

Q&A

Two's Company

The husband-and-wife team of **John Wary** and **Linda Meyers** are the creative force behind Wary Meyers—a Portland, Maine-based decorative arts studio that incorporates both the bohemian and the modern in its vibrantly inventive style. The couple met in New York while John was the corporate display director at Anthropologie and Linda was an advertising graphic designer. Their work ranges from interior design, custom heraldry, and portraits to a biweekly column in *Time Out New York* called “Tossed and Found,” featuring the revitalization of objects found on the street.

Part of your business is making custom crests. What is your process?

Wary: Well, I ask the person to make a list of 10 things they would want to see in their family crest, in order of importance. Then I'll put those things together in a way that looks fun. I just finished one that's a bike chain that goes up to form the Eiffel Tower. [The client's] family owns a company that makes bike chains, and she loves France and lions. So there are lions, too. Their tails form a cursive monogram.

You recently designed a series of plates for Urban Outfitters. How did you select subject matter?

Wary: Basically, we could do anything we wanted. We had a conversation about the old Wella Girl advertisements, fairy tales by Arthur Rackham, [designer] Milton Glaser, and [the novel] *The Golden Compass*. There were no parameters—just whatever we were thinking at the time.

What are your sources of inspiration? What do you always go back to?

Wary: Really good art and design—not what's trendy or what goes in and out of style right now. There are a few design books we go to for information. We don't have

anything newer than 1975, like the Terence Conran house book [*The Ultimate House Book*] and other odd interior books. Also, Barbara Plumb. She used to write for *The New York Times Magazine*. She put out three books that are all about the coolest late '60s and early '70s design from Europe.

Meyers: There are two aesthetics at that time to which I find myself always referencing in something or another. The first is the influence of the Space Age on the designers of the time, notably Pierre Cardin, André Courrèges, and the Italians of the “new domestic landscape” like Mario Bellini, the Vignellis, and Kartell. The other style I love is the hippie handmade aesthetic. It's quite different from the last one, but sometimes the combination of high and low is pretty pleasing.

If you had an event to design, what or where would it be?

Wary: I'm thinking about the restaurant El Bulli. I was blown away by this book [of theirs], and I imagine you could be so creative designing an event around them. Everyone gets their own waiter there, and they use a lot of foam [in their cooking].

Meyers: It would be so fun to cover the exterior in foam, like an El Bulli dish, and have bellinis served in hibiscus flowers and phosphorescent truffle pigs roaming around outside, making the restaurant look like it's inside a frothy aurora borealis.

Wary: You'd need to rename the bellinis Fellinis. —*Andi Teran*



A new series of plates at Urban Outfitters includes illustrations like this one, inspired by Arthur Rackman's fairy tales.



Designers John Wary and Linda Meyers at home in Maine.



The duo used 15,000 marshmallows to create a wintry window display at Rockefeller Center.

Get Inspired

Revel in performance art and visual spectacles at the third annual **Art Parade** in SoHo on September 8, hosted by Deitch Projects, Creative Time, and *Paper* magazine. Last year's participants included Yoko Ono, the Dazzle Dancers, and Fischerspooner costumed in futuristic getups by sensationalist designer Gareth Pugh. (www.deitch.com)



A snowy egret by Charley Harper

Todd Oldham compiles the life and six-decade career of one of his design inspirations, illustrator Charley Harper, in the bold new book *Charley Harper—An Illustrated Life*, available now from AMMO Books. (www.ammobooks.com)

The '60s-influenced, peppy soul sound of Liverpool songstress Candie Payne's album, *I Wish I Could Have Loved You More*, is just the right balance of sultry blues and retro harmonies. Imagine Dusty Springfield crossed with Portishead, and you've got a soundtrack for low-key lounging or late-night rousing. (www.candiepayne.com)

Visit the new SoHo outpost of the Park Slope design shop **Matter**, where exclusive modern collections from Established & Sons (with Zaha Hadid) and Thorsten van Elten mingle in a sleek and inviting space. (405 Broome St., 212.343.2600, www.mattermatters.com)



Across the Universe

Travel back to a 1960s Greenwich Village in director Julie Taymor's movie musical *Across the Universe*, with music courtesy of the Beatles, opening September 21. (www.acrosstheuniverse.com)

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WARY MEYERS DECORATIVE ARTS (PLATE, PORTRAIT, WINDOW DISPLAY), CHARLEY HARPER (COURTESY OF AMMO BOOKS) (ILLUSTRATION), ABBOTT GENSER/REVOLUTION STUDIOS DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LLC (ACROSS THE UNIVERSE)