

Introducing...

By taking classic designs and mixing them with contemporary imagery, Esther Patterson's distinctive creations are taking centre stage



Graphic designer Esther Patterson creates lighting and surface patterns 07894 423 250 | www.curiousaandcuriousa.co.uk

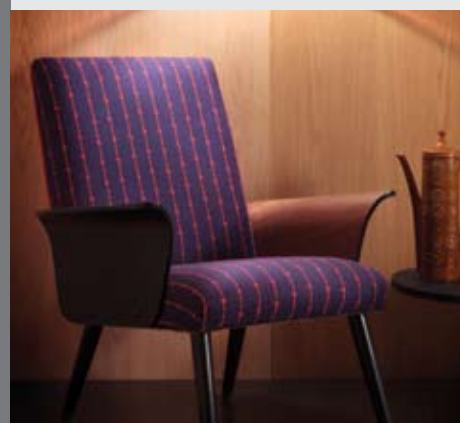
The patterns are enticing, the colours complementary, the chairs look inviting and the cushions comforting, but look a little bit closer and something darker reveals itself. A bird gobbling an insect, a baby's head imposed on a moth and a pinstripe pattern that on closer inspection becomes entangled barbed wire. These disquieting images belie the first impression that these curious objects give. Apt, then, that designer Esther Patterson exhibits under the name of Curiousa & Curiousa.

Esther worked as a graphic designer before completing a degree in decorative arts at Nottingham Trent University in 2009. Her work includes bone china and glass lighting, and surface designs that she applies to wallpaper or fabric used to upholster vintage chairs. She was recently spotted at a Best of British: Open Call day at Liberty in London and her table lamps can now be purchased at the prestigious department store.

Esther launches a reproduction of a 1960s French chair at the year's Tent London [see page 130] and she's developed 10 colourways of her contemporary pinstripe design for it, which make an exciting contrast to the classic shape of the chair.

Collaborating with skilled craftspeople is something that Esther is passionate about, and she only uses local makers for the upholstery work and hand-blown glass lighting.

Esther has dabbled in ceramics, printing and textiles and, judging by this past form, it's clear that she could branch out in any number of directions. When asked exactly what it is she designs, she replies: "All sorts – and I like it like that. If I get bored, my heart isn't in it!"



Have you had any products go to market?

I'm launching my first chair at Tent London, 23rd to 26th September. I took it to the Midcentury Modern show in Dulwich earlier this year. It's quite a small show but I sold the one on display and took two orders. And I've just delivered my first order to Liberty in London.

Have you won any awards?

I was spotted at the Best of British: Open Call day at Liberty's along with a handful of designers from nearly 600 hopefuls. We were also filmed throughout the whole process and the day will be featured in a BBC Two program called The Buying Game, hosted by Theo Paphitis. The selection day started at 7am as we had to queue outside Liberty's ready for the doors to open at 10am. Having got through the first round, it wasn't until after 7pm that I eventually got the call to go through to the final selection panel. It was there that I met Ed Burstall, the buying director for Liberty. It was very nerve-racking but they were all so positive about my work.

Is there a theme to your designs?

I like to work with traditional elements but give my work a modern twist through the imagery I use. I explore relationships between beauty and perceived ugliness, questioning perceptions and examining visual metaphors. I use pattern and form to surprise. My designs can appear fluttery and feminine from a distance but reveal a darker side close-up.

What do you love best about your artform?

That I can create a piece from start to finish and I'm in full control of the process

– especially when I'm slip casting the bone-china parts. It's not always straightforward, though. Sometimes the shapes you want don't work with the material and you have to experiment and have enough resilience to get it right.

What is your favourite piece?

I really like the fact that my 1960s-style winged chair is elegant without being too feminine and sturdy without being awkward. It just feels so right to sit in – very comfy. As you can tell I love it.

What is your favourite part of the design process?

I love the anticipation of opening a kiln door and finding that the objects have fired beautifully.

How would you describe your designs?

Beautiful and intriguing with a few sharp edges.

What is your proudest moment?

Being selected at the Best of British day at Liberty.

Who is your design hero?

Grayson Perry. It's interesting how he uses challenging, personal material on innocent-looking, traditional vase shapes. It brings up the question: is it fine art or decorative art, or both?

What are you currently working on?

A hand-blown glass light piece that is wrapped in chromed barbed wire.

Which celebrity would you like to design for?

I'd like to create Vivienne Westwood a scary, stylish table lamp.

