

# Interiors

# Historic patterns are back in print

Designers are bringing bold new life to old favourites, says **Fiona McCarthy**

**T**HEY say you have to look back to look forward. Which may explain the explosion of heritage prints being borrowed from British archives and splashed across everything from jumpsuits to curtains.

Take the launch at H&M involving Morris & Co's most iconic prints:

Pimpernel, which was originally a wallpaper pattern hung in Morris's own dining room, is on a blouse, jacket and trousers, while Snakeshead, one of Morris's favourite chintzes, appears on a polo neck.

It's not unusual for fashion to pilfer interior design ideas. Radley recently used Sanderson's Roslyn vintage floral print, designed by William Turner in 1910, to adorn bags, backpacks and purses. While fashion brands such as

The Vampire's Wife and Anna Mason are the most recent to be inspired by Liberty of London's floral prints.

But what G.P. & J. Baker didn't expect, when its fashion collection with H&M sold out in July, was that it would bring a new audience to its interiors fabrics. 'The G.P. & J. Baker prints used in the H&M collaboration are some of our most enduring designs,' says Ann Grafton, MD and creative director of the 134-year-old textile company.

Founded by brothers George and James Baker in 1884 to import carpets from the Far East, they moved into textiles at the height of the Arts and Craft movement. Today, G.P. & J. Baker has one of the world's largest privately owned textile archives.

**P**RINTS such as Oriental, Fretwork, Hydrangea Bird, pictured right and Shadow Fern proved so popular on dresses and jackets that a new generation has connected with the brand. 'The G.P. & J. Baker archive reflects the maximalist mood for rich, highly patterned designs,' says Grafton. Fabric is from £96 per metre, [gpjbaker.com](http://gpjbaker.com).

Although recoloured using contemporary shades, they are still true to the original designs. 'We've seen a renewed appreciation for designs like these that are 100 years old, originally hand painted

by artists and then hand block printed.

'Seeing them in a completely new context has proved that great design will always endure,' says Grafton. It's been such a success that there will be a second drop of the collection in H&M stores on December 6.

Another company drawing inspiration from the past is furniture maker Sofa Workshop.

Its collaboration with the V&A sees three new ranges — the Shaftesbury chair, Thurlow sofa, chair and stool and the Walpole sofa and footstool (from £599, [sofaworkshop.com](http://sofaworkshop.com)) — in six V&A fabrics.

'The Love Birds fabric, with its Chinoiserie motifs, and Kaleidoscope, echoing Art Deco silhouettes, both feel right for now,' says Megan Holloway of Sofa Workshop.

All six fabrics, printed in Cheshire, have been lovingly recreated. 'We've stayed close to the original fabrics during the design process,' says Holloway.

Today's customers are interested in history. 'They want fabrics with a sense of depth and intrigue. Each

one of these tells a story,' she says.

At Liberty of London, rising design star Matilda Goad's scallop raffia lampshades have been given a classic twist, trimmed and lined with Tana Lawn Edenham, Thorpe or Elysian fabrics (£160 each, [libertylondon.com](http://libertylondon.com)).

'I think everyone has an attachment to a Liberty pattern,' Goad says. 'I was surrounded by them when I was growing up because my mother used to make Liberty print children's smock dresses.'

Interior designer Kit Kemp's folk tales-inspired fabric and wallpaper collaboration with Martin Waller, of Chelsea design emporium Andrew Martin, has taken a different historic turn.

Working with illustrator Melissa White, designs such as the giant Mythical Land wallpaper, Wychwood and Hedgerow (from £50 per metre for fabric, £60 per metre for wallpaper, [andrewmartin.co.uk](http://andrewmartin.co.uk)), used old tapestries, wall paintings and embroidery samplers for inspiration.



Heritage: The Thurlow Sofa in V&A Love Birds Saffron fabric, £2,999, [sofaworkshop.com](http://sofaworkshop.com)

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## STORY BEHIND

**THAT'S FANCY:** Yes. The Ottomans went in for beautifully decorative bowls.

**IT'S OLD?** Very. It dates from about 1545 to 1550 and was made in Iznik, Turkey, a major centre for ceramic production during the Ottoman era.

**WAS IT FOR BOWL FOOD?** No, it would have been used by the sultan and his entourage for their daily ablutions.

**A WASH BASIN?** Exactly. Makes our porcelain look bland.

**WHAT'S THAT PATTERN ALL**

**ABOUT?** Lotuses, saz leaves and tulips were all referenced in traditional Ottoman court art.

**I DON'T SUPPOSE I COULD AFFORD IT:** No chance, but you can see it in the newly opened Albukhary Foundation Gallery at the British Museum, which is full of wonders from the Islamic world. You could treat also yourself to an Iznik border mug in the British Museum shop £6.99, [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

**JENNY COAD**



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