

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DESIGNING AND PRINTING FABRIC

Techniques, Tutorials & Inspiration for the Innovative Designer



LAURIE WISBRUN



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A&C Black · London



A ROTOVISION BOOK

First published in Great Britain in 2011

A & C Black Publishers Limited

36 Soho Square

London W1D 3QY

www.acblack.com

ISBN 978-1-4081-4700-9

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Typeset in 11 on 16pt Revival 555

Book design by Emily Portnoi

Cover design by Emily Portnoi

Cover photo by Ryann Ford

Photo styling by Robin Finlay

Commissioning Editor: Isheeta Mustafi

Copyeditor: Lorraine Slipper

Printed and bound in China



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INTRODUCTION

I've always been fascinated with the colours, the patterns and the textures in a fabric shop. Just walking into one makes my heart beat a little faster. For me, there's almost nothing as pretty as a pile of richly coloured and patterned fabric beckoning to me with the possibilities of what I might create. I have an enormous stash of designer and vintage fabric, and adding to my collection is a never-ending process. And I'm certainly not alone in my passion for fabric.

The revival of handcrafted goods and society's celebration of artisanal design has helped to drive a renewed interest in textiles. As a by-product of this interest, there's been an increased desire from individuals to design and print fabric for themselves. And for the first time, the tools to design, create and market fabric without huge capital investments are readily available to DIYers and independent designers worldwide. This 'democratisation of design' has shifted the textile landscape and opened fabric design up to a new breed of designer.

Both the new generation of sewing enthusiasts and those who have been sewing for decades are seeking fresh and innovative fabric. The fabric manufacturers are listening and are actively recruiting new designers to provide an infusion of new styles into their lines. Until now, it's been a challenge for independent designers to demonstrate how their designs would translate to fabric, and to get their work noticed by the manufacturers and the marketplace at large.

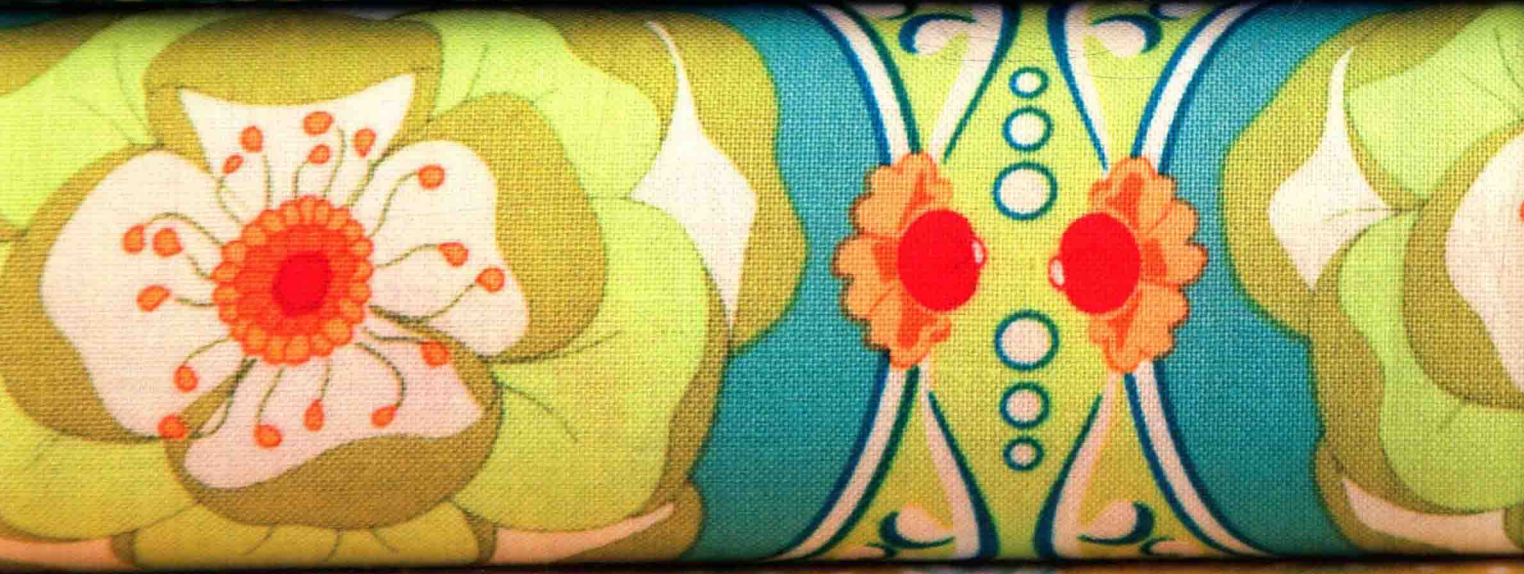
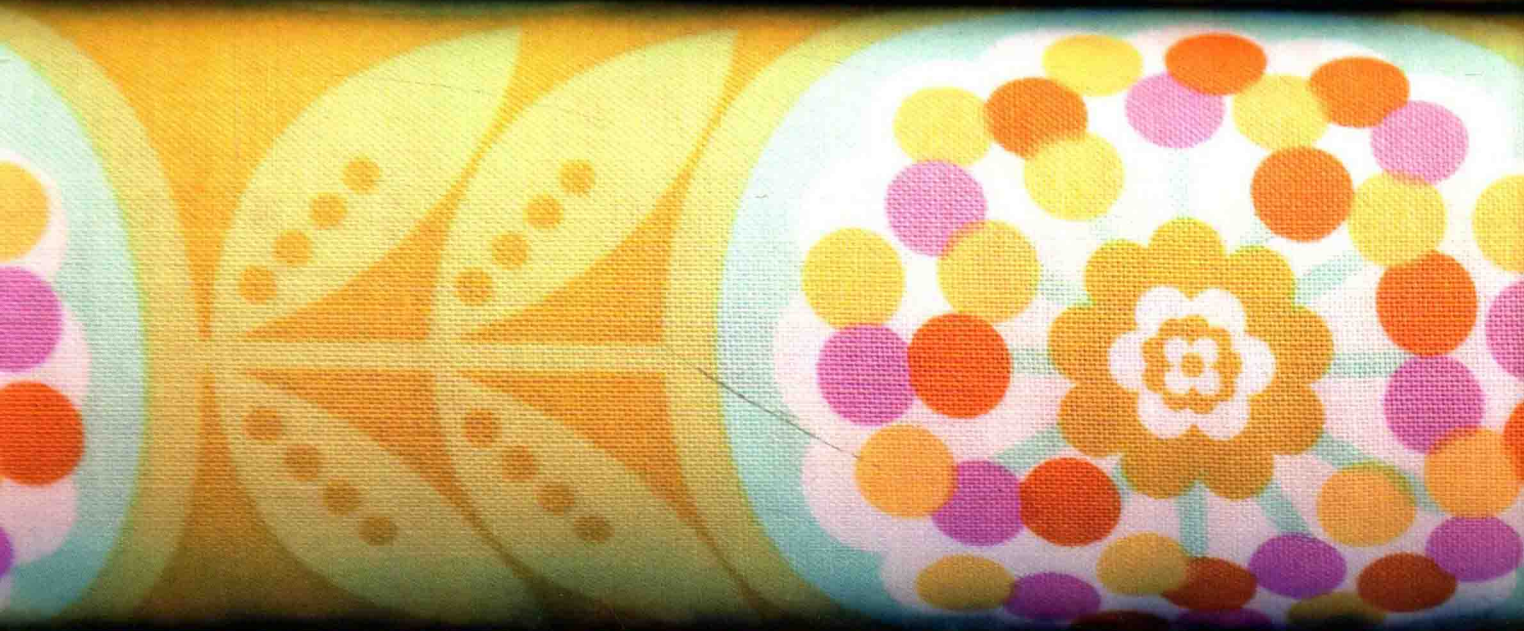
Access to tools for designing and printing fabric digitally, combined with online marketplaces and the internet, have all converged to provide the aspiring designer with all the tools and inspiration needed to create fabric digitally and promote it globally. Tried-and-tested methods like screenprinting or hand-dyeing have seen dramatic changes as this new breed of artist experiments and creates new approaches to an old art form.

Although this book is primarily geared towards designing and printing fabric digitally, the techniques included are applicable across a broad range of creative outlets. This is the book I wish I'd had when I started designing fabric. As an untrained artist and designer, I longed for a single resource to guide me through my exploration of the dynamic and exciting field of fabric design and production. I hope this book will become that resource for you and that it inspires you, guides you and encourages you to follow your dreams of designing and printing fabric.



Laurie Wisbrun

Tufted Tweets by Laurie Wisbrun for
Robert Kaufman Fabrics





CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING PATTERNS

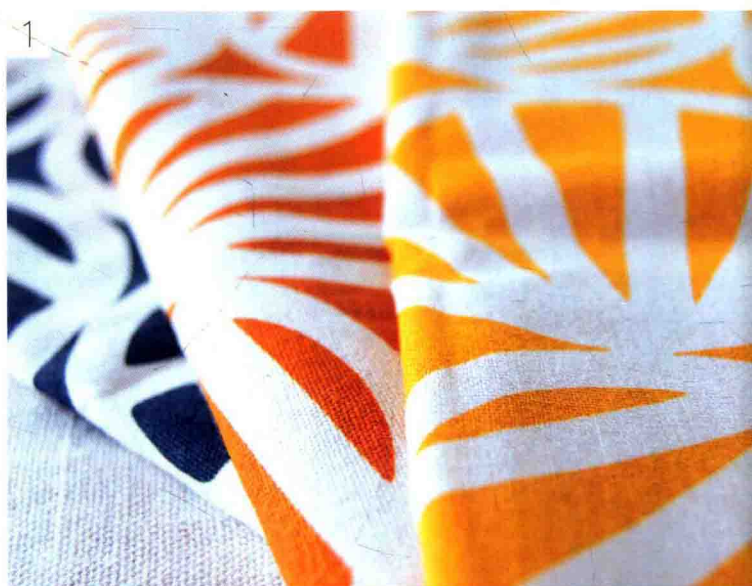
As you begin your journey into designing and printing fabric, this chapter will prepare you with a quick primer covering the different motif categories of fabric designs. Next you'll find some basics surrounding colour theory and general aspects of layout. I hope this information is helpful to you as you begin to think about your next design.

Floral motifs with differing scale and density

GEOMETRIC MOTIFS

The word geometric probably brings to mind the typical shapes from your childhood lessons. Squares, circles, triangles, diamonds and hexagons certainly qualify as geometrics. But in fabric design, any abstract or non-representational motif (meaning something that is not recognisable as an object) is considered a geometric. Geometrics are not limited to straight and hard lines, though. They can feature softer approaches such as wavy bands of colour, paisleys and concentric circles. Even splatters, squiggles, swooshes and blobs are considered to be geometrics.

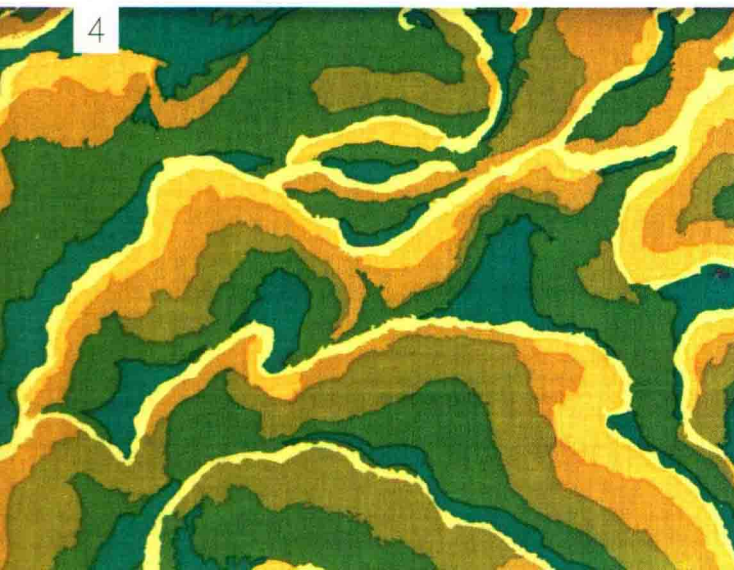
When paired with other prints like florals or novelty designs, a geometric can act as an anchor and give the eye a place to rest. Although traditionally used to line bags, bind quilts and to provide simple accents on apparel, geometrics are certainly strong enough to stand on their own.





Experimenting with geometrics will help you to develop a sense of how to combine shapes together in order to create patterns. Start with a small icon that can then be repeated and manipulated by changing the direction or the scale of the icon to create a pattern. Keep trying different modifications and you'll start to see different patterns emerging just by making some simple changes between versions. Another approach to designing a geometric is tessellation. A tessellation is created by continuously repeating a shape to completely cover the plane in interlocking patterns, leaving no blank areas or overlaps between the objects.

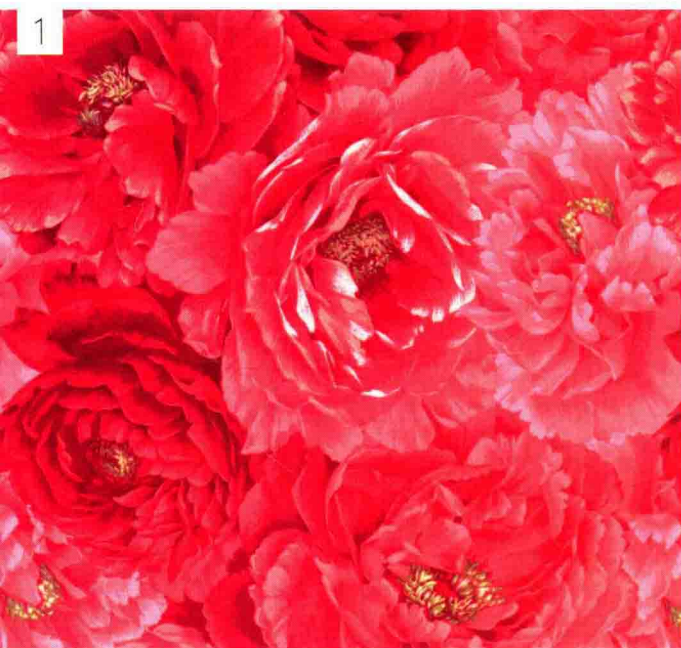
As you start designing with geometrics, follow your creative instinct and think about ways to combine your geometric objects in unusual ways.



- 1 Mari fabric designed by Hitomi Kimura
- 2 Yellow Mod & Dot Bangle wristlet by Kailo Chic, stationery by Smock
- 3 Curly Swirl fabric by Pillow & Maxfield for Michael Miller Fabrics
- 4 Wood Ear by Kaffe Fassett for Westminster Fabrics
- 5 Crazy About Blue fabric by Natalie Callwood

FLORAL MOTIFS

Mother Nature provides a rich palette from which to draw inspiration for floral motifs. Florals are a popular subject for fabric designers, and are one of the most widely created and sold categories of textiles. Don't let the abundance of floral designs deter you from trying your hand, though. With the beauty and diversity of unique shapes found in our natural environment, this category is burgeoning with opportunities to create a breadth of designs.



- 1 Charlotte, a romantic, densely packed floral design from Michael Miller Fabrics
- 2 A modern approach to floral fabric design. Palm Fan fabric by Kaffe Fassett for FreeSpirit Fabrics
- 3 Inspired by the native eucalyptus of Australia, this delicate floral by Jennifer Berney features a simple silhouette
- 4 Verdant and leafy Variegated Garden fabric from Martha Negley for Westminster Fabrics
- 5 Art nouveau florals are a naturalistic and stylised representation, often combined with semicircles or ovals. Nouveau Trees zipped pouch by Hippopotamus Gifts
- 6 Dill Blossom fabric from SEI for Robert Kaufman Fabrics demonstrates a stylised approach to floral designs
- 7 Feedsack prints have evolved from their humble roots as the patterns used to decorate cloth grain bags in 1920s and 30s America, and often feature small or micro florals. Gingham floral from Feedsack VI circa 1935 by Windham Fabrics