

ENCOMPASSING INDIA'S ARTS ON UPHOLSTERY

Sihasn is taking India's rich textile heritage to upholstery on furniture, thus creating rich, unique and eye-catching interiors

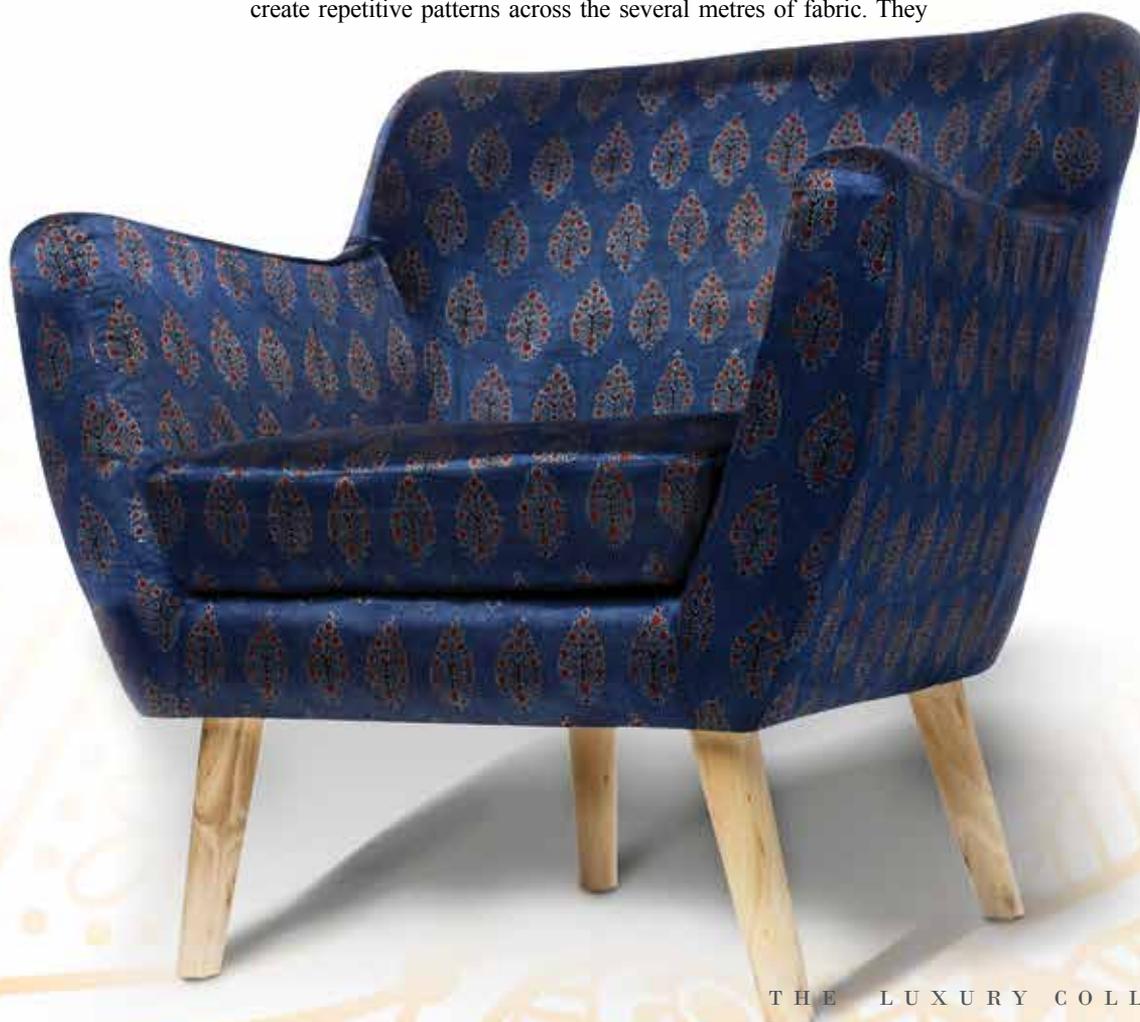
- By Aruna Rathod

Picture this – the rich tradition of India in your home, through the fabrics! SIHASN is a first of its kind e-commerce company that is taking Indian fabrics beyond apparel and using them as upholstery on furniture.

SIHASN was born out of a simple desire of Sanju Rao and Ganesh Shankar, the founders and creative directors of the brand, to explore and embrace India's textile heritage. The company curates fabrics which are known for their long-standing traditions, culture, and stories from all over the country - from the foothills of Nagaland to the salt floors of Kutch!

AJRAKH - A TALE OF TWO TRIBES

Ajrakh, derived from 'Azrak' meaning "blue" in Arabic. Ajrakh-dyed fabric, sourced from Master Craftsman Ramji Devraj of the Banni tribal community, is done on Mashru silk – a rare form of silk woven with cotton such that the silk faces the exterior while the inner fabric in contact with the skin, consists of cotton weaves. The cotton base makes it a tensile fabric. Once the weaving is completed, elaborately carved sheesham wood blocks are used to create repetitive patterns across the several metres of fabric. They



are dipped in vegetable dyes and then firmly imprinted by the steady hands of the dyers on the fabric. Block-printing is done by hand, making every square-inch of fabric unique.

BANNI PATCHWORK

Textile crafts in the region of Kutch date back to the Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological excavations have revealed that indigo was grown and used for dyeing in Mohenjo-Daro. 'Ajrakh' – the ancient art of indigo-dyeing block-printed fabric – was a technique used by the denizens of the Indus Valley Civilization. Until the 1819 Rann of Kutch earthquake, the river Indus flowed through Banni, a grassland reserve bordering the desert Rann.

Their patchwork offering is a combination of myriad Ajrakh – dyed as well as plain – block-printed patterns combined to create a cotton quilt typical of the Banni craftsmen. Creating so many patterns of

CHIZAMI WEAVES - WHERE CRAFT IS INSTINCT

Naga upholstery fabric is woven using cotton yarn, which is light and ideal for Indian climes. The women who wove their fabric are members of Chizami Weaves – under North East Network- a women's rights organisation. Chizami weaves was conceived by the NEN in the village of Chizami. Starting with just seven weavers in 2008, Chizami Weaves today has 600 women in its network across 14 villages in the Phek district as well as urban settlers in the Kohima district of Nagaland.

Each tribe has different patterns that are unique to each tribe. When before, they would weave only shawls and sarongs (also known as



patchwork is no easy task; each pattern requires at least two wood blocks that synchronize precisely so that a design can be imprinted and then colour can be filled into it. Some patches are exclusively block-printed and not dipped in dyes in the tradition of Ajrakh; those that are, have predominantly blue, red, and green hues.

BENARASI KANTHA COLLECTION

The limited edition Kantha collection upholstered furniture is embroidered the eminent Master Craftswoman, Takdira Begum, herself. She was conferred the Shilp Guru National Award by the President of India in 2009. Takdira Begum has single-handedly reinvented the simple Kantha stitch by taking it past generic asymmetric motifs to skillfully embroidered geometric patterns that are near-impossible to achieve by hand.

'mekhalas') today the Nagas have taken the fashion and home furnishings industries by storm with their fashionable bags, belts, table mats, and cushion covers.

RAJASTHANI DHURRIE COLLECTION

Dhurries are the original rugs of India, dating as long back as 200 AD. They are woven on vertical or horizontal handlooms and employ the flat-weaving technique. Carpets that are hand-tufted, hand-knotted, or hand-hooked came to India from Persia a few centuries later. The first dhurrie-weavers were nomadic herders. The Indian cotton dhurrie, being warm in winter and cooling in the summer, is a favourite in both the humble huts of villagers and the palatial urban homes of millionaires around the world.