

# fabric

£3.80



# the neck's *big* thing



*It's official; the age of the pashmina is over. That ubiquitous rectangle of snugliness in a thousand shades of dull has seen its day. It's time to welcome back freedom of shape, riotous pattern and glorious technicolour in the form of the scarf, the stole, the carré, the wrap and even the necker. Your new winter lust starts right here, and it's JANE CARR not Santa you need to contact...*

FROM HER CALM, unassumingly stylish white-walled north London studio, Jane has become the heroine of a fashion revolution. The scarf is no longer a gift for Granny or good old Queenie – it's the essential finishing touch, the accessory de jour.

But maybe not the type Granny would choose. 'Traditionally, silk patterned scarves have been the super-pictorial saddlery scene "necker" from the likes of Hermès at the top end and airport lounges at the bottom,' smiles Jane – the creator of this month's limited-edition cover – as she leads me to her spring/summer 2009 collection, *Opium Dream*. 'Then there's the branded logo-print variety, updated with nothing more than a change of shade for each new season.'

The row of hangers in front of me holds Jane's bold, contemporary antidote to this outdated sartorial habit: her designs are intelligent and luxurious, a combination of beautiful, clashing colour and frivolous motif.

'I don't like traditional designs that reference back to something like the 1970s or florals,' she explains. 'I want to



# COVER STORY



reflect the chaos that surrounds us with a mix of objects which create conflict and energy. We were recently at Paris fashion week and, even after our third year, we still don't have a direct rival.' And yet the rush is on and the trend is well underway.

There was a clear early indication of Jane's potential to take over the world of designer neckwear before she even set foot out of college. Before graduating she'd won the prestigious International Wool Secretariat fashion award – a title first won in 1954 by young upstarts Yves Saint Laurent and Karl Lagerfeld. Then in 2000, at the end of the famously gruelling Fashion & Print MA at Central Saint Martin's, she became the first print designer to 'get the finale' – industry speak for becoming the publicly lauded top student of the year. Usually bagged by a womenswear fashion student it was enough to put her in line for a pinch-yourself first-job opportunity with Jil Sander in Germany.

However, it was a trip to Paris to visit a fashion editor friend soon after that brought about the real tipping point in her fledgling career. Her friend convinced her that Versace, still in the infancy of its post-Gianni era, needed her intuitive skills with pattern and colour – and a hastily arranged

meeting with Donatella herself confirmed this to be true. She was snapped up and relocated to Milan, where for four years she worked as the sole print designer for Versace womenswear (couture and ready-to-wear), menswear and accessories. Looking back through the collections it's clear that what Jane brought to Versace more than anything else was a desire to create unique patterns and designs for each new collection – not take a perpetual trawl through the revered archives.

'It was great fun working for Donatella and I had a lot of freedom. Being in such a small and intimate team meant I learnt a lot very quickly, and had to work very hard. But she throws a great party too!'

Parties aside, by 2005, it was time to come home. 'I loved Milan, but I needed to come out from under the Versace name and do something for myself. And I was missing London,' explains Jane.

And so was born Jane's eponymous label of hand-printed scarves: from satin squares and chiffon wraps to the silk twill skinnies and the gorgeous cashmere-blend carré. 'I wanted to use the skills and knowledge I'd developed to create something really special. I was passionate about making a small but well-considered collection with the quality of Italian production and a fresh take on colour and design – something there was a real gap in the market for.'

With the country in the last throes of 3-for-2 pashmina fever, Jane offered exciting, innovative design with a high-end, hand-printed finish from Como, the spiritual home of printing.

Carr's self-defined strongest skill is colour. The echoes of Versace brights are certainly recognisable in her work, and the hectic years with Donatella honed her amazing ability to visualise stunning colour combinations in her head. 'My colours aren't what I'd call London colours,' she agrees. 'They're cleaner, more continental.'

But while her colours might not be native, there's no doubt that the patterns which define Jane's work are strongly influenced by the city she loves. 'My influences are hugely varied – natural history, fine art, hardware stores, garden centres!' Some of her motifs are familiar or iconic, some more sentimental. This season's White Rocks



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do. They're like art. The last few seasons have seen a growing desire for women to be more feminine, but it's also a social statement. It can be a very elegant in a Grace Kelly way, but it can also be about individuality like when Kate Moss puts one on.'

And like everything else about Jane, her future plans are quietly confident – with no interest in world domination. 'My own shop would be the next natural step, but I really want to keep the brand special, not sell out and appear on every street corner,' she states. 'I want to be the Goyard of scarves, not the Louis Vuitton.' ■

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designs

feature cigarette lighters and the silhouette of her favourite Versace shoe nestling among jewellery box trinkets, diamonds and hearts in an edgy nod to the preppy overtones of silk neckers.

For our cover, Jane, 33, wanted to create the illusion of a Christmas gift box, so she chose a design rich in winter elements like snowflakes and cross-stitch – finished, of course, with her signature colour-shock, this time inspired by a fabulous vintage Miu Miu sandal. The collaboration with Fabric stemmed from an idea to create something exclusive and collectable for the Christmas issue – adjectives that lead directly to Jane's studio. Jane was invited to create a limited-edition cover in three colourways. 'We were really flattered to be asked, and wanted to produce something really special: collectable artwork, not just a big advert or a copy of one of our scarves,' explains Jane.

'The Fabric team wanted to create the feeling of exclusivity, and using an emerging brand, someone not instantly recognisable, gives it that edge.'

With fans like Vogue's Anna Wintour and collaborations with Crème de la Mer and Estée Lauder already under her belt, Jane's ability to define a new era in a market previously reserved for the aged and the double-barrelled is clear. 'My scarves don't age the way other accessories