

# The Art of Pattern

## Susan Collier & Sarah Campbell for Liberty 1961–77

9 October 2015 – 28 February 2016

Press view: Monday 5 October, 9am–5pm  
[#artofpattern](http://ftmlondon.org/exhibitions)

- **Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell's textile designs for Liberty star in a new display at the Fashion and Textile Museum this autumn** (opens 9 October 2015)
- **Art of Pattern celebrates the design duo's contribution to Liberty's reputation as a global style leader in art fabrics from 1961 onwards.**
- **Over 100 painted designs, sketches, printed swatches, fabric lengths and objects highlight their painterly approach to fashion and furnishing textiles.**

Design duo Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell energised Liberty's textile collections for over 15 years. From scarves to fashion and furnishing fabrics, their free hand-painted patterns paved the way for a vibrant new aesthetic in Liberty prints, including the hugely successful 'Bauhaus' range. This display showcases over 100 original painted designs, sketches, printed swatches, lengths and objects from their Collection.

Celia Joicey, Head of the Fashion and Textile Museum, said:

"The Art of Pattern showcases some of the most recognisable textile designs of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The work of Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell forms part of the canon of international textile history and the Fashion and Textile Museum is delighted to celebrate this most successful design partnership."

Sarah Campbell, said:

"We had the opportunity to work with Liberty at the very start of our careers – what luck! What other commercial company stood for such a stated commitment to the art of textile design and the colour, quality, diversity and interest in cloth? It gave us our benchmark."

Susan Collier (1938–2011) became the Design and Colour Consultant for Liberty of London Prints in 1971, when Bernard Nevill left the firm. Collier was already well known to the company having supplied textile designs for scarves to Liberty and Jacqmar, among others, since the early 1960s and was retained by the company from 1968. A skilled painter and self-taught designer, Collier had learned the practicalities of the freelance business while working for Pat Albeck, a successful textile designer best known for her work with Horrockses Fashions and John Lewis.

Sarah Campbell (b.1946), Collier's younger sister, had begun to assist her in her studio during school holidays and while studying graphics at Chelsea College of Art. Campbell's first sale was to Liberty with her graduation design, and by the late 1960s, she was also producing a wide range of designs for Liberty of London Prints from her

own and Susan's studio. These included redrawing fragments from Liberty's archive and creating repeats from them as well as original designs for scarves and textiles. By the early 1970s Sarah was retained as a designer too.

The sisters painted for a variety of fabrics – Tana lawns, Varuna wools, chinon silks and cotton – used for dresses, furnishings and scarves. While they drew on iconic Liberty patterns, they sought to reinterpret them and introduce their own creative energy and preoccupations. In spite of the constraints of mass production, their looser painterly aesthetic became evident in designs of abundant soft florals, bold stripes and free abstracts. Sarah Campbell notes:

"That the quality of the painted mark is very important and gives beauty and energy to the fabric has always been a guiding principle".

Simultaneously, Susan worked hard to challenge the traditional Liberty colourways:

"Liberty at that time had colour combinations – a brown way, a red way, and so on. I wanted to create colour for moods – very strong, very dark, very light – all in one group because I thought this is how people lived, an indication of the self and an indication of the state." said Collier.

Starting with the Clarion Collection in 1972, their designs began to appear in new expressive colours. Among their most popular designs from this time are 'Bauhaus', introduced as a scarf in 1969 and with a radical bright colourway as a furnishing fabric in 1972; 'Kazak', 1974; and 'Cottage Garden', 1974. The celebrated design 'Bird Stripe', 1972, was also adapted for couturier Yves Saint Laurent, who had seen samples of the design and commissioned exclusive patterns by Collier and Campbell for his first collection in 1971.

Both sisters felt strongly that high-quality printed textiles should be available to all through ready-to-wear fashion, and not only the customers of couture. Liberty prints had been produced in limited runs, but when Collier became Design Consultant she determined to supply the wholesale quantities wanted for couturiers' new ready-to-wear collections, and do the same for furnishings.

"We very much wanted it to be off-the-peg. This wasn't any particular insight we had. We were simply born with it," said Collier.

However, they appreciated the creative freedom the company offered them too:

"Liberty has always stood for design, quality and originality of colour, and with some of our designs they were prepared to risk things – as long as there was enough that sold overall" says Sarah Campbell.

The designers introduced a new tone and sensibility to Liberty's house style, reinterpreting the archive while introducing the first abstract furnishing designs. However in 1975, Sarah Campbell, whose designs had up to that point been printed anonymously, received an irresistible offer to join the dress fabric company Soieries Nouveautés and design under her own name. In 1977 Susan made the decision to leave Liberty too. Soon after, the sisters formed Collier Campbell, where for over 30 years they designed for clients including Habitat, Jaeger and Fischbacher in Europe, and Martex, JP Stevens, and P Kaufmann in the United States.

[Additional information and quotes sourced: *The Collier Campbell Archive - 50 years of Passion in Pattern* by Emma Shackleton with Sarah Campbell]

## Notes to editors

1. The display is organised by the Fashion and Textile Museum and Newham College and accompanies the exhibition Liberty in Fashion. Display and exhibition dates **9<sup>th</sup> October 2015 – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2016**.
2. The Fashion and Textile Museum is at 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF.  
**[www.ftmlondon.org](http://www.ftmlondon.org)** #libertyinfashion  
Facebook Fashion and Textile Museum  
Twitter @FashionTextile  
Instagram @FashionTextileMuseum  
Pinterest FashionTextile
3. Opening times: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm; Thursday until 8pm; Sunday until 5pm last admission 45 minutes prior to closing. Monday closed. Ticket prices: £9 adults, £7 concessions, £6 students. Under 12s are free. Booking information: Online at [www.ftmlondon.org](http://www.ftmlondon.org) or in person at the Museum.
4. The Fashion and Textile Museum is the only museum in the UK solely dedicated to showcasing developments in contemporary fashion, as well as providing inspiration, support and training for those working in the industry. Founded by iconic British designer Zandra Rhodes, the museum is owned by Newham College London – one of Europe’s largest further education colleges. The Museum is located in the only building in Europe designed by award-winning Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta (1931–2011).
5. Sarah Campbell biography  
Internationally acclaimed textile designer Sarah Campbell was the co-founder, with her late sister Susan Collier, of the original company Collier Campbell. She is now working under her own name - Sarah Campbell Ltd. As well as painting new design both for influential retailers in the UK and the US and for bespoke customers - combining the commercial with the one-off - she also gives talks about her many years in the industry, the nature of pattern making, and her current daily studio life. She runs workshops, writes a blog and the company retails a small but growing range of products via the website. Her starting point for both bespoke and mass-market projects continues to be the hand-painted mark. For more information visit [www.sarahcampbelldesigns.com](http://www.sarahcampbelldesigns.com)  
@SarahCamDesigns [www.susansaraharchive.com](http://www.susansaraharchive.com)
6. An events programme accompanies the display. Join Sarah Campbell at the Museum for the Liberty Study Day on Wednesday 3 February 2016.
7. The display is accompanied by the book *The Collier Campbell Archive - 50 years of Passion in Pattern*, by Emma Shackleton with Sarah Campbell published by Ilex Press.

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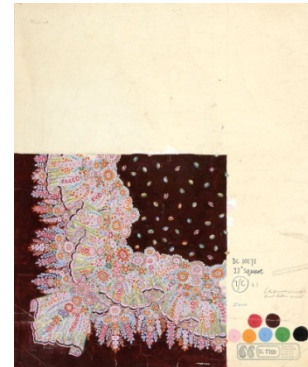
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### Press images

A selection of press images is illustrated below.



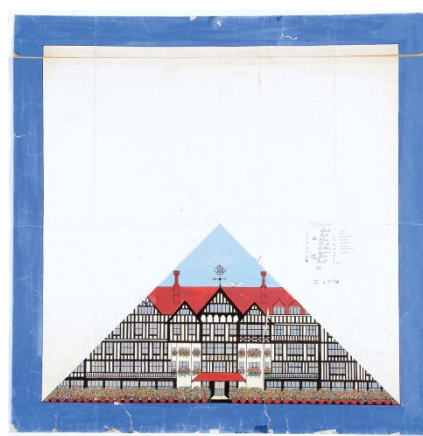
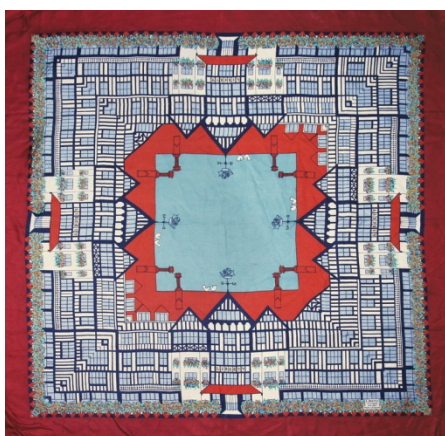
l to r: 'Bauhaus', artwork for the Liberty scarf by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell, 1969. © From the collection of original paintings by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell

Anemones and Ranunculas, 1975, painting for a dress fabric in repeat by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell. Photograph © Sarah Campbell Ltd 2015

Painting for a paisley scarf corner repeat, 1973, by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell. Photograph © The Collier Campbell Archive (Ilex Press 2012)



Painting for a long silk scarf, Herbaceous Border, 1974, by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell. Photograph © The Collier Campbell Archive (Ilex Press 2012)



l to r: Silk Scarf, 1974, by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell. Photograph © The Collier Campbell Archive (Ilex Press 2012)

The Liberty building, 1974, by Susan Collier and Sarah Campbell. Photograph © The Collier Campbell Archive (Ilex Press 2012)