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DESIGNER PROFILE
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PAGET SCOTT-McCARTHY, textile designer

For textile designer Paget Scott-McCarthy, from Schull, Co Cork, the possibilities of fabric are manifold. “The manipulation of fabric and printing on fabric is something that’s never really shown to you – if you want to find it, you have to go looking for it yourself. I found that strand and just latched on to it.”

A portfolio course after school led to textile design in NCAD, where in her fourth year, she was a finalist in the Nokia Young Designer competition. The broad course, covering print, weave and embroidery, gave her a feel for all the different options. “I ended up doing fashion and interiors, which allowed me to really branch out.”

An erasmus year in Paris during college was inspirational, and on finishing college, Paget spent six months working for Acorn Conceptual Textiles in Nottingham, designing prints for a range of clients from Marks & Spencer to Stella McCartney. The following year working for Irish-based designer Liz Nilsson and an internship at McQueen menswear in London provided her with plenty of variety.

While in London, Paget and a friend began to discuss the idea of doing textile workshops and gave their first one in Dublin last July. “We thought we would just do it for the summer but they went so well, we’re still doing them.” The weekend courses teach print, embroidery and sewing skills aimed at enabling people to start making things again. “It’s about being able to design beautiful things for yourself. It does take practice but it’s fun and people enjoy doing it, it’s just about knowing a few basic skills and believing in yourself and it’ll pay off.”

In between teaching, she’s still designing her own collections. “I’d miss it too much to stop but I really enjoy teaching as I love working with people.” Inspired by children’s illustrations from when she was younger, there is a playful, whimsical feel to her work, as she uses everyday objects in innovative ways and likes patterns to be “a bit surprising”. On finding some old toy cars at home, she copied their shape into a pattern. “They were just so pretty, I wanted to give them a second life.” Many of her patterns feature shapes from the natural world: hens, dragonflies and waterlilies. “Their forms lend themselves so much to repeat patterns, it’s hard to resist.”

Also working as a guest lecturer in embroidery at the Grafton Academy and exhibiting her own design work, for Paget, it’s all in the mix. “I guess with every career, you realise it’s not necessarily going to be straight down the middle, it’s more of a winding road.” Above all, it’s about enjoying the process. “It’s great to show women how these traditional embroidery skills can be made contemporary so easily, and that it’s really fun. All of us sitting around this big table just stitching and gossiping, it’s lovely!”

www.pagetscottmccarthy.com; for more information on Paget’s textile workshops, www.textileworkshopdublin.com



DAVIN LARKIN, furniture design

When furniture designer Davin Larkin returned to Dublin in December 2008 after over a year travelling around the world, a lot had changed. “It was hard to come back, it was a completely different country.” With the economy flagging and employment prospects grim, he decided to set up his own design studio, Kooyong Design.

“There wasn’t much hope of getting a job and there still isn’t and this was something I’d always wanted to do.”

The spacious studio in Tallaght Arts Centre showcases his own work, along with other young designers, Kate Cronin and Sadhbh Fitzgibbon. “I think we all need to bounce off one another to help each other out,” says Davin. With influences from Scandinavia and Japan, his collection in beautifully polished oak features simple, well-designed and functional pieces, with the aim of putting Ireland on the international design map.

“People value other Irish entities like art or music, so if there was a market for Irish design abroad it would be hugely beneficial. I think we need to recognise design as a craft in itself.” Although a fan of Ikea, Davin feels there needs to be a balance between temporary and long-lasting. “We’re living in a very throw-away society – things are only used for a few weeks or a few years. I think we need to get back to a strong design aesthetic, where something will last for a lifetime.”

www.kooyongdesign.com

