



National  
Museums  
Scotland

# Bernat Klein Design in Colour





Bernat Klein at High Sunderland,  
1963-64  
Image: Behr Photography

# Exhibition overview

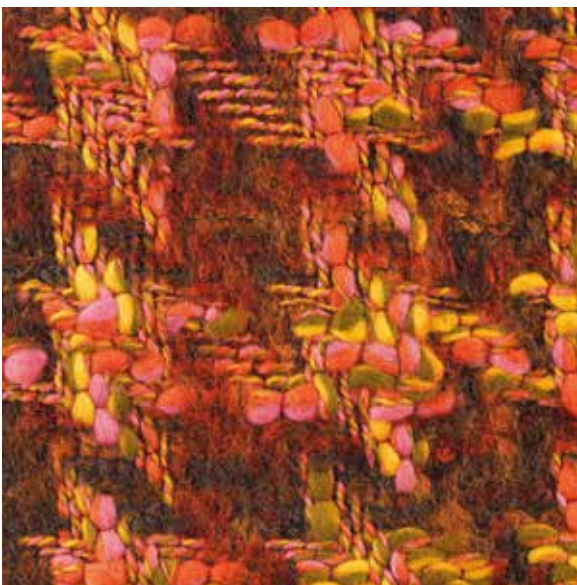
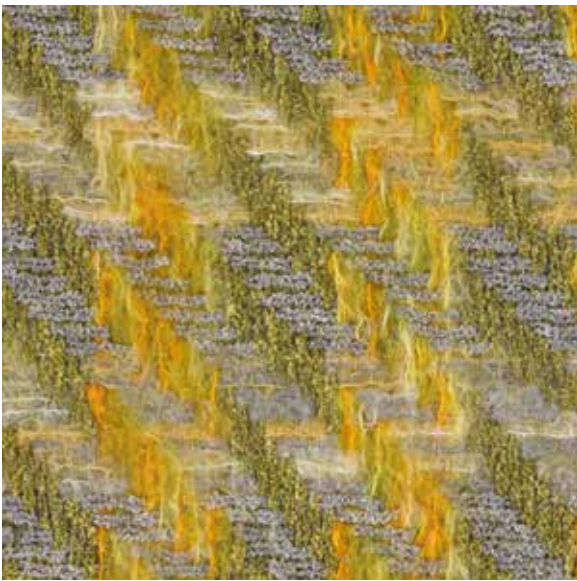


Bernat Klein (1922–2014) was a leading force in 20th century design who had a profound influence on fashion, interior design and architecture during an illustrious career spanning six decades.

Underpinned by new research, *Bernat Klein: Design in Colour* will be the first major retrospective exhibition devoted to Klein and his work. In 2010 National Museums Scotland acquired the internationally significant Klein collection comprising some 4,000 objects and this centenary exhibition will showcase objects which have never been on display.

Klein's extraordinary couture textiles caused a sensation when they first appeared on the Paris catwalk of the House of Chanel in 1963. Characterised by bold textures and painterly use of colour, these 'mohair tweeds' were utilised by couturiers, including Dior, Balenciaga, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Cardin.

The exhibition will be displayed thematically to highlight different facets of Klein's career, including textile design, colour consultancy, fashion, interior design, painting and architecture. The display will encompass textiles, couture fashion, graphic design, furniture and tapestry. Overarching contextual narratives will highlight post-war British design, émigré design cultures, modernist architecture and interiors, and the workings of the couture and ready to wear industries.



Top: Bernat Klein, *Trefoil*, women's fashion fabric, mohair, wool, polyester and velvet ribbon, c 1965

Middle: Bernat Klein, *Quince*, women's fashion fabric, mohair, wool and polyester, 1962–64

Bottom: Bernat Klein, *Maple*, women's fashion fabric, wool, mohair and polyester, 1964

Flickering Flame



Macbeth



Kilimanjaro



Pasteque



Desdemona



Kivu



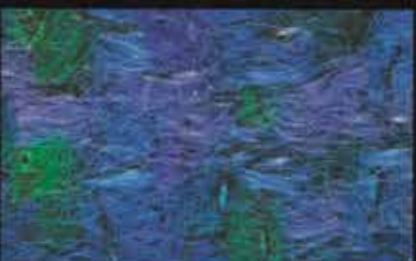
Romeo



Cape



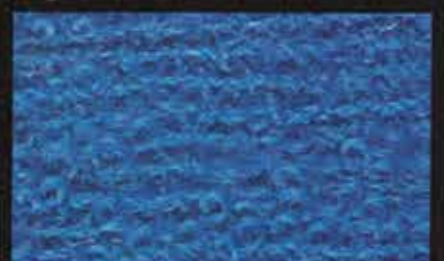
Grotto



Titania



Kigoma



Ariel



Kano



Tropic



Oberon



Kakia





## Bernat Klein

Born in Serbia in 1922 to an Orthodox Jewish family, Klein studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem before immigrating to the United Kingdom to study at Leeds University. Klein eventually settled in the Scottish Borders, where he based his design and manufacturing business, drawing upon the pool of expertise that existed in this historic textile centre. Klein went on to gain international recognition as a designer and colour consultant. He was part of a new wave of émigré designers reinvigorating the British design landscape in the years following the Second World War.

In addition to manufacturing his own textiles, Klein worked as a colour consultant and industrial designer for various national and international firms. He would go on to design interior fabrics and colour schemes for high profile clients, including The Department of the Environment, the Queen Elizabeth 2 ocean liner and progressive Scandinavian firms such as Fiedler Fabrics of Copenhagen.

The natural world, the Scottish landscape, post-impressionist art, and colour theory all fed into Klein's practice and he was particularly noted for his masterly use of colour. British Vogue credited him with having 'revolutionised traditional English fabrics to win them new recognition abroad.'

# The exhibition

## Introduction

The exhibition will begin by introducing Bernat Klein as a modernist designer and highlight his lasting influence on designers practicing today through a newly commissioned film. Exploring his early career in post-war Britain, it will encompass arts education and Klein's career trajectory. This section will also position Klein in the context of his peers and as part of a vibrant network of émigré designers practicing in Britain. Highlights will include Klein's 1947 Leeds University sketchbook and comparable work by fellow émigré designer and collaborator, Tibor Reich.



Above: High Sunderland, Selkirk, Scotland, designed by Perter Womersley and commissioned by Bernat Klein, 1957



Above top: Bernat Klein, women's fashion fabric, wool, 1960–66



Above: Bernat Klein, *Mediterranean*, women's fashion fabric, wool, mohair and polyester, 1966

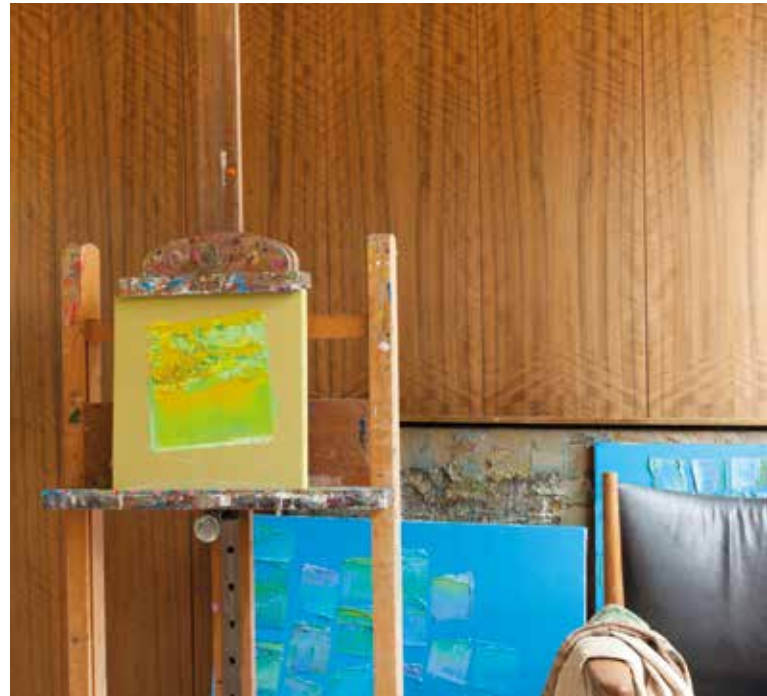


High Sunderland, Selkirk, Scotland, designed by Peter Womersley and commissioned by Bernat Klein, 1957

# 1

## Modernism and landscape

Klein commissioned two iconic modernist structures – his home High Sunderland and The Bernat Klein Studio – from architect Peter Womersley. The natural world, and in particular the landscape surrounding the Klein family home in the Scottish Borders, served as an important source of inspiration for Klein throughout his career. Paintings of the natural world will be displayed alongside colour samples and textiles to explore Klein's process.



Left: Bernat Klein, *Autumn Trees*, oil on canvas, 1964

## 2

### Colour, cloth and couture

In 1962 Coco Chanel selected one of Klein's mohair tweed womenswear textiles for her Spring/Summer 1963 haute couture collection and this propelled him into the international couture market. This section of the exhibition will explore the development of Klein's iconic couture textiles, contextualised by an exploration of the workings of the post-war couture market. Highlights will include Chanel fabrics and garments made from Klein's couture cloth.



## 3

### Branding and identity

Klein is notable for his brand identity and clever use of graphic design which set his eponymous company apart from its competitors. Original graphic layouts and ephemera will be used to communicate this to visitors. A digitised photo album depicting a press trip to High Sunderland and a catwalk presentation in Klein's family living room will be displayed to demonstrate how he aligned his brand with modernist architecture.

Above left: Event hosted by Bernat Klein showing his collections at High Sunderland house to invited journalists, photograph by Peter Waugh, April 1963  
Image: Peter Waugh

Above: Suit by Monte-Sano & Pruzan made from Bernat Klein fabric, *Vogue New York*, photography by Bert Stern, September 1963  
Image: Conde Nast

Left: Bernat Klein, handknitting yarns, *Romeo* and *Firebird*, wool, c 1962–92



# 4

## Styling interiors

In 1966 Klein embarked on a design consultancy business and completed commissions and collaborations for progressive interior firms in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, including Margo Fabrics and Fiedler Fabrics of Copenhagen. Interior fabrics will be shown alongside paintings and contextual images of interiors. Highlights of this section will include original designs for a colour co-ordinated interior scheme for government buildings.

### An Executive Office

Neutral colours give a quiet dignity to this particular working environment. The desk and occasional tables are in natural oak and are from the DoE Higher Administrative range. The carpet is 'Birch' from the DoE Bernat Klein range. The unit chairs are loose covered in 'Quartz' bouclé and 'Russet' plain weave. The 'Eleganza' visitors' covered in 'Russet' plain weave vertical louvre blind gives light. The desk set is from Ltd.; the desk lamp and are from Heal & Sons Ltd. picture by Bernat Klein pick the colours in this distinctive room.



Bernat Klein Design Consultants Ltd,  
Co-ordinated Colour Guide for Interiors,  
Standard Range, Volume 1, featuring  
groups of colour-balanced fabric and  
carpet samples and images of model  
room settings, designed for the Supplies  
Division of the Department of the  
Environment, 1971

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# 5

## New markets

The final section of the exhibition will explore how Klein moved into screen printed designs based on his impasto oil paintings, ready to wear fashion and designs for handknitting. It will explore the changing ready to wear market and Klein's impact on everyday fashion. Highlights of this section will include fashion photography, ready to wear garments and designs for handknitting by his collaborator and wife, Margaret Klein.

High Sunderland, Selkirk, Scotland, designed by Perter Womersley and commissioned by Bernat Klein, 1957



# Target audience

Mid-century design is enjoying a wave of popularity at present. With such a breadth of content, this exhibition will appeal to wide-ranging adult audiences interested in fashion, textiles, mid-century design, architecture, interior design, social history and the influence of émigré designers. By exploring Bernat Klein's legacy and impact on designers today, the exhibition will remain current and relevant.



Bernat Klein, *Lanzarote*, watercolour wash, pencil and black chalk, 1979

# Exhibition details

The exhibition will open at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh in November 2022.

## Size

The exhibition will require a minimum space of 150–200 metres squared.

## Schedule

The exhibition is available to hire from late 2023. Standard hire periods are three to four months.

## Objects

Approximately 60 objects, including textiles, works on paper, garments on mannequins, tapestry and paintings.

## Publication

A complementary publication from the Bernat Klein Foundation is available with contributions from the exhibition curator, Lisa Mason.

## Included in the exhibition hire fee:

- Loan of objects, including custom-made mounts and mannequins
- Curation and exhibition concept by National Museums Scotland
- Administration and tour management, including the time and services of exhibition couriers
- Exhibition crating
- Exhibition text in English
- A selection of images with rights cleared
- Audio visual software of exhibition films
- Marketing Guidelines and Media Kit



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For more information contact

Touring Exhibitions  
National Museums Scotland  
Chambers Street Edinburgh EH1 1JF  
United Kingdom

[touringexhibitions@nms.ac.uk](mailto:touringexhibitions@nms.ac.uk)  
[nms.ac.uk/touring](https://nms.ac.uk/touring)

We create inspiring and memorable visitor experiences. Through our touring exhibitions we offer our internationally important collection and diverse research to a broader range of audiences, revealing the many fascinating stories these objects tell.

Above: Bernat Klein Design Consultants Ltd for Tomkinsons, Kidderminster, *Tulip Petals Rug*, machine woven long-pile wool, with jute and cotton backing, c 1967

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