

# inLA



Photo: © Justin Ellis

Above:  
Katy Polsby with  
CW Stockwell's  
Martinique pattern.

Right:  
The relaunch of the  
brand revives historic  
patterns and adds  
new variations.



## LEGENDS OF THE WALL

In the 1940s, when renowned architect Paul Williams commissioned the Hollywood costumer-turned-interior-designer Don Loper to help renovate the Beverly Hills Hotel, Loper installed Martinique wallpaper—the iconic banana-leaf pattern that's synonymous with Los Angeles and one of the most recognizable wallpaper patterns ever produced. Today Martinique is still a touchstone of the Los Angeles-based company CW Stockwell, which has been around since 1905, when Clifton W. Stockwell, a pharmacist from Ohio, moved to Pasadena and started a wallpaper business. Yet Martinique is just one of many designs CW Stockwell produced that appeared frequently in ads in *Architectural Digest* in the 1940s and in the homes of movie moguls like David O. Selznick and actors like Gregory Peck and were used by architects and designers like Roland Coates and Arthur Elrod.

Lucille and Remy Chastain (Lucille was Stockwell's daughter) took over the company in the 1930s, and CW Stockwell was eventually passed on to the Chastains' son, Remy Jr., who had joined the family business in 1950. Over the last few decades the company quietly streamlined its production, and when Remy Jr. died in 2013 without children (he never married), the future of the company looked precarious. That's when Chastain's dear friend Jill Polsby purchased the company to keep his legacy alive. "I knew it was crazy, but I also knew I had to do it," she says. "I didn't realize it at the time, but I think Remy had always been grooming me. He was a sneaky devil."

Polsby's daughter, Katy Polsby, has recently taken the reins of CW Stockwell as CEO. Her goal: revitalize the brand and capitalize on its vast library, which includes gems like a collection of Japanese textile designs the Chastains acquired in 1930s and patterns hand-drawn by Remy. Her journey has been part detective work (scouring the haphazardly organized company archives and Remy's collection of old magazines and photographs) as well as art directing the brand relaunch to shepherd it into a new era.



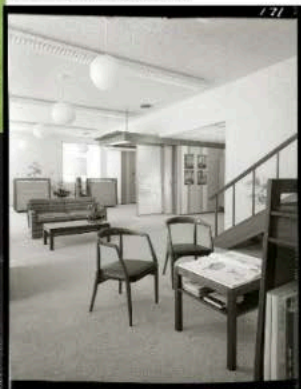
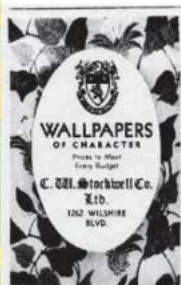
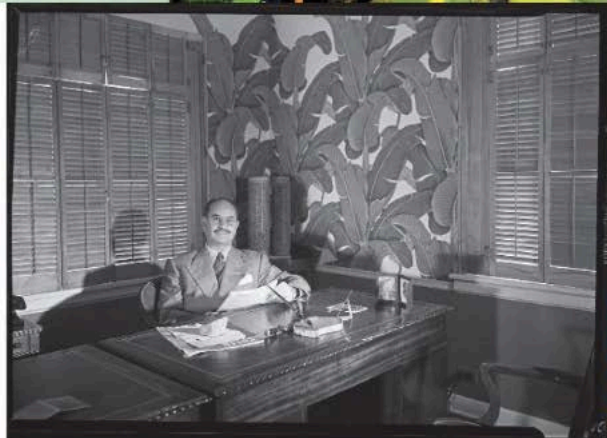
Top and top right:  
Original drawings and  
ephemera from the CW  
Stockwell archives.

Right:  
Remy Chastain, Sr.,  
took over from founder  
Clifton Stockwell in  
the 1930s.

Far right, middle:  
The CW Stockwell  
showroom on Wilshire  
Blvd. in the 1960s.

Far right and bottom right:  
Polsby oversees the  
printing process in  
Los Angeles.

Archival images: Maynard L. Parker,  
Courtesy of the Huntington Library,  
San Marino, California



Polsby, a veteran of West Elm and Serena and Lily, is well equipped for the challenge. The current revival of wallpaper coupled with the brand DNA makes her job a little easier. “The Chastains never had the feeling that anything was too precious,” she says. “They were selling an elegant handmade product, but they were never haughty about it. There was a spirit of innovation and just having fun with design.”

The Chastains’ emphasis on risk-taking—an irreverence in color combinations and patterns—has given Polsby license to play. She’s still producing the line in Los Angeles using a hand-printing process, and her first collection offers 14 new wallpaper and textile designs that include both large-scale patterns and smaller

geometrics intended to be used together to create layered, colorful palettes. Martinique is still in production, of course, but Polsby has introduced new colorways. The collection is available through the Harbinger showroom in Los Angeles.

“It’s a delicate balance to relaunch such an iconic brand,” Polsby observes. “You need to make sure you honor its heritage but not be too beholden to it.” But what would Remy think? “I think this was his plan all along,” says Jill Polsby. “He would be beside himself with joy that what he and his family created over the past one hundred years lives on.” —*Stacie Stakin*

[www.stockwell.com](http://www.stockwell.com) [harbinger.com](http://www.harbinger.com)

