

# Creators of the Côte d'Azur : using fabrics to fashion art



*Artisans have been embellishing our daily lives for thousands of years. Skilled craftsmen with an artistic eye, they have designed and decorated everything from an exquisite bowl to grandiose château furniture. And the legacy of creative craftsmanship still flourishes on the Côte d'Azur.*

Text and photos by Inger Holland

Three of the Riviera's artisans have chosen to work with fabrics, each in a highly individualized style. You might want to pay them a visit. Master craftsmen, they have transformed their craft into a fine art.

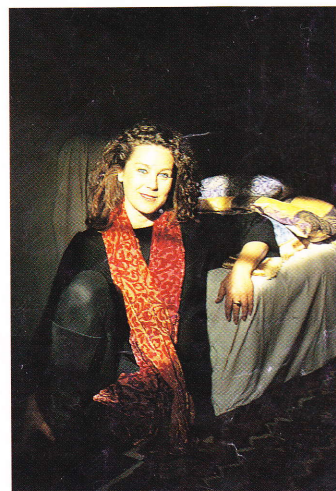
#### VELVET AND SILK

On the days when Josefina Gordh dyes her fabrics, she walks down from her old stone mill-house to the River Cagnes far below the sheer cliffs of the village of St Jeannet. To rinse the colours just dyed into her latest batch of cloth, she stands barefoot on a high rock in the middle of the swirling water, dipping a couple of metres of fabric from each hand into the rushing current. When it's very cold, of course, she wears rubber boots. "What a relief it is!" she says. "Going from a steaming kitchen to the cool water."

Josefina is an artist of silk and velvet fabrics. She dyes the virgin white cloths she buys from India, China and Paris in her kitchen, in tubs and pots of steamy hot water. "I re-dip them many times to obtain a variety of hues, sometimes with an antique appearance." Once coloured, she prints them in gold and silver, mostly with motifs from nature: animals, plants or cosmic energy. Her lilac silks portray lions, pyramids and feathers. "The feathers are a symbol of Maat, an Egyptian goddess," says Josefina. "She holds a pair of scales, one side weighing a

feather, the other a heart. If your heart is as light as a feather, you are pure." Other prints include hares (their long ears are symbols of wisdom heard on the wind) and tortoises (who travel through deep consciousness).

Josefina was once a fashion designer but, with time, realized it was fabrics she really loved. Uncut fabrics which could create a whole environment. "I can use a length of cloth as a shawl to go out, then come home and drape it over a chair. It is still with me." Josefina's crushed velvet scarves have become immensely popular. Why? "They're addictive," she says. "When you wear them round your neck, they are like a permanent hug."



For home decorating, scarves or info: call Josefina on 04.92.11.05.55.