

inspire (style insight)

artistic licence

Ellie Bradley of Xavier & Me explores the world of art to create vibrant fabric, cushions and rugs

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HITTING THE pause button on her busy advertising career to have a baby gave Ellie Bradley the headspace she needed to rediscover her love of art. Now, the busy mum to five-year-old Xavier – her label's namesake – indulges her artistic side full time from her Sydney home, designing kaleidoscopic cushions, cashmere throws and rugs. After studying art throughout high school, Ellie was attracted to advertising for its promise of a design-oriented and creative career. "It quickly turned more commercial, but it gave me a massive understanding of what people like and don't like," she says. Out of hours, painting became her artistic outlet. "I have always loved where art can take you – you see the world differently when you consider how you might paint it," she says. It wasn't until four months into her maternity leave that she pulled out all her old artworks and began to explore other applications for them. "I found they translated beautifully onto fabric," she says. "From there, my ideas slowly turned into a business plan and then into a business."

High-voltage shots of colour and unpredictable patterns characterise her designs. "I love a classic, tailored look but it can't all be grey, you need to have lots of colours in the mix for that bit of spark," she says. Her artistic background bubbles to the surface of each print. The 'Pigment' collection, for instance, is the result of her experiments with watercolours on paper, tiles and timber, while the 'Crumpled Paper' range was inspired by a series she created for her fine arts degree. "I ramped up the colour into hot pinks and aquas."



"I love the **textural** quality of crumpled paper when combined with that unusual hit of hot colour" - Ellie

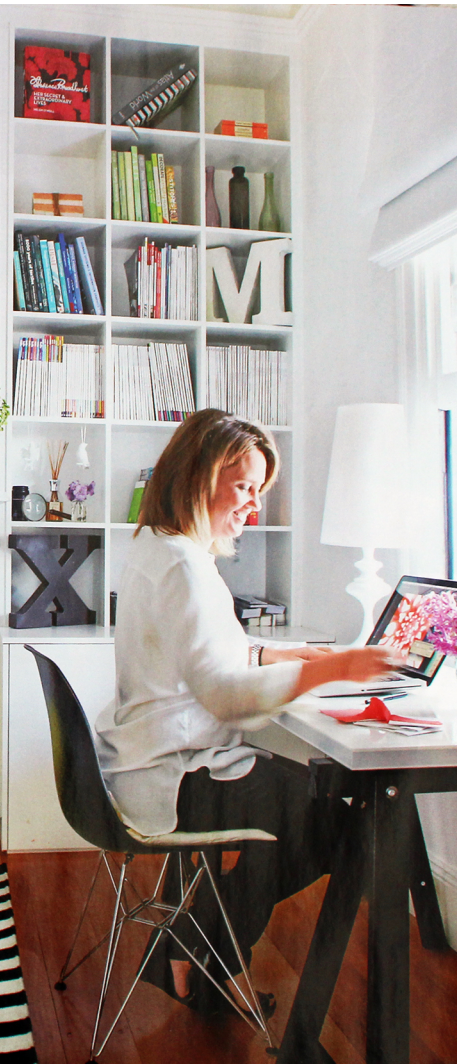


Her eclectic designs are digitally printed onto linen or cotton and sewn into cushion covers locally. Her hand-knotted rugs, which she launched last year, are made in India by artisans who operate under Fair Trade conditions.

Ellie works from her sun-dappled home office, often with Xavier in tow. "I always ask him if he likes new designs and he's not afraid to give me his opinion," she says. "That said, a lot of work happens when he's asleep, at preschool, or being looked after by my mum."

Her home office is equipped with archives of past collections, art books and a moodboard with tear sheets from magazines. All of which she uses as inspiration for her latest initiative, an online decorating service called Atelier Lane. If her own home is anything to go by, future clients can expect the Ellie Bradley signature – lashings of bright colour, all tempered by classic design. Visit xavierandme.com to shop online.

This page: Ellie Bradley in her home studio. The photograph is from Samantha Everton's 'Childhood Fears' series. Opposite page (clockwise from top): A lifelong love of art is mirrored in Ellie's fabric designs; her moodboard is an ever-changing collage of influences; the chic Xavier & Me cushions start at \$74.



Ellie's top 3 tips for decorating with pattern

1. "Mix scale to create balance. I love combining a larger print with a smaller pattern. The same goes for blending dense and sparse patterns."
2. "Look for patterns that complement each other. For instance, a graphic pattern always looks great with a floral or polka dots."
3. "White is a great base to start from as it allows the colour and pattern to stand out, but darker shades really make them pop."