

Women in design

SALLY CAMPBELL

Tag along with a stylish textiles guru whose thriving business sprang from her deep love of beautiful things.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Chris Warnes*

Textile designer Sally Campbell begins every day, all year round, with a swim at Sydney's Coojee Beach. "It's my coping mechanism," she says. It's no wonder she needs one. As the leading light of Sally Campbell Handmade Textiles, she is hands-on, involved in every aspect of the business, from designing new ranges to styling product for the website, dreaming up marketing strategies, blogging, packaging despatches, even hand-writing thoughtful notes to each of her customers. "It's not a huge business but it's all-encompassing," she says.

For 25 years, Sally worked in the film industry as a set and costume designer. Her career took her around the globe, including regular trips to India to source textiles. "Travelling and collecting are big passions of mine," she says. In 2005, aged in her 50s, she was inspired by an abiding love of handcrafted fabrics to launch her own collection of soft furnishings. "It was a natural progression," she says.

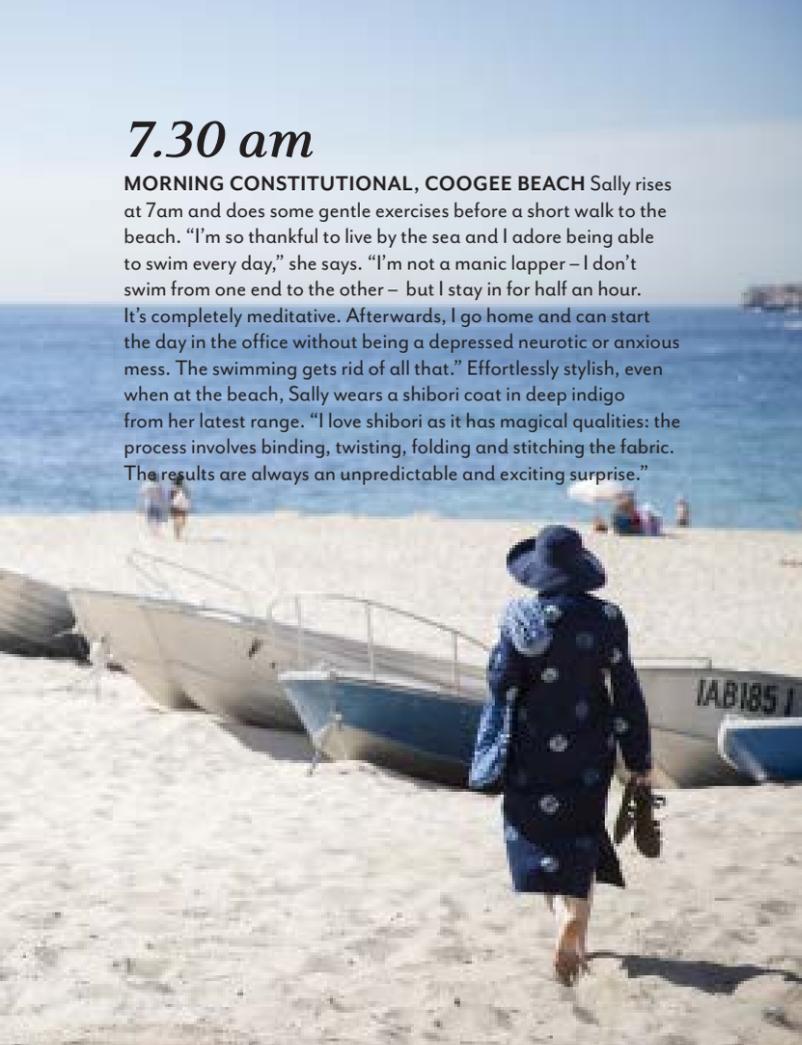
Today, the business is headquartered in a three-storey Victorian home she shares with husband Greg, a former documentary filmmaker. She works closely with artisans in India to create unique and vibrant textiles that are fashioned into clothing, quilts, cushions and other gorgeous pieces. Everything is embroidered, dyed, woven or printed by hand.

Sally particularly likes the results of traditional block printing and shibori dyeing. "I love using fabrics made with these age-old techniques and giving them a contemporary edge," she says. "I also love to recycle beautiful vintage fabrics and to give them new life." ▶



7.30 am

MORNING CONSTITUTIONAL, COOGEE BEACH Sally rises at 7am and does some gentle exercises before a short walk to the beach. "I'm so thankful to live by the sea and I adore being able to swim every day," she says. "I'm not a manic lapper – I don't swim from one end to the other – but I stay in for half an hour. It's completely meditative. Afterwards, I go home and can start the day in the office without being a depressed neurotic or anxious mess. The swimming gets rid of all that." Effortlessly stylish, even when at the beach, Sally wears a shibori coat in deep indigo from her latest range. "I love shibori as it has magical qualities: the process involves binding, twisting, folding and stitching the fabric. The results are always an unpredictable and exciting surprise."



9.30am

LOCATION SHOOT, NORTH COOGEE With a stunning new product range ready for market, Sally and her husband, Greg, head to the cliffs of North Coogee for a styling session to produce images for the website. "Greg has a film background too, and he's a good photographer," says Sally. "He's the person behind the scenes, organising our trips to India, looking after the website and the accounting."



11.30am

HOME OFFICE/SHOWROOM One of Sally's latest triumphs is a fabric collection printed in the Indian Bagru tradition, "a 15-step block-printing process using mud-resistant natural dyes". The results cover a spectrum of earthy tones (below left). She writes personalised notes to customers on business cards (below right). Quilts are packaged in cotton bags (right).



'What keeps me going? I'm a very optimistic person. I have tremendous enthusiasm all the time and a complete love of beautiful things. I also have an amazing mother, who's still alive, fabulous sisters, a gorgeous husband... I'm surrounded by lovely people.'



6pm



4pm

SETTING THE SCENE This bevy of beautiful homewares showcases the Marine collection of hand-woven, hand-stitched and hand-printed cushions and quilts in cotton, styled for a pop-up event at Sydney's Shapiro Gallery. Months of preparation go into creating these pop-ups (Sally hosts similar events in Melbourne and Brisbane) but the pay-off is worth it for her: she loves meeting fans and followers.



SHAPIRO GALLERY, WOOLLAHRA, SYDNEY "I opened my business with a show at the Shapiro Gallery 11 years ago and it was terribly successful, so I've had a pop-up there every year since," says Sally, resplendent in a shibori dress (above) at the opening of her annual pre-Christmas show. Aside from showcasing her regular stock, these shows provide a great opportunity to unveil new product to her loyal and adoring clientele. Sydneysiders can catch Sally's next pop-up show at the Avalon Recreation Centre, January 11-17. For more, go to www.sallycampbell.com.au.



STOCK CHECK Sally and her assistant Chris Valentine check stock levels and orders (left). "Chris is an absolute dream," says Sally. "She helps with styling, packaging, showroom windows, pretty much everything." All of Sally's collections, including the Bagru printed fabrics (above left) have their genesis in her personal diary (above right). "I collect train tickets, sweet wrappers... everything I like the look of. I find inspiration everywhere in India, and it all goes in here. Then, when we've developed a design, I attach fabric samples and make notes about them and what I've ordered."