

# INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 9

tuck right in



THE SMALL MILL IN THE MEXICAN desert specialized in coarsely woven 100 percent paper yarns, mostly for making cowboy hats and laundry hampers. But textile

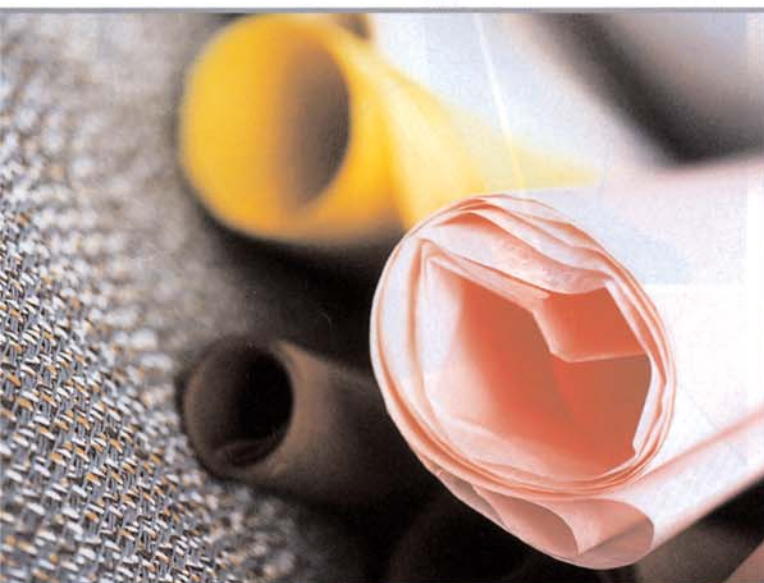
## Down Mexico Way

To produce wall coverings for KnollTextiles, Elizabeth Whelan heads south of the border

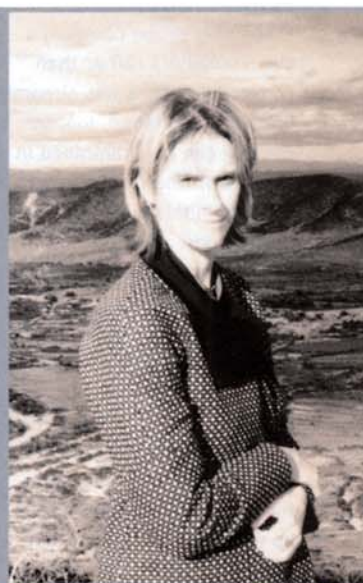
designer Elizabeth Whelan, who discovered the facility four years ago, knew it had the capacity for finer things. After selling KnollTextiles on the idea of developing a line of woven-paper wall coverings in Mexico, she approached the mill owner about fine-tuning the manufacturing sequence there accordingly.

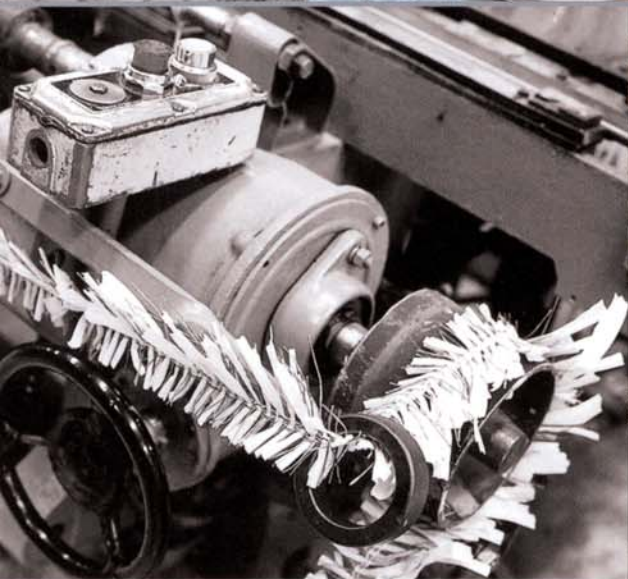
Her innovative Woodland wall

coverings start out as rolls of colored paper similar in weight to the pages of a telephone book. [The rolls are virgin North American stock, since recycled fibers aren't particularly strong.] A machine rather like a bread slicer cuts through the rolls to produce rounds that Whelan calls pancakes. After each pancake is unrolled, a throstle →



*From left: The product starts as tissue-thin paper. Elizabeth Whelan developed the yarn process for the Woodland line. Rolls of paper are sliced into rounds of ribbon. The paper ribbons get twisted into yarn. Bobbins on a spool rack store the finished yarn. The yarn flies across the factory floor, from the bobbins to the warp beam and the loom.*





*From left: Holes in the metal warp guide organize the paper yarn en route. Workers secure individual yarns to vertical ones already on the loom. After weft yarn has been woven in, blades trim the selvage. Finished fabric rolls off the loom, ready for backing.*



*From left: KnollTextiles Woodland wall coverings originate in the Mexican desert. Looms flank the production floor. The finished product comes in two patterns and 11 colorways. Paper yarn preps the loom.*



twists the ribbon into a single-ply paper yarn in off-white, brown, rust, and blue, among other choices. Some of these yarns remain single-ply; others are twined together as a double-ply yarn in contrasting color combinations.

To ready the looms for production, mill workers run single-ply yarns from myriad bobbins, through a matrix of holes that keep everything organized. Even-

tually, the strands find their way to the loom's horizontal warp beam. Wound side by side on the beam, they're ready to unspool as the wall covering's vertical structure. The mottled effect of the double-ply yarns, running horizontally, adds depth to the tight weave.

At the end of the process, a coating similar to watered-down white glue locks the yarns in place for durability, ease of

seaming, and stain resistance. And KnollTextiles gets a 50-yard roll, 54 inches wide.

Working with paper challenged Whelan. Still, she says, "I was ready to let the material teach me something." It was the Mexican workers who unexpectedly taught her a lesson about staying loose. In the desert, she explains, "Everything gets done to the rhythm of nature."

—Craig Kellogg