

# My Life in Design: Peter D'Ascoli

The celebrated designer talks about how Maximalism is trending and the influence of Indian textiles the world over

 **Aditi Sharma Maheshwari** 22 June 2017  
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**Designer at a Glance**  
**Name:** Peter D'Ascoli  
**Firm name:** D'Ascoli and Company  
**Design style:** Creations that spell international luxury, steeped in influences from ancient cultures and history  
**Education:** Bachelor of Fine Arts from Fashion Institute of Technology, Manhattan

Photos courtesy: D'Ascoli and Company



### How did you begin as a designer?

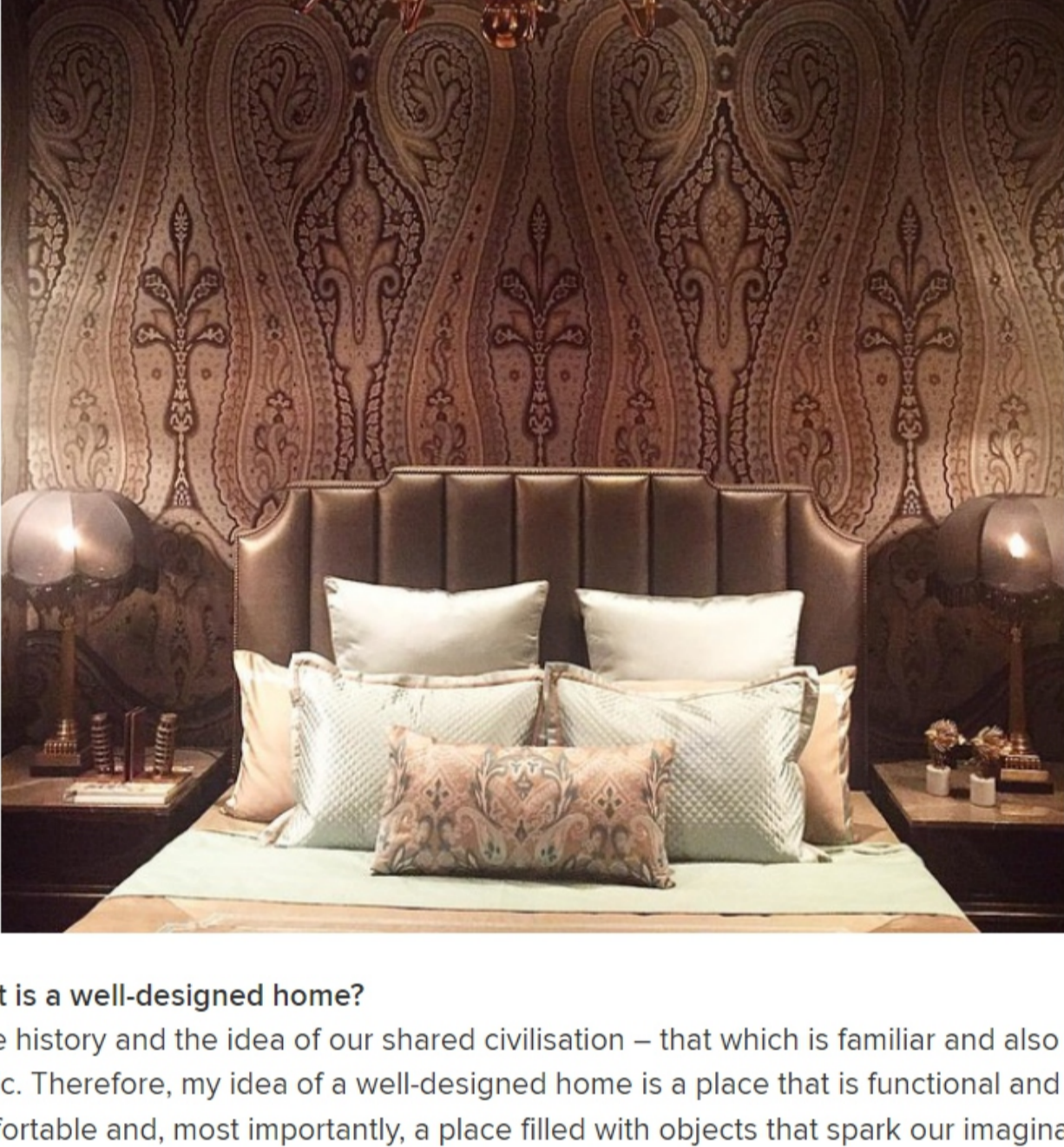
I was born in New York City and lived on Long Island. At seventeen, I moved back to NYC to study design at the Fashion Institute of Technology. My first job out of school – when I was 22 – was for the Indian Government, where I spent almost two years travelling throughout India, working with crafts. My time in India was an education in itself as I was exposed to the rich variety of ancient textile techniques still alive in this country.

From India I returned to NYC and began working for Diane von Furstenberg, which was an entirely different learning experience. Diane taught me about two worlds: the commercial world of the American mass market and her personal world of international luxury that mixed old-world aesthetics with contemporary fashion in a sophisticated manner. It was the second that became the foundation of my work, of creating fabrics for interiors as I draw inspiration from cultures across the globe.



### What is your brand's USP?

My firm's fabrics and products for interior decoration are designed in our studio and made in our workshop using small-batch production methods with Indian materials and techniques. High quality is central to our mission and, ultimately, what makes our products unique are the aesthetics derived from my passion for history and the diverse cultures of the world.



### What is a well-designed home?

I love history and the idea of our shared civilisation – that which is familiar and also the exotic. Therefore, my idea of a well-designed home is a place that is functional and comfortable and, most importantly, a place filled with objects that spark our imagination and intellect. Colours, books, art collections, fabrics, antiques, contemporary furniture, these are the things that allow us to live with the past while dreaming of what the future might be.

### Could you share a trade secret that consumers should know?

As a consumer it is important to understand the big picture of what you desire. If you are building a new home or redecorating an old one and can afford a design professional, then you should hire a good one and empower them to create for you the home of your dreams.



### Have Indian textiles and fabrics impacted or influenced the world?

Indian textiles have had a major impact on world trade since antiquity. Beginning with the Indus Valley Civilisation five thousand years ago, India was at the forefront of technical and aesthetic innovations in the arts of growing, spinning, weaving, dyeing, and printing cotton. As industrial technology has replaced the hand techniques India pioneered, the aesthetic legacy lives on and is evidenced by the many examples of Indian-origin designs found in the national design traditions of countries across the globe, from Japan to France.

### How do our textiles and fabrics tell the story of ancient and new India?

The textiles a country consumes are a reflection of that culture; it reveals influences from the past and is an indication of the future. Indian textiles are a mix technically and aesthetically. There are many traditional designs being handmade while, at the same time, we see increased mass production of designs influenced by global fashion trends. This is both a tribute to India's rich, ancient civilisation and an indication of her connectedness to an increasingly homogeneous global culture.



### The best thing about Indian homes and Indian consumers?

Pride in national heritage and a strong curiosity towards the outside world makes the Indian design environment one of the most dynamic. After years of scarcity from a closed economy, India is undergoing an embrace of high-growth consumerism. Add to this the importance of family life, which makes the home an important showcase for the joint status and aspirations of its members, and we have an exuberant economic and creative ecosystem.

### What textile trends/practices do you foresee in 2017?

Recently there has been a sea-change in the world of fashion and decoration, a macro trend that will last for years and will impact our very idea of what luxury is. This trend is the embrace of ornaments of all types, often used in a complex layering of patterns in a style known as Maximalism.

Another trend that has been unfolding for years is a reaction against mass-produced products made by large, impersonal industrial manufacturers. This has led to increased interest in small-batch and handmade products that celebrate authenticity and individuality. These trends are global in scope and will impact high-end Indian interiors.



### What are the current challenges of Indian textiles industry? Where is the Indian textile industry headed in 2017-2018?

India has a changing economy, with one foot in an agrarian, pre-industrial, the other in the modern, industrial, global mass market. This change is epic as tens of millions of rural people employed in the craft sector transition away from handmade textiles in the face of industrial development. The inevitable result includes increased competition and a growing design and marketing sophistication of branded industrial fabrics while handmade textiles become expensive luxuries.

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### Tell us:

What type of textiles and fabrics have you used in your homes? Tell us in Comments below.

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