



IKEA: MAGICAL PATTERNS

Dovecot Studios, 10 Infirmity Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, 18 July 2025 – 17 January 2026

IKEA: Magical Patterns takes visitors on a journey of printed textiles within the IKEA brand. Yellow-striped walls and a series of wall-mounted motifs greet visitors as they enter the exhibition. The introductory text emphasises that “Textiles at IKEA are more than decoration. They are a canvas for creativity, innovation, and collaboration.” Recognised as fundamental to daily life, textiles are identified as IKEA’s second-most-used material after wood. The exhibition celebrates innovative thinking, bold ideas, and colourful printed textile designs that have shaped Swedish interiors and brought accessible modern design to homes worldwide. This introductory framing positions textiles as a key part of the company’s development and central to IKEA’s identity as a home-furnishing company.

The narrative begins in the 1960s, when IKEA founder, Ingar Kamprad, brought in Danish designer Bitten Højmark to revitalise their textile and rug range (Kamprad registered IKEA as a teenager in 1943). Three IKEA catalogues from the 1960s are featured to give an idea of the company’s early textile collections. With Sweden’s textile industry in decline, IKEA saw an opportunity, moving away from dull polyester fabrics towards bold colours and contemporary patterns printed onto cotton, reflecting the shift from postwar functionalism to playful, colourful, youth-oriented design. The transformation brought about organisational change, with textiles providing design

and management positions for women in a male-centered context.

The amusingly titled film, *That’s Not Terribly Ugly: Textiles at IKEA 1965–1984*, shown towards the beginning of the exhibition, provides context with contributions from former product managers, range coordinators, buyers, and designers. Introducing more contemporary designs and working with Portuguese manufacturers, initiated by Inger Nilsson (Product Manager Textiles) and Lars Göran Peterson (Purchaser Textiles), meant that by 1971, textiles made up a quarter of IKEA’s turnover. The company shifted its identity from Furniture IKEA to IKEA, becoming a home furnishing store. From 1974, Nilsson’s successor, Vivianne Sjölin (also designer of IKEA’s iconic LACK table), oversaw the growth of the textile range and shaped its direction, managing thousands of items across an expanding number of stores. Sjölin’s invitation to the Swedish design collective 10-Gruppen to create a collection for IKEA was an innovation. Known for their experimental approach to pattern, the collective found in IKEA an opportunity to bring bold design to a wider public. Members of the collective, Tom Hedqvist and Ingela Håkansson Lamm, recall feeling understood and included in the process, contrasting their usual experience with more conservative buyers. The film’s title, *That’s Not Terribly Ugly*, was the phrase Sjölin and Peterson used to signal interest in purchasing a design while negotiating a price.

Phil Wilkinson

Image: Installation view of *IKEA: Magical Patterns*, Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2025.