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Oren Sherman, product designer and senior team member at Elkus Manfredi Architects in Boston, is a self-proclaimed “pattern geek,” appreciating the visuals of classic designs and an expert in translating them into looks that are more popular for today’s user. One of his most recent creations, BLOKWERK, is a customized Brintons Axminster carpet collection that honors the De Stijl movement. De Stijl played a significant role in the evolution of graphic design, and 100 years later continues to be a major influence on designers and architects worldwide.

In converting his design inspiration to carpet, Sherman knew he wanted to create an Axminster collection. “The colors are amazing,” he said. “The articulation and designs are amazing. I knew if I was going to do a carpet collection it would be on Axminster. At the [Brintons] factory, I saw people who worked there for multi-generations, and there was a combination of craft and technology. Everybody really cared about what they did, no matter where on the assembly line. I was so moved by it.”

Sherman noted that he is not a carpet designer by trade, but likes “to work within the confines of a design problem.” The “problem,” or challenge, at hand? An Axminster collection for hospitality corridors. “We design a lot of corridors at Manfredi, so I know it’s hard to really activate a transitional space; repeats tend to be really short. I wanted to do extraordinarily long repeats, [around] 40 to 60 feet. I threw out the idea of color block in a causal conversation, and the designer said it would be perfect for corridors.”

From there, BLOKWERK was born. Selections from the line can be cut and rearranged in varied layouts and combinations. Overall, BLOKWERK offers a practical solution to waste management and meets the needs of the contemporary designer.

It is the secret of art to improve on nature. It is the **purpose of design to improve** on industry.  
—Voltaire

Oren Sherman, designer of Brintons’ BLOKWERK collection, has a personal connection to the De Stijl movement, which helped shape graphic design and influenced mid-century architects around the world. “It was the system of organization [of De Stijl] that moved from textiles, to painting, to furniture, fashion, and architecture,” he said. “I love ‘movements’ that sweep the design world, a historically rare series of events that has everything to do with sociology, politics, production innovations, and original thought.” He traveled to Berlin during a celebration of the anniversary of the De Stijl movement and was particularly inspired by his visit to the Hansaviertel district, which is home

to architecture built in the 1950s. “Everything there is the era I love, mid-century modern, and a lot of the buildings had kind of a color-block ornament on the exteriors. Form follows function equals ornament. That was the ‘a ha’ moment. Things that are beautiful in structure, but also in ornament.”

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