



(folio) insight

SOFT EDGES

FROM GEOMETRICS TO TACTILE SURFACES, METALLICS TO NEW TRADITIONAL, INSIDE EXPLORES FOUR FABRIC TRENDS TAKING CENTRE STAGE.

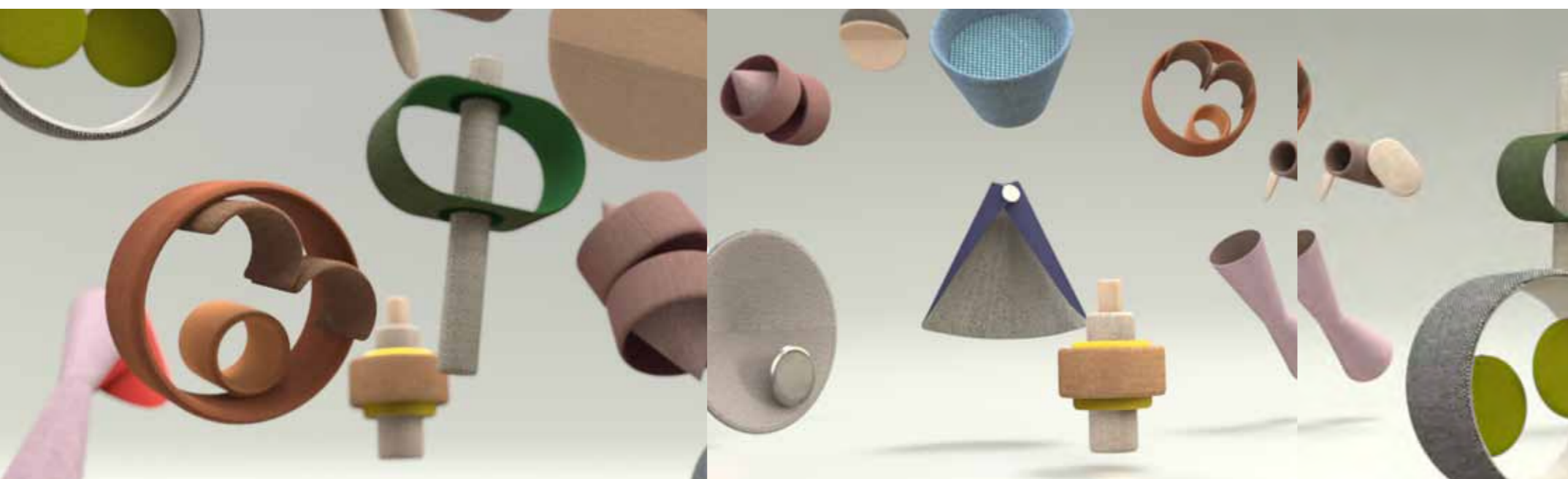
Opposite top—Kvadrat’s eye-catching stand at this year’s Stockholm Furniture Fair, designed by Raw Edges, was shrouded in 1500 fabric ribbons. Photo by Joel Tettamanti

It’s no secret that textiles are cool again. Some industry experts claim they never went out of fashion, while others argue that our modern desire for heightened spatial experiences is the reason behind this renewed interest. What is for certain, however, is that current technological advancements within the textile industry have given rise to new fabrics that, quite simply, are extraordinary.

Textile manufacturers and suppliers have been quick to showcase the innovative properties of these fabrics through a number of installations and special projects that can be regarded as artworks within themselves. At this year’s Stockholm Design Week, for example, Danish textile brand Kvadrat collaborated with design studio Doshi Levien to create *The Wool Parade*, an exhibition featuring 12 abstract objects upholstered in Kvadrat’s woollen fabrics and suspended

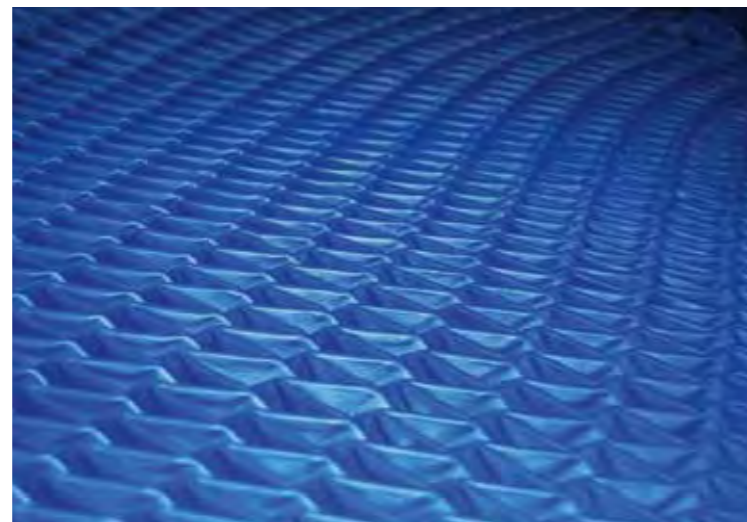
within the company’s Stockholm showroom. And for its stand at the fair, the company worked with Raw Edges to design *The Picnic* – an installation that included 1500 fabric ribbons inspired by the weeping willow tree.

Designers are also well aware of the difference a dynamic textile can make to their own designs. Furniture upholstered in intriguing fabrics turn heads and the savviest designers have been quick to utilise the newest fabric collections to create an impact. These new textile collections may be influenced by technological advancements, but a strong emphasis on the traditional, artisanal qualities of manufacture and the incorporation of natural materials can also be seen to prevail. There are four key trends that have emerged with this resurgence in textile design and they are as diverse as the possibilities for their application: sculptural, geometric, unexpected and new traditional.



Opposite bottom—Also on show in Stockholm, *The Wool Parade* by Doshi Levien featured a dozen Bauhaus-inspired forms upholstered in Kvadrat’s woollen fabric. Stills by Graphic Thought Facility

text Leanne Amodeo



SCULPTURAL

Characterised by voluptuous folds, pleats and quilting, this trend can also be described as architectural. The three-dimensional surfaces of these fabrics allow for a sense of tactility, which is something traditionally woven, flat fabrics can't achieve. In London, Pinaki Studios recently completed a collection of pleated leather for Foglizzo. The hides were folded into paper moulds and then subjected to high temperatures in order to retain their shape. What resulted is a high-end product inspired by traditional artisan pleating techniques.

But it is knitted textiles that are most notably redefining fabric surfaces. Innofa's double- or triple-knit fabrics have already garnered attention as upholstery on designs by the likes of Tokujin Yoshioka and Paola Navone. These furniture pieces rely heavily on the fabric to give them form and, without this sculptural addition, the designs would look markedly different. Navone's Nuvola sofa for Gervasoni, for example, shows off the fabric's three-dimensional properties and impressive stretch.

Innofa's ambitious approach to textile development has also resulted in specially designed elasticated padded upholstery for Benjamin Hubert's new Talma chair for Moroso. Debuted at the 2013 Milan Furniture Fair, Talma exhibits Hubert's characteristic boldness and the fabric adds a dramatic element that would otherwise be lacking. Likewise, Patricia Urquiola's recent Lana Mangas collection for Gan possesses that same tactile quality, although its texture is a playful nod to that of a much-loved woollen jumper.



GEOMETRIC

This current trend salutes the geometric designs characterised by Missoni Home fabrics, but without the exuberant colour. The new wave's colour palette is more minimal and subdued, while patterns have a somewhat rigid mathematical sensibility that is testament to the influence of digital design techniques. Even Warwick Fabrics' Kinetic collection, with its retro hues that hark back to vintage Missoni, is striking in its exactness.

Strict adherence to repetition can be seen in Michael Young's new Ecooustic print collection for Instyle. Young's three designs developed for this panel and screen range were created through a specialised interactive software program, with the resulting patterns heavily abstracted and mosaic-like in appearance. What makes this product particularly exciting, however, is its improved sound absorption and impressive sustainability features.

When colour is used in the new geometrics it is with restraint and Woven Image's Kirigami collection attests to this, with each of its seven colourways consisting of duotones. The cream and black ranges were used by Sydney artist, Marcelle Robbins, when she recently took to a Bondi rooftop to create an installation based on the collection's origami theme.





UNEXPECTED

There is perhaps no more fitting word to label a trend that utilises materials not traditionally associated with fabrics. ‘Unexpected’ is apt to describe textiles that have been woven or constructed with metal or horsehair. These materials are surprisingly easy to manipulate and the results are luxurious finishes that range from the sheer and elegant to the bold and glamorous. The way these fabrics reflect light plays a large part in their appeal and is what makes them so well-suited to larger-scale application and installation.

French company Le Labo exemplifies the high-end glamour of Europe in a collection of metal plate and chainmail textiles that are surprisingly fluid in appearance. With hints of a 1960s aesthetic, these fabrics shimmy and sparkle and are overwhelmingly eye-catching. French artist Sophie Mallebranche’s textiles are also

created from metal. Made from stainless steel and enamel-coated brass, her sumptuous collections are artisanal studies in light, colour and texture. Having recently collaborated with a French mill to devise equipment that can weave metal on an industrial scale, her textiles are destined for high-end interior fitouts.

Both of these textiles are distributed in Australia through Boyac, which also stocks the Le Crin range by Creation Metaphores. This collection is unexpected in that it combines horsehair with natural fibres such as jute, sisal and linen. The resulting handwoven fabrics are delicate, fine and subdued in colour. As with the metal textiles, the Le Crin collection also plays with light and texture; however, the end result is much more subtle.





NEW TRADITIONAL

In ‘new traditional’, conventional designs once considered twee are reimagined to give them a decidedly contemporary twist, featuring eclectic combinations of popular design motifs and rich, multicoloured patterns referencing different period styles. It’s almost a case of anything goes, but in the most tasteful and intelligent way imaginable.

The new traditional finds its greatest exponent in the intricately patterned and precisely printed fabrics of Glasgow-based Timorous Beasties, which is supplied in Australia through South Pacific Fabrics. The Beasties’ New York Toile takes the decorative patterning of the 16th century and substitutes traditional pastoral scenes with gritty images of urban New York. Likewise, its White Moth fabric design looks at first glance like traditional lacework, but is, in fact, a repeated motif depicting a moth. Timorous Beasties also recently collaborated with Ercol to produce a special edition of the Ercol studio couch. The upholstery combines Timorous Beasties’ Blotch and Damask fabric designs in an explosive, floral-like effect.

Hella Jongerius’ Vases fabric for Maharam, on the other hand, references the classical vase motif and funks it up with a playful 1960s aesthetic. This colourful woven fabric possesses the colour and quirk that defines the new traditional, while Patricia Urquiola’s new textiles collection for Kvadrat is a rich study in texture and colour saturation. In application, these fabrics are often used in combination – making for an energetic aesthetic that is a nod to the ornate decorative traits of traditional fabric design, while delivering instantly appealing contemporary motifs and high contrast colour. 