

Exhibition Events

**From Paintbrush to Copperplate The History of
Pattern in Furnishings with Humphrey Boyle**
Thursday 31 May

7pm, Meeting Room

Humphrey Boyle former Design Director of Zoffany and special consultant for this project presents an illustrated talk about the history of creating patterns on material.

Never Mind The Peacocks

Timorous Beasties

Thursday 7 June

7pm, Galleries 1&2

Join co-curators Alistair McAuley and Paul Simmons for a lively and illuminating tour of the exhibition.

Pattern in the Contemporary World

Emily Campbell

Thursday 14 June

7pm, Meeting Room

Join Emily Campbell, Head of Design at the British Council for an illustrated presentation looking at the use of pattern in our everyday lives.

These events are **free** – just turn up.



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Peacocks Among The Ruins

co-curated by Timorous Beasties

This unique exhibition examines the history of the use of the natural world in interior design, and has been specially conceived for DCA as part of the Six Cities Design Festival, Scotland's first festival of design. Selected by the Glasgow based design duo Timorous Beasties, the exhibition brings together examples of historical and contemporary wallpaper, textiles and objects, all of which feature imagery inspired by the natural world. *Peacocks Among The Ruins* reflects Timorous Beasties' entirely partial and eccentric interpretation of the history of interior design.

Founded in Glasgow in 1990, Timorous Beasties consists of Alistair McAuley and Paul Simmons, who met while studying Textile Design at Glasgow School of Art. With designs that have previously been described as "William Morris on acid", they have produced a diverse range of textiles and wallpapers that feature natural imagery such as bees, butterflies, orchids, thistles, pineapples and iguanas. Timorous Beasties have also become well known for their reinterpretation of Toile de Jouy, a textile that traditionally depicts pastoral scenes, which they redesigned to reflect contemporary urban life in the cities of Glasgow and London. Their substantial contribution to design led to their nomination for Designer of the Year, 2005.

27 April –
24 June 2007

Peacocks Among The Ruins takes its title from an eighteenth century British Toile de Jouy fabric **The Peacock in the Ruins**. As well as classical and genre scenes, Toile de Jouy designs often illustrate a familiar narrative from history, literature or mythology. The exhibition includes a number of examples of historical textiles and wallpapers selected by Timorous Beasties from the private archives of two of Britain's major textile companies, **Sanderson** and **Zoffany**. Pieces have been chosen to demonstrate different types of production techniques, the intricacies of the design process, particularly in the execution of patterns that are designed to repeat, and the variety of imagery that has featured on textiles and wallpaper through the years.

Imagery from the natural world has been consistently used to form a back-drop within the home. The enduring popularity of natural themes relates both to the attractive, colourful qualities of flora and fauna and to Britain's status as a predominantly urban society, the development of which saw increasing numbers of people moving from rural communities to the city. While many of the wallpapers and textiles exhibited here were intended for wealthy houses, natural imagery was also adopted by those who lived in less affluent circumstances, and helped assuage the

prosaic reality of many urban homes. The first gallery is home to a flock of birds constructed from flock wallpaper produced by the well-established firm of **Cole & Son**. Invented as a cheaper alternative to traditional fabric wall-hangings, flock wallpaper was originally a luxury product. After suffering a decline in popularity, flock has recently experienced a revival thanks to its kitsch appeal. This is also a feature of the twenty lampshades that contain designs taken from **Sanderson** pattern books of the 1970s, that light the way through to the second gallery. These designs also vividly demonstrate how natural themes have been abstracted and reworked to satisfy the fashions of the day.

Advances in technology have the potential to transform interior design, as demonstrated by the work of **Daniel Brown** and **Christopher Pearson**. Brown's computer generated designs are produced using mathematical formulae, but the resulting projections reflect the influence of the natural world through their regenerative floral imagery. In homage to **William Morris**, one of the most well-known designers to utilise natural motifs, Pearson uses the classic **Willow Boughs** (1887) design as a starting point for a subtly animated wallpaper. Three pieces of Morris's **St. James** (1880) wallpaper are displayed close by, a design which features an unusually large repeat.

Textiles and wallpapers that feature natural themes are often used to create a reflective and restful space. This type of interior tends to present a benign, romanticised view of nature, which does not necessarily reflect the reality of the natural world. **Zuber** takes this to a fantastical extreme with their extravagant panoramic scenic wallpaper entitled **Eldorado** (designed 1849), which was intended to be the seductive focal point of a room, rather than a back-drop for other furnishings. *Peacocks Among The Ruins* features three panels of Eldorado out of a total of twenty-four. The digitally produced contemporary wallpaper **Eaglemountain** (2006) designed by **Universal Everything** is intended to make a similar impact upon an interior, but its imagery is overwhelmingly surreal rather than escapist.

Some of the themes displayed in Eaglemountain also appear in **Committee's Fly Tip** (2005) wallpaper, which offers a modern take on our relationship with the environment, featuring a design that consists of the detritus of everyday life. **Jurgen Bey's Birdwatchcabinet for a girl** (2007) reuses old furniture and packing crates decorated with silhouettes of birds to create a bird watching hide for a seven year old girl, which includes comforts such as a bed. The exhibition includes a real bird (which died of natural causes

in 1958) in the form of **Michael Sans's** literal interpretation of the **Cuckoo Clock** (2006). The design collective **Front** have also put creatures to work, using live beetles to create a pattern on their **Insect Table** (2006). The exquisite furniture that comprises **Studio Job's Perished Collection** (2006) features natural subjects depicted in skeletal form using the traditional art of marquetry. These works all attempt to engage with nature in its true, unadorned state.

Peacocks Among The Ruins features many works that playfully interact with their natural subjects. Each of **Hella Jongerius's** delicate porcelain bowls contains a different animal, and manipulates the scale of its subjects until a snail and a hippopotamus are the same size. **Marcel Wanders's** ingeniously crafted **Silver Egg Vase** (2003) uses the familiar shape of an egg, and multiplies it to create an entirely new form. Similarly, **Nice's Hybrid** (2005) wallpaper uses combinations of halved silhouetted animals, insects and sea creatures to create a strange new mutant breed from previously recognisable animals. Finally, **Front's** life size **Horse Lamp** (2006), manufactured in black polyester and featuring a humorously placed lampshade on its head, would inevitably be the feature of any domestic interior.