

INTERIORS

# DIFFERENT STROKES

Hand-drawn, painted, brushed or scribbled, home decor is a doodle right now, says *Kate Finnigan*

**W**elsh designer Bethan Gray did something she hadn't done for some time during the enforced hiatus of 2020: she started

to paint. Choosing Chinese calligraphy brushes, she began to create freeform lines in ultramarine ink on a canvas laid on the floor of her studio. It was a spontaneous act, but what emerged was progress from an earlier design she had envisaged for the marquetry on her Dhow cabinetry collection: a pattern inspired by the sweeping sails of traditional Omani boats.

The conception of her new Inky Dhow design has been a catalyst for myriad new projects. London-based leather expert Bill Amberg saw the potential in Gray's original artworks for his third collection of digitally printed leather hides. Gray recreated her paintings at a one-to-one scale to bring them to life on leather. "They were 1.5m by 3m – the biggest I've ever done – because I didn't want to lose the quality of the brushstrokes or the way the dark ink fades to light on the hide."

This June, as part of Milan Design Week, Inky Dhow will also feature in an immersive installation at the Rossana Orlandi Gallery, appearing not only on the leather upholstery of Gray's new Ripple sofa and armchair but also as marquetry on her Shamsian furniture (the sideboard is made up of more than 500 separate pieces of veneer). There are flashes of the flowing lines on the top of the brass-based Lustre table, in her silk and wool rugs for the Milan-based specialist CC-Tapis and on handblown Murano glass lighting in collaboration with Baroncelli.

The design caught the eye of Emily Johnson, co-founder of 1882 Ltd, who asked Gray to transfer her pattern onto

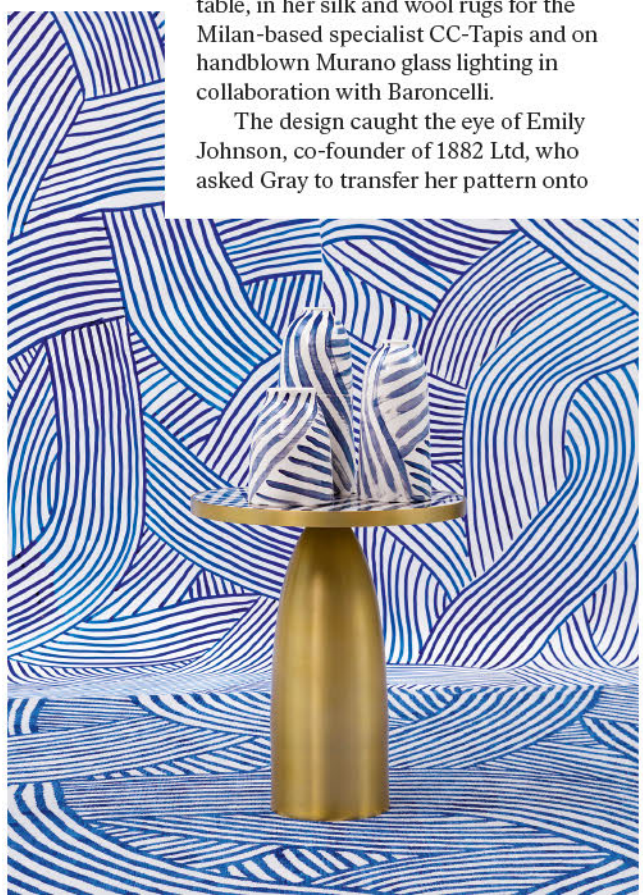


Top edge of page: CERAUDO Orpha Seaweed fabric, £85 per metre. Left: CERAUDO Orpha Elio armchair, £1,775. Above: FRANCES COSTELLOE for Partnership Editions Home hand-painted ceramic Sun plate, £120. Below: Annie Morris's Sharpie pen illustrations in her house in France

BALU CHECKMATE PLACEMAT, £20, LIBERTY LONDON.COM



Below: BETHAN GRAY Inky Dhow Collection CC-Tapis rug, POA, Lustre side table, £4,380, and Seven Sisters vessels, from £231 each



## "PICASSO, COCTEAU AND MATISSE WEREN'T LIMITED TO THE CANVAS"

seven earthenware vases in the shape of the original Seven Sisters pottery kilns in Stoke-on-Trent where the company is based. "I didn't throw the pots but I went to Stoke to paint them. I really enjoyed being so hands-on," says Gray.

The brushwork here brings to mind the expressive artistry of some of Gray's heroes. "I've always been inspired by linear illustrative art. I love Picasso, Jean Cocteau and Matisse," she says. "We have some pieces around the house: a couple of Picasso and Cocteau plates and a Matisse lithograph, as well as a felt embroidered Cocteau tapestry. It's inspiring that those artists weren't limited to the canvas, they worked across various media and it's nice for me to do the same."

Beyond the canvas, figurative, illustrative art is featuring increasingly on furniture, furnishings, ceramics and wall treatments. "We're definitely seeing a trend in people experimenting with their spaces with a turn towards illustrative pattern," says Bryony Rae Sheridan, buying manager at Liberty, citing new designs in the Liberty fabric collection such as the Delaney Dragon Tana Lawn cotton, decorative plates by Willemien Bardawil and the playful organic patterns in the handpainted ceramics of Popolo and Anna Vail's Balu brand.

Last autumn, the online contemporary art gallery Partnership Editions launched



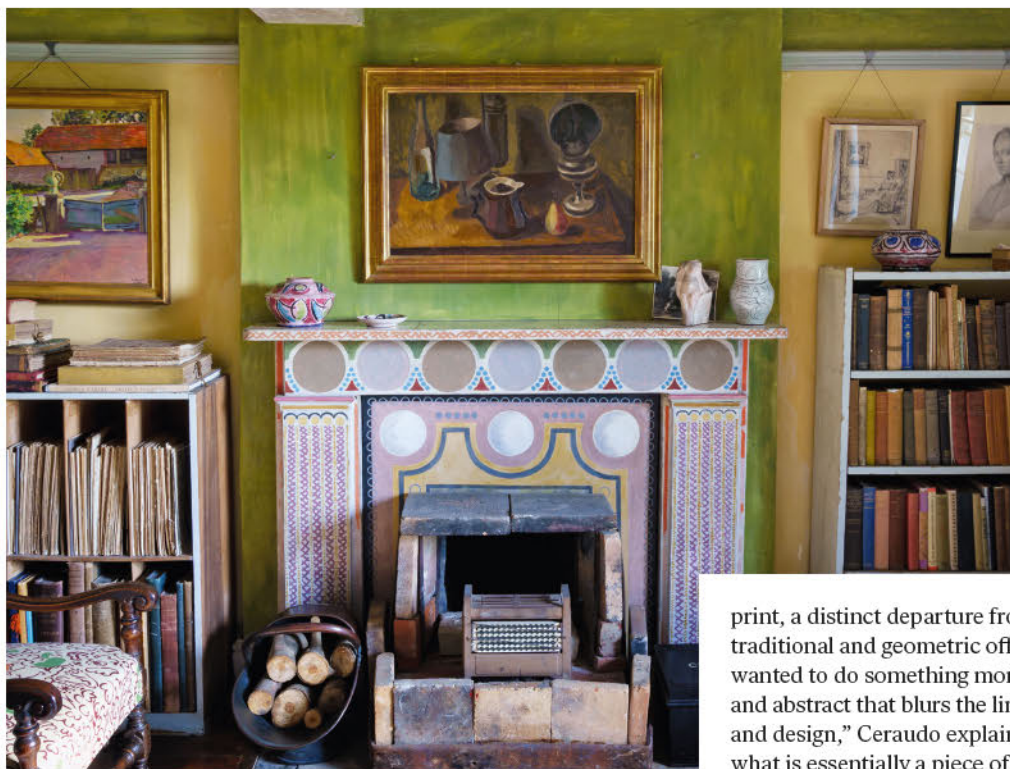
its first "Home as Art" category: a curated collection of works in which "everything has a story to tell". Consequently, the freeline drawings of faces and flora by Frances Costelloe are transposed onto ceramics, the ethereal paintings of Julianna Byrne find their way onto wall hangings, and the illustrative art of Petra Börner features on an ornate candelabra.

It's a concept that has echoes in the Bloomsbury Group's ambition to immerse everything in art, executed most famously in Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's Sussex home Charleston. You can trace its influence, for example, in the work of British artist Annie Morris who, during the renovation of the French home she owns with her husband Idris Khan, drew her distinctive figures and flowers directly onto walls using a Sharpie.



PETRA BÖRNER for Partnership Editions Home hand-painted Candelier 2, £775





POPOLO FISH CARAFE, £55, LIBERTY LONDON.COM



print, a distinct departure from the brand's traditional and geometric offerings. "We wanted to do something more contemporary and abstract that blurs the line between art and design," Ceraudo explains. "You have what is essentially a piece of art translated into different formats – it's something three-dimensional in your interior space rather than hanging on the wall."

The print is inspired by the cutout work of Henri Matisse and the Orphism movement, spearheaded by Robert and Sonia Delaunay in the early 1900s. "We went down quite a rabbit hole with Sonia Delaunay," says Ceraudo. "She was a fascinating character with such fluid movement between art and design. Robert was a purist, and so that he could be completely devoted to painting, Sonia tried lots of different work: costume design, interior decoration – she even designed a print on a car. She was prepared to be commercial and monetised different media so that Robert didn't have to. He got most of the recognition at the time but she was the powerhouse behind it all."

Few of us have the creative capabilities of the Delaunays, and those wanting to dip into the trend without employing an artist to paint their home might consider luxury handpainted wallpaper. Just ask actor and Goop entrepreneur Gwyneth Paltrow, whose dining room in her Montecito home, shown recently in *Architectural Digest*, is a vision of whimsical blue-grey skies and handpainted trees – a reverie captured without a paintbrush or easel in sight. ■HTSI



Above: Tess Newall's commissioned mural in the style of illustrator Ludwig Bemelmans

In 2021, Morris was commissioned to paint a mural for The Painter's Room, a new bar in Claridge's hotel, where a stained-glass window also replicates one of her watercolour collages.

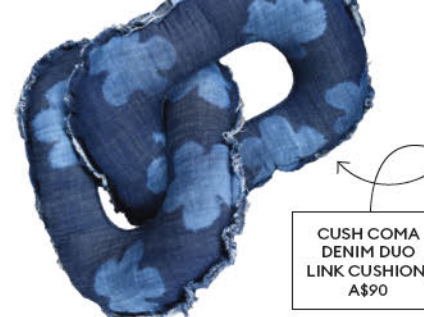
**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ARTISTS** who can be called upon to bring art into the home: London's Jan Erika creates handpainted wall art in bold, kaleidoscopic colours in both homes and public spaces, as does Claire de Quénétain, who lives in Brussels but also works in the UK. "It's much easier for me to work than it was three or four years ago when I started," says the artist, who grew up in the Normandy countryside and whose freehand brushstroke designs are inspired by flowers, plants, trees and gardens. "People are more open to bringing those patterns into their homes now."

De Quénétain's business took off shortly after she graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2014 and posted a picture on Instagram of a mural she had painted in her home. "When something is popular on Instagram things happen quickly," she laughs. "But I just enjoyed the idea of bringing my own mark into my home. I have my own ornamental language of shapes and being close to nature – the true motivation of my work." In December 2021, she launched a collection of 15 wallpaper designs, adding to her existing fabrics.

East Sussex-based Tess Newall is another artist in demand, having recently been commissioned by Soho House Design Group to paint a child's bedroom for a client in the style of Ludwig Bemelmans, creator of the mural in the bar of New York's Carlyle Hotel. Two years ago she created a limited collection of handpainted chairs inspired by the Bloomsbury Group and Charleston for the young British furniture company Ceraudo. This February, the brand launched new range Orpha, which co-founder Victoria Ceraudo describes as "phase two" of the Bloomsbury connection. This capsule furniture collection – armchairs, a slipper chair, dining chairs and a footstool – is decorated with a bold ink and brushwork

Top, edge of page: CLAIRE DE QUENETAINE Jade fabric, €120 a metre. Top: Clive Bell's study at Charleston in Sussex. Above: Claire de Quénétain's handpainted mural in her home. Bottom, edge of page: LIBERTY FABRIC Delaney Dragon Tana Lawn cotton, £25 a metre

WILLEMEN BARDAWIL ANGELS DELIGHT PLATE, £52, LIBERTY LONDON.COM



CUSH COMA DENIM DUO LINK CUSHION, A\$90

HOME ACCESSORIES

Pillow talk

Cushions get playful. By Cherish Rufus

Squiggles, combs, crowns, knots, daisies, butterflies, bows and hearts... A new wave of artists and designers are playing around with the idea of what a cushion could be. The results are wildly imaginative pieces that are simultaneously comforting and visually stimulating, or, as the late designer Rose Greenberg described her cushions: "Half home accessory, half entertaining friend."

Greenberg, who died in 2020, was an early pioneer of the new style of cushion; her whimsical comb pillow quickly exploded in popularity. Her mother, Zoe Friedlander, says that Greenberg was inspired to create further "new and different shapes" – such as her faux-fur cow-print squiggle pillow, an oversized pink velvet comb with missing teeth and a long droopy heart in a dusky rose linen – having seen how "people interact with them".



JIU JIE VELOUR FRENCH KISS CUSHION, \$150

Monique Chiari, the Melbourne-based designer behind Clumsy, creates her bouclé comb and doughnut pillows using offcuts sourced locally from designers and recycled water-bottle fibres, but her environmentally minded production practices don't come at the expense of style and fun.

Cush Coma, another Melbourne-based brand, is similarly eco-friendly, producing cushions that are handmade locally using sustainable materials. Its catalogue of shapes and designs include individual flowers in cow print; "bouquets" of two joined flowers in chequerboard; interlinked denim cushions stamped with a bleached flower pattern; plus sundials, bows, nebulae and more.

Thinking and creating locally is also a big priority for Jeanette Reza, founder and creative director of Jiu Jie, the brand behind the original knot cushion. Reza first started making her pieces in 2016, before formally launching Jiu Jie in 2018. The pieces are made in New York's East Village and offer a decidedly high-fashion look.

Reza studied at the London College of Fashion and then, before the pandemic, was working at an interior design studio. "I've always been interested in beautiful things and fabrics," she says. "I think you can tell when you see my products that they come more from an artistic and fashion background, rather than traditional home decor."

A big part of the experience is the therapeutic element. "The cushion is a long tubular shape, so you can make knots then link them together," Reza explains. "You can make braids if you have three. It gets your mind off other things. It's a transitional object, like when a child holds a teddy bear that makes them feel safe. The cushions are meant to inspire something like this." ■HTSI

ROSE GREENBERG FAUX-FUR COW SQUIGGLE CUSHION, \$200

