

The Story of Bolon

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Mom and Dad, it all starts with you. This book - about us, about the goings-on at Bolon - you are the very reason why it came about. Without you, without what you created, without your groundwork...no Bolon in its present form. Every single day we take pride in managing the company in your spirit - we love you so much!

And without our fabulous co-workers and friends at Bolon we could never have achieved what we have achieved, we would not be where we find ourselves today. You are - truly - our heroes!

To our design and architect friends: It has been inspiring - and a privilege - getting to know you and working side by side to bring our projects to life.

Simon, Tor and Michele, thank you for your dedication, for your ambition, and for making our book so beautiful. Your commitment to this project warms our hearts.

Tobias, it was our wish to make our story a visual one, and you made it come true. For an entire year, now, you have been our family's embedded photographer, you have captured every mood and every moment. We all adore the images you create. Thank you!

Linn, Max and Liv, Bolon runs through your veins since birth, just like it did through ours. Looking at you, are we looking at the 4th generation of Bolon to be? Since this might well be the case we present you, respectfully, this narrative with a beginning, but no end. Welcome to The Story of Bolon...

Annica

Marie

A black and white photograph showing the word 'BOLON' in large, bold, three-dimensional letters mounted on a light-colored wall. The letters are positioned in the upper half of the frame. Below the wall is a dark, horizontal band, possibly a window or a decorative element, and a paved area with a white diagonal line in the foreground.



The Beginning...

It must have happened like this:

A handsome man wearing a stained and ill-fitting overall, bearing, some might say, a slight resemblance to Henry Fonda in *The Grapes Of Wrath*, steps out of a small back door in a large brick building. With one hand he shields his eyes from the sun, with the other he digs deep in a waist pocket.

It is the spring of 1949. The winter in Stockholm has been exceptionally mild and excited birds make chase among the rows of linden trees that have sprouted their greenery earlier than usual.

The young man in the overall takes a few leisurely steps across the gravel yard, leans against a low fence and lights a cigar. Looking down over his cupped hands, something on the other side of the fence catches his attention:

Twisted, discarded threads of nylon and cotton spill out of waste bins and litter the ground, forming tangled patterns. These are times of post-war shortages and the man in the overall finds the waste unusual - but there is also something else, something at the back of his mind that tells him to take a closer look, not to let it pass, not quite yet. A suspicion.

He stoops down over the fence and picks up a fistful of fibres, oblivious to the sting from tobacco smoke in his eyes. He scrutinizes his discovery.

Between thumb and forefinger he explores the suppleness of the strips of cotton and the springy resistance of the nylon. He twirls the cotton and nylon strands with both hands, forming them into an intertwined length of supple fibres. He tugs at it. Once. Twice. It doesn't give.

With his strong fingers he braids a simple pattern. The shadow of a smile crosses his face.

He looks at the rows of waste bins, all of them overflowing. He looks at the strands of cotton and nylon in the palm of his calloused left hand. He looks up at the blue sky.

He stands and stares dreamily, uncaring that the cigar in his mouth has long since gone out.

Two generations later the creative journey continues. Today, thanks to the visions and the tenacity of two sisters, grand daughters to the man in overalls, floors from Bolon are walked on by feet belonging to some of the most creative and fickle minds in the world.

This is a story that deserves to be told. Hence *The Story of Bolon*.













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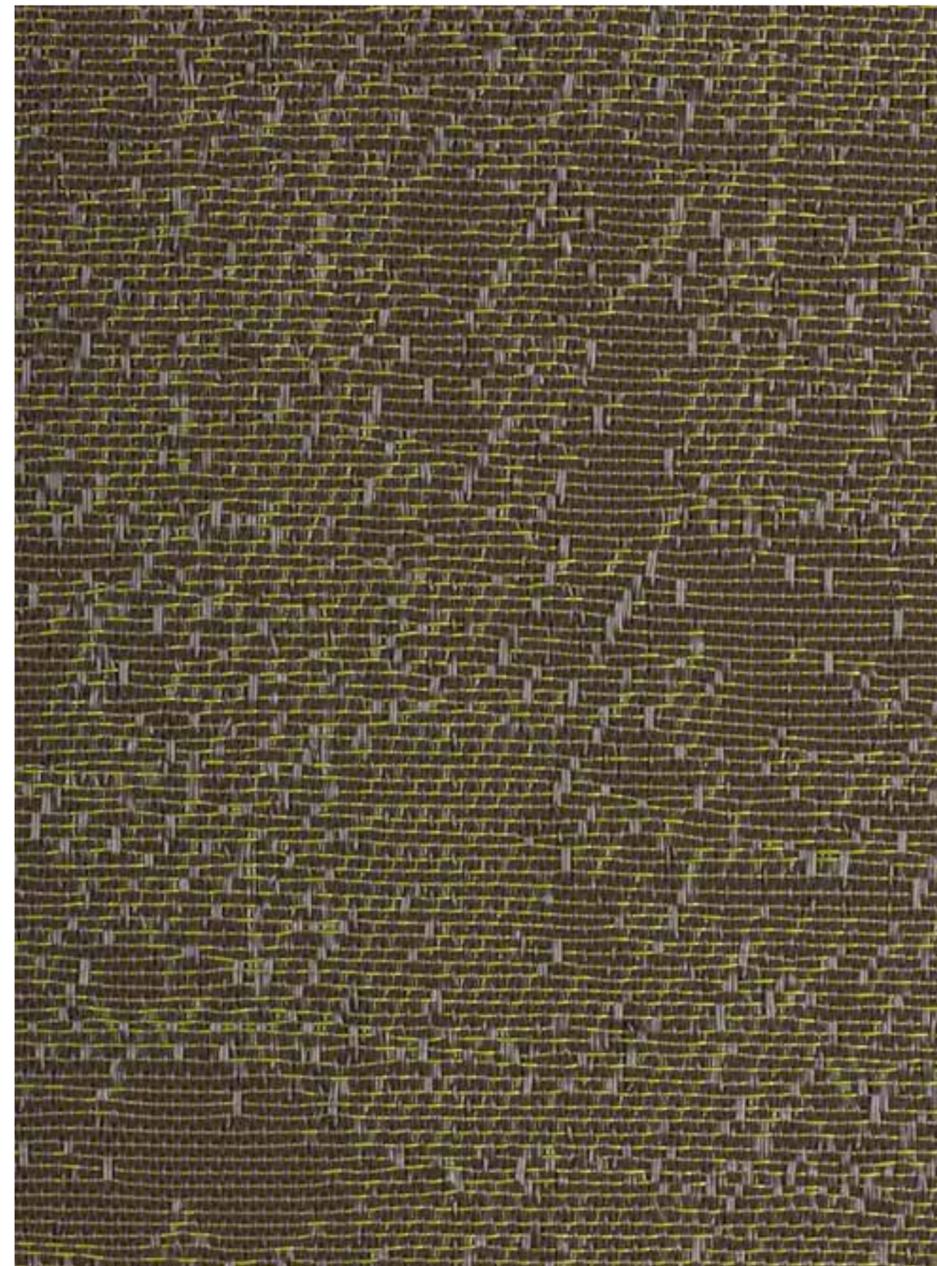






**“Once
you have
visualised
your dream
collaboration,
the rest
is easy.”**

ANNICA EKLUND

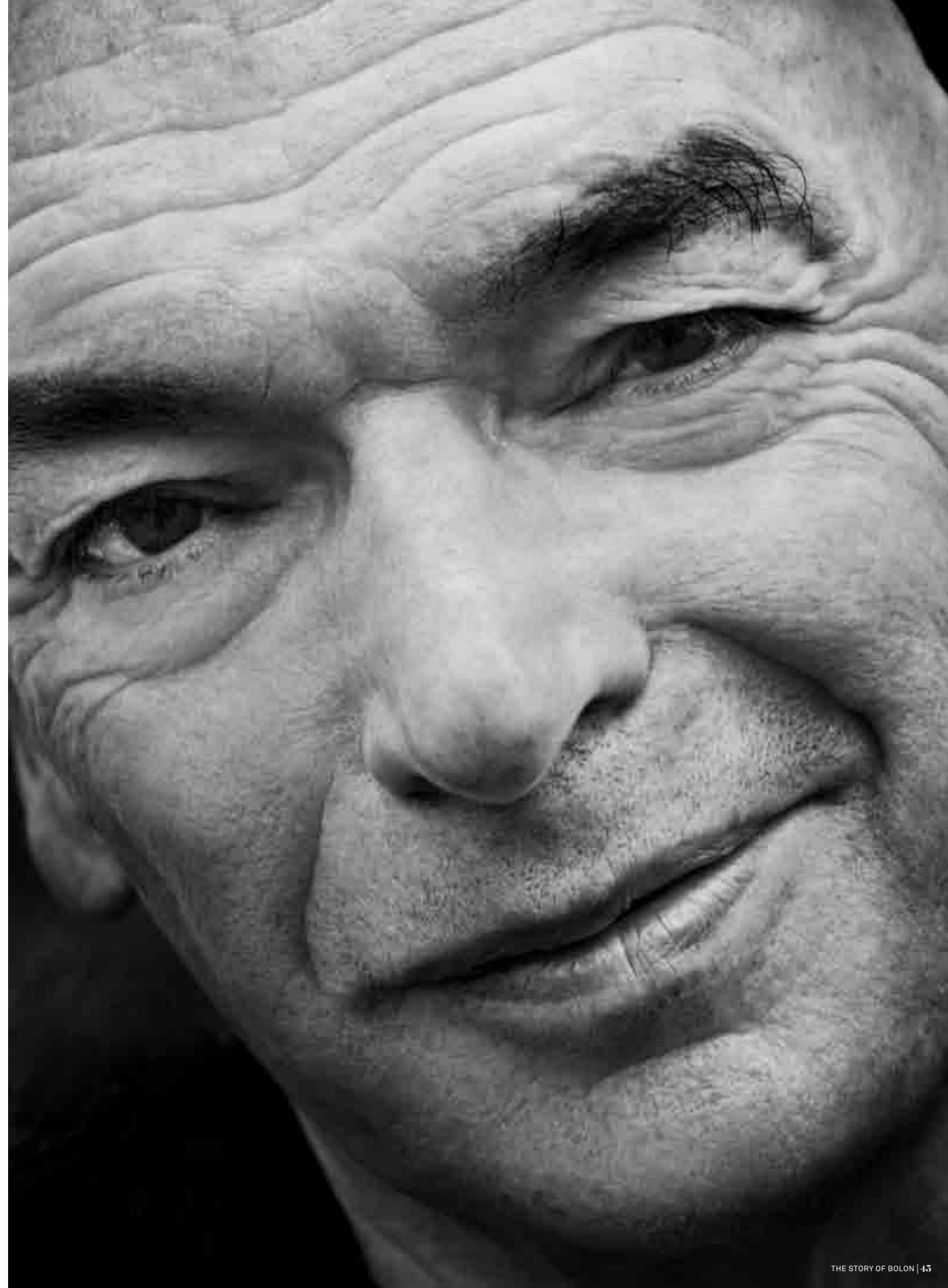


CREATE EFFICIO – THE FIRST COLLECTION TO BE WOVEN WITH OUR JACQUARD WEAVE. WE BOUGHT THE FIRST LOOM IN DECEMBER 2010 AND THE SECOND ONE IN 2011. CUTTING-EDGE ADHESIVE TECHNIQUES MADE IT POSSIBLE TO GLUE THIS FLOOR WITH INVISIBLE SEAMS, DESPITE THE VIVID PATTERNS.



Jean

THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF. ODILE FILLION AND ERNESTO
MISTRETTA ON FRENCH ARCHITECT JEAN NOUVEL.





Jean Nouvel, the French architect renowned for creating buildings that are, variously, bullet-shaped, trippy, muscular, candy-coloured defiant, mysterious and wildly eccentric, always begins a new project in a conventional manner; with a budget, a preliminary sketch and a brief of logistical and practical requirements from the client. He listens. He thinks. Then he lets his imagination take over.

According to Nouvel's former wife and current director of design, concepts, like the zoom-long "green wall" at Paris's Musee du Quai Branly, come "more from his dreams than from drawings."

"He doesn't really draw much at all," explains Odile Filion. "He dreams and thinks. And he needs to be alone to really think."

"There is no set form to his vision," says Ernesto Mistretta, Nouvel's loyal, chef de projets. "Architecture is a way of channelling sensations, just like writing, painting and sculpture. With every project there is a different approach. For Jean, architecture is like a moment or a single frame of a film by one of his favourite directors; Kubrick or Wenders."

"And he likes to sing, you know?" counters Odile. Sing? "Yes, sing!" Nouvel sings in the car and at home in his apartment. Old songs by the classic chanteurs Francais of the 1960s and 70s. "Léo Ferré comes first. But there's also Claude Nougaro, Jacques Brel, Jean René Causimon, Edith Piaf and Charles Trenet," says Odile. "When he has a glass or two of wine, he becomes the singing architect!"

So, ideas for, perhaps, the crazy-coloured, conical tower that is the Torre de Barcelona in Spain or the wafer-thin, silver dorsal edifice of the Dentsu Building in Tokyo, Japan, might appear during the verse of a Piaf song or in the midst of a drowsy reverie. Nouvel's exuberant imagination and famously insatiable urge for experimentation often nurtured from the architect's bed at his second home, next to La Colombe D'Or in Saint Paul de Vence.

"He used to go out a lot at night," continues Odile, wistfully. "Now he works at night. He never stops. Concepts arrive and problems are solved. He prefers writing to drawing. He likes to concentrate on philosophy rather than lines on a page. He looks at newspapers, for inspiration and he is connected to poetry... but always engaged with the modern world too."

Accordingly, Jean Nouvel has very modern, black and reflective Bolon flooring in his Paris Atelier. "He loves this material. We all do," says Odile. "Because it is tough and textured... but also surprisingly soft."

A long-term love affair with carpet and floor coverings led the architect to encounters with Annica and Marie Eklund 'five or six years ago', mostly on the trade fair circuit. Looking for something 'kind, hard-wearing and tactile' he decided to use the Bolon product for the first time in the office areas of the beautiful and provocative Musee Quai Branly, Paris.

Jean Nouvel wanted a material that was impressive when seen from a distance and even more intriguing up close. And hard wearing. "We needed to reflect the design of the building and make a good connection with the textures and materials of the tribal art inside the building," explains Odile. >



**“He doesn’t
really draw
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He dreams
and thinks.”**

ODILE FILLION

Then, in 2012, Annica and Marie officially inducted Jean Nouvel into the extended Bolon family with an invitation to make an installation to show off the company's new line of Create floor coverings at the annual Stockholm Furniture Fair.

"The challenge was, how to create something radical in such a small space?" says Ernesto. "Jean said he couldn't improve on the product. He liked the way the girls had taken something boring and made it modern and fashionable. So he decided to make an installation that would make anyone passing the exhibition stand, stop and stare."

The idea of blurring the boundaries between floor, ceiling and walls was conceived. Inspired by the three-dimensional effects of Bolon's Create coverings, Jean Nouvel decided to use the new material not just as flooring but as the fabric for a compact and contained, 'total universe' of floors; "no walls or ceilings... just floors... a space without gravity".

Nouvel's ambitious desire was for people attending the trade fair to dispense with architectural and structural convention and, instead, immerse themselves in the material, touch it and interact with it. "He even talked about how we could even cover the façade of a building with the material," says Ernesto.

To furnish the Stockholm project with a human touch and a sense of playfulness, he also decided on incorporating mannequins into the scenario; at first, just regular, store-window dummies. Then, in a flash of self-deprecating humour, Nouvel recalled his experience as the subject of Xavier Veilhan's striking collection of famous architects sculptures at the Chateau de Versailles in 2009 (where Veilhan also presented sculptures of Richard Rogers, Sir Norman Foster, Renzo Piano and Tadao Ando) and asked the artist's permission for four, one-off copies to be made.

These were secured to the multiple walls of Bolon's Create universe at various angles and gravity-defying positions - lying down, reading with his feet up, lounging on a chair - like a group of oil-slicked refugees from Madam Tussaud's waxwork museum in London.

"The mannequins are posed to look relaxed and friendly because this is the true attitude of Jean Nouvel," says Odile. "He is very relaxed."

"Jean likes black," continues Odile. "And he always dresses in black, so we made his mannequins all black. For us, a monochrome rendering was more artistic and realistic. The only difference between the dummy and the real thing, she explains, was the wardrobe. "Jean usually wears Yohji Yamamoto, but because the clothes would be pretty much destroyed in the messy process of making the sculptures, we used clothes from H&M instead."

"Oh, and we had to put a bit more fat on the belly area, because he had put on weight since the Versailles project. "

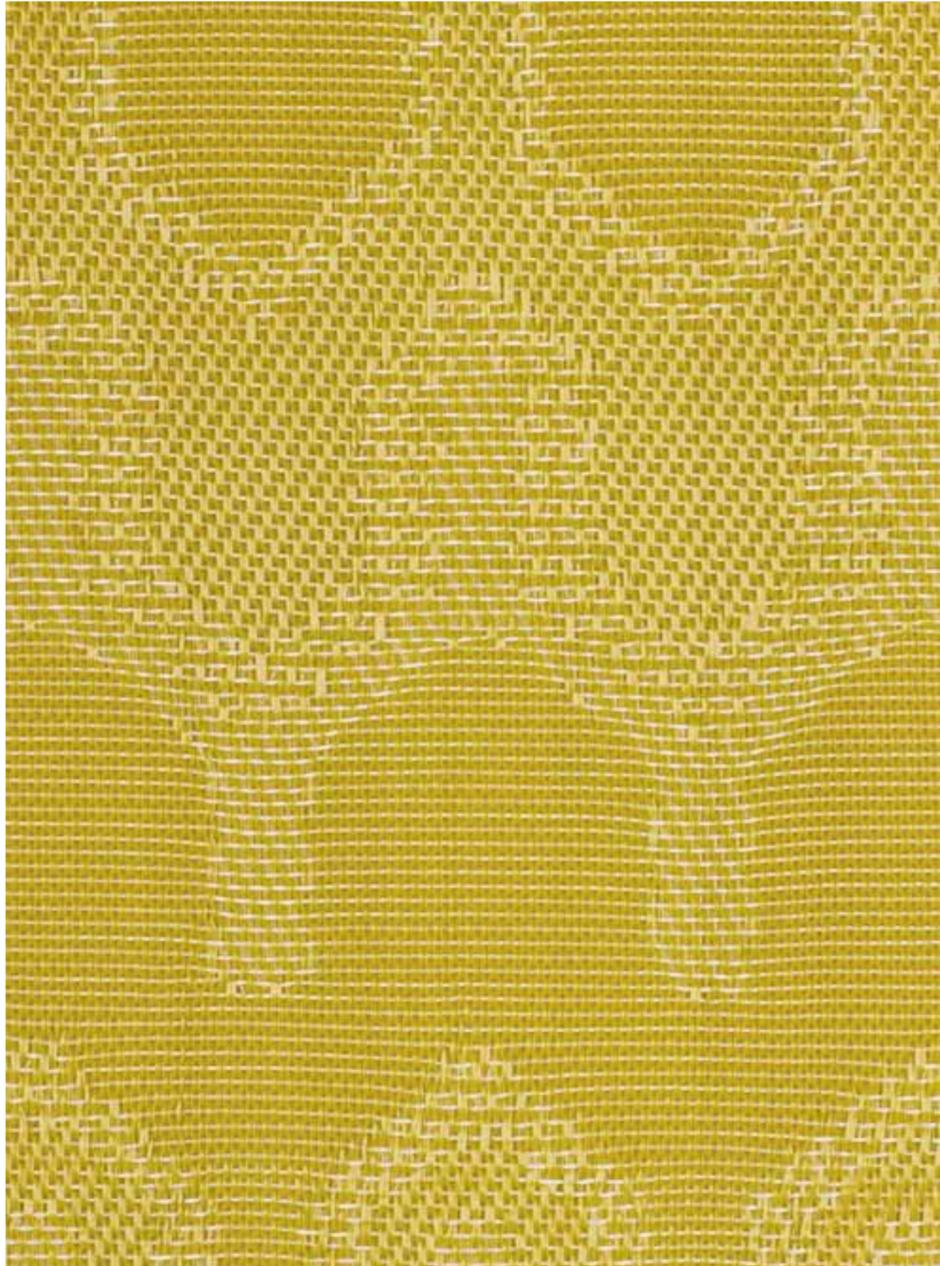
Jean found this detail particularly amusing, apparently. #



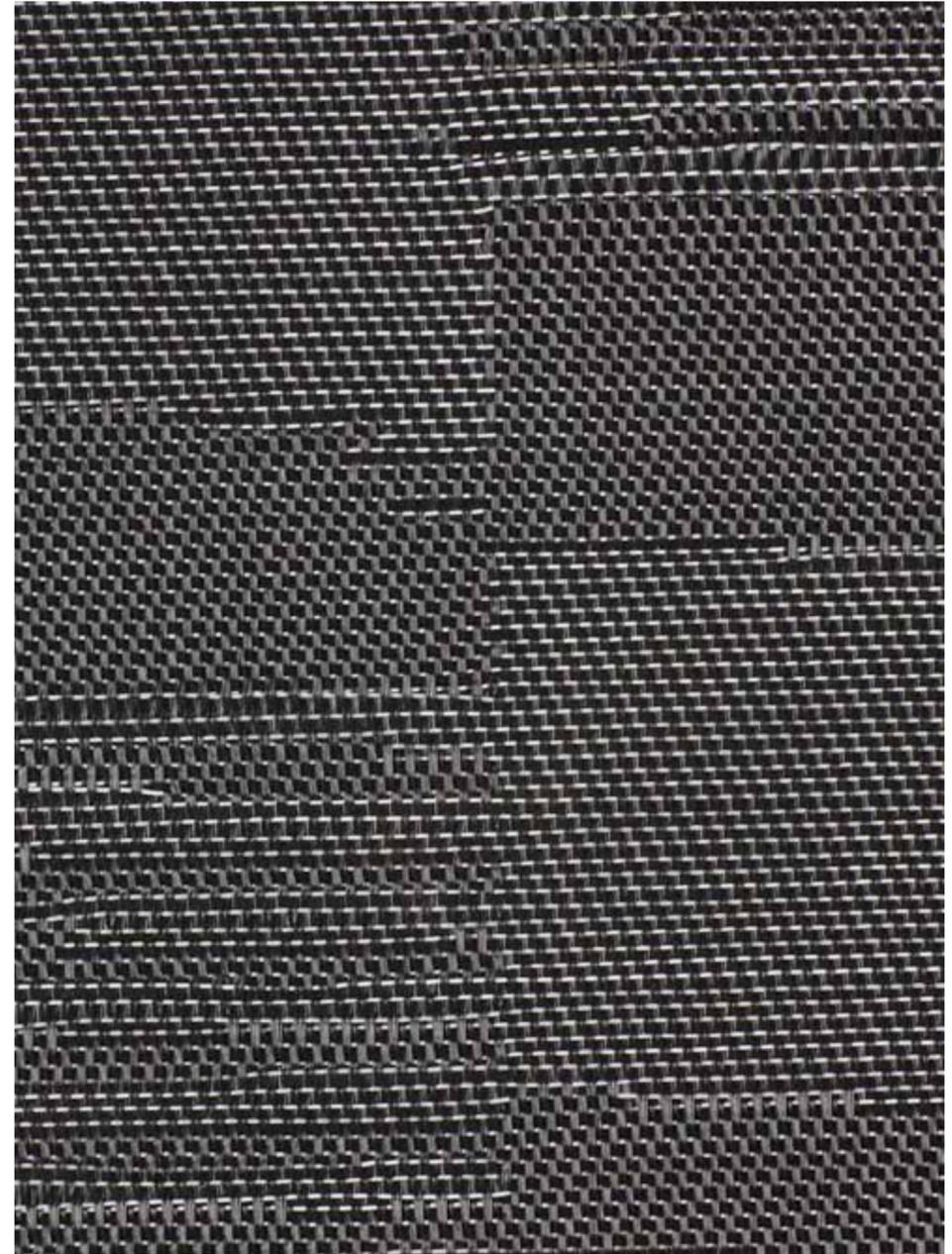
**"The challenge was,
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ERNESTO MISTRETTA

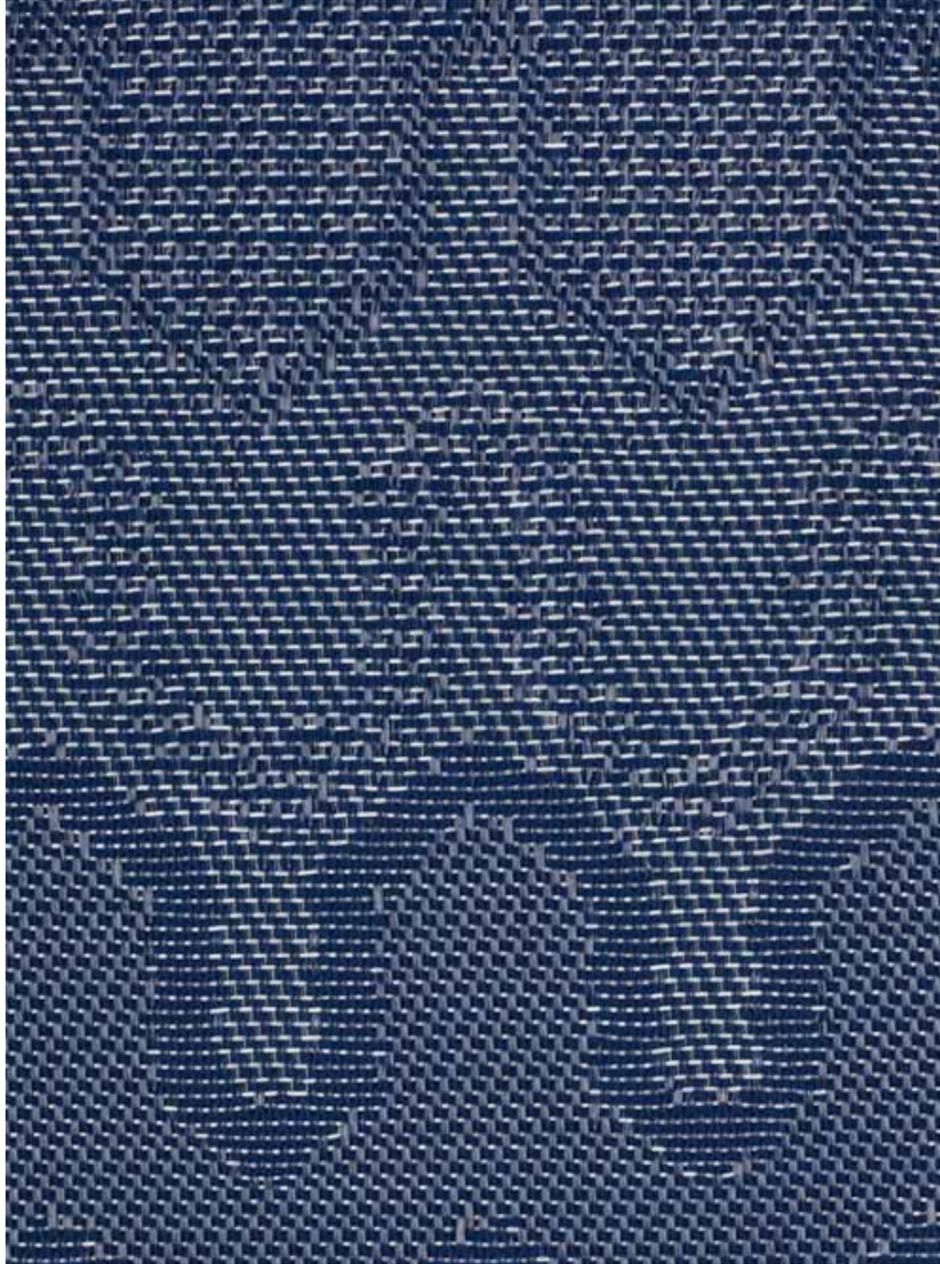




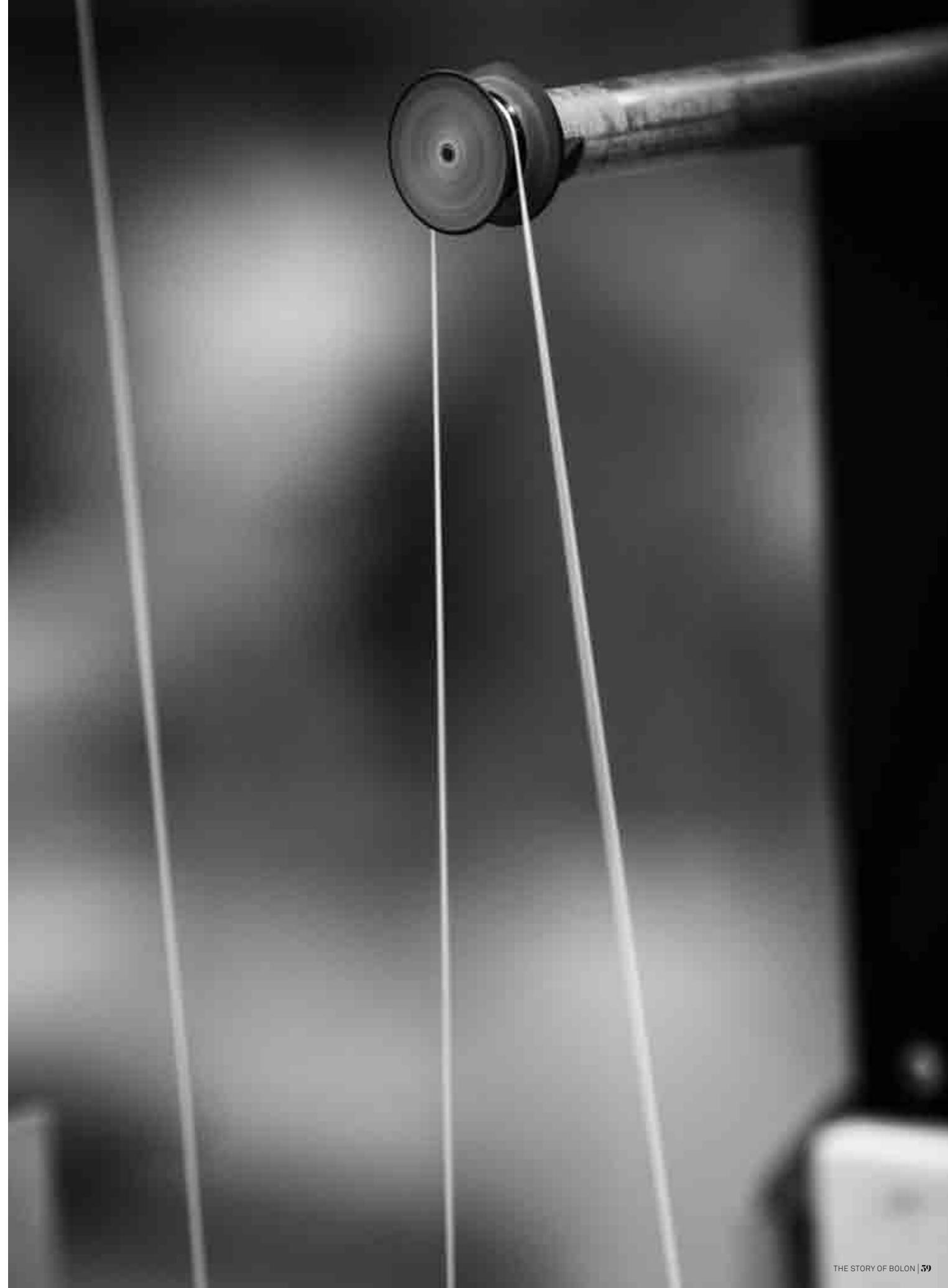
BOLON BY MISSONI OPTICAL PINEAPPLE.

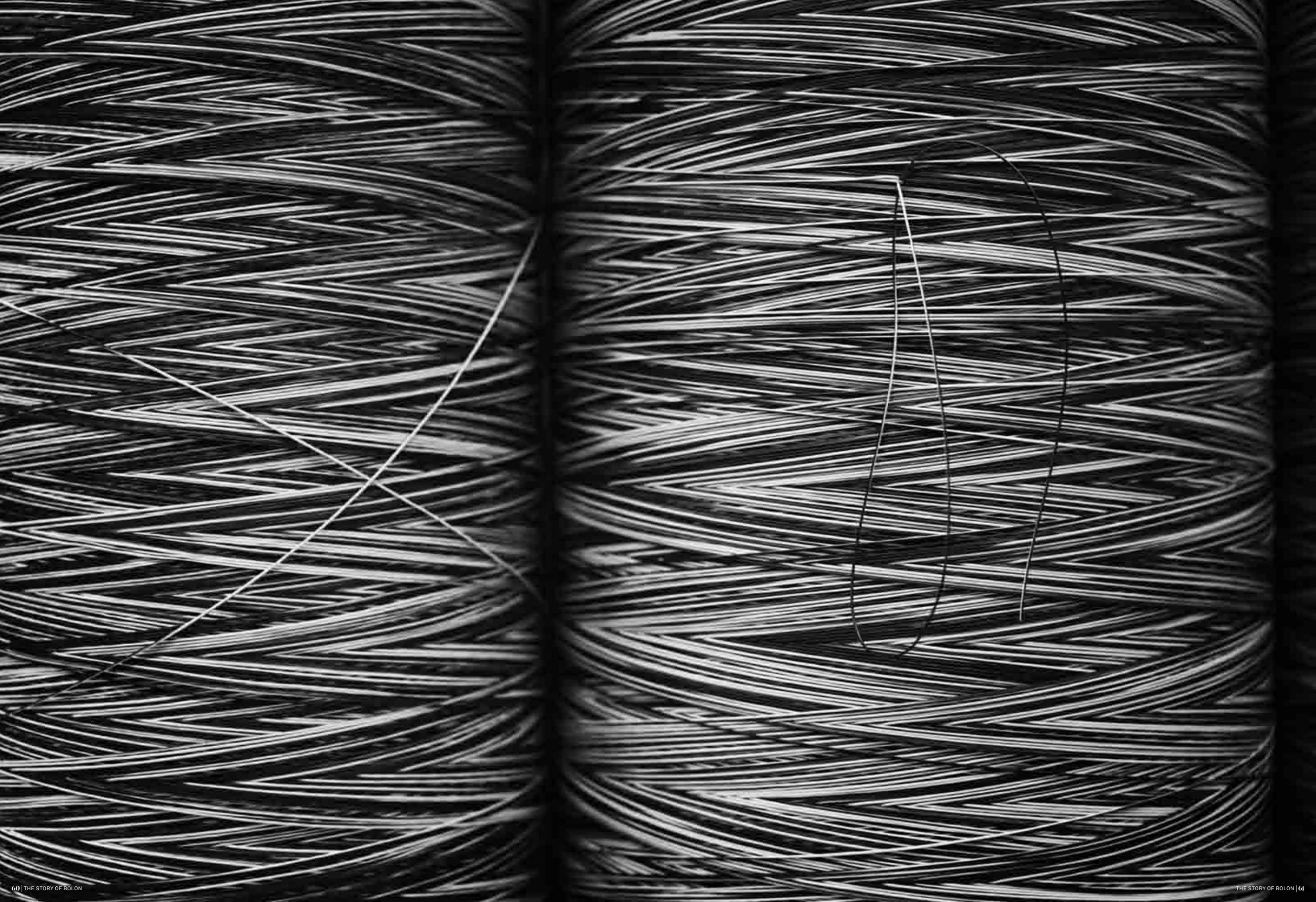


BOLON BY MISSONI FLAME BLACK.



BOLON BY MISSONI OPTICAL BLUEBERRY.







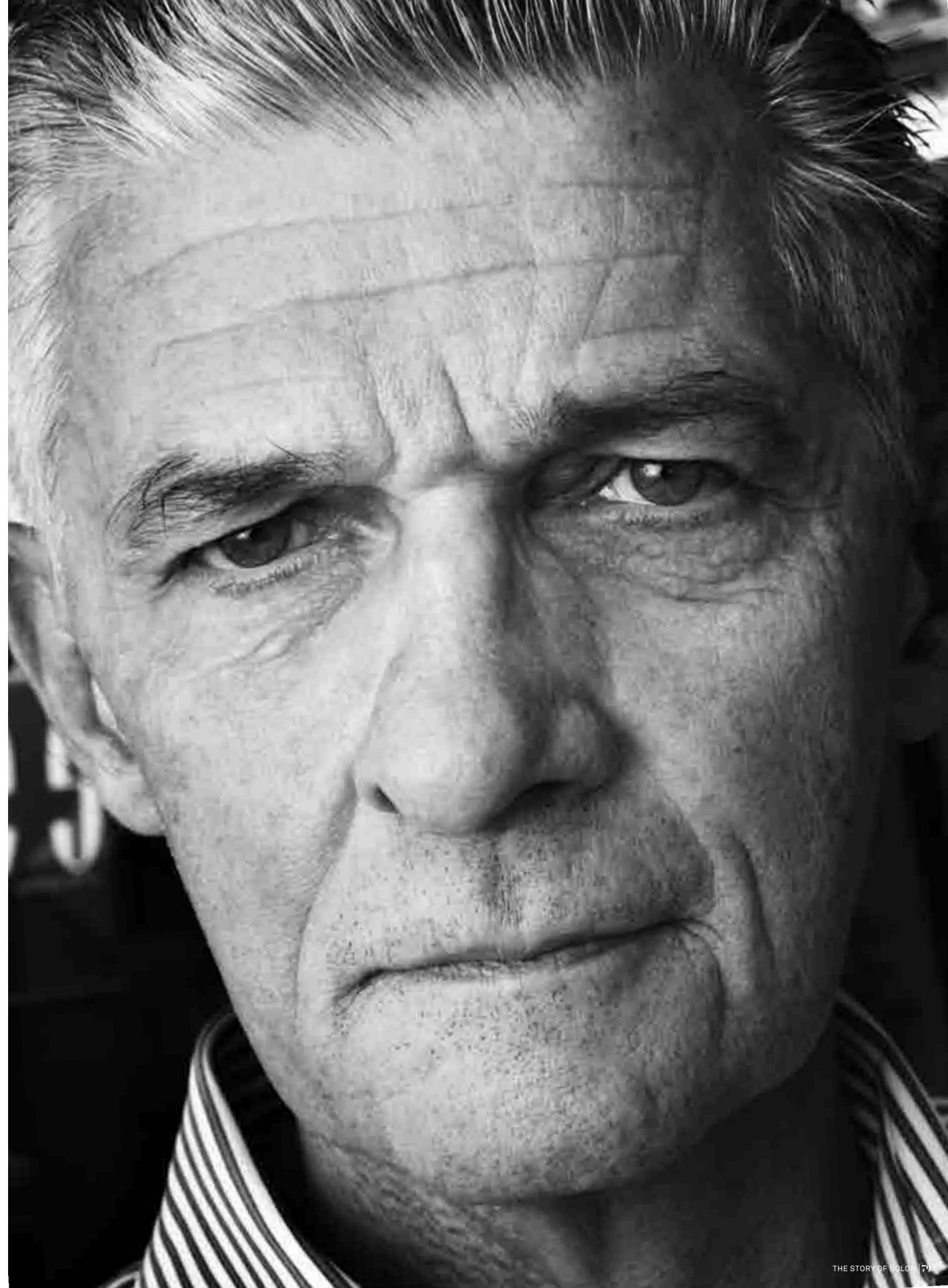




Giulio

THE GODFATHER OF IDIOSYNCRATIC ITALIAN DESIGN, GIULIO CAPPELLINI,
ON SEEING THE WORLD IN COLOUR.

Cappellini's global portfolio of showrooms is uniquely and helpfully colour-coded with the help of Bolon floor coverings. Working with a palette that is a personal voyage of geographically evocative themes, references, textures, instincts and sensations, Giulio Cappellini gives each of his international bases an individual colour-block. This, explains Giulio, equips each space with its own identity and makes things easier for him when he is on the road; the key colours serving as a kind of tonal navigation, immediately and accurately locating the designer through the mind-warping fug of jet-lag and time-zonal disorientation, reminding him that he has arrived at, for instance, the east coast of America... and not Manila. »







The tutti-frutti mind of the constantly travelling, free-thinking owner has deemed that Paris, therefore, is carpet-to-ceiling pink - the Parisian branch of Cappellini accented with Bolon's zinging, Now Pink flooring. Why? "I think of Paris and I think of haute couture ateliers, of Audrey Hepburn in Funny Face - singing 'think pink!'" says Giulio. "I think of pink cakes and elegant women in pink dresses." And Milan? "Milan is yellow," says Giulio, definitively. "Yellow is the colour of the Milan trams and the fading stonework of the old architecture."

We are on a world tour of big city colour-ways now. Miami, he explains, is an art deco-ish fuchsia. Los Angeles is California sky blue. Cologne is a paler blue. "Because blue is the colour of perfume."

Cappellini's Manilla colour box, mean while, is not dull Manilla, but the turquoise of the adjacent Philippine Sea. But why is New York red? "That's simple," says Italy's most stylish designer. "New York is a very big and busy city with so much to look at. We had to do something to make the showroom stand out. Everyone else's showroom is black and white... so we made ours red."

That the godfather of idiosyncratic Italian design, whose anti-monoculturalist spirit, rainbow consistent corporate identity and tirelessly eclectic spirit, should want to collaborate with Bolon (The first Cappellini-Bolon project in 2008 invited Giulio to furnish the entrance hall of the Stockholm Furniture Fair) comes as no surprise. Then there's his family name; Cappellini. So similar to that very thin variety of pasta; the strands of which can be woven and concocted into something beautiful and delicious. Is it any wonder that the two generations of the Cappellini company feels such an affinity with the extended Bolon family?

In charge of his father's furniture company since 1977, Giulio Cappellini now travels the world for around 250 days of each year - "Yesterday Rome before that, France, Istanbul, Brussels, the Far East and Manilla" - making connections with new talent and groundbreaking designers. His constant whirlwind touring has found him discovering the likes of Tom Dixon, the mercurial British creator of Cappellini's iconic S-chair, and Jasper Morrison who made his brick red "thinking Man's Chair" for the company. He's also worked with Marc Newson and Todd Bracher. And Bolon, of course.

Giulio himself, meanwhile, still claims residency in Milan. "From my home, it is just 20 miles to our factory," he will tell you. "When I am not travelling, that is where you will find me." Crucially, Giulio's home is also close to a veritable spoil of indigeneous Milanese ateliers that he delights in exploiting for both business and pleasure purposes.

Milan has a long tradition of craft and an artisanal way of working he explains, "so within 10 or 15 miles we can solve any problem we have when making our furniture - a good artisan can still help industry." And help furnish an enviable and diversely epicurean life-style. »

“The spirit of Cappellini is freedom”

GIULIO CAPPELLINI

Giulio gets his suits made ‘bench bespoke’ by the Milan sartoria of Domenico Caraceni, which has also crafted ensembles for Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Yves Saint Laurent, the Prince of Wales and Gianni Agnelli. He collects small leathers from the Milan outpost of Hermes and scours collectors’ shops for vintage Mickey Mouse comics. Gay-Odin’s, the famous Neapolitan chocolatier, keeps Giulio’s sweet tooth satisfied. In the evenings he goes to the opera at La Scala.

Bizet to Disney, high-culture to pop art; the irreverent, genre-defying Cappellini spirit encapsulated.

“The spirit of Cappellini is freedom,” says Giulio. Minimal cosies up to baroque, the sophisticated neighbours the humorous. There is no, signature ‘house’ style. Cappellini’s pieces are heterogeneous and eclectic, often with wildly different temperaments, lines and personalities, but can cohabit the same space with effortless harmony. Mostly thanks to the bold, creative and irreverent eye of the owner.

“Our products are never boring neither absurd, but they always possess something of alive and light, often full of healthy humor, other times proposing brave and dynamic, formal solutions.”

Given his irrepressible, globe-hopping tendencies, it seems appropriate that Cappellini was recently hired to redesign the Milan’s VIP Lounges at Malpensa and Linate airports.

Working with the Poltrona Frau Group, Cappellini used 2000 square metres of Bolon’s Now Silver flooring to create a congenially calm, intimate and warm atmosphere. You don’t just want to wait for a plane there...you want to move in.

Giulio likes Bolon because “it has a strong character and the texture of a natural material but it is synthetic and hard-wearing without actually looking synthetic.” Now he’s looking to work with Bolon on a more experimental and more Cappellini-ish basis “combining different colours, creating a mosaic, a mix of different colours and stripes.”

He is confident that his Swedish friends will help him achieve his vision. “Marie and Annica Eklund are quite unique in the world of carpet. Our relationship is always easy because they are very open minded and curious about the world, always very involved, passionate and keen to find a solution.”

So, Giulio. What colour is Stockholm? #



**”We create
everything
at home.
And send it
abroad”**

MARIE EKLUND

Marie

BOLON'S CREATIVE DIRECTOR DREAMS OF ROCK STARS.





At the age of 23, when she'd retired from modeling in Italy, given up competitive show jumping and finished her studies at Florence's Accademia Moda, Marie Eklund returned home to Sweden with a fairly good idea of what she wanted to do with the rest of her life...and a very definite idea of what she didn't want to do. "I knew for sure that I didn't want to work with my family," says Marie. "I thought the caravan rugs industry was boring - a business with no potential. I couldn't see past the old catalogue, the traditional rugs and the camping connection."

Wanderlust and glamorous further education had informed Marie's sense of aesthetics and, she presumed, laid the foundations for her personal style and career path. Encounters with new cultures and the contacts she'd made from all corners of the world provided stimulus, making a significant impact on her development and future as a designer.

So, convinced that her destiny lay in fashion design Marie worked for the family firm but also set up her own, independent atelier. She traveled extensively, visiting art galleries, libraries and museums, gathering information, images and inspirations, weighing up possibilities for her future in fashion, always adding to her mind's ever-developing, multi-textural mood board. But the fruits of her intensive and exotic research programme were to have an unexpected outlet.

Bolon had now set up a new factory. Her younger sister had even started working part time for the company. Designer Marie's interest was piqued also.

"It was around this time that something inside me changed," says Marie. "I thought, 'maybe I should give this a try.' I brought home all my notes and memories and discoveries...and Annica and I set to work."

First, Marie served an apprentice at the Bolon factory. And surprised herself by rather enjoying it. The pervading humidity, she decided, appeared to be good for her skin ("It seems to open up the pores.") And the odour of the vinyl proved alluringly heady. "There is something in our special, environmentally-friendly manufacturing process that leaves the product smelling vaguely of...soya." (Eau de Bolon, anyone?)

She also learned how to actually lay a Bolon carpet. "My father taught me," says Marie, casually. "First, you need to prepare the bare floor very carefully - make sure that it is perfectly flat, clean and dry. You need a big knife, glue and sealant. Stretching and seaming tools. Special trousers with big knee pads.

In the Bolon boardroom, Marie and Annica had agreed on a plan to engineer an exciting synergy between their humble, country business and the dizzying heights of the international catwalk. Even though their parents weren't totally convinced. "I'm not sure they really understood what we wanted to do, but they were very trusting and open-minded," says Marie. But things moved very quickly in the new direction and we started to experience success."

Their flooring/fashion conception was bolstered when Marie came across a familiar-looking, charcoal black floor covering in an Armani advertisement... shot on location in Mr. Armani's home. »

"We hadn't sent Armani the flooring personally, so he must have chosen it himself. More to the point, he was using Bolon to help sell his own products - our flooring next to Armani! This was a thrilling moment and gave me a lot of confidence that we were heading in the right direction with our marketing and our product." Then, at a trade fair, an overheard comment from an American architect; "This is the first sexy flooring I've ever seen."

Reinventing Bolon as a fashion-forward concern was always part of Marie's plan, but the confirmation that the product had also had a healthy libido was a delightful bonus. Now Marie and her sister were on their way.

"When we started going to trade fairs, people we met had real passion and energy and that was infectious," says Marie. "Those early days were exhilarating. Being passionate and taking the odd risk has taken us to where Annica and I are today."

Even though they live in different parts of Sweden from time to time, there exists a kind of telepathy between Marie and her sister. "Sometimes I know that Annica is thinking the same thing as me without us talking to each other," says Marie. "I think we are the same... but different, if that makes sense. We have discussions and we sometimes disagree... but nothing too serious. She is all about context. I am more about creativity."

"In terms of personal style, Annica is more creatively driven while I am a control freak. In my house everything is colour matched, very calm, neat, organised and linear. Annica lives in a kind of rough house... well, a very beautiful house, but it's an old abattoir and it is much crazier than mine."

Marie's thing for style and fashion, she will tell you, developed whilst her sister was busy mucking out the stables. "My grandmother was the person who encouraged me to sew. When I was 11-12 years old I was always trying to make my own clothes - beach dresses mainly." The tailoring may not have been perfect, but, says Marie, "I was very precise and I had a good feel for colour."

Her innate sense of style and colour has since flourished and matured. Marie's vision and precision, passion and personality remain central to the role as Bolon's Creative Director, bringing a unique and genuine fashion sensibility to flooring design collections. "Often when you are working on a new building project, the flooring will be the last part of the process before the furniture comes in," she says. "I am always excited to see how well the tones and textures in such a huge expanse of our material goes so well with steel, wood and glass. Bolon's flooring brings such a great deal to an interior, complementing all the other details in a room. It works especially well with contemporary design. It's a beautiful thing."

Marie continues to travel the world seeking influence, inspiration and collaboration, often flying thousands of miles just to have an interesting meeting over a lunch.

For Bolon's future, Marie envisages working with more key architects, more cutting edge fashionistas and furniture designers. "And maybe even a rock star." she says. "Come on... why not?" #







BOTANIC VIVA – THE BOTANIC COLLECTION CAMPAIGN WAS SHOT IN THE WILD ON ALVARET ON ÖLAND. THE DECORATIVE COWS TURNED OUT TO BE NOT-SO-FRIENDLY BULLS AND CHASED US OFF THE PREMISES. IT WAS NOT A WRAP.

1003



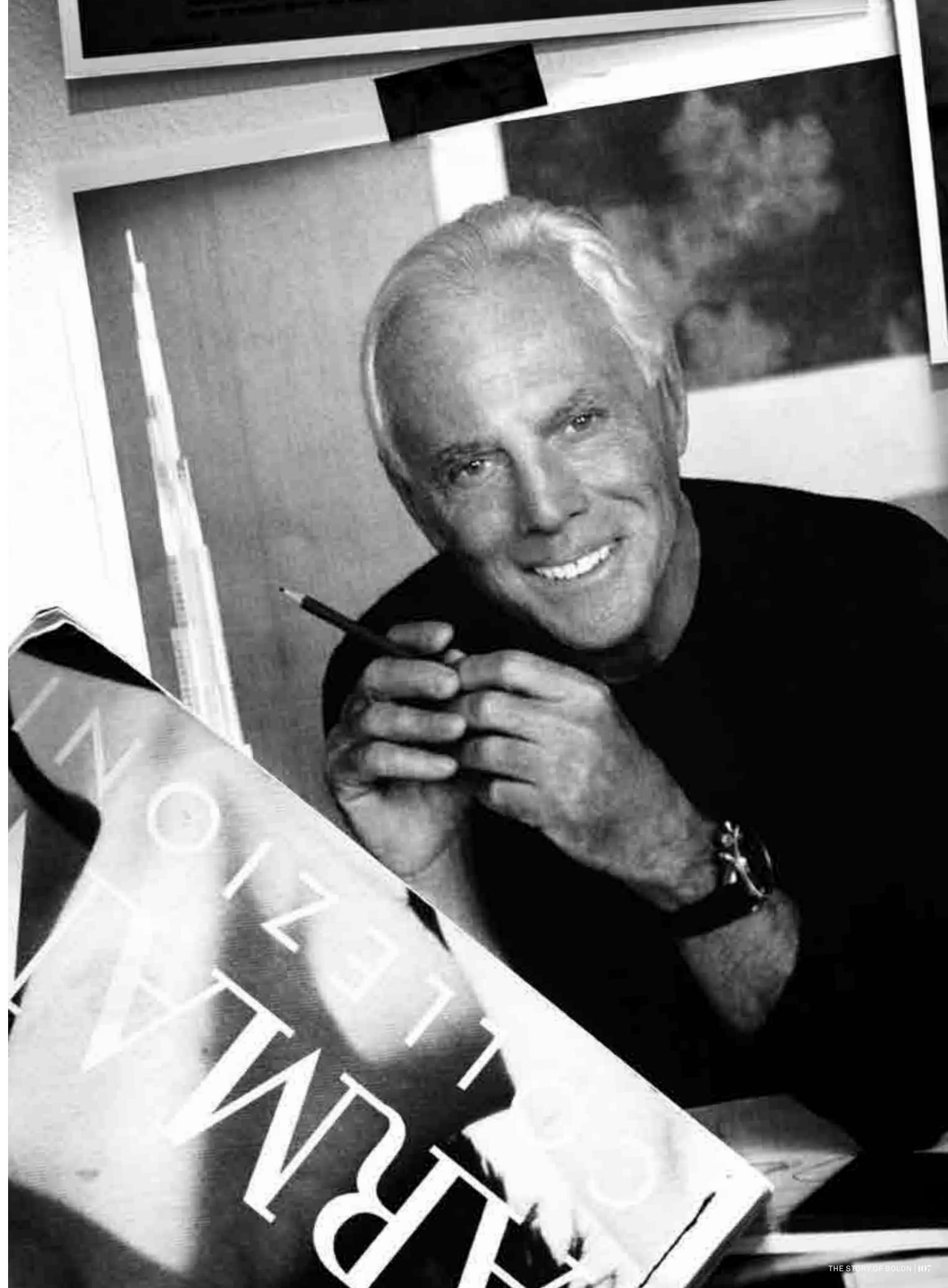
Bolom

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of some individuals... in report a memorandum
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**“If we can
attract someone
like Armani,
we must be doing
something
right”**

ANNICA EKLUND





**“...it is what
you take away
that makes it
really
interesting.”**

HUMBERTO CAMPANA



Fernando & Humberto

BRINGING GONZO CONCEPTS TO LIFE. THE CAMPANA BROTHERS ON
THE BRAZILIAN ART OF LIVING AND CREATING IN CRISIS.

The Campana brothers house style is kitsch meets regionalism, a playful, Brazilian arte povera utilizing unlikely and often unloved materials, executed with alchemic craft, wit, charisma and passion. From their Sao Paulo studio Fernando and Humberto Campana prefer to work on visceral instinct rather than attempting to >



satisfy market forces or the requirements of the industry. They sculpt the commonplace and mundane into the beautiful, inspiring and surprising; a wooden chair fashioned from layers of cheap kindling, a kindergarten accident of a sofa made from hundreds of brightly coloured soft toys, the now classic Vermelha chair coiled from 492 yards of cotton rope, intricately woven, knotted and looped around a metal frame. For their recent 'Barocco Rococó' collection the brothers presented a series of eleven furniture prototypes - lamps, chandeliers, tables and seating units - made with recycled and secondhand, souk-quality bronze tat, all fused together in intricate filigree style to achieve decadent and elegant, baroque 'n' roll/rococo pieces.

"Sometimes, I like to think that we are not just recycling materials but also recycling history," says Humberto Campana. "Essentially, we are story tellers. What we like to do is cross over between different cultures. Our work comes from hybridism; we mix two elements - the rough and the smooth, maybe something luxurious and something trashy - to create a third element."

Ever since 2006, when the ingenious and ever resourceful brothers showed their collection of 'sushi roll' furniture, taking rolls of ordinary carpet and coiling them up tightly (like sushi) to form the surfaces and upholstery of sideboards, chairs and couches, they have been inspired by working with carpets and floor coverings.

Five years later, the inspiration took another turn when Annica and Marie Eklund commissioned the Campanas to make an installation for the Bolon stand at the annual Stockholm Furniture Fair using its new Artisan range of flooring.

Deconstructing in order to create, 700 pieces of carpet were cut up into apparently random shapes that decked the stand's walls in a chaotic mosaic of abstract, over-lapping layers, like a multi-coloured dragon skin. Using Bolon's state-of-the-art laser cutting machinery, a photograph of a woman's face was abstractly rendered in the Artisan material and took centre stage on the stand. The result was bright, multi-textural and mischievously Brazilian; a little bit of Sao Paolo in Stockholm.

The Campana brothers enjoyed their collaboration with the Eklund sisters. "The girls are a little bit like us, one slightly more introverted than the other but still of the same mind and always open to communication and new ideas." Marie, says Humberto, "reminds me of my brother Fernando."

Recently the Campanas used Bolon for the floors of their stunning New Hotel Athens project in Greece.

"I think Bolon has really taken carpet to the next level, by mixing things and embracing new technology. They are bringing a new way of making carpets. They work with the best artists and architects and designers, re-cycling materials and going for daring colours. Bolon is such a fantastic material to work with - flexible, colourful, very resistant and hardwearing. We'd like to use it for wall covering or furniture. Why not?"

Brazil is a hot and sexy, perpetual carnival of a country, somewhat at odds with the pervading atmosphere of Sweden, perhaps? Humberto laughs. "For us Sweden represents a sort of low profile sophistication. We have colour but in Sweden there is lots of white... everywhere! The people are cool and calm and I think it's nice that they don't show off too much - in that way they are the opposite of people in Brazil! But it doesn't matter because we get along very well."

The Campana brothers will tell you that they find creative stimulation in all countries, on every street corner and in every building. The architecture of Rome, is spontaneous," says Humberto. "Different layers of history on top of each other, each one using the other to add to a bigger, multi textural picture."

China, he says, "is like Brazil. During Beijing Design Week we saw beautiful modern buildings right next to medieval structures. Fantastic!"

That said, the Campanas don't crave or require anything particularly exotic or rarified to make their gonzo concepts come to life. Humberto happily claims that all the materials the brothers will ever need - colourful plastic buckets, brooms, birdcages, ropes, abandoned wood piles and tacky religious souvenirs - can be found in the stores and street markets in their immediate Sao Paolo neighbourhood.

"Brazil has always been very inspiring," he says. "We like to watch how people - not wealthy people but normal people - organize their lives and make their lives better with ordinary things."

It's a unique aesthetic partly borne out of fiscal necessity and now that Brazil is thriving economically, Humberto is wary of his country's future. "Brazil's creative strength has always been about resourcefulness, flexibility and mental agility. We have been living in crisis since the day we were born. This is tough, but it brings out the survivor in you, makes you grateful for what ever the next day brings. Now that Brazil's economy is improving, things are changing and I am concerned that our country might lose a bit of the spirit; the naivety, curiosity and positivity that has always made it such a wonderful place to be.

With 25 years experience, the Campanas know the importance of remaining true to themselves, their country and their work, not just making extraordinary furniture but also living with it. "Our houses are full of our prototypes. We use our homes like laboratories, testing out of new furniture to see if it works, if it can survive a real life style. It would be hypocritical if we sold things without testing them first."

Currently, they are building their first ever complete house, for a client in their home town of Sao Paolo. "Our plan is to make what at first, seems to be a very simple, conventional and linear design made of bricks... then, when it is finished, we will deconstruct parts of it. It's like creating a sculpture... you make something, yes, but it is what you take away that makes it really interesting. This," he says, "is our thing." #



Lars and Monica

THE SECOND GENERATION SAYS "WE TRUST YOU".







Marie and Annica Eklund's grandfather Nils-Erik started his own business in Stockholm, back in 1949. "My father was producing cans for food packaging - fish mainly," says Lars Eklund. "After the war he noticed that the factory next door, which was making vinyl aprons and table cloths, was producing a lot of textile waste. He found a way to make the waste sheets of PVC, cut them into strips and then hand weave them, kind of plait them, I guess, to make rag rugs."

Nils-Erik was way ahead of the curve when it comes to recycling and re-using. "Yes!" Lars says. "It was early eco-production. I suppose you could even say that he was a maverick environmentalist."

Lars Eklund laughs at this bold suggestion. He laughs a lot. He laughs, even as he speaks. It is the laugh of someone who is proud and contented. The laugh of a hard working but happily semi-retired man who now spends his time on luxurious, world circumnavigations... a man who is currently planning next year's Mediterranean cruise with his wife.

Granddad Eklund gave his new company the name BOLON - a portmanteau rendering of the first and last letters of the Swedish words for cotton ("bomull") and nylon ("nylon"). The business was passed on to his son Lars and his young wife Monica, in the 1960s. "The factory was then around 25-30 people," says Lars. "The weaving was done on a big noisy machine. Now we have more than 70 people and some incredibly sophisticated new technology."

It wasn't until 1971 that Bolon found a serendipitous niche, via the family's hobby. With their two young daughters now in the frame, the Eklunds bought a caravan. At the weekends, Lars and Monica would take their children off to the Swedish countryside for rural adventures. Quickly, the ever-resourceful and practical Lars worked out that quality of life around their little mobile home would be vastly improved by a lightweight, but hard wearing, floor covering for the area under the exterior awning. "If you owned a caravan, you needed a floor or, at least, some sort of matting for that area," he says. Laughing as he tells the tale, of course. "But the only carpets you could buy were all very heavy. When you have a caravan, weight becomes important because you need to carry everything with you, trailing it behind on the back of the car."

So, Bolon's caravan carpet - tough, lightweight, child-proof, country-proof, washable and easily rolled-up for storage and transport - was born. "More than forty years later, it remains our product icon," says Lars, proudly. Even now, with Bolon successfully reinvented as a high fashion interior design product, "the caravan matting is still selling pretty strongly." Lars has a good laugh at this. "We must have sold several million square metres of it over the last four decades."

At first, it didn't look as if Lars and Monica's children, one being obsessed with horses, the other more concerned with fashion, would be likely to find a career with Bolon's caravan matting business.

Who was the wild one? "Marie was a bit crazy sometimes," says Monica. "She liked to climb up on the roof. Annica was the calm one. Now it is the opposite >

way round.” Were they good at school? “Not so good... but not too bad, either. Horses were more important.”

“Annica started riding horses at 12 years old,” says Lars “There was no history of riding in our family but she was very keen. She got her own horse at 15 and she became pretty good.” Good enough to compete in national show jumping competitions, in fact.

“Marie used to make her own clothes,” says Monica. “Extraordinary creations that she would adapt from her regular clothes. If she needed a new summer dress she would go up to the factory and get some stuff from the factory floor and take it to her grandmother who would help with her sewing. We still have some of Marie’s hand made clothes in the attic.”

When the girls were still teenagers (both having now acquired a serious equestrian bug) Lars completed construction of a smart new Bolon factory in Ulricehamn and he suddenly saw flickers of interest from his eldest daughter. “I think the fact that the factory was now very modern changed Marie’s mind a bit. I think she started to see some possibilities.”

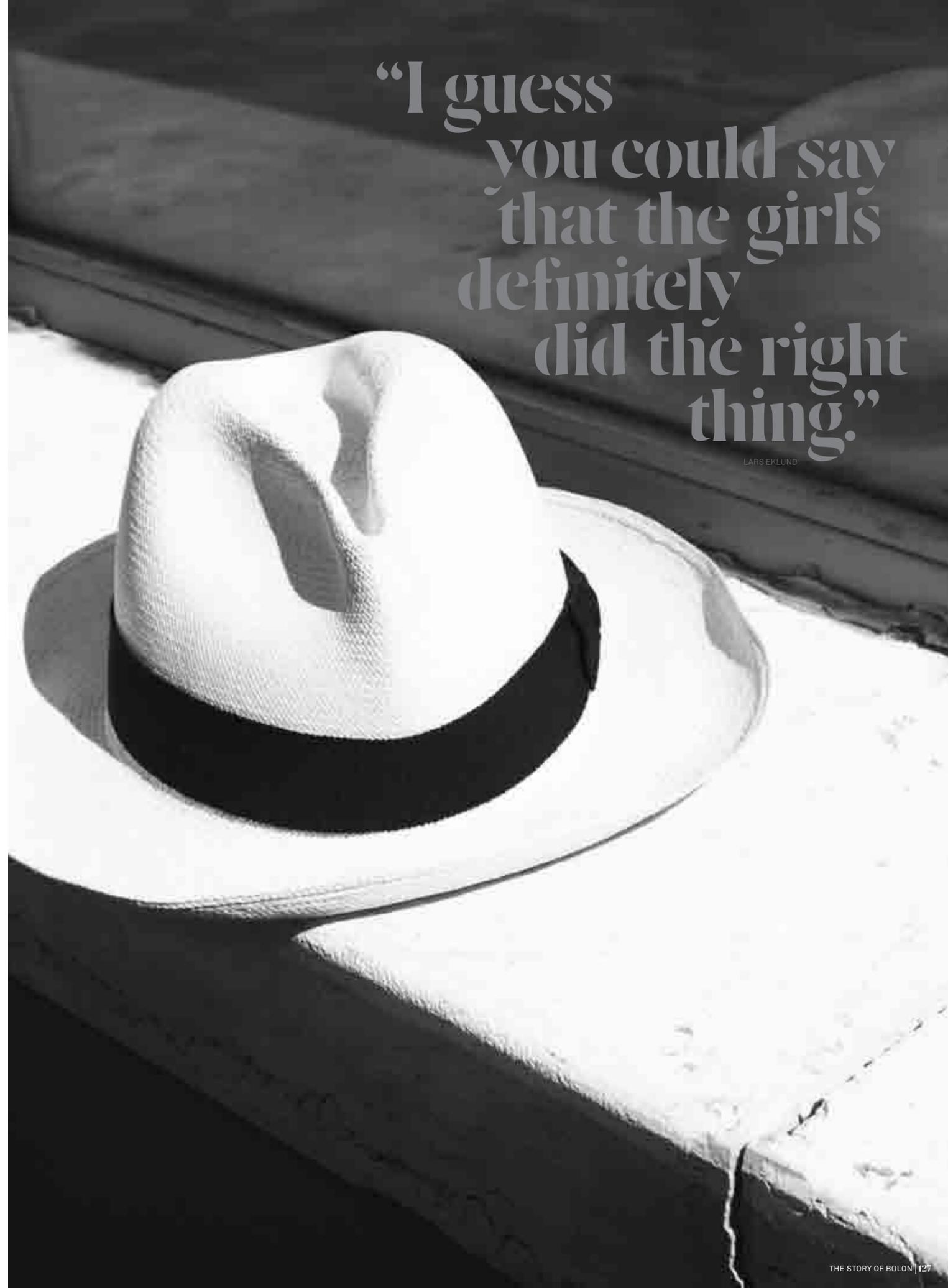
Lars and Monica agreed that if their children wanted to get involved with Bolon, they would have to start right from the bottom, on the factory floor. “We made sure that they understood how things worked, that they got to know all the workers and had a genuine interest and passion for the business,” says Lars. “For instance, if they needed to, both of the girls know how to install flooring in a room.”

Marie and Annica took over Bolon in 2003, as Design and Marketing Manager and Managing Director respectively, and Bolon entered an exciting new, second phase. Were Lars and Monica ever concerned that their girls’ radical new direction for the company, driven by fashionable influences and entering a highly competitive international marketplace, was a little too ambitious? “Not really,” laughs Lars. “I think it was worth taking the risk. When they started, we were still the market leader, but we needed to go forward. We trusted them to do the right thing.”

Recently, Lars says, Bolon took an order for 95,000 square metres of flooring for a single building in Milan. “So, when you look back,” he laughs. “I guess you could say that the girls definitely did the right thing.” #

“I guess
you could say
that the girls
definitely
did the right
thing.”

LARS EKLUND

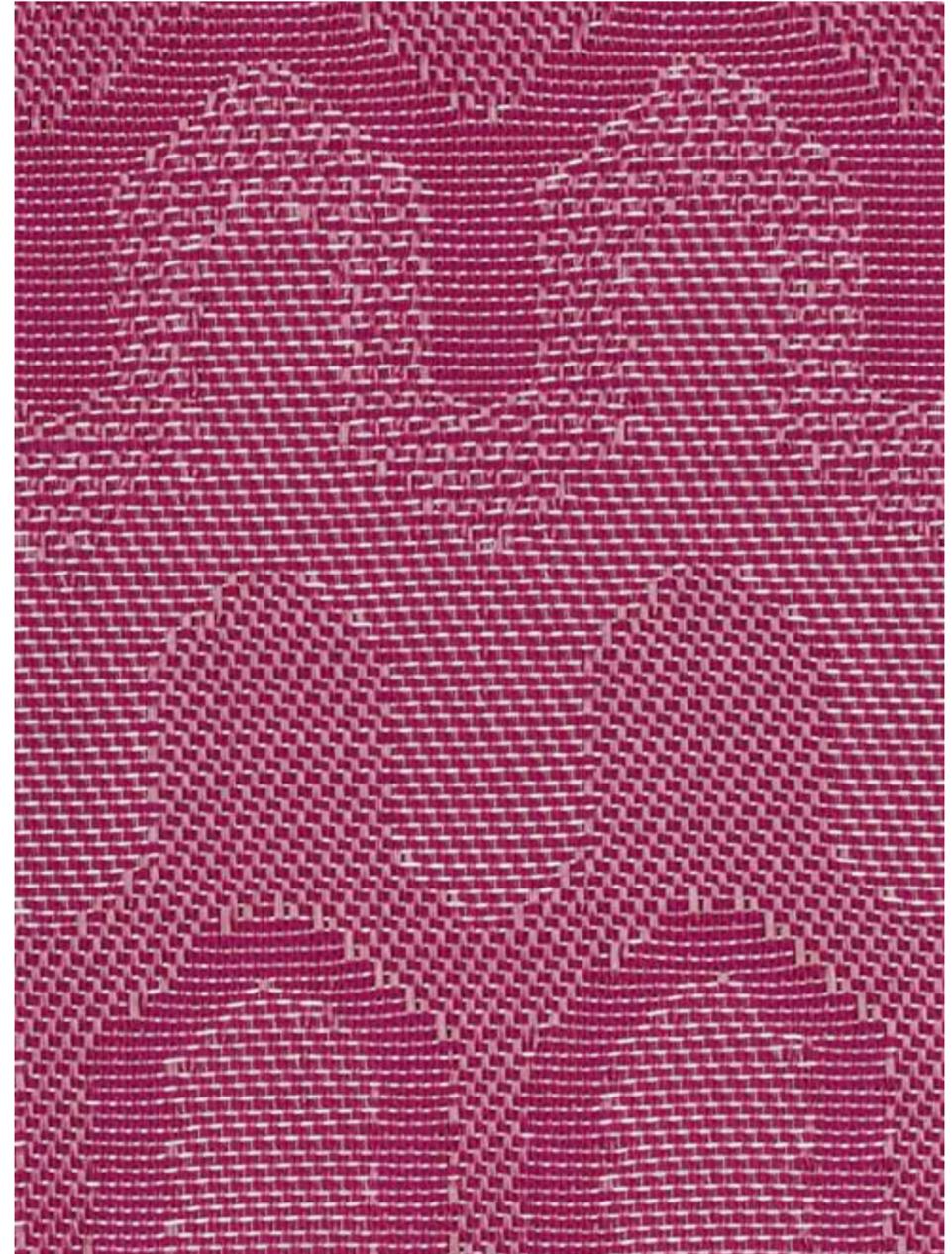








BOLON BY MISSONI BAYADERE PINK – THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN THESE TWO FAMILY-RUN COMPANIES TOOK PLACE IN NOVEMBER 2011 IN ITALY. BY JANUARY, THE 9 PATTERNS IN THE COLLECTION HAD BEEN DESIGNED AND WEAVING COULD START.



BOLON BY MISSONI OPTICAL RASPBERRY.



JUL 11

Tom

BRITAIN'S QUINTESSENTIAL DESIGNER, TOM DIXON, IS MORE INTERESTED IN INVENTION, ENGINEERING AND MARKETING THAN IN THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF DESIGNING.

A friend once described Tom Dixon as a "vertebrate designer", someone whose creative process evolves from the inside out, his work characterised by an interest and exploration of the structure and construction of an object (its skeleton) rather than its skin and surface.

It's a technique which begins with a fascination for new materials, procedures and specialist tools. "I am mainly motivated by materials and processes," says Tom. "But these preoccupations evolve..." Currently, he is investigating the >



latest innovations in wood and natural materials technology, genning up on sustainable materials and eco-friendly processes.

The quintessentially British Dixon (actually born in Sfax, Tunisia to an English father and a French-Latvian mother) has explored blow-moulding, vacuum metalising and computer-controlled manufacturing systems. “The digitalisation of design, manufacturing, communication and distribution is completely changing this business like all others...and that’s very exciting and fast moving.” India’s creativity and steadfast resourcefulness never fails to inspire him also. “India is new tastes and new landscapes every time - a whole continent of craft and industry where I have only just started to scratch the surface of the collaborations that I can do there.”

Currently immersed in his first hotel project (the Morgans Group-owned Mondrian on London’s South Bank due to open in 2014) Tom has designed everything from chairs and bicycles to lighting and fruit bowls, working with copper, polypropylene, wire and rafia, latex rubber, extruded and hand-woven plastic. He’s even converted a derelict water tower near his office into a two-floor apartment. But when his career began, he mainly welded.

As part of the guerilla design collective Creative Salvage, Tom made furniture from scrap metal with new product designs frequently tailored to a bargain machine tool purchase (a flocking machine, perhaps) a local subcontractor’s skills or, more often than not, a recently unearthed stock of cheaply available or dumpster-salvaged raw material.

So, you can see why Tom Dixon says that he feels “completely atuned” to the Bolon story. “I love the idea that someone can turn junk into a business, because that’s how I started,” he says. “It feels a bit like alchemy to take a waste material and turn it into gold...and the Bolon grandfather (Nils-Erik Eklund, inventor, maverick recycler, Bolon founder and grandfather to Annica and Marie Eklund) sounds like a man after my own heart.”

Tom Dixon chose Bolon silver metallic, light-reflecting flooring for his London office The Dock (a converted coal depository next to a canal in west London which also hosts a restaurant and store) while as creative director of London’s 100% Design fair, he commissioned Bolon to provide carpet for the exhibition hall canteen, also inviting Bolon to debut its collaboration with Missoni at the London show. It was the latest in a long line of encounters with the Swedish design industry for Tom.

“I’ve always liked Sweden’s minimalist modernism aesthetic,” he admits. “But I’ve been influenced and inspired by Sweden from a business perspective as well.” For seven years he worked as creative director at the British furniture retail outfit Habitat, then owned by Ingvar Kamprad’s Ikea group and is currently majority-owned by the private Swedish finance company Proventus.

The moderately mannered Swedish business model has, he says, offered him “a vision of gentler, longer term development than I could have hoped for from UK backers.” Sweden’s national psyche, maintains Tom, is a “straightforward - understated

and cultivated people with a great quality of life and an international attitude.”

But Tom’s entrée into the design world was anything but understated; his beloved Moto Guzzi motorcycle providing the young art school drop-out with two career defining moments. He taught himself to weld whilst trying to repair it. Then, when he fell off the bike, making things in workshop filled long days of recuperation.

This was 1980s, post-punk London. An anyone-can-do-anything ethic prevailed. It didn’t bother Tom that he hadn’t studied design at college. “For me it was a considerable advantage as it allowed me to experiment with no constraints and make my own mistakes. As a result I developed my own attitude.”

Having a multi-faceted, discipline-surfing career was more important than a degree. So, Tom played bass in the band Funkapolitan, he modeled for Comme Des Garçons and The Gap. He ran nightclubs - the Language Lab and Demolition Derby - and made crude but intriguing furniture out of scrap metal and old frying pans. Sometimes, these careers would collide and Tom could be seen welding furniture actually inside one of his nightclubs.

Gradually, the self-taught designer-maker’s products, like the S chair and the Pylon chair, achieved a refinement, industrial elegance and a startling individuality that combined ingenuity, engineering and ingenious use of unlikely materials. The press lapped it all up and throughout the 1980s, no British style magazine or Sunday newspaper was complete without an article about Tom Dixon or a photograph of one of his chairs.

Since leaving Habitat, Tom has gained an OBE (Order of the British Empire title) and established “Tom Dixon” as a brand; a British design and manufacturing company making mainly lighting and furniture. “With a commitment to innovation and a mission to revive the British furniture industry,” he says, “the brand is inspired by our nation’s unique heritage.”

Some 30 years into his career, Tom feels that he is still only just starting to find his feet as a designer. “I want to design more things that I have never tried before: buildings and motorcycles; books and gardens; foods and discotheques; water purification systems. The bits of the process that really interest me are the invention, engineering and marketing rather than the actual process of designing,” he says. “A good designer is somebody who manages to put together all the elements - an understanding of materials and a belief in improving functionality - then puts the shape on last as a result of all those experiments. I’m a designer very occasionally. I tend to be on the periphery, occasionally popping out a product which is designed mainly through an interest in materials and technologies.”

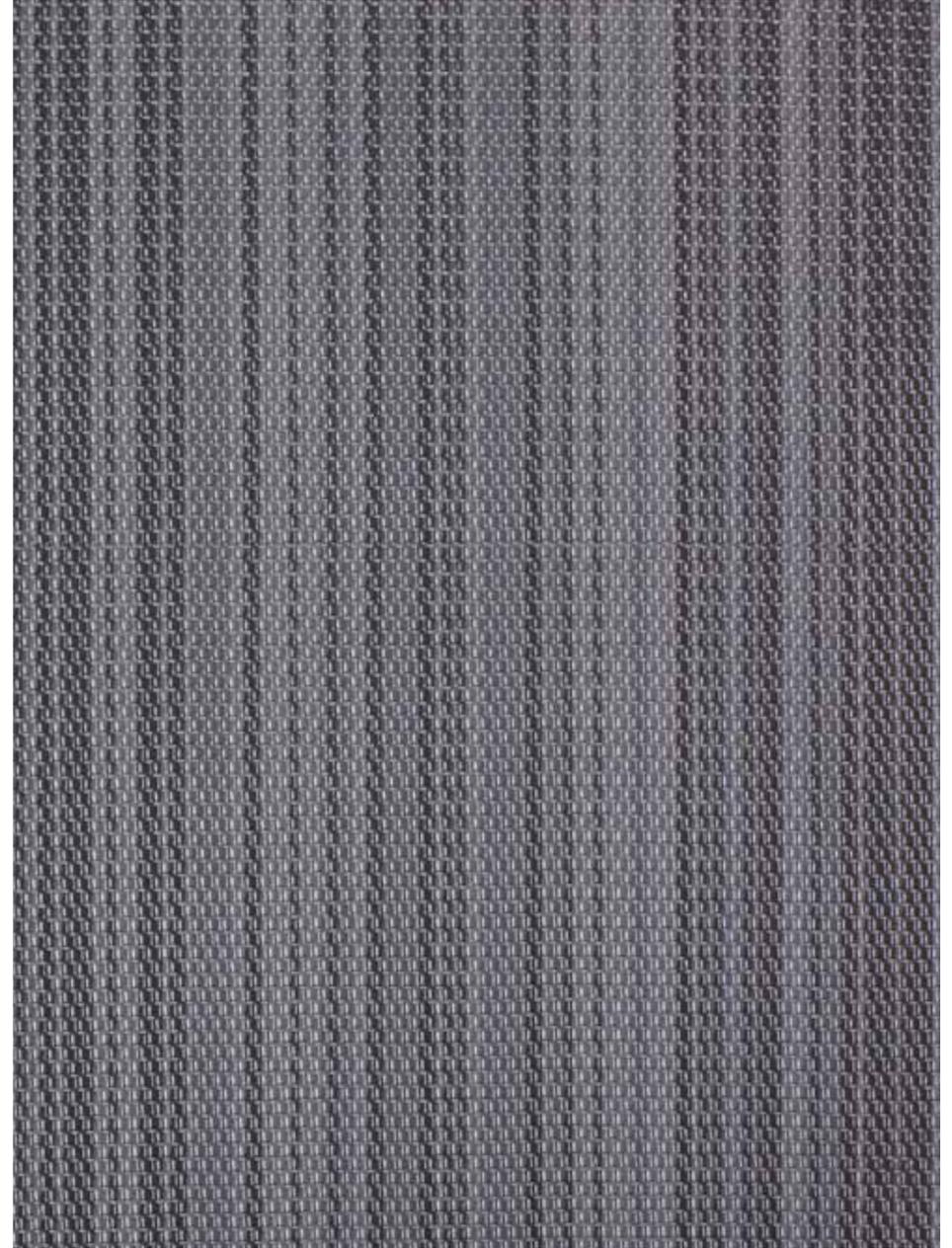
Tom’s favourite floor-covering material, by the way, features in “The Shining”, the 1980 horror film starring Jack Nicholson. “The hotel corridors in the movie have a carpet that is unforgettable; a graphic, hexagonal nightmare that stretches endlessly into the distance.” Maybe Bolon should get the license for the pattern, he suggests playfully, and add it to their collection? #



BKB SISAL NATURE BLACK – PAUL SMITH CREATED A HERRINGBONE PATTERN FROM THE FLOOR THAT WAS LAID IN THE STOCKHOLM FURNITURE FAIR. IT TOOK AN AWFUL LOT OF TIME, BUT THE RESULT WAS STUNNING.



PAUL SMITH, BEING A TRUE PROFESSIONAL, PUT OUR FLOORS TO THE TEST BY TAKING OFF HIS SHOES AND WALKING THEM BAREFOOT. | 41



EIGHT HONG KONG 8AM – A RATHER COOL NAME FOR A RATHER COOL FLOOR. IN A FURNISHED ROOM, THE UNDERSTATED ELEGANCE OF IT CREEPS UP ON YOU.

Annica

BOLON'S MANAGING DIRECTOR DREAMS OF WORLD DOMINATION.

When she was much younger, Annica Eklund was a talented equestrian sportswoman competing for the Swedish national team as a show jumper. A little girl on a big horse, urging the animal towards a high fence and a bold leap of faith; it's a discipline that requires courage and audacity. "If you want to make a jump, you need to learn how to take responsibility for your own actions," says Annica. "You need confidence and a competitive spirit. You need power, ambition and teamwork... the whole package. But most of all, you need guts." It was a similar story when Annica made the big jump from the saddle to the boardroom. »





Annica had grown up in fairly idyllic circumstances. With her parents working hard indoors at the family-run business, her life was mostly outdoors. Summers were languorous and self-sufficient with homemade fudge and roadside hamburgers consumed as she walked towards the local railway station before catching the little train up to the stables. "The fudge is a very strong memory for me," she smiles.

Her obsession with horses was total. Until the age of 25 riding took precedent over everything. She worked full-time with horses, rode and competed for different show jumping organisations both at home and in Denmark.

She broke bones and broke hearts. "If any boys were interested in me, they had to come along with me to the stables." But little by little the horses were left to graze alone and Annica started to think about a career. At first, she worked as a waitress ("I am a woman who is good at many things" she says, archly) but gradually, with her parents' gentle encouragement, the notion of adapting the qualities she had learned in the show-jumping arena (courage and audacity, confidence and competitive spirit, power and ambition) to a career in business, began to appeal.

"Of course, my parents made me and my sister start at the bottom," she says. "To start with, just three hours a day on the factory floor, watching and learning how the weaving production worked."

The factory work was a vital experience for Annica (who reckons she can still identify certain types of Bolon product blindfolded) but her ambitions ran higher than managing the warehouse.

"Eventually, when the family began talking with me about taking over the business, it seemed only natural that I would become the CEO. It suits my personality and with Marie's interest and talent for colour and design, her role as Head of Design was just as obvious. I share the passion for design and creativity with Marie and dare to say that my skills are there as well, still we needed to take the decision which position we should have. Now both of us are very happy and secure with our choices.

Now operating mostly in different parts of the country (Marie in her countryside home, Annica based on-and-off in Stockholm and travelling the world) the sisters' responsibilities are split 50/50. "I am Managing Director, Marie is the Creative Director," says Annica. "She works everything from an initial concept right down to the final touches, making sure that everything that we make maintains our very high standards and brand values.

Do they always see eye to eye... on everything? Pretty much.

"I think there must be some differences of opinion in order not to stifle creativity," says Annica. "But because we share so much, one sister tends to know what the other one is thinking." The girls speak every day on the phone, and often spend time together at weekends - long lunches and Sunday walks. Marie, says Annica, "is more elegant."

"Everything has to be perfect. Her house is in many different shades of grey. Colours are not allowed! It is very tidy with everything in the right place and >







just so. If I take off my shoes and leave them near the door she picks them up and hides them somewhere.”

Of the two sisters, Marie “is definitely the more stubborn,” says Annica. “It can be annoying sometimes but in a way, I guess it is good that she doesn’t give up easily.”

Tenacity and resolution proved vital attributes when Marie and Annica embarked on their Bolon adventure.

Having decided that their family’s traditional product could be very credibly reinvented as “sexy, sensual, elegant, rock ‘n’ roll flooring”, the idea of turning the old Ulricehamn outfit – which was then a catalogue-based, contract business – into fashion-driven concern, regularly met with negativity. “Some old employees said we couldn’t do it,” says Annica. “I would show people pictures from the Giorgio Armani brochure (where the Italian fashion maestro had used Bolon product in a series of Armani advertising spreads) and say, ‘are you crazy? If we can attract someone like Armani, we must be doing something right.’”

So, Annica decided to aim high, “... to really go for the top.” She determined a long-term plan that would establish Bolon as “a creative workplace filled with ambition and kindred spirit” involving collaborations with a hand picked selection of key, high profile designers and architects. Courage and audacity, confidence and ambition, remember?

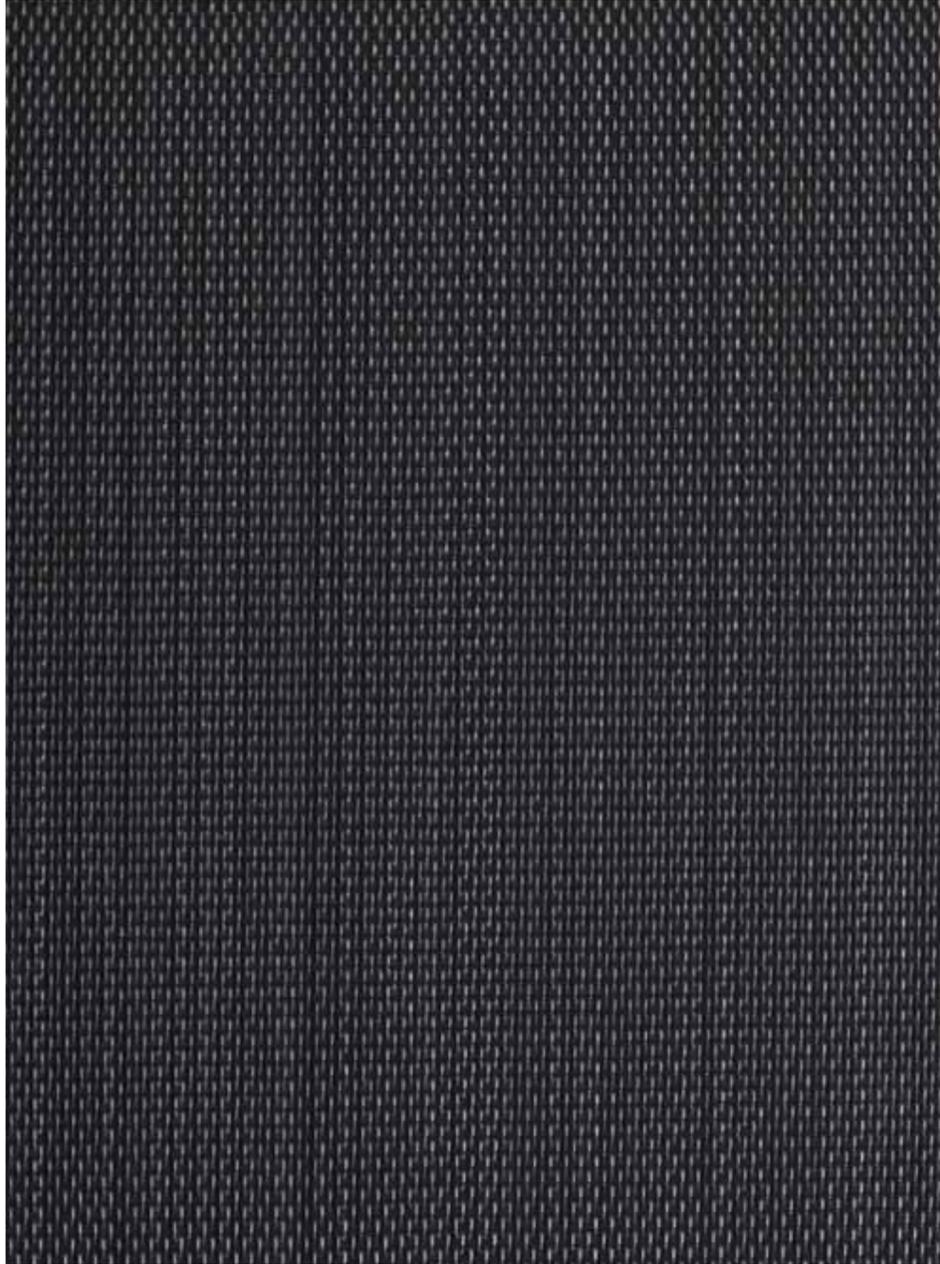
Early approaches were made to Paul Smith (“a fun and fantastic man with such charisma...”) and with Rosita Missoni (“I was confident that we would have a good working relationship because we had a lot in common. The Missoni family very much reminds me of my own family.”) Via a genuine and passionately driven combination of enthusiasm, tenacity and friendly networking the mutually beneficial, collaborative strategy started to pay dividends.

“One of our most important company philosophies at Bolon has always been to take care of our guests when ever we see them and offer an extra warm welcome,” says Annica. “We like to keep things very relaxed. We’re not into white tablecloths or anything too formal.”

Accordingly, Annica’s home in a converted abattoir now features a nightclub in the basement (“It’s in the part of the house where the animals used to come in,” she says) and current projects include the conversion of an old wooden lake house, 20 km from Bolon HQ, which will be used mainly to entertain clients and friends of the brand when then come and visit.

With the burgeoning Bolon family getting bigger all the time, Annica hopes that water-side facility will be put to raucous and regular use.

“The last four years have been really amazing,” she says. “We have grown so much... and all from our little factory in the forest. It fills you with so much energy and love.” Annica Eklund’s tenacious, dare-to-dream vision as Bolon’s Managing Director and figurehead of an ever-growing conduit for the world’s creative elite, remains clear and far-reaching. “Once you have visualised your dream collaboration,” she says. “The rest is easy.” #



SPEKTRA BLACK – THE DIAMOND CUTTERY IN AMSTERDAM HAS THIS BLACK, DISCRETELY PATTERNED FLOOR TO MAKE IT EASY TO SPOT RUNAWAY GEMS.





Lars

SWEDEN'S TECHNICOLOR COUTURIER, LARS WALLIN, OWES
IT ALL TO MCLAINE, HEPBURN, ASTAIRE AND KELLY.

Sweden's pre-eminent couturier may have been raised in the grey of Västerås, Sweden, but even in his youth his vision was always 20/20 Technicolor.

Lars Wallin grew up on divas, dancers, silk gowns and show tunes. As a kid he would sit in front of the TV watching musicals - There's No Business Like Show Business, Funny Face, Singin' In The Rain and Sweet Charity - thrilling to the melodrama, pizzazz and spectacle of Shirley McLaine, Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly dancing across his screen.

He'd sing along to the choruses and marvel at the lush cinematography but mainly, he'd be checking out the frocks. The sumptuous, impossibly chic wardrobes of Hollywood's golden age informed young Lars's visual language, setting a tone for an already-nurturing designer's palette.

"That period (the 1940s, 50s and 60s) had such a big influence on me," says Lars. "Watching those films was absolutely where my fascination with clothing began. Everything was so beautifully balanced and in perfect harmony. The lines and silhouettes of the women's dresses so very chic. The women were feminine and the men shamelessly masculine. For me, that period was perfection and I come back to it time and time again - I never get bored of it."

Years later, when he became a successful fashion designer, Lars would reference his love of movies, Hollywood and gowns when he was asked to create a line of beds, bed-linen and night wear for a Swedish company, naming each of the items after his beloved silver screen stars; Grace & Spencer, Joan & Gregory etc.

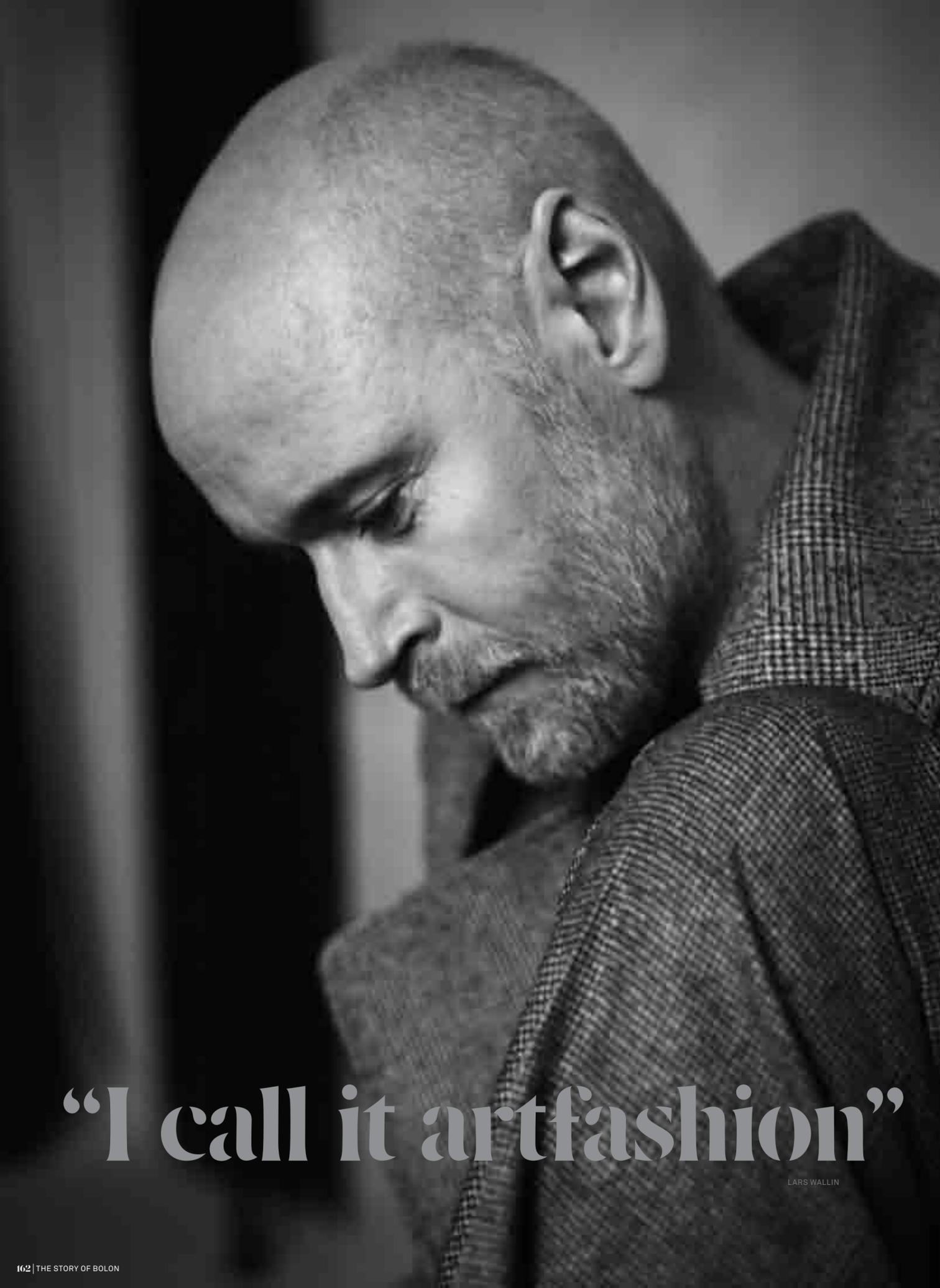
When he wasn't watching TV (in the town Swedes have nicknamed "Cucumber City" - they grow lots of them in the vicinity) Lars liked to observe his parents' parties, staying up beyond his bed time to find out what his mother's friends would be wearing, later making drawings of what he had seen.

"On those party evenings, I'd never want to go to my room," he says. "I'd want see what the ladies were wearing who had the most elegant shoes and the most fashionable cocktail dresses, who had the nicest hair. I was always mesmerized by beautiful things."

Fast forward a few decades and Lars is widely regarded as Sweden's greatest couture designer - a maker of very beautiful things, throwing his own series of parties to celebrate 20 years in the business via a touring exhibition of 90 of his most sumptuous and show-topping confections. In what must seem like a series of fantasy commissions for a boy so enamoured of old fashioned romance and show business glamour, he makes dreamy wedding dresses, creates red carpet ensembles for Miss Sweden, Miss Universe and Miss World pageants. He has dressed princesses, socialites and red carpet stars. Swedish singer Carola Häggkvist wore Lars Wallin for her appearance at the Eurovision Song Contest in Athens 2006. He also conceived the costumes for Gustav III at the Royal Swedish Opera.

Lars designs dresses that appeal to the kind of "cool, strong, confident and independent women who love to be looked at and therefore choose very expressive clothes." His collections are never clichéd. "I always say that clothing is neither art nor fashion," he says. "The result is fashion but when I'm working »





“I call it artfashion”

LARS WALLIN



Thomas

THE BEST-DRESSED ARCHITECT IN SWEDEN WAS RAISED ON MUMIN,
MARIMEKKO AND AALTO.





“Being
an architect makes
me a better designer
– and vice versa.”

THOMAS SANDELL

The best thing about working with Bolon is that they really know how to treat us architects properly," says Thomas Sandell, Sweden's most famous architect. "If you get an invitation from Annica and Marie you know that you are going to have a lovely time; great wine, delicious food, warm and fun company. This is unusual. Architects rarely get to go to good parties."

Clearly, convivial hospitality is important to Sandell. Recently, whilst working on a project of 10 bright green, luxury holiday homes in Sochi, the Russian ski resort on the Black Sea coast and host city of the 2014 Winter Olympics, his construction team uncovered a tunnel from the new properties leading to a nearby *datja*, once owned by the notorious Soviet dictator Stalin.

Lesser professionals in this position may have been chilled at the historic discovery, quickly blocking up the passageway to continue work on the primary site, but Sandell, immediately thrilled and inspired by what he had come across, had other ideas.

Thomas is now confident that the subterranean "Stalin Bar" will be ready to serve its first round of celebratory vodka shots to Swedish gold medal winners when the winter games opens in one year time. "The tunnel was built as an escape route for Stalin, in the circumstances of a revolution, so turning into a bar seemed like the perfect solution," he says with a wry smile.

This is typical Sandell. A humorous, charismatic and tirelessly prolific opportunist, his boundless creativity thrives on the mixed media of spontaneity, instinct and myriad collaborations as well as the design of new buildings. Founding the Stockholm-based architectural practice sandellsandberg in 1995 with his partners Ulf Sandberg and Joakim Jebel, the company now works across architecture, interiors, product design and advertising.

He's designed everything from the Stockholm Stock Exchange to a corkscrew for Georg Jensen. And is there any family in the western world who doesn't have a couple of the white plastic VÄGÖ garden chairs that Sandell designed for IKEA's PS range back in 1995?

"Variety enriches me in my trade," he will tell you. "Being an architect makes me a better designer - and vice versa. I'm good at doing a lot of different things at the same time."

Indeed. Sandell has designed interiors at the Museum of Modern Art and the Swedish Museum of Architecture. Currently, he's building a row of 41 houses at Lidingö, just outside Stockholm. A group of vacation homes in Bodrum, Turkey proved so successful he purchased one himself. As a furniture designer he has collaborated with the likes of Artek, Asplund, B&B Italia, CBI, Cappellini, Gärnsås. He's conceived candlesticks, corkscrews, table lamps and, for Palmgrens, leather and canvas luggage inspired by Danish postal bags and old school satchels.

For Sandell, typical Scandinavian design frequently references nature. "Normally, it is very closely connected to natural materials such as wood, and quite light colours - probably because we don't have much sunlight. We live »





very close to nature. When you think about Italian design, it is totally different - they are more connected to urban life." Design in Sweden, he believes, "is more happy, organic, but not surrealistic. It keeps moving on."

To the winner of 11 Utmärkt Svensk Form (Swedish design excellence awards) it seems as if there is a tacit, national understanding that good design has to be functional. "You are considered to be doing a bad job if you don't have functionality in design - that's the mentality of Swedish design. Yet sometimes design is not functional, which I think is also interesting."

Thomas Sandell's introduction to Bolon came in 2007 whilst he was working on as judge on the prestigious red dot awards with his friend Jasper Morrisson. "We were looking at things like mobile phones and ceramics when suddenly I went into a room and saw this fantastic flooring reflecting the light," he says. "It was good to look at with a particular architectural quality... but also rough and tough. The kind of thing that would cope with heavy footfall in an office and wild parties in the home. For some reason, I presumed Bolon to be a Belgian or Dutch company, so I was delighted when I discovered it was Swedish."

Sandell bestowed on Bolon the red dot award for product design and quickly forged a friendly working relationship with Annica and Marie Eklund, recently being co-opted onto the company's familial advisory board. "The Eklund sisters are very easy to like, for different reasons. Marie is quite reserved and still lives in the country, while Annica is more lively, extrovert and very much part of the Stockholm social scene. But their ideas are totally integrated. We all speak the same language."

While he may be an indefatigable champion of Swedish product design, Sandell was actually born a Finn, growing up in the north of Sweden with Swedish-Finnish dual heritage. As a child, summers were spent in Finland at his grandparent's house surrounded by random examples of 20th century Finnish design; Mumin, Marimekko and, most significantly for Thomas, pieces by Alvar Aalto.

Leaving school, he briefly toyed with the idea of becoming a dentist but dropped out of oral studies after only a few weeks beginning instead, a degree in architecture at The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. Graduating in the mid-80s, early work quickly earned Thomas a high profile; Rolfs kök restaurant and a luxurious fashion boutique Les Enfants Gâtés, owned by the art collector and financier Fredrik Roos. Soon, he assumed the role of Swedish ambassador for design, travelling to Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles sometimes accompanied by of Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria.

By now, the world was waking up to the elegant, natural simplicity of the Swedish aesthetic. Thomas and Gert Wingårdh designed the new head office for Ericsson in London. The Swedish government asked them to design the environment and meeting rooms for the Swedish Presidency in the EU. A more recent commission is a beautiful new hotel in Djurgården and some quite extraordinary mobile phone aerials.

Thomas Sandell, it should be noted, is widely regarded as the best dressed man in Sweden. #



ETHNIC KAISE – WHEN ADIDAS AND REEBOK ORDERED A CUSTOM WEAVE FOR THEIR AMSTERDAM OFFICES THE RESULT WAS SO PRETTY THAT WE MADE IT A PART OF OUR STANDARD ASSORTMENT. ETHNIC KAISE HAS SOLD WELL, BOLSTERING OUR HUNCH THAT PEOPLE WHO KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT FOOTWEAR WILL ALSO KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT FLOORS.



BOTANIC PYRUS – BOLON IS THE FIRST PRODUCER IN THE WORLD TO USE 100% RENEWABLE SOFTENER IN VINYL FLOORING. THIS IS ONE OF OUR STEPS TOWARDS A FUTURE WHERE WE DON'T LEAVE ANY FOOTPRINTS AT ALL.

Jaime

THE LATEST DESIGN MAVERICK TO COME OUT OF SPAIN BELIEVES IN HAPPINESS.

Just before his wedding last year, Jaime Hayon got back on his skateboard. It had been a while since he'd attempted a 'Street Plant' trick or an 'Ollie Airwalk' manoeuvre, but the Spanish designer felt he needed to reconnect with the explosive youth cult that had informed his formative days as a nascent designer. "Skating is one of those things that you don't forget...but I actually fell off and injured myself," laughs Jaime. The board-handling skills might not be quite as sharp as they used to be but a hardwired appreciation of a still evolving aesthetic, vital to young Jaime's visual language as Spain's most prominent designer remained fast and true.

The freewheeling skateboard culture that incorporated fashion, style, graphics, graffiti art music and an alternative attitude, personified the new found sense of post-Franco liberation that prevailed in his home country during Jaime's teenage years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Skate on to the present day and Hayon is older, wiser, aesthetically mature, but still acutely tuned in to the newest trends, youth cults and technological developments. He's also one of the most highly regarded designers of his generation. "I think that your cultural/background has a great deal to do with who you are," he says. "One's identity is a mix of background and life journey. My work is very personal and it comes from who I am and what I have learnt in my path."

In the grand and quirky tradition of fellow Spanish mavericks such as Mariscal and Gaudi, Hayon's work is all about lightness, humour, beauty, irony, technology and fantasy. With a portfolio that takes in furniture, art, architecture interiors, shoes and even wrist watches, Time magazine called him a "visionary" while Wallpaper* ranked him amongst the world's most relevant designers of the last decade. His style has been described, variously, as "baroque", "neo-surrealist" "surrealist" and "minimal decorative". In truth, he is a little bit of all of these things...and simultaneously indefinable. "Design needs to solve the problem and be long lasting, of course," he says. "But it is important to remember that my design is made for humans - to be used by humans. I believe that design should provoke emotions. Design should make you feel good. Create happiness." »





“I’m
trying
to show
my life through
my
projects”

JAIME HAYON



Madrid-born Jaime says he is a strong believer in tradition and history. To him, design needs have charisma, ion and verve. Pieces that don't tell a story are cold and soulless, no matter how beautiful and well crafted they are. "I'm trying to show my life through my projects," says Jaime.

Nature, being outdoors in amongst beauty and the raw materials that always stimulate his creative process, is what inspires Jaime most. "But this doesn't mean disregarding technology, modern manufacturing techniques and new materials. In order to come up with a good interpretation of the right now, it is essential to keep one an eye on the past and the other on the future."

With a passion for heritage, modernity, the environment and story telling, it is not hard to see why the Bolon team regarded Jaime Hayon as an ideal collaborator as soon as they became aware of his career.

An initial encounter occurred in 2008, when Jaime was invited to be the youngest ever Guest of Honour at Interieuro8 in Kortrijk, Belgium. Curating a comprehensive retrospective of his work to date, the designer chose Bolon's 'Now' collection for his show at the exhibition. Jaime raved about the quality and innovation of the Swedish floor covering and the Hayon/Bolon connection was secured.

Now Annica and Marie proposed a second collaboration. In 2010, Hayon opted for Bolon's Botanic flooring when he showcased an installation entitled 'Interni Think Tank', at the Università degli Studi di Milano. His luminous, Smart Grid Gallery (which looked like it had escaped from the Tron movie set) formed the framework for an imaginary world connected to various forms of renewable energies. Inspired by an electronic circuit board, the pavilion constantly transformed, creating an immaculate and intriguing environment. It was a show-stopper with an important message about the environment.

Hayon's project highlighted the need for grid designs that can draw energy generated from water, the sun, wind and geothermal sources communicating with "prosumers" (producer/consumers). It's dizzyingly technical, fantastically futuristic stuff.

In the not-too-distant future, the young visionary explains, smart grids will make it possible for everyone to interact and exchange energy, increasing efficiency and fostering the spread of renewable energy. "Just like the Internet has done for information."

Jaime's journey from street skater to dream maker began when he studied industrial design in Madrid and Paris. He joined the Benetton-funded design and communication academy Fabrica in 1997, working with the company's legendary Art Director Oliverio Toscani, quickly working his way up from intern to Head of the Design department.

Now living in Valencia, Spain with offices in London, Barcelona and Treviso, Jaime's busy studio works with a diverse client base making shoes, ceramics and furniture, designing interiors for hotels, restaurants and stores. Ideas and inspiration, he says, come fast and without warning, in the most unlikely of situations.

"My mind is very inquisitive," he says wistfully. "I can be very creative, even if I end up drawing in coffee shops and airports... instead of facing the beautiful endless sea." #





ARTISAN SLATE.



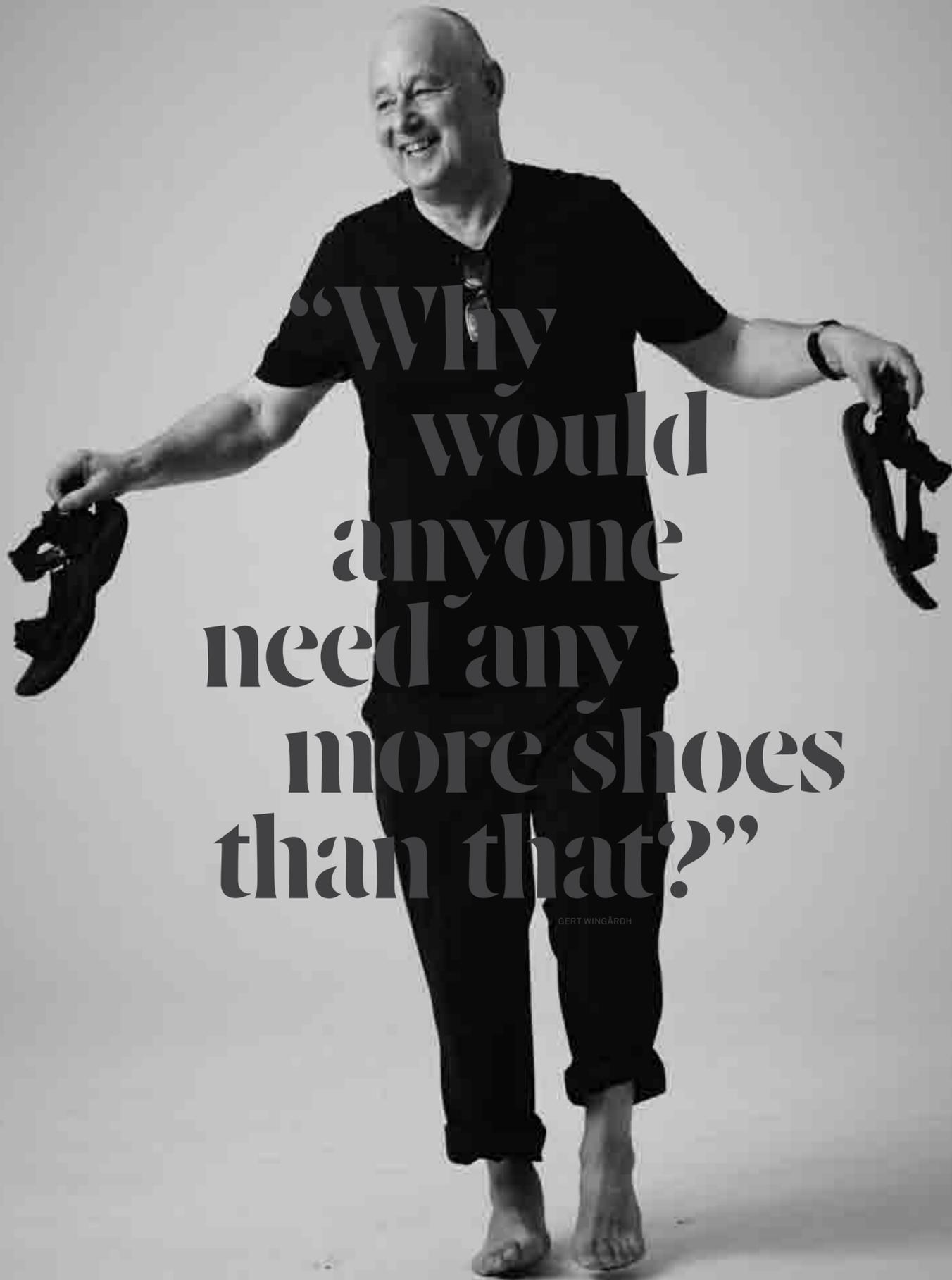
ARTISAN OIL.



Gert

GERT WINGÅRDH - UNCONVENTIONAL, UNCOMPROMISING,
INDIVIDUAL AND ECCENTRICALLY BRILLIANT.





“Why would anyone need any more shoes than that?”

GERT WINGÅRDH

While it is only right and proper to acknowledge the myriad achievements, awards and ground-breaking buildings conceived by Sweden's greatest living architect, paying respect to his commitment to a better, more spectacular and environmentally responsible world with projects such as Gothenburg's Universeum Science Centre and Müritzeum in Waren it is Gert Wingårdh's idiosyncratic and somewhat ascetic choice of footwear that must be dealt with first.

On the day Bolon meets Gert, for instance, he explains that he is about to head off for a client meeting in Munich where it will be 10 degrees below freezing. For the preliminary leg of this trip - the bit where he is between car, departure lounge, airport tarmac and business class seat, he will be electing footwear option no. 1. A pair of Teva outdoor sandals. The Moses-goes-hiking type with the Velcro straps and the all-terrain sole. Probably with a pair of socks, in consideration of the somewhat inclement temperature. “The Teva is a very good taxi sandal,” says Gert. “Very practical at airports and good for getting in and out of taxis.”

In summer time, the Teva sandals will be worn with no hosiery but any other more extreme seasons/conditions/temperatures/weather fronts (i.e. away from airport terminals, taxis and German winters) will require Wingårdh footwear option no. 2. Curling boots.

“The Swiss company Bally does a very nice traditional pair,” says Gert, with a matter-of-fact tone that suggests gentle contempt for any one who does not understand his strict and economic shoe policy. “They come with a rubber sole so that you don't slip over on the ice.” Indeed. Bally's handmade, raw rubber and suede, fur-lined curling bootees, while said to be the some of the safest and warmest shoes on the planet, are only sold in Sweden and Finland because they are considered too ugly to be commercially viable in other parts of the world.

And that's it? Just two pairs of shoes? Both choices, stylistically contrapuntal and of an acquired, jolie laide appeal? “Why would any one need any more shoes than that?” comes the rhetorical reply. This is typical Gert Wingårdh; unconventional, uncompromising, individual, eccentrically brilliant.

He first became acquainted with the Bolon team whilst doing the rounds of the international trade fair scene (Tevas for Milan, Curling boots for Stockholm, one presumes) and was impressed, not only by the floor coverings (“For something that is synthetic, Bolon is, in a sense, a human product. The weave is not perfect adding the interesting element of texture to its attraction.”) but also by Annica and Marie Eklund's intelligent transformation of the company from a contract business to an aspirational, interior design luxury. “What they did was very clever and quite unusual - take something that was once thought of as a good but rather mundane thing and turn it in to something completely new.”

The girls approached the reinvention of Bolon with a fashion sensibility, Gert suggests. “They gave the company a face and a personality. This is important when you are in the world of design.”

The prolific and unpredictable architect believes that the location of Bolon HQ in Ulricehamn, western Sweden, commercially linked to the sea by the busy trade »

river Ätran, is key to its indigenous industry, innovation and know-how. "I think it is important to understand the significance of this," he says. "That particular area of Sweden has always been central to the country's textiles and hi-tech industries and Bolon is part of that tradition. It's connected to the sea and to the rest of the world, so open to new ideas and new products."

Gert Wingårdh is similarly open to new concepts in his work and remains an expressive, tirelessly interpretive and adaptable architect who likes to keep people guessing by refusing to adhere to any one style. Having grown up in Skövde Västergötland, where his family owned the local cement quarry, he once described his work as "high organic"—modern materials integrated into organic lines. It was a neat signature that spoke of light wood, the limestone and cement of his childhood and a sympathetic but adroit response to surrounding environmental and social conditions, and sensitive to human behaviour — a very Swedish approach to building, in fact.

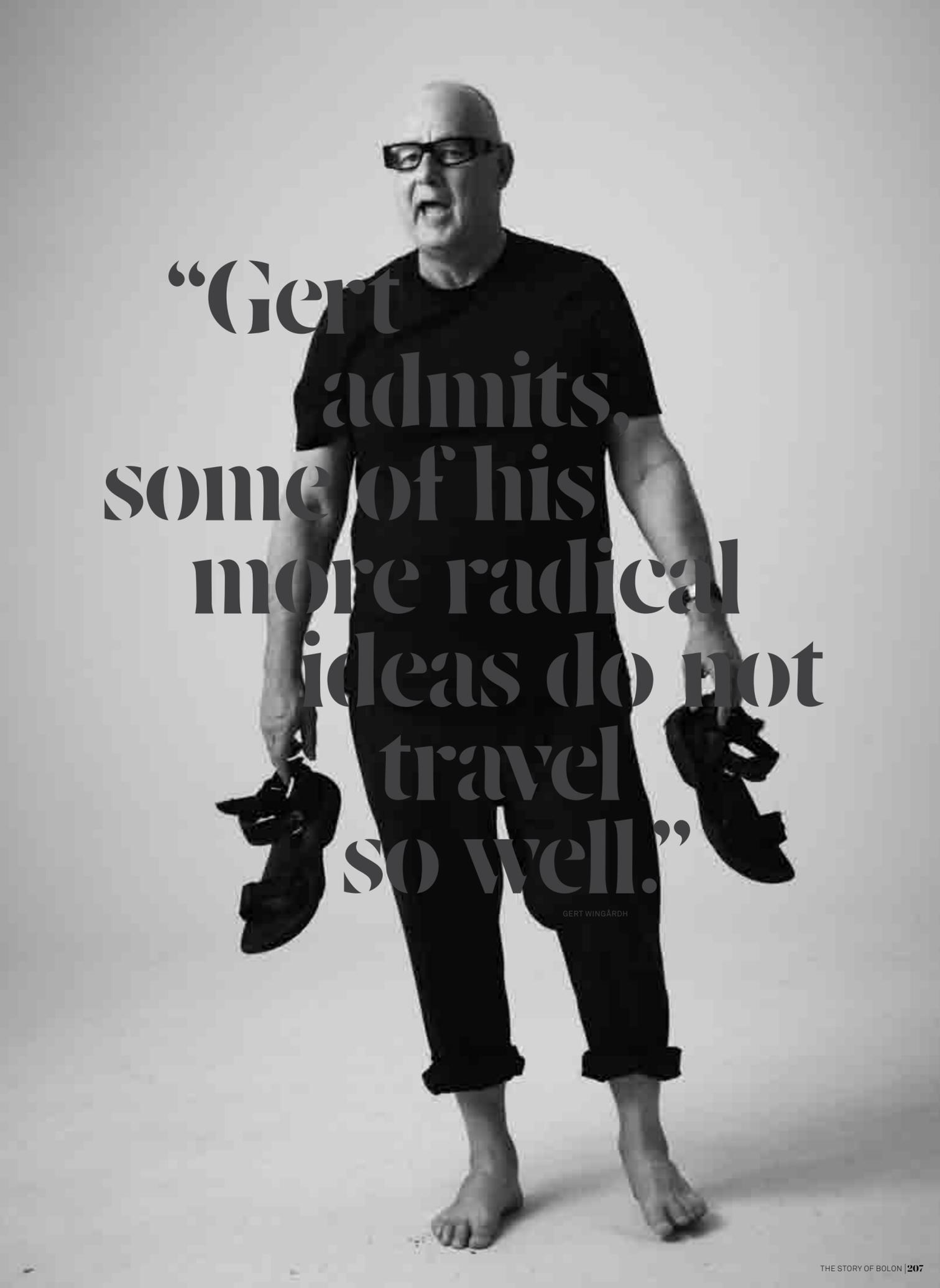
This brought him great success and repute in Sweden (in 2007 a national daily newspaper listed seven of the twelve hottest architecture projects in Stockholm as designed by Wingårdh) but now Gert wants to up the ante again, move on from "high organic" ("that was fifteen years ago!") use materials that don't automatically reference Scandinavia, become a world architect rather than just Swedish one. Wingårdh Arkitektkontor is currently working on major projects in China and the US.

"Traditionally, it was always Danish architects that were regarded as more skilled than Swedish ones," he says. "But we are catching up fast and getting a good reputation world wide. The influx of Danish architects coming in to Sweden during the current housing boom has encouraged us to up our game. And this is a good time for Sweden. We are not, like the rest of Europe, suffering economically, and the Euro crisis has not impacted on our industry like it has in the rest of the continent. The architecture scene is exciting, there are a lot of very interesting furniture designers emerging also. Sweden's music and fashion are strong too."

Occasionally, Gert admits, some of his more radical ideas do not travel so well. A few years ago, whilst working for a German client he proposed a building with an exterior of black, charred wood, perhaps as a sort of post-modern, pyromanical antidote to the light woods of Scandinavia. "When you suggest to someone that you want them to pay for their expensive new building to be set on fire, they don't always react positively," he shrugs. "So I brought the project back to Sweden."

Of course, the original client eventually saw the error of his judgement (and the brilliance of Gert's left-field creativity) and the German building was completed.

Now, 61, Gert occasionally allows himself to enjoy both the glamour and sense of satisfaction that the life of a globally renowned architect engenders. When he passes through his home town he sees buildings that he has designed. "I enjoy that," he says. "The science centre in Gothenburg is attended by half a million people every year and everybody moves through the building in the way that I thought they would. That's kind of empowering." #



“Gert admits, some of his more radical ideas do not travel so well.”

GERT WINGÅRDH



Peter

DESIGN ACCORDING TO IMMANUEL KANT WITH PETER ULLSTAD.



Spring 2010. The persistent, belching eruptions of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull have caused a huge ash cloud to descend over Europe and all flights out of major cities are temporarily cancelled. In Milan, it is the end of Salone del Mobile week and 52 key names from the Scandinavian design industry need to get home. They pool their resources, empty their bank accounts and hire a coach.

The drive is going to take over 33 hours so this disparate bunch will need to find some way of bonding with one another and breaking up the tedium during the endless stretches of freeway, toll gates, comfort stops and the unforeseen break-down in Germany, ahead.

Passenger Peter Ullstad of Codesign - architect, clothes horse and inveterate freethinker - keen to head back to his HQ in Stockholm, comes up with a novel suggestion; a game he calls "design baton".

Ullstad divides the bus up into smaller groups and gives each one a pad of paper and a pen. For the next day and a half, the bus becomes a brainstorming, mobile mood-board of ideas, concepts and sketches. Some are good, some more the product of boredom and exhaustion than inspiration.

At the end of the long journey, one idea actually makes it to the prototype stage; working with fellow Swedish outfits Källemo and Gärsnäs, Peter Ullstad conceives the Ercol-influenced rocking bench, named MilanoStockholm (after the aforementioned interminable bus ride) and its first rendition is exhibited at Stockholm Furniture Fair in 2011. A production run is now expected.

Naturally, a piece of furniture with such a great story to tell, had to have its slender rockers sitting on an appropriate, sympathetic and aesthetically congenial floor covering. Ullstad called his friends at Bolon.

A suitably charred and volcanic-looking floor covering of a charcoal grey, herring bone weave - ecologically sustainable, of course - was chosen. Ullstad and co's ash cloud rocker had found its scorched earth home.

This sort of thing is business as usual to Peter Ullstad who is no stranger to oblique and sideways concepts of design. His Codesign company name comes from the pragmatist tradition, with its roots in the philosophy of Germany's Immanuel Kant, who suggested that all human artifacts are designed and with a purpose, with one trying to include those perspectives related to the design in the process. The quality of design, proposed Kant, increases if the stakeholders' interests are considered in the process. Co-design is a development of systems thinking, "where you view the world through the eyes of another."

So, when Ullstad's Codesign outfit was asked to work on Oslo's Klima X exhibition in 2006, showcasing the causes, effects and possible solutions to global warming and climate change, he flooded the show space with shin-deep water, offering visitors rubber boots to wear at reception. Ullstad got the idea whilst wading across St. Mark's Square (Piazza San Marco) in Venice during an unexpected rise in canal water. The concept proved to be completely interactive and highly effective with guests able to experience the sensations of climate change with every sloshing step. Kant would have been so proud of him.

For someone who thinks, listens and considers before he designs, Ullstad's eye-catching portfolio of work tends to be shot through with an altruistic and practical, user-friendly sensibility; a derelict warehouse becomes a school and a mountainside restaurant is a fun, ski-thru affair. "With that project we proved just how hard wearing Bolon flooring is," says Peter, who first came across the Ulricehamn company after reading about it in a newspaper article. "In my opinion, this was the ultimate test for Bolon because conditions in a ski resort are worse than in a prison. Hundreds of people in heavy and hard ski boots, dropping food and drink all over the floor. But it survived and still looks good."

Bolon came into play at other Ullstad/Codesign projects. "Swedish Love Stories" at the Stockholm Furniture Fair for Superstudio Pih, a show at Nordiska Museet where he used Bolon, not just as a floor cover but also as wall-mounted relief, cutting the material into jagged peaks "like a 3-d graphics on a video game... a computerised abstraction of a natural, physical environment that would draw people in."

Inevitably, as one of the first architects in Sweden to start integrating Bolon into his various assignments (Peter says he will often start a design for a building with the flooring "because if you don't control the floor, the ceilings and the walls can become distracting billboards") the early-adopting Codesign CEO formed a bond with Marie and Annica Eklund.

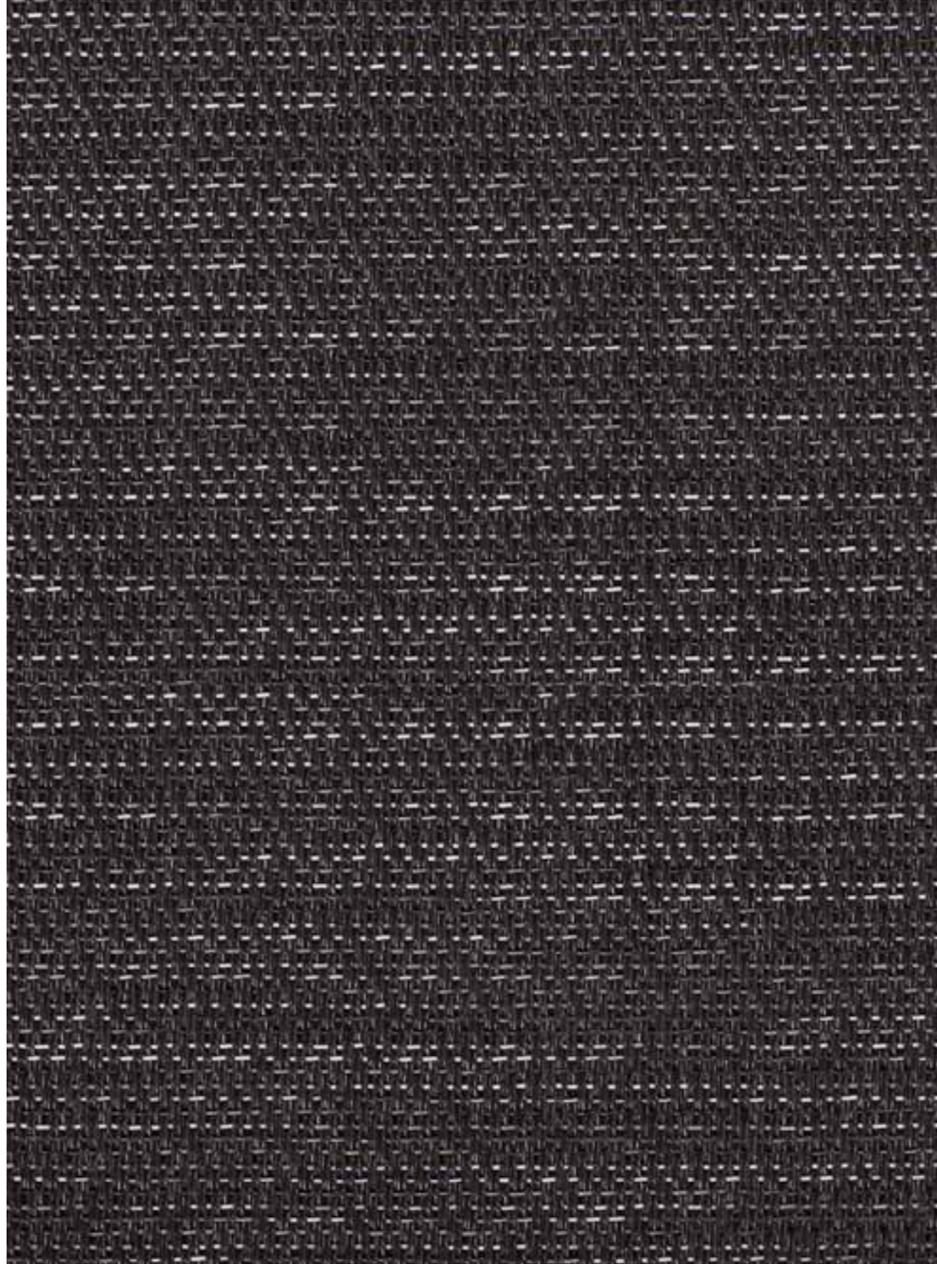
Now he works closely with Bolon (a new Ullstad-conceived tile design is in development) and regularly lunches with the Eklund sisters at their respective homes.

"We have become very close friends and I probably know them too well to have an impartial opinion of them," he smiles. "But I have a great deal of admiration for the way that they took something utilitarian and made so fashionable and exciting that people like Giorgio Armani started using it."

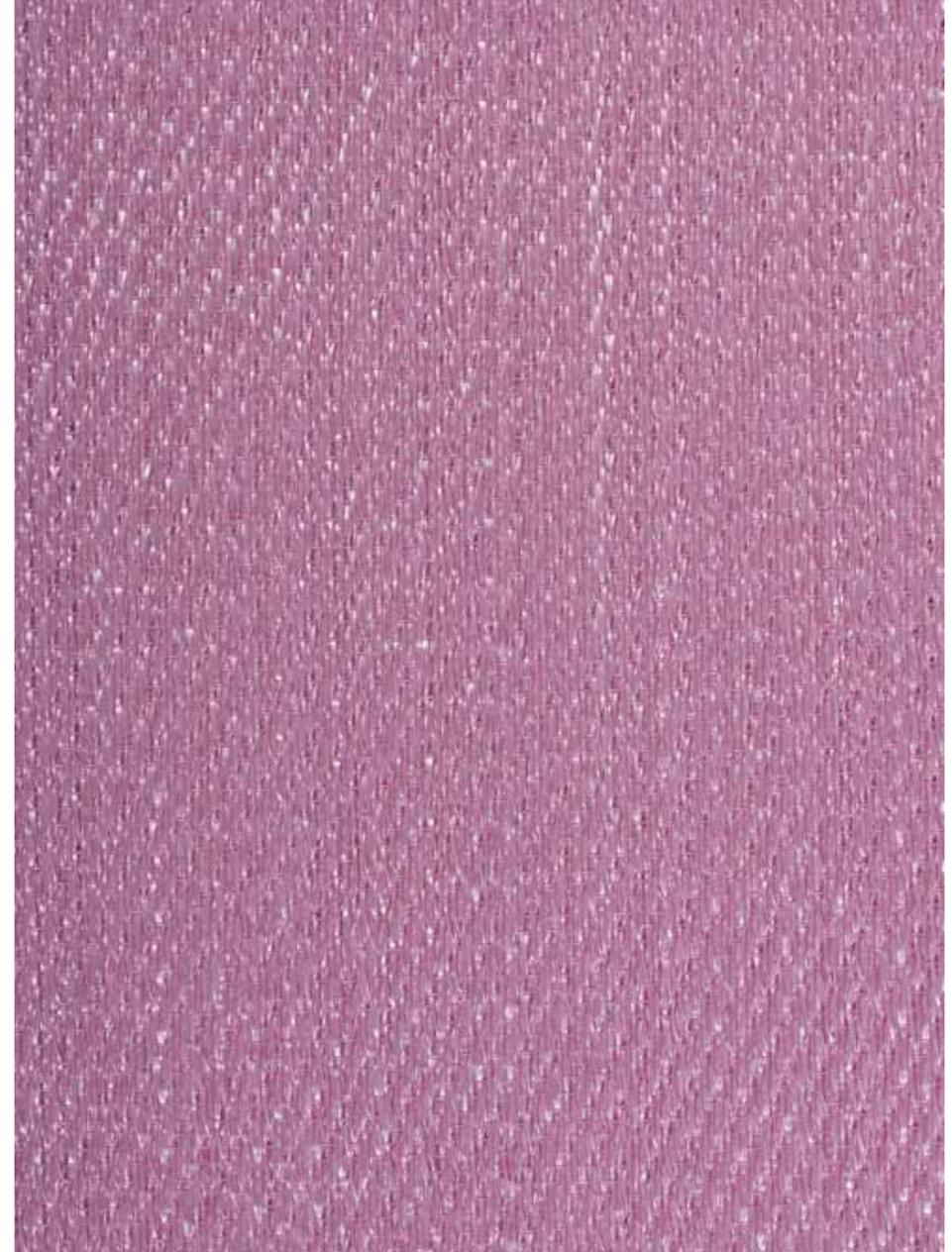
Mostly, Ullstad says, he likes the way that Annica and Marie are defiantly not "lagom".

Lagom? "It's Swedish word, and a Scandinavian lifestyle choice, that means enough, sufficient, adequate... a bit boring. Lagom is a very Swedish attitude. The Eklund girls are far too glamorous, ambitious and interesting to be anything as dull as lagom... or 'jante'" Which is very worthy, Lutheran set of rules where everyone has to know his place "and you should never oversell yourself or make a brand of yourself."

"The way they work is counter to those prescriptive, national characteristics concepts," explains Peter. "What Marie and Annica do is instinctive not just strategic. They have respect for the family traditions of the company but are not scared to keep taking it forward," he says. "Not bad for a couple of farm girls." #



ARTISAN COAL – TO ILLUSTRATE THE VERSATILITY OF THIS COLLECTION WE DESIGNED A FLOOR IN THE FORM OF THE FACE OF AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN. IT MEASURED 16x20 METERS AND IT TOOK US 80 HOURS JUST TO CUT OUT THE 300 UNIQUE PIECES OF ARTISAN.



NOW PINK – A GERMAN CUSTOMER ORDERED A SPECIAL CARPET FOR A PET DOG, EVEN SENDING US A LIFE-SIZE PAPER CUT-OUT SO THAT WE WOULD GET THE SHAPE JUST RIGHT. NOT ONLY DID THE CARPET HAVE TO HAVE A SPECIAL SIZE AND SHAPE, IT ALSO HAD TO BE RESISTANT TO DOG PEE.

**“We have
carried
each other
through
many fun and
career-defining
years”**

FORM US WITH LOVE, ABOUT THEIR COLLABORATION WITH BOLON.





So...where will it end

God knows. Meanwhile, here is a book about woven vinyl flooring. Why not? After all, cathedrals, symphonies, paintings and haute couture get more than their fair share of being portrayed in books. They have journeys - but so do floors, floors deserve books, too. If Michelangelo could make unforgettable ceilings, why shouldn't the great designers of our age be encouraged to create unforgettable floors?

And the end is nowhere in sight. The Bolon journey goes on, as the full story unravels this is a floor that will