*Faye Toogood and her sister Erica have created a multi-disciplinary design studio that translates their personal passions and experiences into craft-focused products.*

"Because I didn't train in design, there are no rules," Faye Toogood, the founding creative force behind Toogood designs, told The Journal. Liberated from the rigidity of tradition, Faye has developed a soaring multidisciplinary practice that seamlessly moves between furniture, interiors, objects, and, working alongside her sister Erica, a clothing line.

Just over a decade of practice, the Toogood studio has already become iconic for its bold minimalism. As at home in a Spanish villa as in a sparse Nordic gallery, Toogood designs are distinctly British and intimate, with a global appeal. During the past few years of museum acquisitions, awards, and installations, they have remained a small studio predicated on craft.



Gathered in the cozy rooms of the Toogood studio, a former Victorian townhouse in East London, architects, artists, furniture designers, and pattern makers not only share space but a creative energy and approach. Almost despite the ever-growing range of materials – clay, alpaca, jesmonite – used in production, the boundaries between disciplines on their small team are blurred, and each design is imbued with a distinctly Toogood sculptural mark and geological pallet.

Having felt like an outsider in the worlds of design, fashion, and art, Faye created the studio to have a collaborative flow and freedom that bridges these worlds and allows a movement between genres.



Erica Toogood.

Whether it is a whimsical painted wallpaper landscape designed for the Toogood store in Tokyo, a sturdy geometric table cast in concrete, or ominous “volcanic” forms for the Hermes store in Paris, much of the creative output is also hand made. Working with artisans, Faye described, maintains a connection to the original point of creation and the “moment of magic” when the piece was conceived.

Unlike mass-produced items, this inevitable variability adds both a physical and emotional value to their work – one that resonates internationally. Faye described the thrill of seeing their work appreciated all over the globe: “It means that it goes far beyond cultural meaning and it is much more about who we are as human beings.”



Faye Toogood.

A celebration of craftsmanship has been at the core of the Toogood clothing line since Erica and Faye initially partnered. The inspiration, the cut, and the title of each piece is an homage to a trade and invokes a fading era of local craft. *The Roadsweeper* jacket, *The Milkman* tailored shirt, and *The Bricklayer* trousers are a few of the durable yet elegant pieces in their current collection *011*. Harkening to a time when communities were smaller and networks of exchange where not as tangled as today, it tells a story of a globalizing world and a nostalgia for simplicity.

Working in tandem, Faye and Erica describe themselves as “the tinkerer” and “the tailor” – creating looks that one can imagine comfortably sitting in *Roly Poly Chair*, or at a Toogood dining table. The clothing line is also the link to the sisters’ lineage. Sewing alongside their grandmother, a tailor who “made underwear out of parachutes” during the war, is what inspired Erica’s career. This clothing line is one of the many ways the Toogoods work and is an invitation of insight into their world.



In general, Faye is forthcoming about how her personal perspective impacts her work. “I am happy being autobiographical in the way I approach things,” she said. “If there is something I feel is needed in my life, or going on in my life, that will end up in the work. Somehow that imbues in the objects and the space something of me, which allows people to connect to it irrespective of what it is.”

Two years ago she had twin daughters, an event that would dramatically alter anybody’s life. While admittedly demanding and a distraction from some elements of the practice, her children have been a huge source of inspiration. “Having young children is limiting but actually it is when you are reminded of what pure creating is,” Faye said.



In the midst of mothering, she has been building a large collection of maquettes, drawings, and designs using everyday materials such as cardboard, tape and wire that reflect that creative spirit and lightheartedness. While many of the designs have not yet been finalized or shown, her *Doodles* rugs in collaboration with CC Tapis are the first to hint at what is to come. Sketchbook doodles were transformed into bright asymmetrical rugs that feel free, playful, and bold.

Shown in conjunction with Faye's paintings, the textured rugs not only signal a new direction but offer an insight into her creative process. In the coming year, she will launch *Assemblage 6* – an entire collection of textiles and furniture that translates drawings and maquettes created over this past year – with gallery Friedman Benda.

In general, for designers in the United Kingdom, there has been a prolonged state of uncertainty around what the near future will hold. Brexit has rattled many UK industries that rely on their relationship to the European Union and employ staff from outside the UK. Among the many benefits of a union, open borders have meant smooth trade and industry growth. In 2017 the creative industries were growing at two times the national standard.

Many creatives including performers, designers, and artists rely on the assets and relationships the EU provides and have been outspoken against Brexit. For creative studios like the Toogoods, which is 50% EU professionals, this is a real threat to their ability to thrive. “It feels very rigid, this feeling of going back to being an island. It feels lonely and it feels limiting,” Faye lamented. “That is not not a way that I wish to work or wish to live.”



It is a dramatic upheaval with results that are yet to be understood or even decided. Faye’s generation and those younger have lived with a sense of union, an active blurring of boundaries, and open borders counter to the political direction the UK is moving in. Creatives have long been the ambassadors of culture on a global stage and as representatives of British design, the Toogood studio has a complex relationship to its home country. “It's [...] a kind of disillusionment, a sense of isolation. It's not something that personally I'm very proud of,” Faye said.

While political changes may hold uncertainty, they will not derail Faye's will to create. "As a designer it's a relentless pursuit within you," she said. "The power of a designer is to question and solve problems but also to pose questions [...] and reveal as much as they solve." As the studio continues to expand the limits of their practice, it sets an example for others to have expansive, personal practices. This coming year promises a range of exciting work.

