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WALL ART

Leather specialist Studioart celebrates 10 years of reimagining interiors and putting leather on walls, writes STEPHANIE IP

HOW DO WE dress-up walls? There's the usual vibrant wallpaper and art pieces and paintings, and then there's the unusual: leather tiles.

Such material is the work of young company Studioart Leather Interiors, founded by brother and sister duo Nadia and Gianfranco Dalle Mese. Studioart is just 10 years old but its understanding of leather runs to decades. Their father, Giuseppe Dalle Mese, founded the Montebello leather tannery more than 50 years ago and it has since become the go-to provider for leading brands such as Dior and Chanel.

Studioart has a focus that is less about fashion and more on design. When Nadia and Gianfranco took over the family business, they toyed with the idea of establishing an offshoot to focus on design.

"Everything started when my uncle had to restore my grandfather's house," says creative director Massimo Brancati, Nadia's son. "He wanted a television room with tiles made of leather. Together with my mother, they worked out a way to put the leather on the wall. That was the first prototype."

Leather walls immediately bring a room to life and their versatility meant Nadia and Gianfranco Dalle Mese quickly identified a business opportunity. "You can also imagine, we have two collections per year and for each collection there's probably 50 types of leather," says Brancati. The possibilities to create different patterns were nearly endless.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, Brancati released the Anniversary Collection not only to pay tribute to the company's rich heritage but also to mark a turning point for Studioart. "The idea was to change our point of view," says Brancati. "So we chose to collaborate with other designers as well."

Brancati designed the first three leather tiles. The design for Kaleido takes its inspiration from the archives. "I'm working in



Clockwise from left: Massimo Brancati; Losange tiles by Giorgia Zanellato; Semitondo also by Zanellato; Parallel by Elaine Yan Ling Ng



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the company, so I'm also trying to maintain something we have and reuse two shapes that we have; the triangle and the square." Brancati combines the shapes in unusual patterns to add his own twist. In Woods, he combines padded and flat surfaces to explore the three-dimensionality of the tiles. The effect is subtle and beautiful, mimicking the geometric structures of wooden staves. In Frammenti, Brancati mixes and matches six different shapes in a juxtaposition of irregularity and uniformity.

The second collection is designed by Giorgia Zanellato. "She is an Italian designer based in Venice and she normally works with fabric," says Brancati. "You can see the different background of the designer in the final product. She loved stitching, for example."

Zanellato's collection includes Losange, rhombus-shaped tiles where the stitching flows onto the padded surface of the leather tiles. In Ginko, Zanellato creates padded and flat tiles shaped like ginkgo leaves. Semitondo also contrasts padded and flat tiles, and reflects the designer's passion for geometric shapes.

Hong Kong-based artist Elaine Yan Ling Ng was also invited to collaborate on the Anniversary Collection. "She's more into product design, like objects and installations. I think she did some projects with Swarovski. She also has a very colourful palette," says Brancati.

Nature informs Ng's collection and she has married topology with Studioart's DNA to create tiles that are natural and engineered. Hyperreal, Delta, Vector and Parallel are the end results, and the tiles come in eclectic shapes that can be pieced together in unusual patterns and colours, allowing the customers' imaginations to run free. Studioart's leather tiles can be purchased exclusively at Atfield Interiors in Hong Kong. #