



Eleanor Pritchard

With designs that take their cues from the hills of Shropshire and the mills of Wales, Eleanor Pritchard's textiles capture a uniquely British sensibility. *Jo-ann Fortune* spoke to Eleanor to find out more about her work and inspirations. Photography by India Roper-Evans.

A very British tradition

London-based textile designer Eleanor Pritchard has just finished packing palettes to ship to Maison de Object in Paris when we catch up. Although the design and inspiration of her geometric woven blankets, cushions and upholstery are rooted in British traditions, they are proving popular all over the world, particularly in Japan, Scandinavia and the United States.

Eleanor learnt about global cloth craftsmanship through her textile design training as a mature student at Chelsea College of Arts. But while some of her classmates worked on projects inspired by travels to far-away places, it was the traditions closer to home that tugged on Eleanor's heartstrings. "I was interested in the patterns knitted into fishermen's jumpers to help identify them if they drown", she explains, "and the way that weaving and spinning feature in folk songs and how terms from Britain's textile heritage are still used in everyday language." Such as? "On tenterhooks is a good one. It comes from the tradition of drying textiles stretched with tenterhooks that kept the weave taut. The impact textiles had on British tradition and our landscape is quite incredible."

Eleanor is now at the heart of that great British tradition, helping to weave new life into the industry by working mainly with a Welsh mill in Carmarthenshire that shares its site with the National Wool Museum – an inspiring showcase of local weave history.



Here, Eleanor began to work with pattern on a large-scale, mixing repeated geometrics with a mid-century palette of hot orange, lazy yellow and muted grey to create feature-piece double-weave blankets that form focal points in living spaces and bedrooms. She's since added a more versatile range of upholstery to her repertoire, sold by the metre to both domestic and contract markets.

As well as pattern and colour, woven into Eleanor's deep love of the mid-century aesthetic is the design philosophy of the era. "There's an honesty in the materials and you can see how things are made," she explains. "My grandparents were both architects and I spent a lot of time at their house surrounded by Ercol, Artek, cork tiles and printed fabrics – they handed down the philosophy that good design should be democratic – available and affordable to all."

Eleanor tells me that she

wants her work to look contemporary and with this in mind, she takes her design cues from architecture – of any era. For example, she's discovered that "the repeat patterns in blocks of flats lend themselves very well to weave design." These industrial influences are no more easily identified than in Eleanor's recent upholstery partnerships with London-based furniture makers Hitch Mylius and twentytwentyone; both of which see her work fused for the first time with metal.

Hitch Mylius' sculptural sofas and chairs share a similar understated yet striking geometric mid-century aesthetic with Eleanor's work, making it difficult to believe that many of their models are children of the 21st century. Founded in 1971 to fill a gap in the market for well-crafted Modern British furniture, at a time when all eyes were on Italian and Scandinavian imports, several

Previous page: Eleanor Pritchard in her London studio, sat in the Hitch Mylius Cebi armchair. **Above:** hank winding the yarn for the stitching used on the edges of the blankets.

Right: Quail's Egg blanket. **Following:** the colourful array of wool yarn in Eleanor's studio; **Easterly blanket;** 405 Line blanket; **Eleanor with examples of her work,** including the Hitch Mylius Cebi range of armchairs.



