



# Prêt-à-porter patterns

The exquisite work of Swiss-born textile designer **Claudia Caviezel** has adorned the portfolios of some of Europe's most important fabric and couture houses, while her name remains relatively unknown. Denna Jones is one of many that believe this must change!







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**P**honetics first: Claudia Cah-vie-ETZEL. Most readers may not need the tutorial but the pronunciation of the young Swiss designer's name is offered in advance of her credentials going global. Caviezel is the semi-secret go-to girl of print connoisseurs, curators, couture houses, and manufacturers like venerable Swiss haute couture, Prêt-à-Porter and décor firm Jakob Schlaepfer. But the secret has leaked. The success of Caviezel's 2011 interiors collection for another Swiss favourite – Atelier Pfister – means her name is gaining household recognition. Her shibori-like 'tie dyed' cotton print cushions with single colour cotton velour backs are affordable because her clever design is digitally printed rather than resist-dyed. "Really cool how they printed," Caviezel exclaims, clearly delighted with the results. Her cushions join bed linen and upholstery prints she's designed to look as though a Technicolor spring shower breezed through open windows and splashed onto white cotton sofas.

Caviezel's designs are familiar but they also defy categorisation. The clue to her inspiration lies at home and abroad. She remembers with joy "the whole mess" of yardage and textiles that represented two generations (her mother and grandmother) who sewed; her mother made Caviezel's clothes when she was growing up. Now in her thirties, Caviezel acknowledges her generation (in the West at least) represents the tail end of those raised with the expectation they would learn domestic skills. "It was normal for us to do it ourselves," she says without fanfare.

After gymnasium (high school) where she spent one year in California as an exchange student, she graduated from Lucerne University of Applied Arts and Science.

In 2000 Caviezel interned for three-months at Studio Li Edelkoort in Paris. She and two other interns worked on an issue of Edelkoort's famous trend magazine. Research, trips, and flea markets forays filled the gaps when they weren't in the studio or planning the magazine. Asked whether she was paid, she is emphatic. "Yes, 600 Euros; enough to pay rent and living expenses." She senses this is a leading question based on the growing number of unpaid design and art world interns, and her explanation is unequivocal. "Interns should be paid otherwise only rich people can benefit. And it takes work away from those who are starting out. It's not good for business."

Although Caviezel isn't an official design ambassador for Switzerland, it's an idea the government might want to ponder. Not because she speaks five languages (German, Rumantsch, English, Spanish and French), but because although she soaks up experiences and ideas from other countries, she is rooted in Switzerland where she adapts and updates her myriad international experiences and influences. The Swiss are probably the first to admit their country is broadly perceived as monocultural, but the government balances treasured cultural ideals with generous educational and atelier opportunities abroad via the Swiss Federal Design Award. Caviezel has won it three times – the maximum number allowed.



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Previous page *RIOM* sofa and *MORISSEN* cushions.  
© Atelier Pfister

02 Drawing for an embroidery design

01 Wallpaper design for the 2011 interior collection of Jakob Schlaepfer.  
© Jakob Schlaepfer

03 Carpet design for Jakob Schlaepfer / Textile Museum St. Gallen, 11 x 11m. © Jakob Schlaepfer









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In 2003 the canton in which Caviezel lives awarded her a 3-month artist residency in New York City. When asked what official expectations were attached, her answer is one every creative longs to hear. "None" she says, "I didn't have to do anything". She lived in a Swiss government apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side, and spent the first month exploring the city. She bought a video camera. She drew and took photographs. She collected flotsam, jetsam and the bits and bobs ignored by natives but which appear as treasures to the newly arrived. She archived everything, and now almost a decade later, she still uses this imagery. New York was followed by five years in charge of textile print, laser, and embroidery at Jakob Schlaepfer. "Production is in-house", she explains, "so you're able to work with ideas and try new things." Followed by "a year of pure inspiration" on an IED Masters of Design and Innovation course in Madrid.

In addition to running her own practice, Caviezel is now in charge of fabric sourcing and development for fashion house Akris. "I shop for

fabrics with the head of design, and get to know all the textile companies and get deep into the industry" she explains. "It's nice to see the other side. They let me work on my own projects when there's time, but it's good not to have too much time for my own work." Queried, she explains. "Too little time makes me sharper in my decisions. That's important in design, not to be insecure about your decisions."

Caviezel's craft is often expressed digitally, but she understands the fundamentals of repeat construction and screen separations. Her palette and concepts have echoes of contemporary pop artists like Haruki Murakami and Brazilian Beatriz Milhazes, but also veer towards the rich delicacy of Symbolist Odilon Redon's flower pastels. Her recent wallpaper designs for Jakob Schaefer are fresh and contemporary florals, but with a hint of Zuber Cie's famous 19th century panorama wallpapers. In 2011 she was commissioned through Jakob Schlaepfer by the St Gallen Textile Museum. Her sleight of hand printed carpets reflect the museum's pre-eminent collection of lace. Working collaboratively with the curators (her



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04 Textile design for Jakob Schlaepfer. © Jakob Schlaepfer

05 The print on chiffon for the Spring 2009 collection of AKRIS. © Akris

preferred way to work), Caviezel created designs that look woven, embroidered and embellished but are printed at large scale and cut to fit around architectural features. She played with light and scanned pieces of antique textiles, carpets and lace to create a digital design that was sent for printing to one of Europe's leading factories for hotel carpets. The carpet she designed for the private collection of the sponsoring bank is a digital confection of lace overlaid on antique carpet but rather than appear as a feminine confection, the lace swirls down the length of the hue shifting carpet like a series of crystalline ice flows.

"My work is always about collaboration" says Caviezel. "It's a more open process, you're not so fixed. And I always like to ask non-designers what they think." Who does she ask? "Family and friends. One friend is an intensive care nurse. She gives me a chance to look at my work from a different angle. She reminds me life is a big soup. Nobody dies if my design is not too good. She allows me to really appreciate and enjoy my design life." [www.caviezel.cc](http://www.caviezel.cc) ©