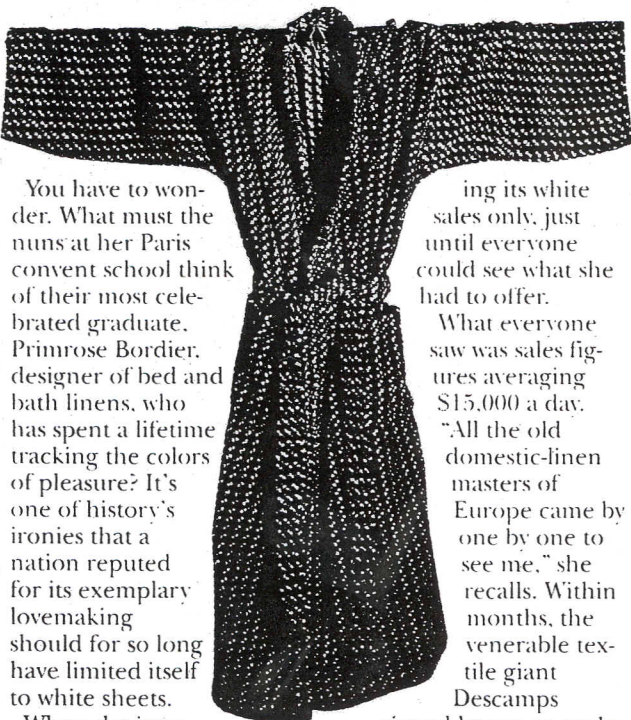


TASTEMAKERS

PRIMROSE IN BED AND BATH THE SENSUOUS BORDIER TOUCH



Good-bye white sales, hello color. The lively bed and bath linens that Primrose Bordier (above, with a colleague) pioneered in the 1960s have put plain white sheets beyond the pale. Right: her Damier Club terry-cloth robe for Descamps. For details see Resources.



You have to wonder. What must the nuns at her Paris convent school think of their most celebrated graduate, Primrose Bordier, designer of bed and bath linens, who has spent a lifetime tracking the colors of pleasure? It's one of history's ironies that a nation reputed for its exemplary lovemaking should for so long have limited itself to white sheets. When she introduced the French to colored and patterned linens in the 1960s, Bordier admits, she "flabbergasted" many of her countrymen. "Not only did France produce no colored sheets at the time," she recalls with a

grimace, "but our towels were ugly, and our linens bore absolutely no relationship with one another." She came home from a scouting trip to the United States in the early '60s committed to the American concept of color coordination.

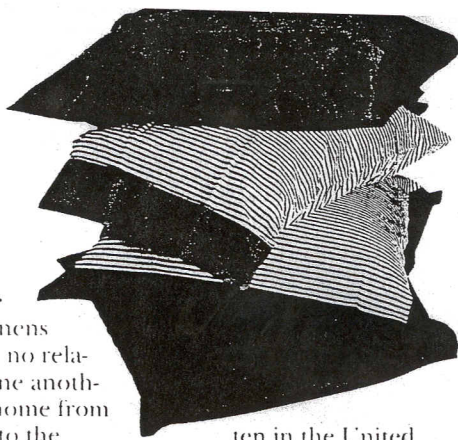
At first French textile manufacturers bridled. They weren't willing to invest in the huge machines needed to produce Bordier's colorful new designs. By 1964, however, she was able to persuade the Bloomingdale's of Paris, Printemps, to set up a small Primrose Bordier boutique. The department store decided to house her experiment dur-

ing its white sales only, just until everyone could see what she had to offer.

What everyone saw was sales figures averaging \$15,000 a day. "All the old domestic-linen masters of Europe came by one by one to see me," she recalls. Within months, the venerable textile giant Descamps

signed her to an exclusive contract. "Together," she says, "we changed the market in France. I love a good fight!"

Today there are over 200 Descamps outposts scattered worldwide from Japan to Argentina, with



Bordier's Boston and Cambridge pillow shams for Descamps glow with unexpected shades of prune, cedar, cerise, and hussard blue. kelly greens.

ten in the United States alone. In them, aficionados of the Bordier-dressed bed, which runs about \$500, can choose from new designs that evoke the India of the maharajahs, 18th-century French porcelain, even Jackson Pollock and abstractions reminiscent of Piet Mondrian.

Sugar-cube wrappers have been a source of inspiration no less than the moon hanging over the pyramids. A friend confesses that she's seen Bordier pull a colored thread from the dress or jacket of an unsuspecting guest at a party: Inspiration, after all, can strike anywhere.

Taking tea in New York at the Mayfair Regent, she is fascinated by the pattern on a rather severe saucer. "But it's color that my designs come from," she says. It is the colors that make Bordier's linens remarkable: lilacs and oranges on a field of periwinkle; blurry-pine greens and blues; burgundies against deep greens and strong yellows; fuchsias atop indigos and golds; pansies on hot coral; sun-struck emeralds and Aegean sapphires.

Even her pastels are intense. "Colors for now," she calls them. For her bath linens—towels and terry-cloth robes—she chooses full-bodied grapes and mints, African reds, downy yellows. On her sheets for children, little pink elephants disport themselves in green-striped pants and lavender shirts. She decks herself out in indigos and plums and

Slender, but with enormous presence, Primrose Bordier leans back from the tea table a little to discourse *à la française* on giving pleasure, on coming through in the hard light of the morning after: "A woman may be many women for her man," she propounds. "A woman might dream of being another woman. A woman might change her lovers with her moods...."

Primrose Bordier's views of female sensuality are at the heart of a wider vision. She's working with scents, for instance, trying to match them to her colors—an incense to evoke the color blue, for instance—as well as oils and unguents for the bath, and room scents that will come alive with just the heat of a light bulb. She's even developed a scent to be scattered on carpets—a perfume, she says, that will make everyday vacuuming "a little more joyful."

Bordier also has plans for cigarettes in multicolored papers, a little on the order of Balkan Sobranie. But her cigarettes would be coordinated with the wearer's dress and lipstick. In addition, she wants to try her hand at luggage shaped to accord with jacket and coat proportions. Currently she is preoccupied with the problem of the toothbrush: What color combinations might make brushing just a bit more delicious every morning?

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