

The complete picture

AMANDA GROGAN

American textile designer Amanda Grogan employs a combination of woven, stitch and print techniques to her textiles for interiors. Grogan's unusual palette and eye for the ways in which woven structures and embroidery stitches intersect is at the heart of her unique style. The double weave structure, which uses two separate warps wound on a loom with two beams, allows the artist to control the tension of each warp individually and weave pleated fabrics. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, Grogan now lives in Williamsburg, New York and has recently opened a store that specialises in antique and ready-made bedding with her business partner Hannah Curtin. Jessica Hemmings talks to the artist



Can you give me some insight into the inspiration behind your textile designs?

'Most of the inspiration for the pleated textiles, which are my focus, stems from an association I have with different types of fabric. When I first started weaving the series they were based on the idea of the touch, the hand of an old pillow or blanket; vague

but comforting childhood memories.'

And what drew you to pleating?

'By altering materials and weave structures I learnt that I could recreate different fabric textures in a single woven piece. I find the idea that one woven fabric could contain references to several contrasting fabrics very interesting.'

It seems that these works are a mixture of weaving, embroidery and other types of embellishment.

'I enjoy working with many different approaches. I incorporate silk screening, hand dying, felting – whatever feels right for the piece. I like to think of myself as a textile designer in the broadest sense but I also find



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painting to be a great source of inspiration. I enjoy working with all sorts of mediums and find that I can relate them all to my weaving.'

Your working process looks to be quite complicated. Can you give some insight into the steps involved? In particular, I notice many delicate areas that have been snipped or even cut away entirely. Is this something you plan before you begin weaving?

'When I start weaving a piece the two main elements at my disposal are the contrasting materials I select for my double warps. I wind one of the warps in nylon or another material that does not shrink in hot water and the other in a material such as wool that will shrink. I keep this relationship between the two in mind when I begin weaving. I don't have preconceived ideas of what I am going to weave, but my work is a response to the double warps and the shrinking that I know will take place later. I then go back into the fabric while it is still on the loom and stitch or trim areas to alter the quality of the fabric when it is washed.'

Is it important that the embroidery is done under tension while the woven fabric is still on the loom?

'Yes, that is what I have found works best. After the fabric is washed the

stitch contributes to the design in a way that does not look like an afterthought. I feel this sense of integrity and intention is very important.'

The double weave is an incredibly time consuming structure to weave by hand. Is the direct contact with materials afforded by hand weaving a necessary part of your creative processes?

'I like to think of my weavings as prototypes. I tend to weave rather than sketch my ideas right from the start and I do enjoy the degree of control hand weaving offers, even if it looks antiquated to some. But I think that every one of my designs could be woven in a pared down form on a computer driven loom.'

A lot of your colour ways are unusual tones or surprising combinations of familiar colours. Where does inspiration for your palette come from?

'It is a combination of things. I grew up overseas and lived in Cairo and Taipei as a child. I have long been fascinated by other cultures and their textile traditions. I also think that much of my palette is informed by my own photography. But there is also an element of nostalgia for colour combinations I saw as a child that seems to creep in.'

Do you think that your sense of colour,

this palette that makes your work so vivid, originates in the natural environment or the constructed?

'I think it is drawn from the constructed world far more than a natural one certainly. Even more than the constructed, I feel it is a world where colour is heightened and stretched to new limits. I try to push each combination to the extreme, which is always a tricky balance!'

Could you describe the type of interior you envision for these textiles?

'I think that there is an aged quality to them that is similar to an antique quilt or a piece of worn clothing. I've always thought of them as pillows and scarves, elaborate touches that bear intriguing signs of age.'

Where do you see yourself going from here?

'Bedding has always been an interest and my business partner, Hannah Curtin, and I have recently started a company called Sleep. Our store in Brooklyn opened this past November and sells a combination of bedding and lingerie. It is my hope that I will be able to launch a design line of my own in the near future. It is something I have wanted to do for some time now and would enjoy working towards – once the company is up and running! I think it would be a



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