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MEET THE DESIGNER



Erica Moses



IT'S NO WONDER NEST STUDIO pillows feature vibrant colors: Their creator, Erica Moses, is a native of Brazil. After moving to Connecticut to marry an American, she owned two successful local retail stores (Benetton and New Frontier), re-created herself as an elementary-school teacher, and then launched Nest while raising three children.

How did a personal setback lead to the creation of Nest? After my second husband died young of a brain aneurysm, I was devastated. In control in the classroom, I would come home and completely fall apart. I needed something to make life happier and decided to explore textiles.

But it wasn't the first time you gravitated to textiles. In Rio, women wear bright colorful *canga* cover-ups to the beach. As a teenager, I owned several and scattered them around. I loved the way they looked draped on the bed or knotted to cover the pillows in my room. When I went home to visit my family, I had a flashback and brought some back to West Hartford. I hadn't been able to walk through my husband's office without grieving, and I used the *cangas* to transform this sad place into a happy space that would inspire me.

How did that evolve into a business? A few girlfriends helped me empty the space and paint the dark blue walls white. I bought a sewing machine, went to Ikea for a table, and soon I had the pillows. It was so uplifting, almost like a spiritual experience. And I started selling them to my girlfriends.

How do you get the fabrics? I've always loved traveling and, being a teacher, I have the whole summer off. I research before I go and find markets with cloth and textiles. At many outdoor markets, you can buy right on the street. In Paris, I found a beautiful print, paisleys and little flowers. Portugal has a lot of red and orange; in Japan, blue and white *shibori*. I bring them home, wash them and cut them. Cutting is a real process because you have to be really

respectful and thoughtful in order not to compromise the design.

What draws you to vivid colors? I often tell my young students how sad it would be if everything were just black and white. I was born in 1960, the generation when we only had black and white television. One day in the '70s, there was color, and I was just hypnotized. The world is so beautiful in color.

Aren't muted palettes easier to work with? The soothing tones are peaceful, but not terribly exciting. The moment you mix in a few colorful pillows, that pop of color lifts your spirits. You have to start thinking outside the box, and before you know it, you've introduced color to your life.

If the world were confined to only one color, what would you choose? Blue, the color of the ocean and the sky. It's the color I relate to the most because of my childhood growing up near the sea and the sky.

—Sharon King Hoge



Bright Idea Initially inspired by colorful beach wraps, Erica Moses creates one-of-a-kind pillows that showcase fabrics collected on travels around the world. See *Resources*.



LIZ CALVI