

# *Bernat Klein: An Eye for Colour*

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*The textile designer and artist Bernat Klein was born in Senta, formally in Yugoslavia, in 1922, and his career spanned five decades from the 1950s until his retirement in 1992. Based in the Scottish Borders, his visionary use of colour blending and texture had a massive impact both nationally and internationally. His keynotes were his inspiration from the colours in nature, the connection between his art and textiles and his unparalleled skill in achieving a colour balance both within the textiles and in coordinating his designs, emulating the work of impressionist artists such as Seurat. He carried his distinctive style across woven woollen fabric, knitwear, printed synthetic and furnishing fabrics.*

Bernat Klein was born in Senta in 1922. This was formerly in Yugoslavia — in what is now Serbia, on the Hungarian border. His father was a textile importer and the family business was very much integrated into the running of the household. Seeing the bolts of cloth in the warehouse in a myriad of jewel bright colours was a very significant influence on him. From an early age he knew he wanted to be a textile designer. *I spent many a day-dreaming hour imagining how one day I might learn to be a designer and run a mill of my own.*<sup>1</sup>

In 1939 his family sent him to Jerusalem to study. His artistic talent was spotted very quickly and in 1940 he transferred to the Bezalel School of Art and Design, studying textile design from the second year, where he learnt to weave. After the war he moved to Britain, studying textile design at Leeds University. There he not only further developed his technical weaving skills but also met his future wife, Margaret Soper. Most of his own family had tragically died in Auschwitz.

His passion for colour in particular is fundamental to his approach to textile design. He stated

that *colours are as important in our lives as words are . . . colour is the most obvious and immediate visual stimulus and it can express the whole gamut of human emotions in quite a different way from words.*<sup>2</sup> However, he believed that many people had become so controlled by only wearing colours that were in fashion that they had lost the innate joy in colour, of choosing a colour because you liked it and to communicate an emotion. This sense of joy in colour had survived in art, in particular with impressionist artists. In addition, certain colours had become symbolic, such as red as sinful, white as pure and black for mourning and these associations meant that certain colours were worn as part of a rigid colour code.

In 1954 he visited an exhibition on impressionist art at the Tate Gallery and saw *Un Baignade, Asnieres* by the artist George Seurat. This had a massive impact on his future textile design. Seurat was a Pointillist. He broke down the basic colours in nature into tiny dots of their component colours, achieved by using tiny brush strokes, and letting the viewer's eye see one complete colour. Klein left the exhibition wishing he could do this, but with cloth. *There was something very clothish about these areas taken in isolation and I could not stop thinking about this. I dreamt of cloths that contained not just three or four colours but dozens and dozens of them . . . I dreamt of cloth vibrant with colour, soft with texture . . . I wanted reds that were redder and blues that were bluer than anything I had seen before and I wanted to see cloth in many colours that had never been attempted before . . . The colours in my new cloths would blaze or shimmer; I realized, only if many many colours were carefully combined: for then the eye could either add them all up together and so enjoy the fun of their varied subtlety amounting to a clear hard fact or it could see them merging in their multitude to remain an amorphous, cloudy hint of tints, of softness and endless possibilities.*<sup>3</sup>

Another significant part of Bernat Klein's ethos was his belief that one should be well dressed, which did not always equate with being fashionably dressed. His mother was a strong influence on his early life, and he recalls that she was always very smartly dressed. All her children were equally well fitted out, and when he first left home to go to school he was dressed in a Donegal tweed suit with a herringbone overcoat.<sup>4</sup> As part of this philosophy he believed that wearing colours that suited your complexion was integral to being well dressed, but also that this should be affordable and available to all regardless of income.

### **Colourcraft and Bernat Klein Ltd**

Following his graduation, Bernat initially worked for Tootal Broadhurst Lee in Bolton, and then Munrospun where he designed ladies' coat and skirt fabrics. In 1950 the design department

relocated from Edinburgh to Galashiels. However, his desire to express his creativity was such that in 1952 he set up his first company, Colourcraft, in a weaving shed in Galashiels. He had quite significant early success in producing scarves and headsquares for chain stores such as Marks and Spencer and British Home Stores. At this point he outsourced much of the weaving to local mills whose own production and orders had slumped after the Korean War.

In 1956 he bought the High Mill at Netherdale in Galashiels and engaged architect Peter Womersley to renovate it. By now he was weaving coloured fabrics for both men and women. After experimenting with weaving and dyeing techniques, he was successful in translating the impressionist effect of Seurat into textiles. This was achieved by space or dip dyeing the cloth (Fig. 1). By dip-dyeing wool in 4–6 inch lengths on a 32-inch hank, the seepage of dye on each side of the colour would result in a solid colour of about 2 inches, with a tonal variation on either side of about 2–3 inches. This avoided the problem of having stripes of colour rather than spots. This achieved about 8 colours, 4 intended and 4 tones in each hank.<sup>5</sup>

Once the technical side of dyeing and weaving had been resolved, the next issue was choosing the colours. In 1960 he took up oil painting. This was a significant step in the development of his colour palette in textiles and the use of colour balance. He used his artwork to explore the colours in nature, breaking these down and translating them into his woven and printed fabric (Fig. 2). This then allowed him to achieve the subtleness of Seurat's work. His main inspirations were the colours in the Scottish Borders landscape, flowers and other natural elements such as tree bark, rocks and stones, and sometimes the work of other artists in graphics, painting and sculpture.<sup>6</sup> His home at High Sunderland near Galashiels, also designed by Peter Womersley, looks out onto the Eildon Hills and copper beech trees. Warm russets and browns feature very heavily in his work, which echo the colours of the Borders landscape in the autumn (Fig. 3).

At this point his artwork did not always immediately directly translate into the fabric (Fig. 4). Jeremy Hooker notes that *When painting he works slowly, using only a palette knife in order to obtain a surface texture which is, naturally, of great interest to him. Returning to the mill and to designing after a week-end's painting he finds that he uses colours in his cloths similar to those in the painting. Thus, there is an indirect but close link between his paintings and his textiles.*<sup>7</sup> Bernat Klein himself noted that he would paint the item that interested him two or three times and versions of it were prepared in a completely abstract form, and these were then slowly translated into woven or printed designs.<sup>8</sup>

By the early 1960s he was successfully producing and selling his first range of worsted suiting fabrics for both men and women using the space dyeing technique (Fig. 5). The technique gives a very subtle and unique effect. *Mr Klein, who has evolved this technique after many years of research, stresses the fact that it is not random dyeing but a controlled process which enables the operative to get five or six distinct colours in each thread which, of course, are multiplied many times in the course of the cloth construction.*<sup>9</sup>

He began developing a wide range of different kinds of cloth aimed at the couture market. These fabrics demonstrate his skill at using texture as well as colour. One was a mohair tweed woven purely in brushed goat mohair. This gave a texture which seemed thick but was actually light and airy with a lustrous sheen. The mohair yarns were supplied by British Mohair Spinners of Keighley.

Another type of fabric he developed was a tweed integrating mohair, slubby yarn and twisted yarn to stunning effect (Fig. 6). *Here are the giants of the 1964–1965 Fall– Winter Season. Yarns that make the biggest, blown-up, bulky but weightless weaves in coatings and suitings.*<sup>10</sup> One very significant difference between these fabrics and traditional woven Scottish woollen designs is the lack of a regimented pattern, unlike the District Checks or tartans. The closest he came to a defined pattern was a very large dogtooth check, and even this had a very soft outline. He also experimented with using other types of fancy yarns which were gimped (two yarns twisted together at different tensions), looped, boucle and a light but slubby yarn called French Nib which was imported from France (Fig. 7).

Further development of the company was made possible by additional investment. In 1962 he had sold the controlling share of Colourcraft to Imperial Tobacco to gain more investment for expansion and to market his fabrics more successfully, renaming the firm Bernat Klein Ltd. Trial lengths were woven at the High Mill and successful designs were woven in mass by Gibson and Lumgair at St Mary's Mill, Selkirk, which was also owned by Imperial Tobacco. He employed designer Jeremy Hooker and a London-based Public Relations officer Peter Hope Lumley. An additional team of designers including Grant Gilligan, Carolyn Bowyer, Scott Forrest and Pat Holtom soon also joined the team.

Bernat Klein's major breakthrough into the couture market came in 1962. A mohair tweed inspired by one of his paintings of a rose was sold through his Paris agent, Dumas Maury, to Chanel. The fabric was used in a suit. *Some of the prettiest, most supple and flattering (tweeds)*

*shown in the French collections this year turned out to be Scotch. They were the thick, soft, incomparably lightweight tweeds woven in muted vegetable colours of carrot and lettuce and cream, used over and over by Chanel in her collection.*<sup>11</sup> The fabric that had the greatest ‘wow’ factor was the velvet tweed. In 1963 he saw a tie in a shop window in Scandinavia made with silk ribbon and was inspired to translate this effect into a woven fabric with velvet ribbon. Technically, this was incredibly difficult. It was achieved by adapting power looms so that they could accommodate ribbon instead of yarn, increasing the size of the eyelet holding the warp. The ribbon ran across the warp and the mohair on the weft held in place by worsted thread.<sup>12</sup>

The velvet tweeds were launched in 1964 and caused an immediate sensation. Several versions were created. One used only mohair, one with looped and another used slubby wool (Fig. 8). The cost of the fabric was quite prohibitive for most people. A coat by British designer Ronald Paterson cost 180 guineas. In 1964 this was the price of a mini car. To make the fabric more affordable, he introduced tweeds with the velvet ribbon interspersed with slubby wool (Fig. 9) and using ruched nylon ribbon instead of velvet sourced by Jeremy Hooker from Lyons.

The fabrics created a sensation on the catwalk and were soon taken up by many leading designers. Christian Dior in particular used a lot of Bernat Klein fabrics, both velvet and mohair tweeds. Balenciaga used a brown and black velvet tweed in boucle wool. A green linen fabric in a loose weave was selected by Gerard Pipart, the chief designer at Nina Ricci. Other major designers such as Hardy Amies, Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin and Guy Laroche also bought his fabrics. *Tweeds in the British collections have never been more colourful or luxurious: Bernat Klein’s velvet ribbon tweed taking top honours in nearly all the fashion houses.*<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the success in selling to the couture market, Bernat Klein wanted to continue to create textiles for the average customer. In the 1960s many people still made and knitted their own clothes and very few could afford to buy clothes from Chanel or Dior. In 1963 he launched a coordinated range of Bernat Klein knitting wool, patterns and matching skirt lengths to allow people to achieve the ‘Bernat Klein look’ at home. The knitting patterns were designed by his wife (Fig. 10). This also shows the evolution of a concept that became of greater importance with his ready-to-wear collection in the 1970s — of wearing fabrics where the colours balanced and coordinated, regardless of whether woven, knitted or printed. All the skirt lengths perfectly matched a knitting yarn.

Many hand-made garments in Bernat Klein fabric have been donated to the Textile Collection

with the proviso that I made a special journey down to the mill shop in Galashiels to buy the fabric. While the wool and fabric was not cheap, it was certainly much more feasible for many ordinary women to buy this and make their own clothes than buy a garment from a Parisian couture house. This also sets Klein apart from other textile designers who solely aimed at the high end of the market. He supplied Bernat Klein branded labels to attach to the hand-made garment, allowing them to buy into the brand (Fig. 11).

Using colours from nature was becoming increasingly important in his work. Several marketing brochures produced by him in this period beautifully illustrate the synergy between the colours of nature and textiles. In the publicity leaflet *A New Movement in Colour by Bernat Klein*, he states, *Look closely at a hillside in the autumn and you will realise that what charms the eye is the infinite variety of colour and tone; of reds and yellows; of browns and greys repeated at random to create the overall effect.*<sup>14</sup> The illustration in this leaflet shows how an apple is broken down into the constituent ‘dots of colour’ and this is translated into paint colours, then wool. Another leaflet publicizing knitting wool shows the painting of a parrot tulip which was then used as the basis for knitting wool. The parrot tulip painting subsequently proved to be a significant inspiration for his later textile design (Fig. 12).

Klein became famous for creating fabrics in very vibrant colours, especially blues and hot pinks. However, he recognized the role of more muted and neutral colours in everyday dress and created many textiles reflecting this.

One major development was the introduction of the Colour Guides in 1965. Again this illustrates his belief that one should be well dressed — and also that this is something that can be achieved by all regardless of income. He also noted that many people — both men and women — wore colours that did not suit them. He wanted to create guides to help people choose the colours that suited them best, and came to the conclusion that eye colour was one of the best indicators of general tone and colouring. *It is my belief that it is to her eyes that she should try to match her clothes, and not to her hair or her skin. The eyes are the most positively coloured part of the human body. They contain strong, definite colours and because of their construction they have dozens of tones and mixtures of their basic shades.*<sup>15</sup>

From talking to hospitals that replaced missing eyes he learned that there were six main eye colours. To achieve this he broke down the colours in the eye — using six basic eye colours, light blue, dark blue, hazel, green, light and dark brown, in a similar way to the techniques he

used with colours in nature. The resulting guides comprised basic, contrasting, harmonizing and neutral colours in a small booklet (Fig. 13). The guides were produced 20 years before the trend of *getting your colours done*, and were quite a new concept. He noted at the time that even his wife *was rather unwilling to agree to stay within the limits of the guides, but she has been amazed to find that she can wear very successfully colours which she had not thought possible for her before.*<sup>16</sup>

In 1966 Imperial Tobacco appointed a business manager to increase profits. This move was a catalyst that heralded in a new era of creativity for Bernat Klein. Rather than compromise his creativity, he resigned and set up a design consultancy as Bernat Klein Consultants Limited. This move allowed him to further develop his skills as a colourist and designer and take some new challenges that allowed him to branch into new areas of textile design — furnishing fabrics. He had previously created some upholstery fabrics based on a range of neutral toned fabrics that had also been used for ladies fashion — in fact, one fabric had been used in a coat for the actress Shirley MacLaine and the upholstered version for a chair in his Paris showroom. However, this was quite a new departure into designing fabric for rugs and carpets. *Until now I have been designing almost exclusively for women's ranges. But I have a lot of new ideas which I want to expand in different fields.*<sup>17</sup>

One of his first projects as a consultant was designing tufted carpets. A new carpet printing process developed in Copenhagen by the Danish firm Weston made the tufted carpet designs more free and subtle. For Tomkinsons of Kidderminster he designed rya rugs (Fig. 14). These were Scandinavian in origin and were originally made in hand-knotting but could also be produced by machine. His stated aim with the rugs was to give colour contrast to, and to highlight, the large areas of plain carpet that were popular in the early 1970s. *You need one part of an area where you have a lot of colour, in your sitting room or perhaps under the dining table.*<sup>18</sup>

Other commissions included cashmere knitwear for Ballantynes of Innerleithen, woven upholstery fabrics for Fielder Fabrics of Copenhagen, Denmark, and woven and printed furnishing fabrics for Margo fabrics of Gateshead. Many new clients were from Scandinavia and Finland, where he had previously sold very successfully.<sup>19</sup>

In this period the close synergy between his art and fabrics, and between different kinds of textiles, became increasingly apparent. In this period he started creating tapestries as well as

paintings. He took a close-up photograph of a painting and used this as the basis for the tapestries which were woven by Edinburgh Tapestry Company, Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh (Fig. 15). A similar technique was used for the rya rugs woven by Tomkinsons.

For his commission to design fabrics for Hille Furniture, he noted that he approached designing furnishing fabrics in the same way as dress materials. *To furnish successfully you have to think of a whole room from floor to ceiling and choose each time to tone in as carefully as a woman will choose accessories for her suit or dress. But one is also able to be more adventurous in furnishing designs and to use the stronger, clearer colour with an emphasis that one has to avoid with a fashion material.*<sup>20</sup> The range of Hille furniture consisted of hopsack material in wide and narrow stripes, checks and plains in green, turquoise, flame, orange, navy and violet.

One of the largest contracts he received in this period was for the Department of the Environment in 1969. The Supplies Office was responsible for sourcing items for a very large range of governmental bodies, from offices to armed forces accommodation, which necessitated a range of furnishing fabrics which would satisfy a wide range of needs. He created a three-volume scheme of coordinated carpets and furnishing fabrics in distinct colour groups that would allow any fabric design to be used in conjunction with another from the same group. The first two volumes were for normal domestic and office use, and volume 3 for heavy traffic areas such as museums. Twenty-two carpets, 13 woven textiles and 11 printed polyester stretch fabrics were produced. The carpet was the key design around which the user could select coordinating and accent fabrics for the room. One particular challenge was the design for stretch upholstery fabric which needed patterns which would not be distorted by use.

An exhibition in 1971 at the Design Centre in London showed the furnishings in room settings. The same principles can be seen in these designs as with fashion fabrics of the use of harmonious colour balance within the textiles and in selecting the coordinating fabrics to colour match within a space.

While still carrying out consultancy work, he began work on the next new type of fabric that would become the hallmark of his work in the 1970s — printed synthetic jersey fabric. Some of these designs were also based on photographs of his paintings, as with the tapestries. The stretch upholstery textiles he created for the Department of the Environment echoed designs in these fashion fabrics. The first range of fabrics was produced by British Enkalon and was printed on Terlenka jersey. These were launched in spring 1972. The designs were described as *original*,

*non-directional and sophisticated. They resound with colour, reflect a variety of moods and have a fluid, drifting character that complements the incoming fashion feeling for draping, floating cloths and garments.*<sup>21</sup>

Bernat Klein subsequently produced his own range of fabrics printed on Diolen jersey cloth in November 1972 (Fig. 16). The fabric went on sale at first by mail order in 1972. The initial collection had five basic outfits designed by Eric Sporrang from Sweden in eight limited edition prints. The range was a resounding success. Jeremy Hooker explains that the fabrics were a very different type of printed design — not floral, abstract or geometric, but *From a distance they looked plain yet they were not; the colours seemed to flow in sympathy with the curves of the body and, depending on the light, changed gently like the light on the surface of soft waves. On closer inspection, it could be seen that, on average, 8–9 colours had been used but that the colours were ‘balanced’ so that no single one of them stood out and hit the beholder’s eye because of its lightness, nor did any one of them recede from the eye because of its depth and darkness; no repeat was readily discernible.*<sup>22</sup>

In 1973 woven woollen fabrics were added to the range. In 1975 a shop was opened in George Street, Edinburgh, and this was followed in 1976 by others, including one in Knightsbridge, London, and concessions in department stores such as House of Fraser. Curtain fabrics, tablecloths and rugs were added in 1974 and a range of knitwear designed by Margaret was introduced in 1976.

The textiles follow the existing tenets of colour coordination. Irrespective of the kind of fabric — whether plain or patterned Diolen, mohair, knitwear, accessories or worsted fabric — they were perfectly matched by colour. Colour and fabric guides were issued with the catalogues to allow the buyer to pick garments in perfectly matching hues. The mohair tweeds were very similar to those produced in the 1960s — following the impressionist effect of dots of colour. The shops were laid out like a colour wheel so that clothes were displayed to allow shades to blend in to one another naturally until the colour wheel had turned full circle. The customer could then go to whichever part of colour spectrum which suited her.<sup>23</sup>

The economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s affected Bernat Klein’s business, along with many other textile manufacturers. In 1980 the last ready-to-wear collection was produced, and the shops closed. However, he stayed in production with a range of hand-knitted jumpers designed by Margaret and produced by a range of outworkers. They were sold through

selected outlets both domestically and internationally, in particular to the United States and Japan. Again, the yarn used in the knitwear was dip-dyed to give the same effect.

In 1992 he finally retired.

## Legacy

There are several aspects to his lasting legacy, and areas of his significance that merit further more detailed research. His use of colour was revolutionary in two very significant ways. His use of strong, bright colour may not seem so important now, but in the late 1950s Britain was a country just coming out of rationing. The impact of the electric blues and shocking pinks must have been immense<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 17).

But more importantly Bernat Klein was the first textile designer to achieve the effect of impressionist art with fabric. In achieving this he had effectively invented a new form of woven design. The use of a large amount of tiny areas of colour scattered at random with a lack of repeat was completely different to any fabric produced before. Previously woven designs had been plain, checked or striped or woven with intricate patterns such as Paisley shawls, and had a clear repeated design. *Bernat Klein's way of seeing this has helped him to introduce a fourth kind of woven fabric. It is neither plain, striped nor checked but incorporates the most desirable characteristics of each of these three types of fabric. It is visually more exciting and therefore, as far as the wearer is concerned, more practical and rewarding in wear, than any one of them.*<sup>25</sup>

The use of texture was also very significant in woven, knitted and printed fabric. The mohair and slubby tweeds seemed almost three-dimensional. The designs of the printed Diolen fabric often incorporated the brush strokes and texture of the oil paintings that inspired them.

One of the most important areas of his work was the use of colour balancing. This can be seen within the fabric itself and the relationship between different matching fabrics. The use of the dip-dyed yarn achieved the subtle morphing of colours that was translated into both woven and knitted fabric throughout his career. However, the impact would not have been so stunning without his ability to select and perfectly balance the colours. The jacket in Figure 18 is an excellent example of this — the jacket seems orange, but is in fact a mixture of pink and green yarn. The colours were usually chosen from the same half of the colour spectrum and of the same visual weight, *and the way they combine to make the whole more vibrant, powerful and visually effective than one would expect the sum of the component parts to be*<sup>26</sup> was the key element of Bernat Klein's brilliance. All the colours, when looked at from a distance, fuse together to create

a colour that seems more alive and vibrant than using a block of solid orange colour.

The colour balancing was extended to other aspects of his design. The balance of colour within the range of clothes worn, the relationship of clothes to the natural colouring of the wearer as evidenced in the colour guides, and the use of matching colours in interior design are further examples of his holistic use of colour balance throughout his art and design.

Bernat Klein's impact on the use of colour balancing in textile design is perhaps hard to assess, as no other designer has managed to achieve the same affect of colour mixing in textiles themselves. However, dressing according to colours that suit you is certainly now quite an established principle. In the 1980s this was re-assessed according to seasons — Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter — but the principle is the same. In the same way it is now quite common to have clothes displayed in shops according to colour to allow you to pick a matching skirt and blouse. In addition, we in the West are now quite familiar with Feng Shui and are bombarded with a plethora of interior design programmes on television. Creating an interior design based on colour balance and harmony was much less established in the 1960s, and even though many of us are now quite familiar with the concepts, creating a room design with balanced colour is not very easy to achieve successfully.

The connection between Klein's artwork and textile design was a unique and distinctive aspect of his work, and one which evolved throughout his career, as did his style of painting. While initially his painting did not always immediately inspire his design, by the 1970s this connection was much more direct and in the case of tapestries and Diolen his artwork provided the actual design. This relationship ultimately came full circle by incorporating fabric in his artwork (Fig. 19). Klein started by inserting fabric into the oil to create a collage effect, and eventually painted directly onto both tweed and Diolen fabric, using colours to match and harmonize with the fabric.

One area that merits further research is the extent to which Bernat Klein sold throughout the world and in particular the United States. This is hard to assess for two reasons. Many designers and garment manufacturers in the US would not usually publicize who provided their fabric. This was not so much the case in Europe as fashion magazines quite often cited Bernat Klein as the textile designer, or he recognized his own fabric in publicity photographs.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Bernat Klein sold to Europe and the United States through agents — notably Chantal and Lili-Ann in the United States and Dumas Maury in France. For this reason the work of Bernat Klein

is less well publicized in the United States, especially regarding fabric sold in the 1960s before the ready-to-wear collection was established.

The pattern books held at the Textile Collection of Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service do record when fabric was sold directly to a designer, such as to Yves Saint Laurent. However, the sales ledger for Gibson and Lumgair, which manufactured the fabric, shows the extent to which the fabric was sold through agents. In 1966 alone, over £400,000 worth of fabric was sold to the Lili Ann Corporation in San Francisco; and £100,000 to Dumas Maury in Paris between 1964 and 1966. Other purchasers in the US included the department store Neiman Marcus.<sup>28</sup>

In a recent article, textile writer and researcher Jacqueline Field has demonstrated the fact that in the United States, in particular, many garments in Bernat Klein fabric were not attributed to the designer. This was highlighted by the case of iconic fashion designer Bonnie Cashin. Cashin was famous in the 1960s for her creation of loose, layered and practical garments for working women (Fig. 20). Many of her garments were quite clearly made from Bernat Klein fabric but this was never publicized. Cashin designed knitwear for Ballanytnes in the mid-1960s, so one can conclude that even if they did not meet she would certainly have been aware of his work. Ms Field concludes that many examples of his work in the United States remain unidentified in museum costume collections and in private hands, and therefore the extent of his impact there definitely requires further investigation.<sup>29</sup>

One other key significance of his work is in the area of marketing and branding. Previously other woollen mills such as Munrospun had produced packs of matching wool and skirt lengths with a knitting pattern, but these were supplied in a plastic bag. Bernat Klein's knitting wool was provided in a striking drum-shaped box. These were displayed in department stores in such a way that buying the wool seemed irresistible. His marketing branding was very distinctive in black and white with quite plain script. Fashion shows were organized at his home at High Sunderland with models and the major London magazine editors were invited to attend. He also displayed his artwork alongside the fabric thus underpinning the connection between his art and textiles.

The way in which shops and catalogues were laid out by colour was also quite revolutionary. *In the early 1970s no-one had really gone into a range of clothing that particularly related and my mail order company endeavoured to change that. The way I merchandised the product, the*

*way each garment related to others in the collection and even the way they were photographed in my brochures — it was all about co-ordination. I just hoped to make a difference.*<sup>30</sup> The high regard given to Klein's work can be seen by the many awards given in recognition of his achievements. In 1973 he received a CBE; in 1980 he became an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Incorporation of Architects; and in 2003 he received an Honorary Degree from Heriot-Watt University in recognition of his achievements in textile design. From 2005 to 2006 a retrospective exhibition on his work curated by Lesley Jackson and supported by the Bernat Klein Trust was held at the Scott Gallery and Hawick Museum, Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick and at the High Mill, Scottish Borders Campus, Heriot-University.

Bernat Klein's unique use of blending art and textile design created beautiful and unique fabrics that echoed the effect of impressionist art. Inspired by nature, his main significance was his ability to break down the colours in nature and to create fabrics based on a colour balance. The connection between his artwork and his textile design was unique in the 1960s, which is what made his fabrics so different to those of his contemporaries and still makes his fabric so outstanding almost 50 years later.

In their recent articles both Jacqueline Field and Sharon Pringle have commented on the lack of detailed academic research into Bernat Klein's work, either by his contemporaries or by current researchers. Most accounts are usually by Klein himself and further, more detailed investigation into comparisons with contemporary artists and textile designers and the extent to which his fabric was used by designers outside Europe is definitely merited.

### **Bernat Klein Collection**

The Textile Collection at the Scottish Borders Campus of Heriot-Watt University in Netherdale, Galashiels, is managed by the University's Archive, Records Management and Museum Service. This includes a comprehensive collection of Bernat Klein's work from the 1960s to 1980s, including pattern and design books, garments in woven and knitted wool and Diolen; loose fabric samples including velvet and tweed mohair tweed sold to Hardy Amies, Chanel, Christian Dior and Balenciaga publicity materials; knitting patterns, wool and furnishing fabrics. The collection is available for research by appointment.

### Notes

1. Bernat Klein, *Bernat Klein Eye for Colour* (Edinburgh: Pillans and Wilson Ltd, 1965), p. 24.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

3. Ibid., pp. 117–18.
4. Ibid., p. 25.
5. Bernat Klein and Lesley Jackson, *Bernat Klein: Textile Designer, Artist, Colourist* (Selkirk: Bernat Klein Trust, 2005), p. 59. This publication accompanied the 2005 retrospective exhibition held in Hawick.
6. Notes to Mr Hooker from Mr Klein, 25 April 1975. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service, BK 10/9/2.
7. *Bernat Klein*, unpublished manuscript, Jeremy Hooker 1964. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/9/1.
8. Notes to Mr Hooker. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK10/9/2.
9. Klein and Jackson, *Bernat Klein*, p. 12; Wool, Winter 1962–63.
10. Klein and Jackson, *Bernat Klein*, p. 35; *Big Fat Yarns*, Women's Wear Daily, 14 January 1964.
11. *Tantalising in tweeds*, Evening Standard, 11 March 1963.
12. Klein and Jackson, *Bernat Klein*, p. 59. In *The Law of Simultaneous Colour Contrast* (De la loi du contraste simultane des couleurs) the French chemist Michel Eugene Chevreul had proven that colour was mixed by the eye, that a spot of pure colour had the halo of neighbouring colours around it and each colour therefore shaded into its neighbour.
13. Klein and Jackson, *Bernat Klein*, p. 15; *The Ambassador*, September 1964.
14. *A New Movement in Colour*, Bernat Klein Publicity leaflet. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/3/4.
15. Bernat Klein, *A Philosophy Based on Customer Colour Sense*, Drapers Record, 16 December 1976. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/4.
16. Jean Smith, *Perfect Dressing at a Glance*, newscutting. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/1.
17. *Mr Klein Decides to Take a Risk*, newscutting. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/13.
18. Derek Norman, *Carpets from the Eye of a Painter*, newscutting. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/14.
19. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service. Sales Ledger L–M, 1963–1966 GL 4/4/2. The sales records show that companies in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway bought fashion fabrics quite extensively in the 1960s.
20. *Imaginative use of colour* by J. W., newscutting. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/13.
21. *Klein Paints the Future for Terlenka*. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service, BK 10/10/5.
22. Jeremy Hooker, *Some Things You Might Like to Know About Bernat Klein*, unpublished manuscript. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service, BK 10/9/3.
23. *A Philosophy Based on Customer Colour Sense*, Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service, BK 10/10/4.
24. Sharon Pringle, *Bernat Klein's Use of Colour and Image Management Strategies in Relation to Contemporaneous Colour Trends, 1963–1965*, pp. 48–49. Essay submitted to Glasgow School of Art, 11 December 2008. Following

an analysis of Bernat Klein's work and *Vogue* fashion articles, Pringle concludes that Bernat Klein's use of colour was quite in trend with other designers in the mid-1960s for high fashion and couture garments and fabric. He wanted to be able to sell his garments, and blue and pink were popular colours. However, there is quite a difference between high fashion and what people with more modest incomes wore, and this was not the market *Vogue* was aiming at. Also, by this period Klein's work was becoming quite established. In addition, placed in the context of the rather conventional Scottish Borders tweed industry, his use of bright colours was quite revolutionary.

25. Hooker, *Some Things*.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Pringle, *Bernat Klein's Use of Colour*. Pringle references many examples of advertising images in fashion magazines such as *Vogue* where Bernat Klein's work is cited.

28. Gibson and Lumgair Sales Ledger, Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service GL 4/4/2.

29. Jacqueline Field, *Bernat Klein's Couture Tweeds: Color and Fabric Innovation 1960–1980*, in *Dress*, xxiii (2006), pp. 41–55.

30. Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan, *Klein Dancing Step by Step*, in *The Herald Magazine*, 27 February 1999. Heriot-Watt University Archive, Records Management and Museum Service BK 10/10/3.

Fig. 1. Space dyed wool in red, orange and brown, 1960s. BK 12/1/1. The section of wool illustrates the subtle morphing between colours.

Fig. 2. *Lichen 2*, 1963, oil on board, 87 × 78 cm.

Fig. 3. Woven fabric in russets and browns, 1960s, 45 × 59 cm. BK 12/1/19. This is a very good example of the use of colour balance.

Fig. 4. Velvet tweed in space dyed mohair, turquoise and green, c. 1964, 33 × 34 cm. BK 12/1/31. Although created a year after *Sea-scape*, the colours in the fabric echo those in the painting.

Fig. 5. Women's skirt length in blues and greens, 1960s, 28 × 29 cm. BK 12/1/85.

Fig. 6. Tweed with mohair and slubby and twisted yarns in blues and greys, 1960s, 31 × 37 cm. BK 12/1/58. Another larger length of the same fabric is in the Textile Collection.

Fig. 7. French nib fabric in cerise pink, 1960s, 24 × 28 cm. BK 12/1/79

Fig. 8. Velvet tweed in ribbon and space dyed mohair, c. 1964, 13 × 19 cm. BK 12/1/97.

Fig. 9. Velvet tweed swatches interspersed with stripes of slubby wool, c. 1964, 90 × 195cm. Bernat Klein design book. BK 6/1/2/7.

Fig. 10. Knitting pattern for mohair yarn, 1960s. BK 10/5/3.

Fig. 11. Handmade dress in red and mustard in Diolen fabric, 1970s. BK 12/2/16.

Fig. 12. Publicity leaflet featuring tulip painting, 1960s. BK 10/3/3.

Fig. 13. Colour guide for light blue eyes, 1965. BK 10/4/1.

Fig. 14. Rya rug, c. 1967, 92 × 122 cm.

Fig. 15. Tapestry *Scandia* woven by Edinburgh Tapestry Company, Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, 97 × 99 cm. The texture in the tapestry echoes that of the oil paintings.

Fig. 16. Diolen fabric from sales bunch, 1970s. BK 7/7/2/2.

Fig. 17. Velvet tweed in mohair, c. 1964, 89 × 145 cm. BK 12/1/15.

Fig. 18. Jacket in slubby wool, 1960s. BK 12/2/21. The fabric for the jacket was bought by the donor from the mill shop in Galashiels, and the outfit was made by a dressmaker. Originally part of a trouser suit.

Fig. 19. *Ochre Textures*, 1969. Oil and woven textiles on canvas, 76 × 96 cm.

Fig. 20. Coat by Bonnie Cashin in Bernat Klein velvet tweed, c. 1960–69. Acc. no. 2005.5.25, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Los Angeles, CA, USA.