



▲ Stellar screen, by Jake Phipps, £19,500 for three panels, jakehipps.com



The stand of Milan's Nilurfar Gallery at Design Miami this month — James Harris

Interiors | Geometric patterns are no longer limited to tiles, as more designers experiment in using repeated lines and shapes. By *Emma Love*

A certain symmetry

Anyone in doubt that geometric patterns are back in vogue among designers need have looked no further than Design Miami earlier this month. Among the new furniture on display was Italian designer Alessandro Mendini's curved Orvieto table, made using a criss-cross pattern of Bisazza mosaic tiles, and the fan-like Wave cabinet by the Chilean-born, New York-based Sebastian Errazuriz.

"Geometrics have always been

around in some guise but, in the last year, they have really come to the forefront of design," says Hannah Bort, an independent interiors stylist.

And the interest in geometric design appears to be growing. In the past couple of months, designer Daniel Heath has launched a collection of salvaged Welsh slate wall tiles in geometric shapes; design studio Afroditi Krassa has released its debut product collection, featuring a monochrome Piano tile; and British furniture company

WorkHouse has commissioned its first series of handmade cement tiles.

"We're creatures of fashion so it could be that we were influenced by what seems to be most popular at the moment," says WorkHouse founder Dominick Pegram. "The only brief we gave the designers was that the tiles must tessellate and we wanted to capture a sense of movement." The results feature linked hoops, warped diamonds and, in the case of those based on paintings by artist Roy Pegram (the founder's late father), have an op-art feel. "We have his paintings from the 1980s on the wall in our east London studio and the biggest surprise to us was how fresh and contemporary the shapes look."

Another company specialising in wall coverings, although this time in leather, is Studioart, which joined the Rubelli group earlier this year. "The great thing is that we can achieve different effects using the same basic geometric shapes



▲ Bone china mugs, £16 each, alfredandwilde.co.uk
▼ Tea & Mocha spoons, by Katharine Pooley, £148, fortnumandmason.com



depending on whether the client is looking for something classic or contemporary," says creative director Nadia Dalle Mese. "For example, our Outland leather can be used on flat or padded square tiles to create a 3D surface."

Harriet Roberts, co-founder of specialist tile company Bert & May, believes the appeal of geometric patterns is widening. "Our geometric tile range is one of our most requested, particularly in urban tones of grey, black and white. The tiles are a way of lending gravitas to a space, making it striking but without taking over," she says. "The reason we feel geometrics are having a moment is because the patterns are now appearing on a huge array of homewares."

Bort agrees. "Previously, geometric patterns were mostly seen on tiles and surface finishes, but now they are cropping up on bedding, cushion covers and wallpapers too, so it's more of a complete look," she says.



▲ The Darwin chair in orange Piccadilly velvet, £350, galapagosdesigns.com



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▲ Revolver display cabinet, by Chris Turner, £3,400, treniq.com



▲ From left: WH Tone Row and Tempered Pitch tiles, by Roy Pegram, £180 per sq metre; Gradient Beam tile, by Jethro Macey, £205 per sq metre, workhousecollection.co.uk



▲ The Bartolomew chair in angel cubes, £625, galapagosdesigns.com

► Velvet throw, by Margo Selby, £385, margoselby.com



▲ Push bowls, in steel, copper and brass, £16 to €48, thefundamentalshop.com



The beauty of geometrics, Bort adds, is that “because of the repeat nature of the patterns they are manageable in our homes. You can blow them up and go as wild as you want or just add a small-scale pop through accessories here and there”. Textile designer Margo Selby, for example, has put geometric prints on cushions, throws and bed linen, while Woven Ground has a new range of geometric, monochrome leather rugs.

Another interior designer using geometrics is Katharine Pooley who often features cubist-style paintings by artist Bianca Smith in her clients’ homes. “A lot of Bianca’s work is geometric. She uses clean lines, which I think are a calming, beautiful antidote to our busy lives,” she says. Pooley has also designed an art deco-influenced dinner service for Fortnum & Mason, formed of geometric patterns in gold and silver.

Art deco lines crop up on geometric-based collections by Nathan Philpott and Jemma Ooi, who together form

design duo Custhom. Their Palladian collection of blue-and-white porcelain and Hayward range of textiles are both inspired by London architecture. Philpott and Ooi put their geometric leaning down to their respective backgrounds in graphic design and screen printing.

“There’s been a lot of talk about the rebirth of geometrics and block colouring but for us, our shapes are more about a visual language that we’ve evolved together. We don’t want to over-complicate our ideas so simple geometric forms make sense,” says Philpott.

It is an approach echoed by Grace Winteringham and Anna Murray of Pattermy, who are known for their monochrome geometric patterns. “Our trademark print – circles, lines, squares – is a rearrangement of those fundamental shapes that make up all matter. It represents the infinity of pattern,” says Murray. The pair’s most recent project is their Fleet of Dazzle range of art prints, fashion and home accessories

created for London’s Imperial War Museum to commemorate the start of the first world war.

Bespoke furniture designer Chris Turner has created a series of veneered marquetry pieces, including the American walnut Tabitha coffee table, the Revolver cabinet, designed to display vinyl records, and the Credenza 13 cabinet. The latter has more than 660 pieces of wood, all individually placed and hand-cut to fit. “It’s a bit like putting a jigsaw together; it’s very therapeutic,” says Turner. “The fact that using veneers in furniture is also becoming more popular again means that as a maker, you can experiment a lot more with designs that wouldn’t be achievable in solid timber.”

German designer Elisa Strozzyk experiments with geometric patterns in unusual ways by creating half-wood, half-textile flexible surfaces that can be used as curtains, rugs, and table runners. The wood is sanded, stained and laser-cut into small triangular pieces which are then applied to a fabric base. “When I started experimenting with wood I tried

‘We don’t want to overcomplicate our ideas so simple geometric forms make sense’

different shapes – circles, honeycomb patterns, squares – but then I realised triangles worked the best in terms of movement,” she says. “The small triangles allow the material to be sculpted in a 3D way that’s not possible otherwise.”

Equally, the Stellar series (featuring side tables, a mirror, a console and a screen) by designer Jake Phipps is the result of innovative thinking.

“From a manufacturing perspective, it’s interesting because there’s the ability to create organic shapes with straight lines. 3D curves cost money so by laser-cutting flat sheets of stainless steel into a geometric arrangement you can produce a 3D curved object,” he says. Each piece is inspired by the precious qualities of naturally forming amethyst geodes and machine-cut diamonds (each panel of the screen consists of more than 1,000 individually sized and angled mirrored sections). “I’ve certainly tried to push the construction boundaries,” says Phipps.

Life’s little pleasures

Continued from page 1

household. There are no tablets or games consoles. Take a look at the various websites for US or British doll’s-house enthusiasts and they reflect a world that has long disappeared.

That cosy, nostalgic domesticity is, however, at odds with an unsettling sense of a too-real world of reduction. In the remarkable 1957 film *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, the protagonist finds himself getting smaller each day and ends up living, for a while, in a doll’s house (until the cat chases him out). It is an eerie echo of a childhood fantasy of living vicariously through the tiny contents of an imaginary world.

Artist Rachel Whiteread collects old dolls’ houses, not as antiques but rather as miniaturised simulacra. The suburban houses, cutesy cottages and mini-mansions exude an existential angst of lost childhoods and unloved abandonment. The houses piled into an uneasy, twilight suburb of empty dwellings create a powerful, evocative image. Henrik Ibsen also exploited this sense of unease in the implicit comparison of the life of a wife trapped in a dependent, bourgeois lifestyle to an existence in a doll’s house in the title of his most revered play.

From the Wunderkammer to the favoured toy, the doll’s house delivers a sense of control over an idealised environment. It presented a God’s-eye view with its owner as God, rather than merely inhabitant. For the child it is exactly the same but more so. Children lack the control over their everyday lives so the ability to dictate the details of existence in the doll’s house provides a sense of agency.

The doll’s house has lasted because it allows our adult and our infant selves to imagine a level of perfection, completeness and control so conspicuously lacking from the chaos of our actual lives.

‘Small Stories: At Home in a Doll’s House’ opens this weekend at the V&A’s Museum of Childhood in London, and runs until September 6 2015; museumofchildhood.org.uk

Edwin Heathcote is the FT’s architecture critic



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