

maja brugos: principal designer

From her studio in Oakland, California designer Maja Brugos designs textiles that reflect her own eclectic upbringing.

While spending much of her childhood in California's Marin County, Maja and her family moved often. "We lived in places as diverse as touristy Waikiki, a Parisian suburb, and a mountain village in Colorado." she says. Also influential in Maja's upbringing was her introduction to Scandinavian design as exchange student to Denmark in 1985. "Scandinavians live with beautiful modern design, and as a teenager in Denmark I was impressed by the beauty of everyday objects." Brugos cites that this exposure to the work Maija Isola, Eero Saarinen and Arne Jacobsen during her year abroad was highly influential in her to pursuit of a career in design.

Discussing design influences, Brugos notes that she has always been attracted to art and music which explore the juxtaposition of diverse cultures and styles. "Perhaps it was my own eclectic upbringing that created my desire to make connections. Or perhaps my mixed background-- my name is taken from my ethnic Slovak father, but I was raised by my Anglo-Saxon mother. Or, perhaps my interest in exploring contrasts is a result of living in the San Francisco Bay Area, a cultural crossroads of sorts." Brugos cites Bay Area Artist Ruth Asawa, a Japanese-American, as an influence. Brugos explains, "So much of Asawa's work is about the intersection of cultures and forms. For example, the crochet technique for her wire sculptures was learned in Mexico and was originally used to create egg baskets. The craft was reinterpreted to create modern sculpture, and is an intersection of three traditions. "

Majoring graphic design at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maja also spent a semester at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland, UK. Not content to limit herself to one medium during her college years, Ms. Brugos relished working in the fiber (textile) arts as well as painting. In 2005, she was called back to her love of textiles after working in communication arts for many years. She concludes, "You never forget your first love."

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On her work for Tikoli | "When developing the line for Tikoli I drew upon childhood memories, and also a desire to explore connections between cultural motifs and color palettes. For example, the Mummy and Fractil designs both have a distinct Asian flare, one speaks to tradition and high art, the other pop culture. The Plouf design is sort of a meeting of cultures in itself, combining both delicate esthetics of Finland and Japan. The biomorphic shapes of Cirius, Bisou and Flax are clearly influenced by mid-century modern design which in turn was informed by the indigenous and primitive art of Africa and the Pacific." The set of six towels are sold individually and are designed to be combined together in pairs. Each pairing, matched or mismatched, creates a dialogue and perhaps a moment to reflect.

Brugos sees this product line as an everyday indulgence, allowing one to create small compositions with common wares.

"Yes, they are just kitchen towels," she says. " but I've always found something profound in the mundane. That coffee mug or spoon at breakfast is a part of our life each day, a personal effect. From the standpoint of anthropology, the objects we surround ourselves with, the things that make us comfortable, say much more about who we are as a culture than what can be found in a museum. The Tikoli product line is really just about injecting a little bit of wonder and beauty into the everyday."