



SURFACE DESIGNER OTTOLINE DE VRIES

Inspired by geometric shapes, street scenes and surrealist art, this Dutch designer produces vibrant fabrics, wallpapers and furniture with a contemporary edge

WORDS EMMA J PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS ALUN CALLENDER

THIS PAGE Ottoline sketches ideas on a tablet in her dining room, which features a bespoke Tulips wallpaper inspired by a drawing by Andy Warhol. **OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Studio shelves are stacked with lampshades from the Ballets Russes collection and cushions from the Love and Peace and Swinging collections; Ottoline's living room is decorated with many of her own designs,

including Brigands wallpaper, a Japanese Tape lampshade and a chest of drawers papered with a hand-drawn map of Amsterdam; a rack of wallpaper samples exemplifies Ottoline's love of vibrant imagery and bold hues; a clash of patterns – Chief Clown wallpaper, a chair upholstered in Pop-In fabric, a cushion in Tartan Trip and a London Mews shade – characterises another corner of Ottoline's living room.



ABOVE In her studio, Ottoline holds a roll of *The Buffoon's Wife*, a pattern from the *Ballets Russes* collection, which won Best Wallpaper Collection in the 2015 *H&G Fabric Awards*. The cushions on the chair are in *Sky Candy* (top), based on work by Roy Lichtenstein, and *Homework*, inspired by Pop Artist Gordon House. **BELOW** A miscellany of wallpaper designs.



Forsaking the legal profession for a career in design, Ottoline de Vries launched her own wallpaper collection in 2011. Using digital technology to reinterpret her love of bold colour and graphic pattern, she quickly expanded to incorporate fabrics, lampshades and cushions. Ottoline has supplied wallpaper to Museum Willet-Holthuysen in Amsterdam and London's Firdale Hotels, and is an *H&G Fabric Awards* winner.

“ I grew up surrounded by design influences but I was unaware of my own creativity. Instead, I studied law and, although I didn't love the profession, I did enjoy it. When my children were born, we began to renovate our family home near Amsterdam, and I started playing with colour and fabrics and upcycling furniture. During lunchtimes at work, I would scour the internet looking for antiques and, if I was lucky, I'd pick up a new treasure on my way home. By day, I was practising law; at night, I was sanding, painting and papering my finds.

For the first three years of my life I lived in Quito, Ecuador. There are lots of pictures of me surrounded by locals wearing traditional, colourful clothes. We then returned to the Netherlands and lived in a big, old house in the village of Aerdenhout. My mother and grandmother were important influences. If my mother wasn't painting the house, she was at the sewing machine making curtains, chair covers or clothes. Her mother was a decorative wizard. She once made me a four-poster bed and a desk for my bedroom. In her later years, she made detailed dolls' houses – my three siblings and I are fortunate enough to own one each.

As a child, I loved pretty things but I don't remember painting and drawing. That side of me came to the fore when I started renovating furniture. After a local store sold all my upcycled pieces virtually overnight, in 2011, I was ready to give up law and start my own business.

My focus shifted over time. In the beginning, I'd search out wallpaper that would be the perfect finishing touch for a piece of furniture, but I often couldn't find what I was looking for. So I started drawing my ideas. When my first design, *Skyline The Hague*, was printed onto wallpaper, I knew I'd found my metier. It was initially a sketch on paper. Later, when I developed my digital skills, I tweaked it a little.

Now all of my designs are created on screen. I'm inspired by traditional techniques, such as Japanese block printing, fabric dyeing and weaving motifs, interpreting them in a new way with my “digital pen”.

A couple of years ago, we moved to London and fell in love with it from day one. It feels like living in a design Mecca. I love colour and art and find inspiration everywhere, from Fauvism and the costumes of the *Ballets Russes* to Picasso and the regeneration of Pierre Frey.

No day is typical for me. I often start with a run on Hampstead Heath then return to my home studio to work on designs; they take weeks to refine. Other times, I'll be out meeting clients. My design ethos is very prevalent in my home. I love using wallpaper and fabrics and I'm not afraid of pattern clashes – colour, print and pattern are what give it soul.

The colour combinations, shapes and forms found in Pop Art have inspired my latest collection. But I have a feeling that I've just begun. Printmaking is addictive and although I've started to develop my own style, I know it will keep evolving. I like to push the boundaries by thinking big – large-scale designs and unlimited colours are a textile maker's dream.”
Ottoline, ottoline.nl.