

In conversation with Peter D'Ascoli

Interviews

By Pragnya Rao | 5 min read

Oct 10, 2016



This former studio director at Dianne Von Furstenberg is today the toast of textile town with his carefully produced pieces

Chances are if you have heard about Peter D'Ascoli, then you would have also heard about his beautiful house (a lesson on how to use fabrics at home), and his brand, Talianna Studio, that may as well have been a museum for textiles. Large, striking prints on walls combined with stunning art, the spaces are a testament to his passion for textiles. A New Yorker by birth, and Italian by roots, he came to India when he was 22 years old on a project for the Indian government where he spent the next two years traveling throughout the country working with craft. He moved back to New York City where he went on to become the studio director at Dianne Von Furstenberg. We caught up with Peter and got him to share with us his inspirational journey, one thread at a time.

Tell us about your initial days.

When I returned to NYC and started working for Diane von Furstenberg, it was an entirely different learning experience. She taught me about two worlds, the commercial world of the American mass market and an elite world of international luxury that mixes old world aesthetics with contemporary fashion.

Where do you seek your inspiration?

It is the second world of international luxury that informs the aesthetics of my collection of fabrics for interiors and draws on inspiration from cultures across the globe.

What do you look forward to every day at the studio?

Each day is like a master class at my office, wherein each of us is learning and exploring new things. For me, India is a constant discovery, and the designers and craftspeople I work with are so full of talent and curiosity that it never gets old - we inspire each other.

How would your closest friends describe you?

Friends who know me well might laugh and tell you that I am a mix between a "laid-back surfer-dude" and a "high strung, control freak urban designer."

How did you decide to work with textiles?

I have always been attracted to art. When I was a child I always had an art desk in my bedroom where I did my drawing and painting. From an early age I saw this as my vocation. I remember when I was ten years old finding a book in my school library about military insignia. I remember devouring page after page of symbols and graphics. I was conscious from an early age that I had a love for art and also for history. In High School I had an art teacher who was an interior designer and he encouraged me to pursue textile design.

How can one use textiles in their homes?

Fabrics are a wonderful way to bring a layered, ancestral look to an interior, and one can use them to create an ambience of, what some call 'old money' but I prefer to call pedigree or heritage.

Do you have a favourite kind of textile that you enjoy working with?

For historic inspiration, it is difficult to choose a favourite fabric. The remarkable 19th century French wallpapers or the silks woven in London in the 18th century come to mind. If I were pressed I would name two - the Jamavar Shawls of Kashmir and the printed cottons - kalamkari - of the Coromandel Coast. I first encountered these fabrics as a young man traveling in India. Both of these genres have become icons that have spawned many modern interpretations and form a major part of both the Indian and European design vocabulary.

Which project did you enjoy working most on?

My favourite project is always our most current, and today that means our new collection for interior designers called "Inspired By India".



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