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WOMEN OF
THE CLOTH:
FOUR TOP
TEXTILE
DESIGNERS

THE CHECKER KING

SOMETIMES LIFE SAVES
ITS BEST MOVES FOR LAST

Women of the cloth

MEET FOUR FEMALE DESIGNERS LEADING THE WAVE OF INNOVATION IN TEXTILES FOR INTERIORS

BY KAREN KLAGES

Fashion designers are household names, and even furniture is sexy now. But the fabric that covers a sofa or chair? It goes unglorified, but shouldn't.

Exciting interiors textiles are hitting the market every day. And women are behind many of them.

The Bauhaus masters sent female students at their seminal design school to the Weaving Workshop in the 1920s because it was deemed women's work, and many of those women later emigrated to the U.S., giving this country a tradition of strong, modern textile design from strong, modern women.

Here are four such women, whose innovative work in both fabric construction—the blending of yarns and fibers—and pattern designs is influencing the industry as well as our lives.

Karen Klages is a Tribune staff reporter who writes about design and interiors.



SUZANNE TICK "Imago," a semi-translucent, hard-surface material (for cabinet fronts, shower doors) is Tick's idea of encapsulating fabric in layers of resin.



JHANE BARNES Computer-aided textile designs from a woman better known for her menswear include (from left) "Milky Way," "Fizz" and "Facets."



LORI WEITZNER "Sassafra" (left) and "Chamomile" patterns are from Weitzner's lush and spiritual "Bloom" collection for Sahco Hesslein/Bergamo.



LAURA FOSTER NICHOLSON "Auricula" features exaggerated blooms and butterflies and a tapestry-like heft that speaks of her other life as a textile artist.

LORI WEITZNER

When she was little, Lori Weitzner would go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with her father. "I would sneak up to my favorite paintings and touch them," says Weitzner. "I felt like if I touched the painting, I was touching the artist."

So it goes with her textiles. Touch them, touch Weitzner. Or at least feel something.

Although she is the industry's pretty woman—known for her lush cloths of silk and wool that can cost up to \$296 a yard and for her fresh, fluid interpretations of flowers and other organic forms—Weitzner is more concerned with delivering an emotional experience.

And so, behind every pretty pattern is a spiritual reference that Weitzner hopes to channel to people "whether they ever know me or ever even know what my inspiration was," says Weitzner, who is synesthetic—she can hear, taste and smell colors.

For her luxurious "Bloom" collection for Sahco Hesslein of Germany, Weitzner delved into the mysteries of medicinal flowers and herbs—eucalyptus, lavender, chamomile.

For her "Myth and Magic" Tibetan rugs for Endless Knot Rug Co., she researched the stories of ancient peoples and turned their symbols and scriptures into patterns. Perhaps her grandest gesture of soulful textiles is her most humble. She recently unveiled a low-price collection of Crypton fabrics (vinyl-like, antibacterial, a staple in health care) for Pallas Textiles, based on serene botanical photographs by the late German photographer Karl Blossfeldt. □

Lori Weitzner's fabrics for Sahco Hesslein/Bergamo, \$158 to \$296 a yard, are available at Holly Hunt Chicago, Merchandise Mart. Fabrics for Pallas Textiles, \$56 to \$120 a yard, are at KI/Pallas Textiles, Mart. Rugs for Endless Knot are at Jorian Rug Co., Mart. Most 6-by-9-foot rugs cost around \$6,000.

Lori Weitzner sits on a sofa covered in her pleated "Cypress" fabric for Sacho Hesslein/Bergamo. Also from her "Bloom" collection is (clockwise from top) "Vervain," "Rose" and "Eucalyptus."

