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"I know this sounds really corny, but there is something about being in this town and smelling the salt air that gets into your soul," interior designer Rose Ott says about Long Beach.

ON THE COVER Ott sketches the Long Beach clock for her wallpaper.

NEWSDAY / KENDALL RODRIGUEZ

LONG BEACH-inspired

Designer Rose Ott creates textiles that evoke the City by the Sea

BY ANNE BRATSKER
Special to Newsday

You don't have to be from Long Beach to delight in an airy new toile wallpaper and fabric collection that has recently come to the marketplace. But, take one close look at this design and certainly residents of the seaside town will instantly recognize some of the city's cherished landmarks and scenes including the iconic boardwalk teeming with bicycles, the famed bandshell, the timeless town clock and

even the "Welcome to Long Beach" sign that greets visitors.

The new line, dubbed LB Soul, is the handiwork of veteran interior designer Rose Ott, 58, who moved to town four years ago from Merrick. "It's been such an incredible experience. I was so inspired that I started drawing and that led me to this," she says. It wasn't an instantaneous process. "It took me two years," explains Ott. "I've always loved toile throughout my career, and I wanted the pattern to be right. A lot of thought went into it. I would sit on the boardwalk sketching and think, how do

I create a cohesive pattern for this beautiful life I have now."

NO REGRETS ON MOVE

While creating the design took time, its name came easily to Ott. "I know this sounds really corny, but there is something about being in this town and smelling the salt air that gets into your soul. There are so many people who return here and stay because of just that — it's in their soul." And she has no regrets when it comes to her move to Long Beach. "It's the best thing we ever did."

Non-designer types may wonder, what exactly is toile? It refers to a patterned fabric that features intricate motifs. It was developed centuries ago in Europe, and is often considered an integral part of traditional décor, though Ott's work — done up in deep navy with a white background — is anything but fussy and could just as easily feel at home in more contemporary settings.

For Ott, the launch of "a fabric and wallpaper collection has always been a dream of mine. My creative endeavors are fueled by the beauty of this vibrant city, which is why I was driven to craft



CTK PHOTOS / CHRISTINA KRAMER

Some of Rose Ott's Long Beach-inspired toile wallpaper can be seen on the wall above.

something truly expressing my love of this community." Other elements worked into the LB Soul tableau — which is sold online — include frolicking dolphins, seaplanes, beach chairs and umbrellas, seashells, wispy clouds and even a rendering of what she calls "the pink hotel," which, once known as the Lido Club Hotel, is located in Long Beach's neighboring Lido Beach.

DIFFERENT OPTIONS

There are many iterations of the wallpaper in different finishes and textures, including peel-and-stick (\$129 per roll); natural grass cloth (\$549 per roll); and pebbled (\$279 per roll). In the fabric department, find the patterns on Belgian Linen, chiffon and even denim to name a few variations, starting at about \$29 a yard. If using LB Soul on your walls or drapes feels a tad over the top but you'd like a touch of Long Beach here and there, consider the throw blankets (\$139), pillows (\$69), sheet sets (\$159.20), tablecloths (\$129) or place mats (\$44) all emblazoned with the pattern. For those who wish to keep Long Beach even closer to their heart, there's a silky bathrobe (\$140).

For Jeanine Price, 56, of East Moriches, that bathrobe was the perfect gift for her sister, a longtime Long Beach resident who she says "absolutely loved it. She was like, 'Oh, my gosh, where did you find this?'" Price, whose background is in design, is helping her sister renovate her house and is debating whether to use the wallpaper in the bathroom or the office. "It's probably going to be the bathroom. It's what Long Beach is all about, with all these landmarks that make it really personal to someone like my sister who lives there and is a rooted part of the community."

LB Soul collection, spoonflower.com

A design that really sticks

LI teen takes runner-up prize for duct tape prom dress

BY BETH WHITEHOUSE

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It took 34 rolls of duct tape to create the butterfly-themed prom dress that Jessica Ong of Great Neck entered in a competition to win a \$15,000 college scholarship. The 17-year-old's piece was chosen as one of five dress finalists in the Ohio-based Duck Tape brand's 24th annual Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest; the grand prize winner, determined by two weeks of online voting at stuckatprom.com, was announced on Wednesday.

While she didn't grab the big money, Ong, a rising senior at Great Neck North High School, did win a \$1,000 runner-up prize for the elaborate dress with wings that honors her Malaysian grandmother, who died in March at age 95. She spent close to 100 hours creating the dress using dark blue, teal, white, gold and black tape.

"I wanted to represent my grandmother's grace and beauty," Ong says of her paternal grandmother, whom she would visit in Malaysia. "Every time I was there, she was always very positive. She had a good energy." In many cultures, the butterfly symbolizes love and life, Ong says.

Monica Walsh, of Dryden, Ontario, won the grand prize for her colorful dress inspired by the Brazilian artist Romero Britto. The contest also included a tuxedo category, and that grand prize was taken by Isaac Cervantes, of Pilot Point, Texas, whose creation is reminiscent of a mariachi suit and includes a duct tape sombrero.

IF AT FIRST ...

This is the second year Ong entered the competition. Ong's entry last year, she says, was "way too simple"; she used only red and white tape and created flowers. When she saw the finalists in 2023, she knew she had to aim higher and try again to succeed, she says.

She was motivated, she says, by her love of arts and crafts and fashion, and also by the opportunity to win money for col-

lege. She doesn't yet have specific college plans; she'll be applying in the fall.

"It's a bit unfortunate," Ong says of not taking the top prize, "but it was a great experience overall." Ong says she's enjoyed the media coverage on television and in area newspapers.

Her quest began with her sketching out a design on her iPad. Then she worked after school and on weekends in the family living room, using a mannequin, skirt frame and plastic wrap to form the skeleton of the dress, with the duct tape as the

"fabric." "It was a lot of trial and error," she says. "You get a lot of air bubbles and wrinkles. You just have to be really careful."

SURPRISE AT STARBUCKS

Ong says she was at a Starbucks on June 25 waiting to meet a friend to go to the beach when she got an email announcing she was one of the five finalists. "I was just elated," she says, and her first act was to immediately call her parents.

"She worked very hard; I was very impressed," says Ong's mother, Helen Chen, 51, who works in real estate.

Finalists were chosen from 150 entries and judges looked for workmanship, originality, use of color, use of duct tape and use of accessories such as purses or earrings, says Duck Tape spokesperson Caitlyn Ward. Duct tape is typically used for home and car repairs; Duck Tape is a brand of duct tape.

VYING FOR VOTES

Online voting took place through July 10 to determine the grand prize winners in the dress and tuxedo categories. Ong says her friends and family here posted on social media, and that her family in Malaysia spread the message as well. All the runners-up got \$1,000.

Ong attended both junior and senior prom this year, but she didn't wear the dress. Duck Tape dropped that requirement from the contest several years ago, Ward says, because the costumes can be heavy and warm to dance in.

For now, Ong's dress is folded in her living room. She plans to send it to the Duck Tape headquarters, and she says she hopes the company will display it with other 2024 finalists there.

Will she enter again next school year? "We'll see how senior year goes," she says.

Jessica Ong, a rising senior at Great Neck North High School, created this prom dress using Duck Tape brand duct tape for its Stuck at Prom Scholarship Contest.



DUCK TAPE