

Here today and here to stay...or gone tomorrow?

Leading textile designer **Aleta Bartel-Orten** speaks to *be INSPIRED* about what to consider when colouring and furnishing the interior of your premises

Aleta Bartel-Orten studied fine art and textile design at the Nova Scotia University of Art and Design, graduating with an Honours BFA Degree specialising in print and surface design. She moved from her native Canada to England in 1999 to work alongside designers in both the fashion and interiors industries.

Passionate about interiors, Aleta recognised a need for unique and specialised textiles within this industry, and in 2003 established Aleta Ltd to launch her own designs. In addition to her 'in-house' range, she exclusively distributes for other textile designers, including a hand-embroidered collection and the renowned block-print range by Brigitte Singh. Aleta has also developed two paint collections in collaboration with Francesca's Paints Ltd, which co-ordinate with her fabrics and wallpapers.

Aleta prides herself in her sensibility to colour, a talent honed whilst working with dye plants in Canada. "There are no unbreakable rules about specific colours within an interior, as so much is determined by the light,



Aleta

space and accessories used within a given area or room. There are, however, broader trends of colour that should not be altogether ignored. Colour trends have greater longevity in the world of interiors than that of fashion, but, nonetheless, still take their cues from what we see on the catwalk. Whether we believe ourselves to be trend followers or not, the colours we wear and see on others around us have a profound psychological effect, and designers within the interiors industry are not immune.

"This year, the fashion world has seen a definite shift towards soft blush neutrals, and bold graphic prints. Blues and purples, in particular, have made a recent reappearance, from soft lilacs to clear turquoise tones and, sure enough, interiors will follow suit. Soft, pale, warm tones will retain the calm and serene environments minimalism brought us, but combined with zingy accent colours and boldly-patterned focal points provide inspiration to otherwise bland spaces," she observes.

Aleta is quick to stress that she believes our love affair with the clean and neutral minimalism of the past decade is starting to wear and we are beginning to look for something more than the smooth textures and plain wovens that we have used to fill our spaces.

She explains: "We have already seen pattern re-enter interiors in a big way with the new popularity of large-patterned wallpapers and floor coverings. With this comes bolder and more creative use of colour. I believe the next few years will see a resurgence of pattern, with particular emphasis on ethnic-inspired florals and paisleys that have undergone modern makeovers." She adds: "In previous decades, there was a tendency to use pattern heavily throughout a scheme – think of the popular chintzes of the 1980s. The key now is to create a focal point with pattern by using it in moderation, combined with textured wovens and plain solids to create balance throughout, and to highlight specific colours within a patterned surface. Watch out for large-scale florals and retro-style graphics."

Complying with fire and safety regulations is of paramount importance and the next requirement for a licensed hospitality business is choosing fabric that has been treated for stain resistance. She advises: "When choosing upholstery, always ask for rub-test results to assess





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durability, and try to avoid large weaves or anything with either a textured, embroidered or stitched surface that might be prone to pulling or fraying. Restrict more expensive decorative touches to areas that won't be handled regularly by customers; for example, window treatments. Consider light-fastness results for fabrics that will be affected by daylight or strong fluorescents, and wash-fastness for fabrics that will need to be cleaned regularly; such as table linens and throw cushions.”

Choosing fabric that is reliable in terms of wear is important to any new business or makeover project. Aleta advises: “Heavyweight synthetic will be the most durable fabric, but although it will be wear resistant, it may not give an aesthetically-pleasing look or comfortable feel in a space intended for relaxing. Linens and hems are nature's strongest fibres, followed by cotton. These are often mixed with synthetics to retain strength without compromising on the look and feel of a higher quality fabric. Cost is also a consideration in blends – usually, the higher percentage of synthetic, the less expensive the fabric.”

As far as handing *be INSPIRED* readers the golden rule when designing their new interior, Aleta says: “If in doubt, remember the old adage ‘less is more’ will always apply. Sophisticated simplicity and good quality materials will last longer than trend-inspired schemes, so be practical with choices of pattern and colour.”