

the material



From top: Palm House from Instyle; Juliet (in Magenta) from Textilia; Moire (in Vino) from James Dunlop.

world

Walk into any good textile showroom and it's like wandering into Aladdin's cave; a rich and varied treasure trove of colours, textures and shapes.

The world of fabric is an ever-changing kaleidoscope, evolving sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically, from year to year. It's partly driven by our preferences and lifestyles, but at the same time, it constantly broadens and educates those same tastes.

Talk to those in the game, and colour-wise they're seeing more vibrancy mixed with neutrals in the next seasonal releases.

"In our homes, we're really starting to mix it up – to display more eclectic tendencies in response to the minimalism of the past few years," says Craig Wyllie, sales and product manager for Instyle. "We still want it easy to live with, and continue to prefer a simple palette, but we want to show personality at the same time. This often means injecting some traditional elements into our modern environments. Your suede lounge suite, for example, might be accented by a lush velvet on a classic chair."

He also sees a strengthening swing towards natural fibres, such as silks and wools. Certain synthetics that don't use toxic components in their making, and draw on fewer products to keep clean and looking good, are gaining popularity in this era of environmental awareness as well.

And what about the patterns coming through in and on fabric – what are the developing trends there? Textilia's creative director, Kristine Boyle had a look around the trade show circuit in Europe earlier this year.

"There are some really strong pattern themes showing up, but rather than setting new directional trends as they did last year, they're really a maturing of last season's concepts," she says. "So, in both upholstery and drapery we're continuing to see lots of over-scaled classic medallion motifs. They're traditional shapes, but their scale makes them more architectural, more contemporary."

Over-scaled paisleys are also gaining a keen following; again, it's a case of the concept having another year to become more mainstream, she says. These and the medallions, both drawn initially from natural forms, have been around a very long time in design, but are now receiving a whole new, modern treatment.

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Probably the newest trend Kristine saw overseas was the re-emergence of florals, but again simplified and over-scaled.

"These are the kinds of elements that I think will translate well into our environment, which is really what we're looking for in the ranges from Italy and Belgium, for example," she points out.

- Resene Bonanza
- Resene Dynamite
- Resene Half Pearl Lusta



James Dunlop director, buyer and designer Lynette Rayward also comments on the prevalence of paisley, observing that its new form offers a different means of using colour.

“Traditionally, we used to see paisley en masse, but what we’re seeing now is a single shape – perhaps a teardrop with paisley in it – or paisley updated with a stripe. In other words, we’re not seeing whole fields of colour as we once did, but less cluttered patterns that use features, accents, contrasts and combinations of textures in their design.”

She sees the same influence, even further simplified, in other designs.

“We found the whole fleur de lis thing wasn’t terribly well received here – it was too formal for our lifestyle. In contrast, more natural, flowing vine themes with a stylised leaf are enormously popular.”

Lynette also sees the trend towards retro patterns continuing into next season, but in a less severe form.

“Again, it’s a case of evolution from past to present. We’re seeing retro designs used more loosely, so there’s room for the background and texture. These are not as structured as the originals; they are transitional designs that will match both traditional and modern decors, and whose flowing designs are easy to live with.”

She is also seeing pattern having an effect on the makeup of the fabric itself, especially as designers experiment with mixing media to create products with a new edge to them.

“We’ve got some prints coming in – printed in foil. Imagine a range of linen, but with a metallic film over it. It’s still got the linen texture, but with a subtle, coloured sheen to it. Amazingly, it doesn’t affect the way the fabric handles,” she says. “It’s shine without the glitz. It introduces a modern metallic element, but softly and opulently.”

Lurex is also being used delicately to introduce just a hint of shine to design.

“There was a big swing away from prints,” she explains. “The fabric houses are now reintroducing them, but have to make them look the dollar!”

Her last word?

“We are so incredibly lucky when it comes to the fabrics on our market. The variety available to us is streets ahead of our neighbours in this part of the world, because we have no duty restrictions. And there is such an awareness now of the value of a beautiful display for the buyer.”

Hence Aladdin’s cave. **H**

From top: Resia (in Stone) from James Dunlop; Diva (in Fuchsia) from Textilia.