



WOTH

wonderful things

N°6

One wonderful year
of WOTH!

all things design and creative

PEOPLE PLACES THINGS



PEOPLE

Jaime Hayon
Hella Jongerius
Bertjan Pot
Wieki Somers
Vincent van Duysen
Matteo Cibic

PLACES

The lifes and works
of Studio Boot
Luca Nichetto's
Stockholm
Solo Houses
WOTHSON

THINGS

The portfolio of
Scheltens&Abbenes
Pants Gents
Colour explosion
in London
WOTH Warehouse!



Vincent van Duysen
antwerp

calm, SUBDUED awareness

‘I’m pretty certain I have some Italian blood running through my veins’

With a second monograph shortly due to be released, Belgian architect Vincent van Duysen is widely recognized as an international celebrity in architecture and design. Over the past 30 years Van Duysen has created a series of exquisite buildings and houses, and designed products and furniture for leading international brands like B&B Italia, Flos, Herman Miller and David Sutherland. In his Antwerp studio, we talked to Vincent about his early career, the sensibility of his architecture and his creative involvement in the reinvigoration of Molteni&C. ‘Even though I’m a Northern European by birth, I feel perfectly at home there. I’m pretty certain I have some Italian blood running through my veins, probably because of the ancestry of my mother’s family,’ Vincent smiles. ‘I consider Milan my second hometown, not least because I began my professional career there after finishing my studies at the St Lucas Higher Institute of Architecture in Ghent. Obviously, for an epicurean like myself, Italy is important. Anybody who cares about beauty must inevitably love Italian culture and heritage.’

affair

This love affair turned out to be a particularly happy one. It started 30 years ago and is still going strong. Under the influence of Memphis, my studies at Ghent were completely focused on ‘form’ and designing single objects of a decidedly strong nature. In retrospect, my own calm, contemplative approach to spaces and products is the complete opposite. But as

a youngster I still had to invent and find my own signature. So Memphis drove me to Milan in the mid-1980s, where I started an internship at the studio of Aldo Cibic, one of the founding members of the Memphis Group (together with Ettore Sottsass, Mendini and others). It was during my stay that Cibic embarked on the concept for the ‘Standard Collection’, which was fundamentally contrary to everything Memphis stood for. We started composing families of furniture and accessories aimed at creating a sense of quality and harmony within the home. The approach was basically modular, compliant to the practice of those days. Yet the furniture described space in an architectural manner. And this appealed to me. The project served as a primer in the sense that it altered my design approach.

abitare

After my return to Flanders in the early 1990s, I distanced myself even more from the trends of the day. As an assistant to a ‘classic’ beaux arts designer, I devoted two years of my early career to decorating homes and discovering the tricks and trade of interior design. Today, almost 30 years down the line as a practising architect, I have designed many buildings, offices and houses. But the design of the living space has always been my main focus, before and above everything else. Understanding how to design a home – as a place where people can feel relaxed and contemplate the day’s work – requires more than just the arrangement of a collection of individual

things or furniture. Bringing logic to a plan and creating harmony between objects, spaces and voids can be quite a puzzle. But the most challenging task is the creation of a truly ‘sensorial’ environment for the ‘art of living’. That’s my own definition of what the Italians refer to as ‘abitare’: ‘dwelling, residing.’ It’s a calm, subdued awareness, which I hope you can experience in my architecture. Nothing trendy, in your face or dogmatic: timelessness is what I try to define.

surprise

This calmness of style, the pure, elemental approach to form, his subdued palette of colours and his refined choice of materials and textures are what caught the eye of Carlo Molteni. ‘Even to be considered for the position of creative director came as a surprise. I accepted the invitation to start thinking about the reinvigoration of Molteni&C when I was asked at the end of 2015. For as long as I can remember, back to when I first travelled to Milan at the end of the 1980s, Molteni has been at the very top. The great colours and, in particular, the architectural form language of Aldo Rossi and Luca Meda were clearly visible in the Molteni stands at the Salone. The furniture planted the quality of the brand ‘Made in Italy’ firmly in the minds of international end users and retailers. This perception was not limited to the product, but also extended to the awareness of the brand and its painstaking attention to detail.

This type of consistency is a rare trait and – though not entirely

the work of one man – is largely due to the commitment and hard work of Carlo Molteni. He is at the factory every day, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and is very proud of the family business, which was started by his father, Angelo. Carlo recently started the process of handing over the reins to the next generation: Guilia, Giovanni and Andrea. I became involved with Molteni in 2015 through my design for a sofa (Paul). From there the bond between the family, Carlo and myself grew naturally. Although I have been working for almost 30 years as an architect, I was a bit overwhelmed in the beginning. But it didn’t take long to adjust. Molteni is a family business that dates back 80 years. The company’s main factory and its subsidiary brands (Dada, Unifor and Citterio) employ more than 1,000 people and cater to the needs of all kinds of suppliers and specialists in the Milan region. It is a type of sustainability ‘in the making’, so to speak. Carlo Molteni is a businessman and a decisionmaker who is committed to delivering quality. These characteristics are rare and they really help to drive things forward. I find it all very captivating.

interview Toon Lauwen
photo Jan-Willem Kaldenbach