

Media information

For release 1 December 2011



Designing Women Post-war British textiles

16 March – 16 June 2012

Britain was at the forefront of international textile design in the 1950s and 1960s. Three women – Lucienne Day, Jacqueline Groag and Marian Mahler – led this movement. 'Designing Women', the forthcoming exhibition at the Fashion and Textile Museum, explores these women's pioneering role in combining art and manufacturing to change the direction of the modern design industry.

The art of textile design radically changed after the Second World War and three women artists working in England in the 1950s were pivotal in this artistic revolution.

The drab days of the War were transformed by the fresh, progressive designs of Lucienne Day (1917–2010), Jacqueline Groag (1903–86) and Marian Mahler (1911–83). *Designing Women: Post-war British textiles* showcases their work beginning with Lucienne Day's 'Calyx' pattern of 1951, featured at the Festival of Britain, and moving through textile commissions of the 1960s and 70s. The exhibition features more than 100 works.

Original artist designs with bold abstract pattern, as well as the use of saturated colour, marked a dramatic departure from conventional furnishing fabrics. This new wave of bold textile designs, helped to bring the influences of the art world, in its most recent, refreshing, and largely abstract forms, into the contemporary home.

Progressive textile manufacturers and wholesale firms like Heal & Sons and David Whitehead Ltd were central in maintaining Britain's preeminent position in textile design. The introduction of new technologies and the work of inventive and creative young designers like Day, Groag and Mahler helped these companies transform the market by inspiring new product lines that were elegant and artistic, yet affordable.

The mid-century pursuit of fresh and provocative designs is reflected in the work of other women designers who produced popular textiles of the period. The work of Paule Vézelay, Mary Warren and Mary White is also included in the exhibition. Together they present a uniquely British brand of modernism whose broad appeal is still relevant to contemporary domestic interiors today

Celia Joicey, Head of Fashion and Textile Museum, says 'We are very excited to be showing the work of Lucienne Day, Marian Mahler and Jacqueline Groag at the Fashion and Textile Museum. Their outstanding designs highlight the important

contribution these women have made to introducing art and modernity into British lives and homes.'

Shanna Shelby, Exhibition Guest Curator, says 'The distinct and innovative style of works created by these women is still relevant to contemporary domestic interiors.'

Dennis Nothdruff, Curator, says 'The mid-century textiles collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown is one of the most comprehensive in the world. This exhibition will provide a rare opportunity to see these works and compare key developments in pattern, colour and form from this period.'

Notes to Editors:

The exhibition is organised by the Fashion and Textile Museum with over 100 works from the collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown from 16th March – 16th June 2012.

Exhibition opening times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm; Last admission 5.15pm.

Ticket prices: £7 adults, £5 students and concessions, free entry for under 12s

The publication *Designing Women of Postwar Britain* by Shanna Shelby and Tariana Navas-Nieves (paperback) will be available in the exhibition shop.

The Fashion and Textile Museum is a cutting edge centre for contemporary fashion, textiles and jewellery in London. Founded by iconic British designer Zandra Rhodes, the museum is owned by Newham College London – one of Europe's largest further education colleges – and showcases a programme of changing exhibitions, courses and events. The Fashion and Textile Museum, 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF

For further information about FTM and its activities visit www.ftmlondon.org

For further press information please contact: Alison Lowe, Press Officer, Felicities Ltd representing FTM, Tel: 0207 377 6030, Email: Alison@felicities.co.uk

Biographies:

Lucienne Day (1917–2010) is one of the best-known post-war textile designers. Born in Surrey, she studied at Croydon School of Art and the Royal College of Art in London. During her career she won several awards, including the Gran Premio prize at the Milan Triennale 1954. She is noted for using Surrealist imagery as a key influence in her designs. Her design 'Calyx', presented at the 1951 Festival of Britain, is her most famous work. She was married to furniture designer Robin Day, and became a Royal Designer for Industry in 1962.

Jacqueline Groag (1903–86) was a hugely influential post-war designer. Originally Czech, Groag studied in Vienna and designed for the Wiener Werkstätte before moving to Paris in 1929, where she worked on dress fabrics for fashion houses such as Chanel, and to London in 1939. In addition to working with some of the foremost textile manufacturers and retailers of the era in Britain and America, Groag created a large number of textile designs for the 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1946.

Marian Mahler (1911–83) was born in Vienna and studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule. She moved to Britain in 1937, and in the 1950s she worked for Allan Walton, Edinburgh Weavers and Donald Brothers. At David Whitehead Ltd she was given a mandate to reinvigorate the company by producing affordable textiles with good design. The new roller-printed manufacturing process enabled her sophisticated designs to be reproduced quickly, in rayon and cotton, and at a price that appealed to a younger clientele.

Press Images:

A selection of images are available to be used with mention of 'Designing Women: Post-war British textiles' at the Fashion and Textile Museum, London 2012



Calyx, 1951. Screen-printed linen. Designed by Lucienne Day and manufactured by Heal Fabrics
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown at the Fashion and Textile Museum, London 2012



Pebbles, 1952. Roller-printed rayon. Designed by Jacqueline Groag and manufactured by David Whitehead Ltd.
Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown at the Fashion and Textile Museum, London 2012



Mobiles, 1952. Roller-printed rayon. Designed by Marian Mahler and manufactured by David Whitehead Ltd.

Collection of Jill A. Wiltse and H. Kirk Brown at the Fashion and Textile Museum, London 2012