE NEW AND IMPROVED digital edition of Selvedge. These few sample pages offer an introduction to – what we hope – will become a simple, fast and effective way to read Selvedge. Since our launch Selvedge has been hailed as an innovative addition to the field of textiles, now with the aid of the latest technology we aim to spread the word even further. Textiles are a tactile and sensual medium and maintaining the high visual standards of our paper edition will be our priority. To maintain the look and feel of the magazine we are using a ‘page turning’ design that allows you to flip through the magazine or go directly to your favourite features. As well as being environmentally friendly and space saving, the relaunched digital edition will also offer exciting interactive elements such as direct links to museums, galleries and advertisers. We hope the service will offer superb value, particularly for academic institutions and oversees subscribers.

Textiles are among the first and last things we experience as human beings: they cover us from cradle to grave now Selvedge covers everything in between. We aim to offer the world’s best textile photography, peerless writing and intelligent, stylish design. While admiring the surface, we unravel the concept, history and context of textile trends, profile the makers, and visit stunning destinations around the world. The magazine is essential reading for those who study, work or simply wonder what it is like to be involved in fashion, interior or textile design. I hope you enjoy this digital glimpse of Selvedge and will want to see more. Please contact us to find out more about subscribing to or advertising in Selvedge.

Polly Leonard  Editor

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It may all come out in the wash but it will only get dirty again. Why not remove the middle man and have a napkin embroidered with chips and tomato ketchup soaked silk? The endless circle of staining and cleaning is at the centre of recent work by Glaswegian artist Deirdre Nelson. Exploring the relationship between food and textiles Nelson permanently embedded a range of foods in table linens sourced from the ‘contemporary archive’ of eBay. Much of her time was spent visiting Granville Arcade in the heart of Brixton market, and discussing with stall holders which foods would stain cloth and thread. She created her own recipes for food dyeing using jerk seasoning, sorrel, sumac berries, onion skins, parsley and spinach creating a palette silks to stitch with.

The London Printworks Trust is one of the UK’s leading centres for printed textiles. It is home to designers including Eley Kishimoto, Jonathan Saunders and Jessica Ogden, it also holds exhibitions and runs an artist-led education programme. Their open access textile print workshop is a godsend for recent graduates and artists, who can also receive help through the trust’s bursary scheme and professional development advice service.

The instantly recognisable work of Orla Kiely now has a dedicated flagship store in London. Over two floors it carries her entire range of ready to wear and accessories. Dublin born Orla has been producing her trademark graphic prints for over ten years and the appetite for her ‘new nostalgia’ shows no sign of waning. If you can’t make it to London don’t fret, Orla’s online shop has all her summer essentials.

Liberty’s quirky new furniture collection, produced in collaboration with Squint, features chairs and sofas dressed in a patchwork of vintage fabrics.

According to a recent survey supermarkets give away an estimated 17 billion plastic carrier bags every year. The idea of “Stitching Up Oxford Road” is to make something positive out of these plastic bags, transforming a wasteful product into a thought provoking artwork. Textile artist Lynn Setterington has taken cuttings from plastic bags and used them to stitch tiny parachutes called “Suffolk puffs”, hundreds of these are then combined to create large-scale artworks.
Lovey Dovey

Clare Nicolson produces a range of textiles and accessories digitally printed with the images of her patterned and textured paper collages. ‘I like cutting shapes rather than drawing. Although you don’t get the same control as when you draw something, you do get unexpected results: the shadows that appear give the image its own dimension.’ The designs are inspired by anything and everything: an old teapot; a walk in the country; even the birds in her garden which make an appearance as lavender bags.

www.clarenicolson.com

Blanket ban

‘As a collector of Welsh blankets I’ve developed an acute knowledge of moth habits’, says Athene English. ‘They are a peril to any textile collector. I was fed up with using naphthalene and camphor so I have collaborated with Tree-harvest to produce blanket wash made from andiroba, lavender, geranium, bitter orange, citronella, white camphor and oak moss.’

Blanket Wash, £10 plus £2 p&p
The Great English Outdoors,
Herefordshire, T: 01497 821205.

Fast floral

The long awaited Topshop collection by Celia Birtwell is finally in store. Birtwell has reinterpreted some of her fashion textiles from the 60s, creating pieces that are unmistakably hers: bold prints, stripes, feminine shapes. When the collaboration was announced last year Celia told The Times “I love Topshop. Even at my age, if you brave the changing rooms you can usually find something fabulous. Looking beautiful should have nothing to do with your bank balance.” It’s a laudable attitude, and given Topshop’s unbeatable talent for forward-looking fashion at fantastic prices it’s within reach. In fact the determining factor in whether you get to float about this summer in one of Celia’s pretty prints is likely to be speed, not spending power.

T: 0870 606 9666 www.topshop.co.uk

Cross stiches

Ruth Cross creates four or five new stitches for her collections of knitted fashion, accessories and homeware pieces. ‘I like exploring the technology of knitting. It’s a great textile because you are not restricted on width and you can insert different stitches as you go along, as and when required.’

Ruth Cross is showcasing her work at an Open Studio in March, www.ruthcross.com T: 01425 652880.

All roads

Emilo - Prince of Prints - Pucci has been described as a jewel in the history of Italian fashion. It is only fitting in that case that the latest in a list of boutique stores stretching across the globe from Palm Beach to Saint Moritz to Bangkok opens in Rome. The fashion house had a store in the city during the 1970s: now the newly opened boutique has an ultra-modern interior concealed by an elegant historic facade. Inside, shoppers experiencing retail fatigue can recline on printed sofas and “socialise as Romans love to do”.

Via Borgognona 21, 00187 Roma, T +39 06 6784058, www.emilnopucci.com
Close Knit

Appropriately for designers whose latest collection draws on a theme of pagan goddesses, it is the religious concept of three-in-one that draws Weardowney to knitting. The simultaneous creation of pattern, shape and texture is the quality that excites and inspires Gail Downey and Amanda Wear. They take this idea and apply it directly, working round the body to produce garments that focus on the individual. For spring/summer 06 intricate handknits display age-old techniques with stitches derived from woodlands, fields, furrows, leaves and flowers. The pair do understand the benefits of technology; they also perceive its limitations. Gail believes the hand alone is limitless: “you can create anything and solve any problem by hand.”

Weardowney holds seasonal knitting courses at its flagship boutique.
9 Ashbridge Street, London NW8.
T: 020 7727 9694, www.weardowney.com

Razor sharp

Swedish textile designer Petra Borner’s strikingly beautiful cut paper collage designs sashayed down the catwalk on dresses, and skirts at Cacherel’s A/W 2006 Paris show. “I layer coloured paper and cut freehand with a scalpel. The aim was to mix gothic narratives with clean Scandinavian patterns, using ‘woodcut’ effects.” Borner’s work translates well to other disciplines, recently she has designed a projection lamp for Mathmos and a series of book jackets for Penguin. As if that wasn’t enough Petra who studied at Central Saint Martins, has her own fashion label, Rosetta.

www.borner.se

Open house

Online booking is open for a limited season of tours at 7 Hammersmith Terrace, London, an exceptional arts and crafts domestic interior. It was lived in by Emery Walker, a typographer, antiquary and pre-eminent figure in the arts and crafts movement.

No. 7 is a feast of textiles, ceramics and furniture. They capture the world he inhabited and reflect his connections with significant artists, literary and political figures of the 19th and early 20th century.

There are original wallpapers in every room, wall hangings and the only known example of Morris & Co linoleum still in situ. Also to be seen are furniture by Ernest Bamsley and ceramics by William de Morgan. It is not a purist’s interior, however. These artefacts live alongside Walker’s collections of Eastern and North African rugs and ceramics, only adding to the charm of this period piece.

Tours 10am, 12 noon and 2pm, Thursday, Friday and some Saturdays, 6 April-28 July, www.emerywalker.org.uk
T: 020 8741 4104. •••
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Email: jossgrahamgallery@btopenworld.com

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Better nature
MARIA ÅSTRÖM’S SUMMER RETREAT
Summer is just around the corner when textile designer Maria Åström squeezes her Stockholm studio and husband Sam into the car and sets off for the south. Hours later they approach the 19th century farmhouse “Tola”, beautifully located under a group of old trees facing the majestic Baltic Sea. “First thing we do every year is to sprint around the house for a quick check. Then I turn to the roses and Sam to the kitchen garden,” says Maria. Hopefully the house has survived undamaged through the winter. The landscape in this part of Sweden provides no shelter against the harsh seawinds.

Fortunately, both house and garden were fine, and a few weeks later the garden is overflowing with delicate pink roses and every vegetable imaginable is growing in the kitchen garden. Maria has adapted to a slow countryside tempo, in tune with the peaceful atmosphere. “Here there is time to linger, to experience nature, time to draw and work in the garden. This is where I find my creative inspiration, and my patterns comes alive.”

Maria Åström is an important textile designer in Sweden. Not since Josef Frank has Sweden seen such well drawn flowers, trees and fruits on textiles.

Not since Josef Frank has Sweden seen such well drawn flowers, trees and fruits.
Her pattern Citrus Limon, created in 1990, is a minor classic. The list of other patterns is impressive: Ekblad (Oakleaf), Fiki, Peony, Tulipa, Vitis Vinifera, Botanica, Rosa Centifolia. In Maria’s patterns the flowers and plants are drawn in scale 1:1, with one exception, the Rosa Centifolia. “This pattern was originally meant to be embroidered on a cushion and I wanted it to be one single rose, a rosa centifolia. But later I decided on a pillowcase – and that is when the rose got blown up.”

The Rosa Centifolia pattern demonstrates a rich variation in detail; tiny holes in a leaf, or a slightly darker dot in another. “If a so-called naturalistic pattern is too perfect it becomes boring! I like to include nature’s own imperfection, like the worm-eaten leaf...it adds something interesting to the pattern.” In real life Rosa Centifolia is a rose with big rounded flowers and an astonishingly fresh scent. It takes both skill and patience to pin down its loveliness with a few well-chosen lines.

Roses are Maria’s favourites in the garden, many of them more than 40 years old. The dominance of pink is obvious. “Not any ‘pink’,” Maria says. “It has to have a
slight touch of cerise!” And, yes, looking closer you notice the fresh sting within the seemingly soft shades of pink; both in the real flowers and printed pattern.

It comes as no surprise that the latest interior project is ‘the pink chamber’, a lovely room decorated in a mix of modern design and romantic antiques. “The interior of the house is dedicated to easy living. We want the house to be beautiful yet modest. Children and grandchildren spend their summers here.”

When Maria first started to work in pattern construction, she worked within certain limits for the colour schemes. Citrus Limon is composed of only three colours. This year Maria has created a splendid pattern for Ikea; a walnut leaf for their Stockholm collection. It will be launched in Britain in the autumn. For those that can’t wait a new pattern will be available this summer. Liberty will stock Anemone, delicate red anemone stars on finest white satin, in their Svenskt Tenn shop.

Since 1990 Maria has worked with the Ljungbergs textile factory where she can use up to seven colours. With experience comes knowledge. “Today I know by heart how to put colours together but still the design process is very slow. From sketch to pattern takes time. I draw and re-draw. The process starts sitting in the garden drawing a flower or a leaf. Through sketching, and painting, I get to know the plant; I want to know how the leaf connects to the stem. When fall comes and it is time to return to Stockholm, I carry the feeling of Tola with me and distill a clear idea out of summer’s work. The result is a beautiful drawing. With that done the hard part of the design process begins. The pattern has to find its own rhythm and flow. It has to feel real but at the same time speak about artistic integrity.”

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Cia Wedin
Grand tour
A JOURNEY TO FIND A LASTING HOME FOR VANISHING TRADITIONS

As a linguist, Sheila Paine has always been interested in different cultures. She also had an early love of embroideries, having bought her first sampler at the age of 17. She began curious to find out about where in the world embroidery traditions still survived: now, after many years and more journeys, she has gathered a wealth of knowledge, and a collection which is both wide and deep, containing some rare pieces.

Rigorously thorough, when Sheila visits embroiderers she photographs the stitching step by step if possible and buys examples of the work to illustrate the making. In her collection of Chikan whitework embroidery from India she not only has the traditional exquisite shirts and caps, but also a fine cotton base cap before stitching. This breath of fabric illustrates the extreme delicacy of the craft - and Sheila’s photographs remind us that this was done outdoors in the heat and dust!

The hats which the Margilan women in Uzbekistan make for their menfolk fascinated Sheila so much that she even slept on a hard floor in anticipation of waking at 5am to see the hats taken out of the press. Back home, in the drawer are the hats and also the materials, detailed notes, photographs of the women at different stages of the process, and a picture of the smiling men sitting around wearing them. Photographs of individuals wearing the garments bring the piece to life, a record not only of its beauty but also its surroundings.

The future of the collection and its value as a record of vanishing traditions seems uppermost in Sheila’s mind and she documents her acquisitions meticulously. Before any item is put away in its labelled drawer it is tagged with a note of geographical origin and a number. A corresponding card is then written up with all relevant information and filed. Sheila is also an able writer and has published three volumes of travel writing and four books on various aspects of the embroidery itself, with Embroidered Textiles: Traditional Patterns from Five Continents now a standard reference.

Sheila Paine’s embroidery excursions have been most frequently to India, Pakistan, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and North Africa. The cultures visited are on the whole Islamic, and in many areas women are still confined to the home for long periods: not a desirable situation but one ideal for producing intricate embroidery. Sheila still regularly takes groups to Central Asia and Morocco, but especially in the latter the number of embroiderers is diminishing fast.

The universal education of women, improved roads and communications, and the advent of television have contributed to the demise of hand crafts – and of the painstaking time-consuming occupation of embroidery in particular.

Although she regrets that she was probably a generation too late to encounter traditional embroidery in its full glory, her curiosity and persistence – at times taking great personal risks as in Afghanistan at the time of the Taliban - in gathering detailed information as well as examples of the work will be of lasting benefit. Astonishing discoveries can come out of war-torn areas where embroidery traditions continue despite upheaval, oppression, and tragedy. Even the Mujahidin who smuggled Sheila into Afghanistan in a burkha have beautiful embroidered covers for their guns.

Shelia’s collection is so large and diverse that it is easy to forget that it is restricted to embroidered work. Everything has been worked upon, decorated and elaborated over and above the basic cloth itself. Embroidery is the overlaying of cultural significance onto everyday necessity. It tells us so much about the people whose traditions and beliefs it illustrates. The hope is that the whole of Sheila Paine’s extraordinary collection of traditional embroideries - the extensive notes, the explanatory and contextual photographs, the examples of so much that was glorious but is fast disappearing - will be saved for all in a major museum.

...even the Mujahidin, who smuggled Sheila into Afghanistan, have beautiful embroidered covers for their guns.

Olga Norris
Once bitten, twice shy
LIAQAT RASUL SAVOURS THE TASTE OF SUCCESS FOR THE SECOND TIME

Be careful what you wish for, the saying goes, you may just get it. Liaqat Rasul knew what he wanted. A fashion student at the University of Derby who had taken time to train in Delhi, he wanted to create beautiful clothes but retain his independence: he wanted to continue to travel and to maintain the freedom he had found in India. More importantly for a graduate making tough decisions for the first time, he knew what he didn’t want. Not for him the ‘sell out’ move to industry, nor even the glamorous fashion industry.

It wasn’t the desire for an easy life that motivated Liaqat. He had an early experience of how difficult and unpredictable the fashion industry could be, for his first foray into catwalk fashion as a student was far from smooth. An administrative error meant that although his graduate collection was picked to go on show at Graduate Fashion Week Showcase, the wrong collection was packed: the important and influential audience didn’t see a stitch of Rasul’s work. Looking back Liaqat can now see the proverbial silver lining. The fashion council, mortified at the mistake, pulled out all the stops to get the right collection seen by the right people.

It was at this point that fortune began to favour the brave, and the London store Liberty stepped up and bought his graduate collection outright. The Liberty buyers had fallen in love with Liaqat’s use of textiles, the beautiful fabrics and shapes inspired by his Pakistani heritage and his wider travels in India.

Liaqat Rasul works between England and India marrying tradition, innovation and craft from both cultures. His work uses embellishment, colour and texture to create a sense of longevity and nostalgia. Liaqat’s fledgling label was called Ghulam Sakina, an amalgamation of two Urdu words meaning servitude and beauty, and on the basis of his first collection entitled ‘Multicultural Mind Mayhem’ Liaqat was hailed as a rising star, pick of the crop of 1999. Accordingly his collection flew from the store. But the fairy tale ends there: what happened next proves just how difficult it is to survive on talent alone.

While we eagerly await each season’s bright new things we choose not to notice the last batch fading from view. The turnover is so fast that like ancient astronomers we don’t realise that half of the pretty new stars of fashion are already dead, burnt out from the stress of attempting to run a business. One
collection, even a fantastic collection, lasts just six months and then you are back to square one.

Liaqat admits he was unprepared for round two. In his next collection for Liberty he was keen to demonstrate his range of skills. It was a departure from the first and beset by the inherent problems of repeats. Authors, musicians, artists and sportsmen will tell you how hard it is to recreate a good performance...sometimes it seems the natural follow-up to success is failure and it is only gamblers that would tell you otherwise. Despite having access to the Anokhi print workshops in Jaipur where the second collection was produced, it didn't sell as well as the first, nor did the third; almost as fast as they had picked him up Liberty dropped Liaqat and Ghulam Sakina.

Thus came dark days in the life of a designer, and it prompted some serious soul searching. Perhaps surprisingly the result was a renewed commitment to the independent route but Liaqat had learned that business skills are as crucial as design skills. He embarked on a steep learning curve to ensure that the administrative side of the company was strong enough to support the creative. Part of the lesson was understanding the importance of not overstretcheding. Asked if he has any plans to expand his collections to include bags or accessories, Liaqat is firmly against the idea, explaining that he simply does not have the time.

Today Liaqat seems happy and content, although this is overlaid – it has to be said...
– with an air of utter fatigue. Despite the tiredness his enthusiasm for fashion is unmistakable. He repeatedly leaps to his feet to touch the clothes he is discussing. He still spends most of his time travelling, as he explains he “still needs India, there’s always something new”, and remains a small independent designer. He shares a studio with accessories designer Ally Capellino and attempts to manage all aspects of production alone.

Over the last five years the label has recreated its strong reputation. During the craze for all things Bollywood, Ghulam Sakina was one of the few intelligent options, offering Indian glamour without the overwhelming glitz. More recently Selfridges – where Liaqat has the highest sell-through on the contemporary fashion floor – commissioned Ghulam Sakina to create an installation of textiles, art and fashion as part of their larger Atelier theme, a celebration of fine detail, bespoke tailoring and the handcrafted. It was an experience Liaqat found fascinating. Producing pieces solely for display was liberating and it’s a freedom he would like to explore further.

For S/S 06 Ghulam Sakina draws on the elegance of the 1940s. Liaqat’s signature style of unconventional silhouettes, printing and hand finishing are in evidence but a restrained palette of tainted creams, pale yellows, brown and mint green shifts the emphasis to the contrasting textures, pattern and fabric density. Jackets are quilted in a spot motif and loose, layered, silk crepe tunics have cut-work details. A nautical theme appears in one strand of the collection and here Liaqat takes a difficult reference – every summer a misguided designer sends out models dressed in unflattering sailor suits – and subtly merges it with relaxed unstructured shapes. Fresh without being prissy, it’s a great interpretation of an overused idea. It also represents Ghulam Sakina’s greatest strength – taking deliberately jarring elements and blending them in a strangely satisfying way. ••• Beth Smith
WHEN IN LONDON...

Annie Sherburne A beautiful new range of eco and sustainable yarns and threads. Pure Fab East, 126 Columbia Road, Shoreditch E2 T: 020 7328 2182 www.anniesherburne.com • Cho Cho San Part gallery, part shop, part showroom... completely beautiful. 9 Camden Passage, N1 T: 020 7359 6000 www.chochosan.co.uk • Cockpit Arts The largest provider of affordable workspace for designer-makers in London, regular open studios offer a chance to view and buy work. Holborn, Cockpit Yard, Northington Street, WC1N T: 020 7419 1959 Deptford, 18-22 Creekside, SE8 T: 020 8692 4463 www.cockpitarts.com • Contemporary Applied Arts Britain’s largest gallery devoted to contemporary craft. 2 Percy Street, W1T T: 020 7436 2344 www.caa.org.uk • Egg Maureen Doherty’s shop still gathers together the most interesting objects and designers. 36 Kinnerton Street, SW1 T: 020 7235 9315 • Fabrications Textile designer Barley Massey’s studio is also a gallery dedicated to contemporary textiles and design.
7 Broadway Market, Hackney E8 T: 020 7275 8043 www.fabrications1.co.uk • Geffrye Museum The changing style of the English domestic interior from 1600 to the present day. 136 Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, E2 T: 020 7739 9893. www.geffrye-museum.org.uk • Hand Hand crafted pieces sourced from around the world by owners Gail Arnold and Susannah Baker-Smith. 11 Colville Mews, W11 T: 020 7792 1292 • Joss Graham Oriental Textiles Themed exhibitions and tribal art for sale. 10 Eccleston Street, SW1W T: 020 7730 4370 • Livingstone Studio Garments by Jürgen Lehrl, Raag Workshop, Shirin Guild and NUNO textiles as well as original pieces by graduates of the Royal College of Art. 36 New End Square, NW3 T: 020 7431 6311 • Loop A knitter’s heaven, classes, homework, clothes, haberdashery and vintage buttons plus a drop-in SOS knitting clinic. 41 Cross Street, Islington, N1 T: 020 7288 1160 www.loop.gb.com • MacCulloch and Wallis Traditional and indispensable haberdashery 25-26 Dering Street W1S T: 020 7629 0311 www.macculloch-wallis.co.uk • MODA Design, decoration and social history; the museum houses the Silver Studio archive, Peggy Angus Archive and Charles Hasler Collection. Middlesex University, Cat Hill, Barnet, Herts, EN4 T: 020 8411 5244 www.moda.mdx.ac.uk • The Constance Howard Research Centre An eclectic treasure trove of textiles, including an archive of techno-fabrics from NUNO and donations by ex-graduates from the 1980s and 1990s. Deptford Town Hall, New Cross High Street, SE14 T: 020 7717 2210 http://vads.ahds.ac.uk • The Fashion and Textile Museum Lectures and exhibitions.
83 Bermondsey Street, SE1 T: 020 7407 8664 www.ftmlondon.org • The Vintage Textile Fair “The Rolls Royce of the Vintage Fashion Fairs”. Events take place approximately every five to six weeks. Hammersmith Town Hall, King Street, W6 T: 020 8543 5075 www.pa-antiques.co.uk • V V Rouleaux The finest ribbon and trimming selection. 54 Sloane Square, Cliveden Place, SW1W T: 020 7730 3125 6 Marylebone High Street W1M T: 020 7224 5179 www.vvrouleaux.com •••

Selvedge address book
It's usually a small huddle of girls that start the annual playground craze: but soon some of the more thoughtful boys are joining in, relishing the artistry and, of course, turning it all into a race. Hands flash and fingers wriggle: the eternal cycle of cats cradle repeats endlessly in the blissful gap between double english and maths. You may remember how you manipulated the loop of string, taken from a fluffy pocket, a little grubbier each time. Perhaps you were one of the whiz kids who knew all the variations: candles, diamonds, fish in a dish, even the complex ones; apache door, carrying wood, lightning. If so, you may have been aware that these figures are part of the cultural history of many tribal peoples. The Eskimo watched as the caribou herds moved across their lands, and told their stories in string. To the Navajo of Northern America the making of string figures was a gift from “Grandmother Spider”. The natives of the Gilbert Islands believed in a spirit hero known as Na Ubwebwe, a guide to the underworld who would not allow the dead to continue their journey unless they could perform a certain series of string figures. Our own cat's cradle figure is a single survivor from a host of others now lost, and crude enough compared with the intricate and beautiful patterns devised by peoples under starry skies in distant lands. First you need your string – some races used a thong of skin; in the Pacific islands a cord of coconut fibre, or of human hair finely plaited, serves. Next you need some clear instructions, “String Figures” by Caroline Furness Jayne is a classic reference, expounded over eleven pages are the details of the “real cat's cradle”. • • • Peter Shaw
Fandango