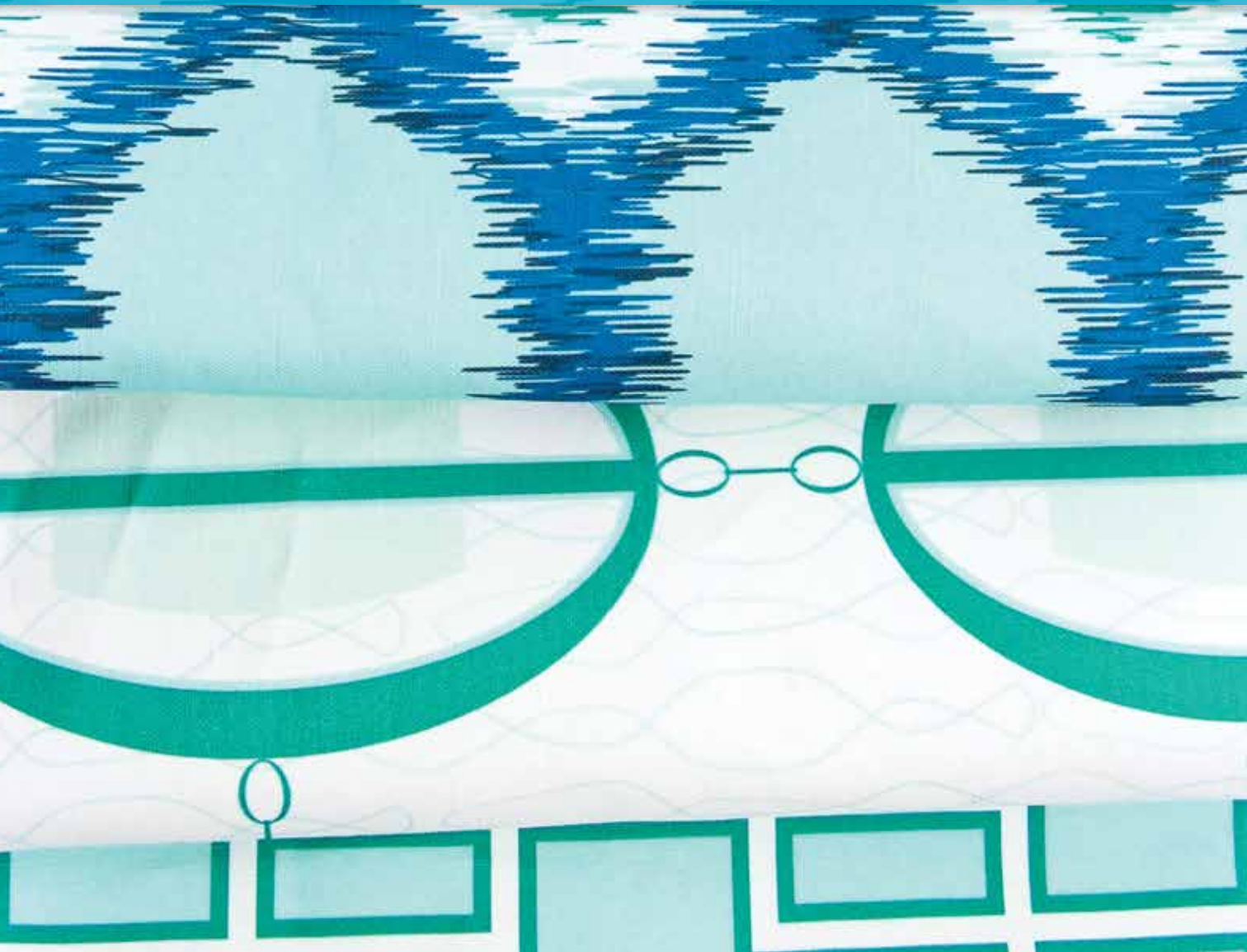


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# Pattern Play

*From playful and bold to elegant and classic, an Alabama native's textile designs weave her Southern roots with her captivating travels*

by Lauren Helmer



On the studio walls, richly colored fabric samples intermingle with images that inspire the artist; her worn paintbrushes, pencils, paint, and ink fill the two large work tables; and a sewing station stands ready to assemble samples of inspired sketches as the brassy, lilting tunes of the '20s float through Mary Catherine Folmar's Birmingham studio. She is immersed in the glamour, sophistication, and exuberance of the Roaring Twenties as she paints the design that will be printed onto textiles for her Deco Collection.

Mary Catherine was originally a premed student, but a love of design got the better of her. She majored in Industrial Design—a field that taught her to turn her art into a brand and bring it to market. Her company, Cotton + Quill, debuted with her By the Sea Collection in the summer of 2012 at the West Indies Market in Florida's Rosemary Beach. "The seahorses and whales were the most fun in my first collection," she recalls. Cotton + Quill now offers textile and stationery products, including custom interior products, pillows, bags, scarves, tea towels, wallpaper, couture paper, note and recipe cards, and bridge scorecards—sold in boutiques and specialty stores throughout the Southeast, as well as the Dominican Republic.

Childhood family travels to the Gulf Coast and New York City, along with college studies throughout Europe and Asia, fueled Mary Catherine's passion





for the unique cultures of the world that are boldly pronounced in every fiber of her designs. “I often look back to the colors in travel photos for inspiration.” She cites the Koi pattern in the Shangri-La Collection: “a carving detail on the roof of a temple in Taiwan—a koi fish spouting water—which I also sketched while I was there.”

While her travels abroad evoke wonder and creativity, she is still fascinated with the South. “I love the food, the sweet tea, rolling hills, azaleas and magnolias, cotton fields, saying ‘yes ma’am’ and ‘no sir,’ and writing thank-you notes.” Her stationery line is a result of her Southern upbringing. “I always include a handwritten note with my orders,” she says. “It lets the client know they are appreciated and important, even if it is just a little sample they are receiving.”

Mary Catherine embraces the possibilities the future holds, dreaming of tabletop and clothing lines. When not in the studio, she loves spending time with her college-sweetheart husband and their three dogs—Marley, Sookie, and Butters—preferably with a glass of wine on the beach. She muses, as if staring into an ocean sunset, “I am doing what I love, and it is so rewarding to know that people get excited about what I have designed and what inspires me.”



“You have to think about how the designs will be used in the space and how they will coordinate with each other,” says Mary Catherine. “You can really use a lot of pattern in a space, but you just have to know how and where to use it.”



**FROM HER HOME TO YOURS**

This fabric fashionista shares her tips for playing with textiles and patterns:

- Don't be afraid of pattern. You can mix lots of patterns by playing with the scale and keeping the patterns you use in the same colorway so it doesn't feel chaotic.
- Not ready to commit to upholstering a sofa in a bold pattern? Try incorporating it into your room as accent pillows first. They can instantly update a space for minimal cost.
- I love using a pattern as draperies *and* as an accent on upholstery. If you're really feeling bold, try using the same pattern on the walls.
- Try framing a piece of fabric to display as art.
- Trending now and always a classic, a floor-length table skirt with an added trim detail is a great display backdrop for anything from small trinkets or photographs to coffee-table books and a gorgeous floral arrangement.

