

Handprinter Rachel Winsper in her home studio



Patterns in print

Welcome to the colourful world of pattern maker and handprinter Rachel Winsper.

From her pink studio in South Staffordshire, she creates unique designs that are printed onto wallpaper, fabric and other useful items for the home.

Rachel has been creating her own patterns since 2014, when she attended a workshop run by renowned fabric designer Vanessa Arbutnot in Cirencester, Gloucester.

"I've always worked in interior design and used to have my own interior design company, but I always knew that I wanted to be the one creating wallpaper," says mother of three Rachel.

"I came back from the workshop full of ideas and I haven't stopped printing since."

Rachel, who lives in Codsall, continued to run her business while honing her printing skills in her spare time for a few years.

"When Covid happened, I couldn't keep the business going while homeschooling my children so I decided to concentrate on printing," she explains.

Since then Rachel has thrown herself into pattern making, creating a number of collections for wallpaper and fabric in her own signature colours. She also works part-time as a front of house manager at the New Art Gallery Walsall.

"Because I had my interior design business I'm used to looking a collections of wallpaper and fabric, so I always design in collections. Each collection has seven or eight designs. They are also available digital format, so can be licensed as a collection or as an individual pattern," explains Rachel. Her first collection, A String of



Rachel carves her design in to each block by hand

Things, was inspired by pretty seaside towns and architectural details from period properties.

Others include Rhythm which was inspired by unusual objects, vintage pieces and Italian furniture design while childhood memories, family treasures and special places were behind her collection Wildlock.

"I get inspired by all kinds of things. I have a notebook on me at all times so I can quickly sketch ideas," says Rachel, who is a member of the Heritage Craft Organisation.

"I have a design called Teacup which reflects a tiny pattern I saw on teacup and saucer that caught my eye at the Museum of China in Ironbridge.

"One of my favourites is a pattern I designed for my son. He wanted something based on the Porsche logo. "I created a simple repeat pattern

design using the iconic antlers, shields and stripes from the logo."

The 45-year-old is full of admiration for print artists Peggy Angus, Enid Marx and Barren & Larcher, who she discovered during a visit to London Transport Museum.

"These artists were working in the inter-war years and their designs really resonate with me."

When creating a new design, Rachel begins by sketching out her idea before transferring the pattern onto a block of lino or rubberised material and carving the details using basic cutting tools.

"I use ink and paint, depending on whether I'm printing wallpaper or fabric. The test print is always the most exciting part because I find out whether the pattern idea I've had is going to work. I have a good idea of how it's going to turn out but I don't know exactly how it will look until I do the test print. I love a good stripe, spot and scallop so every designs ends up with one of these," she tells Weekend.

What Rachel loves most about printing is how accessible the craft is to those who want to give it a go. "You can have a design idea at breakfast and it could be hanging on the wall by tea time. You don't need expensive materials and tools – you could use any paint you have in your garage," she says.

"I love the immediacy of it and also the limitations – I work with only two colours – a base colour and a top colour. Handprinted things have a really lively element and you can see the makers mark in the repeat patterns. This makes it really special."

Rachel is running a workshop at the Crown in Codsall on Tuesday, December 5 from 7pm-9pm. To book a place, visit winsperdesign.co.uk

Heather Large



Some of the printed items in her studio