

BOAT

International

design report



A FABRIC FOR ALL SEASONS

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24 page special: how to develop your own ideas and choose the best materials, plus the designers leading the way in sustainable style

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Sustainable style

Visionnaire's art director Eleonore Cavalli tells *Emily Stefania Cosciane* about the brand's green approach and, overleaf, we select four stylish design houses leading the way in environmentally friendly interiors



For Eleonore Cavalli of Italian luxury brand Visionnaire, the handcrafted pieces in her new furniture collection are more than beautiful objects; she describes them as "functional tools working towards a whole new eco-friendly lifestyle".

The Greenery collection was launched at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, and the furniture reflects a greater use of natural materials. Hero pieces include the outdoor sofa Greenlife, by Maurizio Manzoni and Roberto Tapinassi, in wood and weather-resistant leather; the indoor sofa Bastian, by Mauro Lipparini, the fine details of which reference handcrafted saddlery; and the Harmony bathroom console in marble by Alessandro La Spada.

"When we ask our customers what luxury

means to them, the most common response is to be able to enjoy a green space," says Cavalli. "It is not just about owning expensive products. Being in contact with nature brings positive energy, so we have created a 'green heart', an intimate space that brings nature inside every home."

The collection is the start of what she refers to as Visionnaire's "Green Re Evolution", a new sustainability programme that will ensure the company creates as low an environmental impact as possible. "We are working towards becoming eco-friendly at all levels, in the production as well as the packaging and delivery processes," Cavalli explains.

"We choose materials whose provenance is known and certified, so that they do not release toxic substances." This means that the wood used in upholstery frames comes from plantations where trees are cut only when they reach a certain age. The leather is free from chemical additives and the rubber is vegetal based. Visionnaire also uses natural materials such as jute (to replace elastic straps used in suspension systems) and cushions are

Above: the eco-friendly Convention range was designed by Giuseppe Viganò to complement natural green spaces, enjoyment of which Cavalli, below, believes is the essence of luxury

"WE HAVE CREATED AN INTIMATE SPACE THAT BRINGS NATURE INSIDE EVERY HOME"



filled with hemp or wool rather than feathers. Cavalli stresses that these ethical choices are made according to the values established by three generations of the Cavalli family, starting with Vittorio, Eleonore's grandfather, who co-founded the design company IPE with his brother Pompeo in 1959.

Craftsmanship is still at the heart of the Visionnaire business and the brand collaborates with an army of small family-run manufacturers spread across Italy. Cavalli explains that from its launch 13 years ago the company has selected each artisan according to the particular project, resulting in pieces that are reproducible and yet handmade and unique. "It is a very flexible, healthy approach, which helps smaller companies and ensures high levels of quality," she says proudly.

Cavalli confesses that Visionnaire's green, ethical approach results in a complicated business model with high costs and complex logistics, but it has also managed to create a working structure. She hopes that others in the design industry will follow its lead. "The potential is enormous," says Cavalli. ■

Far left: each of Alessandro La Spada's Swanson lights comprises seven hand-blown glass lamps. Below: Steve Leung's Princess bed, finished here in green leather



Eco-chic: editor's picks

1

Oliveri Home's beautiful Italian-designed bed linen is made from 100 per cent organic cotton, which is free from chemicals and entirely ethical in its production processes. Its suppliers use less water in their farming systems and focus on maintaining and replenishing soil fertility without using toxic pesticides and fertilisers that are harmful to the environment and can remain trapped between threads long after manufacture. The entirely chemical-free nature of its cotton is the reason Oliveri's range of bedding for babies' cribs is particularly popular. oliverihome.com



2



Textile manufacturer Kvadrat has joined forces with Danish start-up Really to launch the Solid Textile Board, which it hopes will be a breakthrough in sustainable design. Made from recycled end-of-life fabrics, mostly cotton and wool, the textiles are granulated into smaller fibres, bound using steam machinery and flat-pressed to become hardboard. The process uses no dyes, water or toxic chemicals and creates recyclable waste. Available in four colours, the material is sturdy enough to be used as a substitute for wood as well as composites in furniture and architectural design. kvadrat.dk

3

StudioArt produces bespoke leather furnishings and accessories for projects on land, at sea and in the air, but ensures that energy and material waste are kept to a minimum in the process. For instance, any excess leather from larger projects is used to make smaller items, including

mouse pads, luggage tags and business card holders. A recycling system saves 70 per cent of the water it uses during the tannery production process and photovoltaic solar panels and heat-fuelled energy systems ensure that the company is almost fully autonomous when it comes to electricity consumption in its factories. studioart.it



4



Bed-maker to The Savoy hotel in London, Savoir Beds has launched an edition of its No 1 design with a unique and sustainable spin. Working with British yarn specialists Tengri, the Savoir No 1 Khangai includes 8kg of yak fibres, hand combed from semi-wild yaks in the Khangai region of Mongolia, in its mattress and topper. Yak fibre is said to be softer than cashmere, warmer than merino wool and naturally water and odour resistant. The bed is limited to 50 editions, with prices starting at £70,525. For each purchase, £500 will be donated to the Wildlife Conservation Society to undertake conservation outreach and research in Mongolia. savoirdesigns.co.uk