

Product

This American Textile Brand Is Out With Its First Debut in Two Decades

Bassett McNab returns with a collection that wipes the dust off its grandiose archives

By Mel Studach

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Launching this week, Bassett McNab's new collection pays homage to the fabric company's past. Photo: Courtesy Bassett McNab

The hope is always that great things will resurface. As of late, we've seen a distinct resurgence of gingham, chintz, and large-scale floral patterns, as the design world fulfills its yearning for [traditional design](#) reminiscent of the 1980s. At the same time, fabric house [Stout Textiles](#), led by siblings and fourth-generation executives John and Kate Greenawalt, has been polishing an industry gem of the same era: textile brand [Bassett McNab](#). Twenty years since its last collection debut, Bassett McNab was set for a second act in April. However, a few weeks prior to that launch, "nearly every production factory shut down right at the time the bolts were scheduled to be shipped," John Greenawalt tells AD PRO. After a two-decades-long wait though, what's another few months?

The delay ended up being, in fact, quite serendipitous. One year prior to the rescheduled launch, the ink was just drying on Stout Textiles' acquisition of the intellectual assets of traditional fabric company Bassett McNab. Their fabric and wall covering archives were filled with toiles de Jouy, grandiose florals, and striking chinoiseries—many of which ready for a modern reinterpretation.





To refresh the patterns, Hahn-Waddell opted for crisp ground hues that would enhance the detailed patterns. Photo: Courtesy Bassett McNab

To lead such a task, the Greenawalts brought in textile artist Anne Hahn-Waddell, who was previously the design projects director at [Lee Jofa](#) and the creative director of Bailey & Griffin. The industry veteran likened her first sifting through the archives to revisiting her high school yearbook. “Some of the color combinations were so outrageous that it almost makes you laugh,” she tells AD PRO. Chuckles aside, she was in search of a thread, metaphorically speaking: She wanted to find a consistent design voice that would establish the foundation for the brand’s renewed identity.

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But editing an archive is easier said than done for a career textile artist who doesn’t like to waste. “I think everything has its place and legitimacy in design, so there were very few [patterns] that we tossed out and said, ‘I don’t see the design narrative in that,’” she says. “It was [about] looking for a design element that is timeless and deciding what is causing that timelessness and how we move it forward,” she says.

Focused on maintaining Bassett McNab’s inherently upbeat designs, Hahn-Waddell turned to the work of interior designers Elsie de Wolfe, David Hicks, and Dorothy Draper for guidance in terms of how to refine bold hues and traditional motifs. As she notes, “we don’t want to lose the thread of what Bassett McNab was.” The new collection, which launched this week and is made up of seven distinct patterns and more than two dozen coordinating wovens, fulfills the design-scheme requirements of modern traditionalists with a fresh mix of reimagined garden florals, trellis fretwork, ikats, and chinoiserie.

For some patterns, a simple rescaling or recoloring was enough to meet contemporary criteria. Hahn-Waddell describes the selected palettes in two categories: relaxing, livable hues that evoke zen-like qualities, and a more happy, uplifting bunch. Other archival patterns, which were initially drawn and screened-printed, were now candidates for digital techniques that would offer clearer printing. Hahn-Waddell poses the ikat patterned



Bassett McNab’s Bukhara pattern, now digitally printed. Photo: Courtesy Bassett McNab

Bukhara as an example. “You can only paint to warp and weft feathering so well, and the mesh [stencil] of the screen was only so good back then,” she notes, describing the outcome as “more blob-y than ikat-y.” The 2020 iteration, digitally printed from a CAD design, gives the ancient pattern the precision it is due.



Maintaining the uplifting hues for which Bassett McNab is known was critical for the relaunch. Photo: Courtesy Bassett McNab

“What’s important to me is to give designers something inspiring, something that they can’t wait to have a client be able to use the fabric with,” says Hahn-Waddell. “My biggest thrill is to pick up a magazine and see designers using a fabric I colored decades ago in their room at Kip’s Bay –think of the longevity of that!”

Then again, standing the test of time is not a new concept for Bassett McNab or new owner Stout Textiles. In fact, the acquisition marks a homecoming of sorts for the two American upholstery suppliers. The Greenawalt siblings’ great-great-grandfather was a partner at Bassett McNab, and it was his son, Charles Stout, who would go on to launch Stout Brothers in Philadelphia in 1927. A bit of history, resurfaced.

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