



stephan
hamel

ZITANPIXEL - Milan Design Week 2016

Rugs are the first thing that make you feel at home. It was through my Russian grandmother that I learned to love floral rugs. I often wonder why it happened. Is it because of my fascination in the Russian tradition of floral rugs or due to my memory of my grandmother? The ZITANPIXEL rug collection are original pieces from the 1920s to the 1970s, woven in Romanian and Hungarian villages.

The Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichals a collective of nomadic tribes that followed a long path from India to Europe, had always been considered outsiders. In various periods up to the 17th century the authorities tried to settle them by giving them free land, but taking their children away, hence never succeeded. In Spain they were arrested in masses during the 18th century, and even used as slaves in Romania until as recently as 1850. The Nazis tried to eradicate this ethnic group, and despite a loss of over 250,000, the gypsies survived.

Gypsies are diverse and widely feared, no doubt due to the governing societies not accepting their cultural habits. Their music is so mesmerizing and enthralling, that at the Imperial Court in Vienna they played which speeds up as you dance. Today this is still the tune of Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and more country music, just as there is flamenco in Andalucia.

Is it possible to stand still when you hear this music? The freedom of these tribes always fascinates. Wherever they chose to stop, they can create a new home. If there was some natural disaster they upped and left to make camp in a more favourable geographical location. The rugs were easily portable, and provide a sense of domesticity that can swiftly create a feeling of having arrived home.

I see these rugs as the narratives of these people, through an object that was central to their daily lives and that provided immediate domestic comfort and assurance. Each carpet is unique and tells its own story. I have framed the coveted rugs with sheep's fur as an extension of the woolen yarn used to weave the piece. The long fur can sometimes look wild, bringing into the home elements of wilderness as a counter balance to the static nature of a built-home, as well as the constraints of society.

In the design world, the most important event in the annual calendar, the Milan Salone, pays homage to continuing this freedom of expression. The gypsy tribes demonstrated the importance of the poetic crafts in continuing their identity and diversity. The pattern of the carpets looks almost as if the flowers have been woven in pixelated form.

The carpets are original, hand woven in wool in the tradition of the Romanian Rom Women throughout the whole of the last century. The era of the pieces range from 1920s to the 1970s, with the more recent pieces shown by a mix of synthetic fluorescent colors. As originals, some pieces had minor imperfections, which have been lovingly restored by craftsmen who value their vintage.

The fur used to frame the rugs is a by-product from the food farming industry. Underneath, the carpets are given more structural protection using recycled material from Vibram, the world's leading rubber sole company. The project has followed the nomadic rules of carrying the carpets by hand from the East to high-end manufactures in Italy, making as least environmental impact as possible.

About Stephan Hamel

Stephan Hamel is an international design consultant with twenty years experience of the industry working with furniture and interior brands working across residential and commercial. He is a communicator and a strategic commercial head, using his understanding of cultural shifts, and what makes the industry tick. Hamel is renowned for his ability to create experience, bringing together the right designers to move a company into the limelight and sell product.

His address book covers the top name designers internationally, quality title press and influencers across territories. Apart from his extensive network in Europe, USA, Australia, Stephan has particular experience in the Asian and Brazilian markets. He is fluent in five languages and keenly attuned to doing business in diverse cultures.

Stephan Hamel was born in Bangkok in 1962, with an Austrian Diplomat father and a Tuscan mother. He studied between Vienna and Milan and holds a PhD titled 'The Banco Ambrosiano a Financial Tool of Underground Politics'. Hamel was integral to the launch of the Edra brand, taking it from an unheard company to an internationally successful and cult brand. With over a decade experience with Cerruti Baleri, he is experienced in all areas of running an international furniture company; its markets, agents and audiences. Over this period, he brought on board designers such as Fabio Novembre, Ilse Crawford, Marcel Wanders, Maurizio Galante and many others.

Lasvit a Czech glass and light company started to rise in precedence, due to the collaboration between Stephan and the President Leon Jakimic, who gave him his full trust. Stephan introduced Maxim Velchovsky, who became Art Director and several designers as diverse as Marteen Baas, Arik Levy, Nendo, Michael Young, Borek Sipek, Jan Plechac and Henry Wielgus, and Lucie Moldova. It's not by chance that this has coincided with the resurgence in Czech design production and industry, but thanks to this understanding of Czech culture through Lasvit's renewed celebration of glass and craftsmanship.

Working as a Brand Catalyst also for Vibram, world leader in producing rubber soles, he brought between others Ilaria Venturini Fendi to the company. Ilaria started Carmina Campus, the first upcycling brand that takes garbage and transforms it into luxury items, in particular bags and fashion accessories. The waste from Vibram rubber sole production was transformed into an important new material.

Fontana Etruria is the first edition realised in 2015 by Stephan Hamel with Fernando and Humberto Campana. The monumental marble fountains reflect Stephan's roots in Pietrasanta. ZITANPIXEL is the rug collection developed in April 2016 focusing on a new nomadic society.

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