



# THE TIMELESS DESIGN OF VINCENT VAN DUYSSEN

The projects of Belgian architect and *designer* Vincent Van Duysen are *intellectual*, minimalist, and sensual. His architectural language elegantly conveys *aesthetics* while avoiding *fashion* and trends. His unique interdisciplinary approach forms the *foundation* of all his creative concepts. Today, the Vincent Van Duysen Architects *firm*, founded in 1989, *handles* a wide range of projects, from large-scale architectural designs not only in *Europe* but also in the Middle East, Asia, and the U.S., to product *designs* for numerous *international* brands.

In an *exclusive* interview for L'Officiel, Vincent Van Duysen discussed his *collaboration* with Zara Home on a furniture and decor collection, his creative *journey* as the creative director of the *Italian* brand Molteni&C, and his philosophy on *contemporary* art.

By ALEXEY NILOV, VALERIA SAVENKO *Photographer:* SASHA OLSEN  
*Stylist & creative direction:* SIMONE SNIKERS *Producer:* JULIE VAN DAMME LAGOE  
*Production:* EUROCONNECTION LISBON & CAPE TOWN  
*Location:* PRIVATE PROPERTY CASA M IN MELIDES







*What are the most challenging things in the creative process for Zara Home?*

I wouldn't say there were challenges, but I had to be precise on how to create designs that reflected my own habitat and to distill and render them into accessible products in terms of quality versus price. Together with Zara Home we wanted to contain price points without compromising quality and materials.

*Can you share some ideas, about the Mood of your latest Zara Home Collection?*

With this third drop, we took a different approach from the previous two installments. Still heavily inspired by the first two collections, this new drop is more focused on objects which range from wooden to bronze vases to more sculptural objects also doubling both as self-standing decorative elements in space or on a tabletop, a pedestal, or a nightstand beside a geometrical daybed as an addition to the sofas. With subtlety, we added a component that can be placed around the sofa, acting as a screen that embraces the sofa but at the same time it can hold books and objects, in solid wood with embedded metal containers/niches so two textures in one piece.

We added a free-standing low chair which creates a little twist and is more dynamic compared to the previous Collections. It is utilitarian and functional yet has a sculptural character, reminiscent of vintage chairs with abstract contours and lines.

The chaise longue in wood is a revisitation of the typical colonial planter chair that I had in my old apartment in Antwerp. A beautiful new striped kilim carpet in beige and dark brown is characterized by graphical elements – it's a revisitation of the one I have at my home in Antwerp. Kilim loose cushions in earthy colors with small fringes in dark brown which complement the sofas' covers.

The collection is based on natural materials that are dear to me, such as oak, ash, Moron lime, wool, cement, linen, leather and brass. These choices are driven by my tactile nature and over 30 years of experience working exclusively with natural materials. These materials bring warmth and authenticity to my creations. By incorporating these elements, I aim to create a harmony between functionality and natural beauty.

*What are your creative ideas behind your indoor and outdoor collection you created for Molteni&C?*

My creative ideas for any collection at Molteni&C are always dictated by the will to perpetuate the art of living, which means understanding how people live in their homes, to somehow discover a way of inhabiting a space, so that I could mold it, later on, into my designs. My creative approach with Molteni&C is based on their unique values, which I share as well: excellence, architectural heritage, and outstanding craftsmanship. Their style is not screaming design, it's an understated sophis-

tication and elegance, just like my creations. Ours is a symbiosis of worlds with an architectural and interior design attitude that tries to rethink and readdress both the world and the art of living. What I really like is the fact that they are the epitome of Made in Italy and "Italianicity."

*How can you describe your creative process as a creative director of Molteni&C?*

I have a very professional bond and relationship with the Molteni family. I feel like I am free to follow what comes next and to follow my instinct. I know which direction to take with Molteni&C but I continuously keep in mind to maintain high standards, and to strive for refined details with an eye of regard toward the hidden tech behind their products. We are quite direct with each other, especially when it comes down to creativity. There is a constant exchange with the company about prototypes from which I always receive constructive criticism. Feedback can be a simple email, a long meeting or a quick phone call; the exchange is never-ending.

*What are your most iconic projects you ever worked on?*

I couldn't really pick one over any other. Over the arc of 35 plus years of experience, I think that I have realized a good number of iconic projects. I could

name my very first apartment in Antwerp, my rental, then my two other homes in Antwerp and Portugal, but then August hotel still in Antwerp or the Winery VV in Puurs, Belgium...

There are some furniture objects that have become iconic or interiors or residences in Knokke or in the US. Amazing projects in Asia, already built or in the works. Hospitality programs being worked on as we speak in unbelievable locations surrounded by an outstanding nature, the list would be too long..

*What are your thoughts about contemporary art today?*

I am an avid art collector in fact I live surrounded by art in Antwerp. I see art as a message from the artist through different disciplines; art sharpens and opens up your senses and gives another perspective to the world. In my case, when choosing contemporary art, I tend to pick the artists whose messages appeal to me the most. Works of art have to vibrate within the home they are in, and they should be interconnected with each other and dialogue, just like within my home. However, they should also stand alone. At Casa M, it is different as I have chosen not to show or incorporate art because nature is so strong that it acts as a living painting.



Furniture from  
COLLECTION 03  
by Vincent Van  
Duysen for Zara  
HOME, photographer  
François Halard

Palinfrasca  
outdoor  
armchair for  
Molteni&C,  
designed by  
Vincent Van  
Duysen





## SUBTRACT YOUR *ego* AND BE *inspired* BY PEOPLE FOR THE *wellbeing* OF *people*

*What would you share to future generations of architects about your work?*

I would like that my oeuvre taught future generations to contribute to mankind and society by creating timeless work that is not self-referential but that is for human beings. Subtract your ego and be inspired by people for the wellbeing of people. I would also like to tell future generations to be passionate and committed, be driven, live life to its fullest, go with your instincts. Be grateful for being blessed with creative talent.

*What projects are you working on at the moment?*

We have ongoing work all over the planet, residential, hospitality, commercial, retail, product design, from Iceland to Asia, New York, UK with great clients, brands and hospitality names; and of course, Belgium. One day, I would like to conceive something sacred like a church and temple or something dedicated to art or culture.

*Which fashion icons do you admire, and what does fashion mean to you?*

In general, both in architecture and fashion I have always steered clear of trends, even if I am aware

of them. Sometimes, however, I pick up items that are appealing to me that complete my wardrobe in a traditional way. But again, in general I'm not a follower of fashion.

*What style of fashion do you wear and what kind of clothes is important for you?*

I wear basic and essential items informed by very contained color schemes from black, to dark greys, from midnight blue to white. I'm all about comfort, good quality, durability and timelessness.

*What makes you creative, where do you find your inspiration? And what makes you slowdown?*

I have become or am a creative because my parents educated me across many different arts as a child, so these were the primary influences for my appreciation and understanding of the creative arts. Inspiration comes from being as observant as possible like a sponge. I regularly sit with my team and discuss ideas and directions to achieve a shared vision. My ongoing inspiration comes from travel, conversations, exhibitions, people, everyday life, it could really be anything. I am a very visual person, so all visual stimuli would go through me and somehow become a source of inspiration. I slowdown when at my two homes, my two temples, enjoying my dogs, family, or my partner.

*What makes you the happiest when you are at Casa M?*

As I was saying in the previous question, Casa M is one of the two places where I can unplug, disconnect and enjoy my dogs, family, friends and partner. That place is magical, like a temple, a shrine to me. You are lulled and cuddled by the most outstanding nature, and the ocean, the Atlantic. You have no idea how much it soothes one's soul and senses! |

