DECORATION

The inspiring creatives continuing the Arts and Crafts ideal of artist-designed homewares

The work of artists Georgie Hopton, Nancy Nicholson and Tanya Ling spans textiles, wallpaper and tableware – and imbues daily incidentals with a visionary beauty

By Fiona McKenzie Johnston
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'I do wish you wouldn't always paint your best things just to decorate odd corners of your house,' wrote Roger Fry to Vanessa Bell in 1920. The house was Charleston in East Sussex, where the muralled interiors reflect a belief in the importance of art's place in the everyday. Fry was partly responsible. A curator, critic and artist, between 1913 and 1919 he ran the Omega Workshops with Bell and her partner Duncan Grant, where he encouraged post-Impressionist colour and form to be applied to fabrics, furniture and ceramics. It wasn't a new idea: prior to the Renaissance, fine and decorative arts were united under the guild system, and they were later reunited in the Arts and Crafts era. Some Omega designs – printed linens, marquetry trays – were outsourced, but the belief in the merit of artist-designed homeware was the same.

It has proven to have lasting value. An inspiring new exhibition at Tate Britain, *Vanessa Bell & Duncan Grant: Inside Bloomsbury* (November 12–April 11; tate.org.uk), celebrates the artists' relationship with each other. As well as paintings, it includes original pieces designed and decorated for Omega and Charleston, which still cast a cross-disciplinary spell. The oeuvre of the artists featured below similarly spans the genres, affording us the enduring joy of daily incidentals imbued with a visionary beauty.

Georgie Hopton

The breadth of Georgie Hopton's practice is emphasised by the transformation of her split-level studio on the Islington-Hoxton border into a domestic space, complete with a bedroom in which she sleeps three nights a week. A pleasing cohesion is granted by distinctive hues and an evident interest in the abstraction of form. On the back wall is a sequence of works inspired by Fra Angelico's 15th-century frescoes for the Convent of San Marco in Florence, which hang adjacent to a series of ornate collages that reveal an obsession with auriculas.





Joshua Monaghan



Joshua Monaghan

‘I’m fascinated by the overlap between natural and manmade, and they’re the ultimate manufactured flower: they’ve been bred into perfection,’ says Georgie. A new body of these collages is the focus of her third exhibition with the Mayfair gallery Lyndsey Ingram, *Floating Lawns* (until November 13).

The conception of Georgie's furnishings can be dated to her own propagation efforts in the garden of the upstate New York farmhouse she used to own with her husband, artist Gary Hume. She created monoprints using vegetables as blocks, and 'it was an obvious extension to use those shapes for repeat patterns'.

Two more fabric and wallpaper designs, originally created for a show in Bath, are produced with Rapture & Wright, and a partnership with the carpet specialist Peter Page has seen Georgie's shapes woven into rugs and runners. She is working on lighting designs: a prototype for an appealingly sculptural floor lamp has been adapted from a vegetable print, and a portfolio holds a quantity of further ideas. 'One thing always leads to another, and I've always wanted to make a whole world,' she says.

lyndseyingram.com | *Georgie Hopton Produce is distributed by Common Room.*

Nancy Nicholson

Nancy Nicholson says that functionality inspired her to pivot her practice: 'I had been painting and working in set design, but I wanted to get to the nub of something: a rug is the foundation of weaving.' It was, perhaps, innate: the great-granddaughter of Winifred and Ben Nicholson, pre-eminent leaders of inter- and post-war British abstraction, she grew up observing 'art and the home being intertwined, with pictures and rag rugs by Winifred, and curtains in a fabric by Ben'. Five years ago, she and her husband, Tim Blanchard, a chef who trained at St John restaurant in Smithfield, moved from London to Devon, and her studio is in rooms above the pub that Tim now runs, The Church House Inn in Harberton.



Nancy's designs begin as appealing watercolours that commissioning clients have been known to frame. Then, 'pages of maths' map the intuitively conceived and calmingly spaced geometrical abstractions that, she says, 'doubtlessly owe in part to the art I grew up with'. She works with wool that comes from known herds, including her mother's in Cumbria. It is spun for her, and some lengths dyed according to her specifications. 'I'm interested in how colours sit alongside each other,' she explains, adding that there are means of manipulating the depth and movement.



Hung in the area that holds Nancy's research books is a beguilingly tactile 'corduroy weave, blown up, with cut pile – it wouldn't enjoy being on a floor for long'. And behind her main loom is a large, dual-direction striped wall hanging in cream and shifting shades of blue, the tones a by-product of doing her own dyeing with natural pigments. Currently on that loom is a fabric she is developing for The Garnered, while a sofa carries a thick-striped, reversible double-weave blanket she designed for The Bristol Weaving Mill. Beneath our feet are 'artist's proofs' of her collaborations with CF Editions, an arm of Christopher Farr. 'I find usefulness very satisfying,' she says.

Tanya Ling

For 20-odd years, Tanya Ling was one of the world's leading fashion illustrators, working for clients ranging from *Vogue* to Givenchy. She recounts how, 'in about 2012, I became more interested in the marks I was making around the illustrations'. She and her husband and studio manager, William Ling, live part of the year in France, but when they are in London, the sitting room of their Marylebone flat doubles as her studio. Vast canvases are propped against the walls, and a mesmeric line of saturated blue unspools across them. It is, explains Tanya, representative of 'both freedom and control. My paintings are not pre-planned, but there's discipline in the execution.' She simultaneously began working in sculpture, creating works she describes as 'assemblages of found things that are no longer recognisable, affording them a kind of order'. They're collected by Damien Hirst, and they're what led to one of her segues into homeware.



Joshua Monaghan



Tanya holds her large cafetière, created with Feldspar. Joshua Monaghan

In 2021, Tanya was introduced to the owners of Feldspar, the ceramic studio in Dartmoor. 'I began using its fine bone china like readymades' (Marcel Duchamp's term for the ordinary objects he modified). Versions of her blue line unravel across the studio's tableware, an assortment of which fills her kitchen cupboards. The line also winds over the CF Editions wool rug, while a second design, for Christopher Farr, has translated multi-coloured brushstrokes into silk. 'I love the intensity of texture that the weave brings, and the concept of having something precious that can be walked on,' she says. 'With everything I do, it's the same voice, but a different language.'

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