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## touchy-feely

Bev Hisey's colourful home accessories demand to be stroked. TEXT: NICOLETTE LINTON

**B**ev Hisey's handmade cushions, blankets, carpets and floor runners are the licorice allsorts of home decor. Their irresistible textures and wide range of colours make them the ultimate feel-good accessory. "I think my colours are inspiring," says Hisey. "To a large degree, they inspire me and keep me sharp."

Hisey's first love was fashion. In the '80s, she set up shop in Toronto's West End, selling remodelled vintage clothing. She then went on to design, manufacture and sell her own line, Hahaha. In 1992, Hisey turned her talents to home decor, wowing the world press at the New York International Contemporary Furniture Fair in 2002. "I think an artistic person selects their medium over a course of time. It wasn't that home decor—or fashion—in itself inspired me. If I look over the last 20 years, I can see that I had a real feel for textiles."

**What else inspires you?** "Aside from my artistic connections—my grandmother was very artistic and my mother was in the world of interiors—human nature has absolutely been an inspiration for me. What drives people? What makes them happy? I think the human vibration can be pretty inspiring, regardless of what it is you're making."

**How do you create your designs?** "Most of my designs come from actually making the samples myself. Once I have the design I want, I can replicate that in different colour combinations. At the moment, I have 24 colours of the wool-blend fabric I use in stock—some left over from when bright fuchsia coats were in fashion! I do have help from a computer wizard, Matt, who draws the botanical pieces. But, for me, having the knowledge of a method and a material is the basis of design. I like looking at things, at the way they're put together—the technical and artistic craft that goes behind making stuff. Although the computer has made it easy enough to draw, people who only use that method of creating miss out on the tactile element. And that's the fun part of it for me."

**What's next for you?** "I think I'll continue to do what I'm doing, but also fit in more screen printing. Maybe I'll have to start doing something that isn't so graphic. Something more organic. Even my die-cut leather flowers, which were Marimekko-inspired, are pretty graphic. I tend to take the same material—a wool-blend fabric—and use different techniques like screen printing, appliqué and cutting to see how far I can push it. Maybe I'll stumble on to a new material!" □

Clockwise, from left: Hand-screened orange and yellow squiggle-print cushion; thick, densely woven wool-blend floor runner; leather flower appliqué and wool-blend lumbar cushion with stitch detail; die-cut wool-blend lumbar cushion in dark gold and khaki; leather flower appliqué and 100 percent duffle wool blanket with stitch detail. For details, see Shopping Guide.