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# THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

**COLOUR FIELD CASA**  
Artists' polychrome home near Como

**BEYOND FASHION**  
Pierre Bergé and  
Yves Saint Laurent's  
timeless Tangier retreat



An early nude by Pauline Caulfield sits on a shelf on the left of her studio, its muted colours in sharp contrast to the large John Hoyland painting directly above and to her own textile designs. One of these, 'Cascade 1', is seen here in the process of being screen-printed, while a bespoke piece hangs on a rail



# CURTAIN CALL

Eclipsed by her famous husband, textile designer Pauline Caulfield contented herself with raising a family – and creating some of Christendom’s jazziest ecclesiastical robes – at home in north London. That was until a whole new audience chanced upon her early work, which she now obligingly reprints as bold, geometric curtains. Finally, says Jessica Lack, this screen-print legend is enjoying the limelight she deserves. Encore! Photography: Antony Crolla





This page, clockwise from top left: 'Garden', which Pauline designed for her RCA show in 1968, hangs above her patio; a still life by Patrick Caulfield is seen alongside one of his lesser-known works - a faux-marble kitchen table that he painted; Habitat chairs echo the turquoise in Pauline's 'Bunting' design, seen here with 'Airmail'; the casserole on the top shelf features in Patrick's 1980 painting *Kitchen/Dining/Living*



This page, clockwise from top left: Pauline perches on a sofa she and Patrick bought in 1975; the large canvas on her bedroom wall is by Stephen Bennington, who was a student of Patrick's at Chelsea, while her 'Sea' design is laid over the bed; a chest of drawers under a skylight in the bedroom bears a bust of the couple's oldest son, Luke, who is also an artist; one of Patrick's paintings presides over an oven-top 'tablescape'



**'PATRICK** used to say it was the best painting he ever did.' We are standing in Pauline Caulfield's galley kitchen in north London, sunlight edging through the metal-framed windows, and looking down at a round MDF table expertly painted to resemble green marble. 'He always said he should come back and sign it.' I look under the table and, sure enough, there in white paint is the familiar cursive signature of Britain's most illuminating and often underrated Modern artist. Pauline laughs. 'I never thought to check! He must have done that some time after he left in '85.'

The artist in question is, of course, the late Patrick Caulfield, whom Pauline met at Chelsea School of Art in the mid 1960s and later married and had three children with before their marriage was dissolved. 'He was one of my tutors – a young one,' she clarifies. A photograph from the time shows Pauline as a serious young woman, with long dark hair. 'I think I was rather prim,' she says. At her first tutorial Caulfield had expressed surprise at the lack of colour in his student's paintings. 'Everything had to mean so much. Painting was so important that I felt I couldn't really make a mark, and so my works got paler and paler.' She points to a small reclining faceless nude made at the time, so sallow the figure almost merges into the white background. 'I was utterly inhibited, but then I began printing fabrics and it was such a release, all those bright primary colours. It's funny, because of course printing is actually very structured and controlled, but for me it was total freedom.'

She went on to study textiles at the Royal College of Art, and her diploma show in 1968 consisted of 11 bold geometric screen prints on large panels. It is these works, which are now reprinted as curtains off-site, that form the basis of her new exhibition at her home in Primrose Hill Studios. 'It's been strange returning to these works after so many years,' she says, 'but it seems a younger generation really like them.' The show will also feature five more recent commissions for wall hangings and a video of a sliding panel piece made for a house in north London.

Until now, Pauline's speciality has been designing ecclesiastical robes. 'Unusual, yes, but I was brought up a Catholic and as a child I really liked the vestments and looked forward to them. I loved the order and the ceremonial aspects of Catholicism.' She got her first commission to produce chasubles while at the RCA

and has since created vestments, altar frontals and wall hangings. Earlier this year she had a solo show, *Fashioning the Sacred*, at St Augustine's in Hammersmith. What did her husband, a well-known atheist (it simply says 'DEAD' on his gravestone), think of her work? 'He was always incredibly supportive,' she says. 'But it took huge courage for me to ever put something up on the walls at home. I had to dare myself – not easy with Howard Hodgkin and John Hoyland always dropping in. 'Yes, partly that. John lived at number 12 – in fact, he suggested we try and live here.'

'Here' is the elegantly appointed Victorian house that the couple moved to in 1975. The building is part of a secluded cloister of artist studio homes built in the 1870s and accessed by a narrow passageway off a street in Primrose Hill. The houses surround a courtyard that contains a wooden plaque commemorating past residents, among them the painters JW Waterhouse and Frederic Villiers, the writers Arthur Rackham and Patrick Leigh Fermor and the actor Martita Hunt (the dusty Miss Havisham, a masterclass in suppressed evil, in David Lean's *Great Expectations*).

Pauline's home is one of the last still to be owned by a trust, the others having been sold off. They inherited it from the painter Lord Methuen and it still had a potbelly stove when they moved in. Patrick screened off one end of the double-height sitting room for his studio, while the domestic life of the house continued at the other. 'It wasn't easy,' concedes Pauline, 'but I was very happy revolving around Patrick. I was enormously impressed by everyone.' Her art took a back seat while she raised their three boys, organised private-view parties that her husband rarely attended ('too drunk to appear') and produced 'deceptively casual dinners' for their friends. Today she still cooks for her assistants. 'I get good ingredients – a mound of really good tomatoes from the market, good bread...' she says. 'It's important, and I'm so grateful for the help they give me.'

Making textiles is an all-consuming and messy business, and takes time. My visit coincides with her final preparations for the show and there seem to be people everywhere. Was it difficult to produce work when her children were younger? 'Yes. The problem with textiles is that you can't stop halfway through and go and do something else, you have to give everything to it.'

She lays out some of the curtains that she is planning to exhibit and I am thrown by the sheer joyfulness of the designs – all those warm yellows and brassy reds, and undulating lines of sea green buzzing like battery acid in a Bridget Riley painting. There is order here – the kind of military precision associated with concrete abstraction – but it is undercut by the flow of the fabric that refuses to settle, and I can't help feeling mildly irritated that this talented artist has remained in the shadows for so long.

We discuss a forthcoming commission she is undertaking for the artist and serial name-changer Monster Chetwynd (known as Spartacus Chetwynd when nominated for the Turner Prize) and the inspirations behind some of the designs. For the first time her engaging chatter falters. 'It's not easy explaining your ideas. Patrick once said he wasn't conscious of any metaphors, and that was not surprising, as he worked mostly in the dark. I think that's a good way of putting it' ■

*'Off the Rail', an exhibition of textiles by Pauline Caulfield, is at 6 Primrose Hill Studios, Fitzroy Rd, London NW1 (020 7586 4130; paulinecaulfield.com), 19-28 Oct, Sat, Sun 10-6, Mon-Fri by appointment*

Top: in the studio 'Black Stripe' and 'Odeon' curtains hang alongside a Nicholas Monro sculpture. Opposite: the sofa was bought off neighbours in Primrose Hill Studios, while Patrick found the Art Deco relief over the mantelpiece, a relic from a liner, in a second-hand shop in the 1980s

