

GET INSPIRED



Antonia Munroe's new textile shop, housed in her Camden studio, displays stenciled linens and clothing in earthy shades, including her favorite indigo, which ranges from cornflower to cobalt.



STUDIO VISIT

Material World

In Camden, a painter launches a line of botanical textiles inspired by ancient motifs and dying techniques.



She didn't hold her first textile show until 2019, but Camden artist Antonia Munroe's love of pattern and fabric has long found its way into her work. At age 11, she copied the borders in her mother's books on medieval illuminated manuscripts — “the twirly little flowers and the leaves and the lines.” In college, she painted intricate Japanese-inspired mandalas, and later spent years making collages composed of layers of fabric and paint. More recently, she became an expert in the Indian miniature style — small, highly detailed paintings that date to the 16th century — creating a series of flowers and birds juxtaposed with stenciled botanical backgrounds.

Munroe still identifies primarily as a painter, but a 2014 trip to India prompted her to turn to textiles. Pre-pandemic, she returned to India annually to study ancient dying techniques. Now, her studio, in a sage-green barn next to her home, includes dye baths, clotheslines, and drying racks, and, as of last summer, her pine-paneled shop, displaying vibrant linens, merino-wool scarves, and flowy silk skirts with stylized floral motifs.

The fabrics are subjected to a multi-step process that typically involves washing, dyeing, rinsing, stenciling, plunging into a vinegar bath that brightens the color, and boiling. The stencils begin as hand drawings inspired by sources as diverse as 10th-century Indian block prints and the perennials in her garden. Some patterns are applied with textile paint on dyed fabric, others with “clay resist” paste on raw material that is later dyed, leaving stark imprints where the paste “resists” the color.

Though she's partial to indigo, Munroe also uses non-toxic fiber-reactive dyes that produce rich chocolate, crimson, and saffron shades, and has been experimenting with tints made from avocados, bark, marigolds, and onion skins. “It's been a huge learning curve,” she says. “I've read tons of books — they all say different things. But the more I learn, the more I'm finding my own path.” — JESSE ELLISON



Antonia Textiles is open by appointment from April through December.
antoniatextiles.com