

*WE*

# LOVE

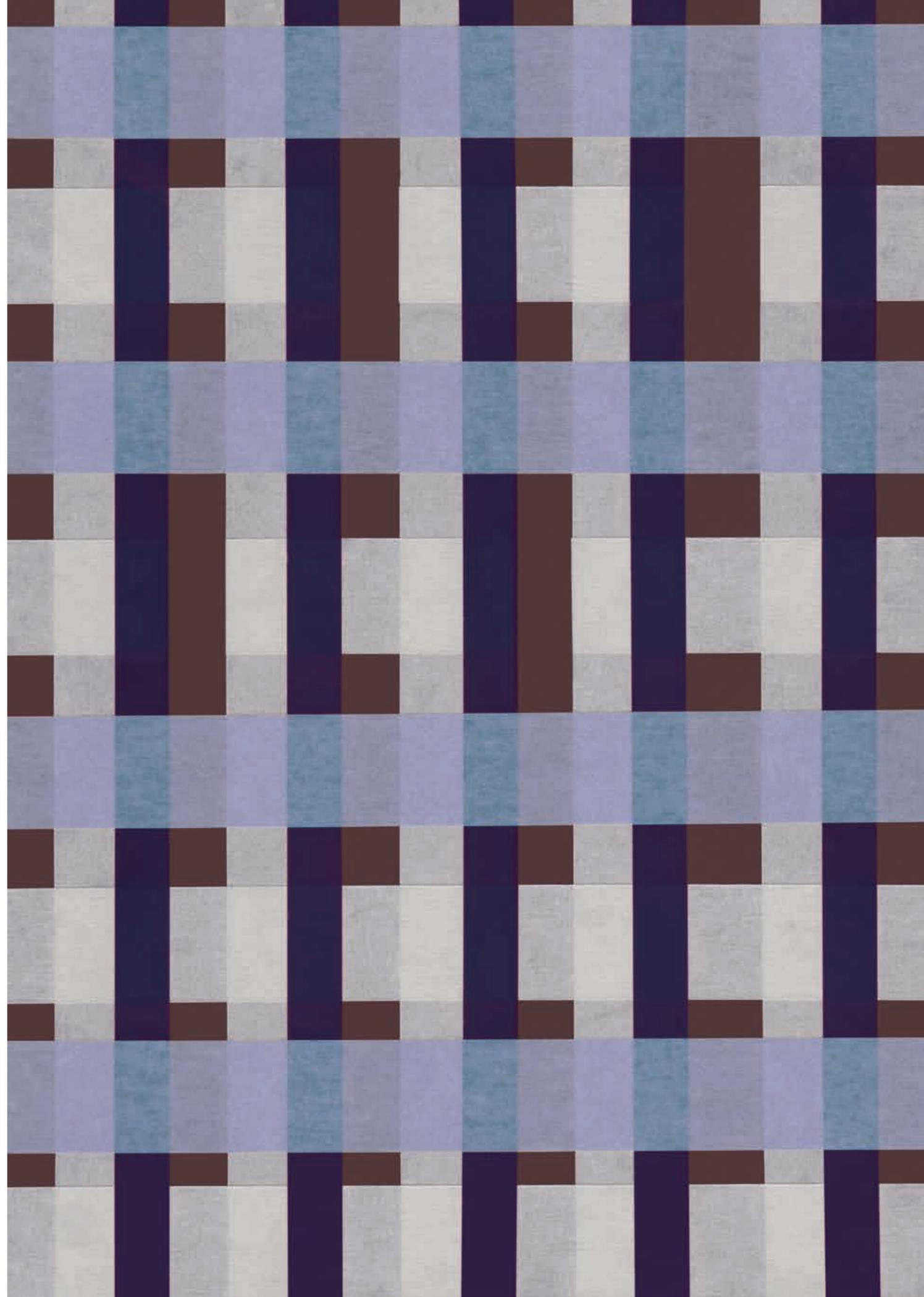


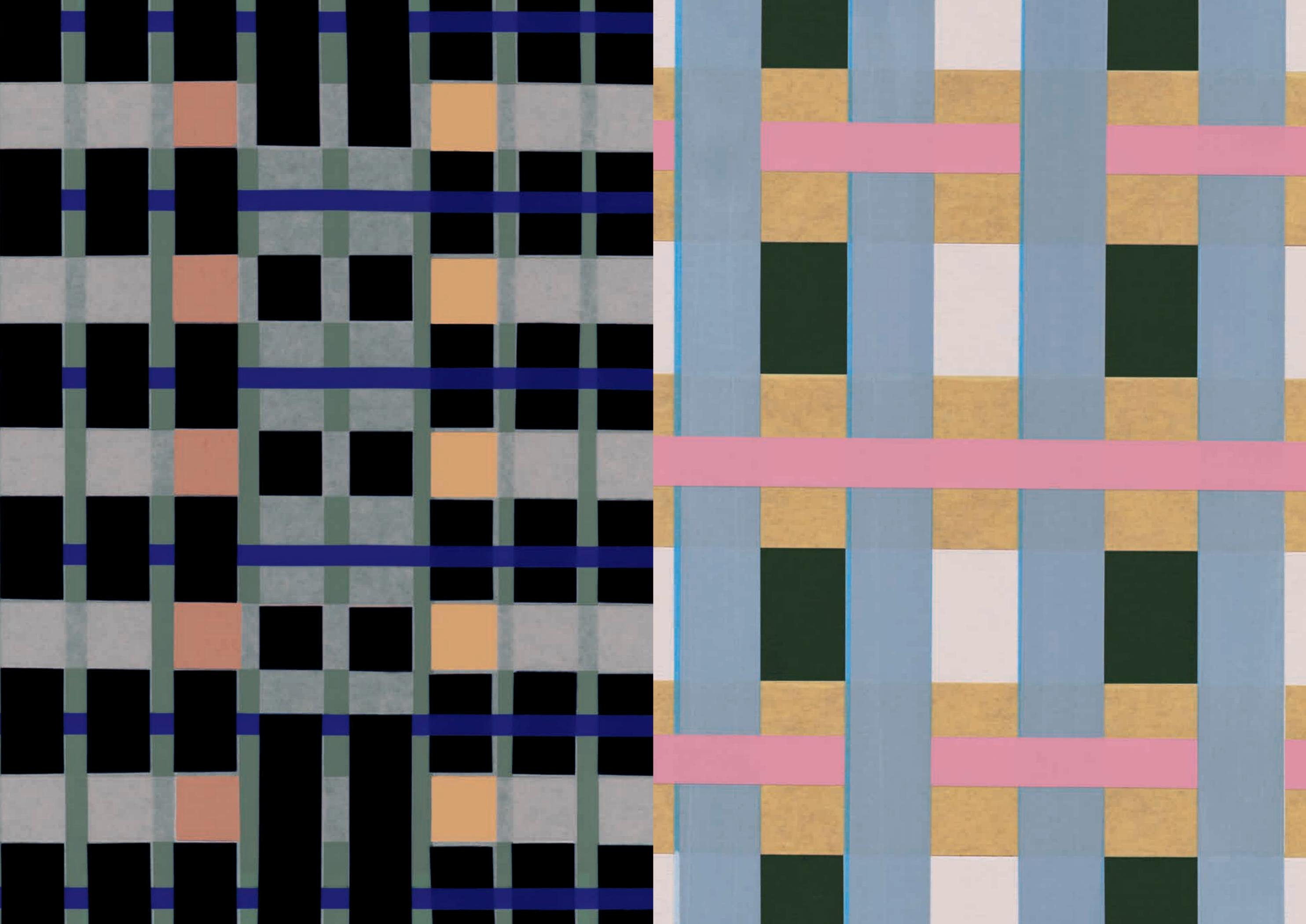
*When Bolon flooring comes to life.*

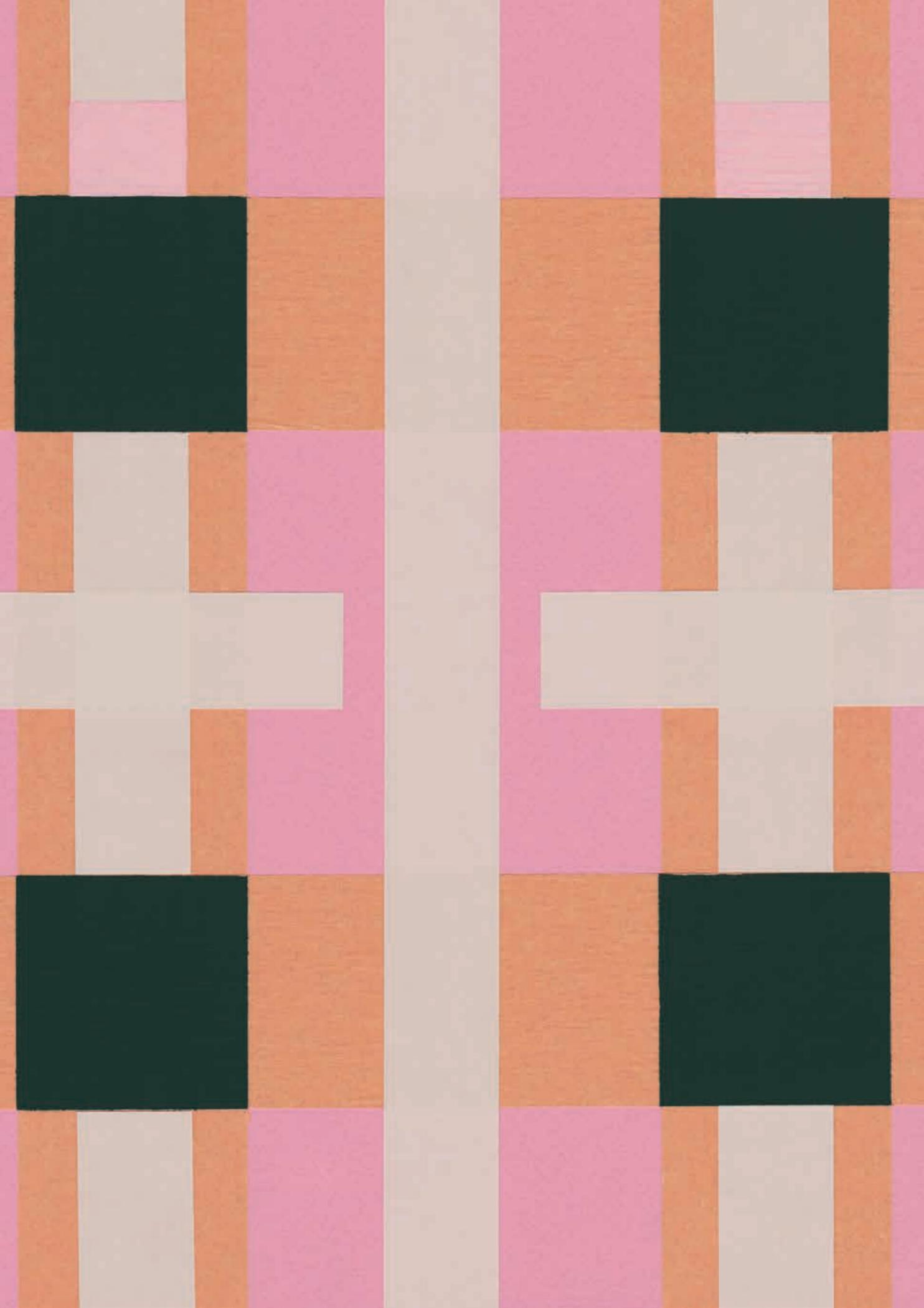
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## CELEBRATION

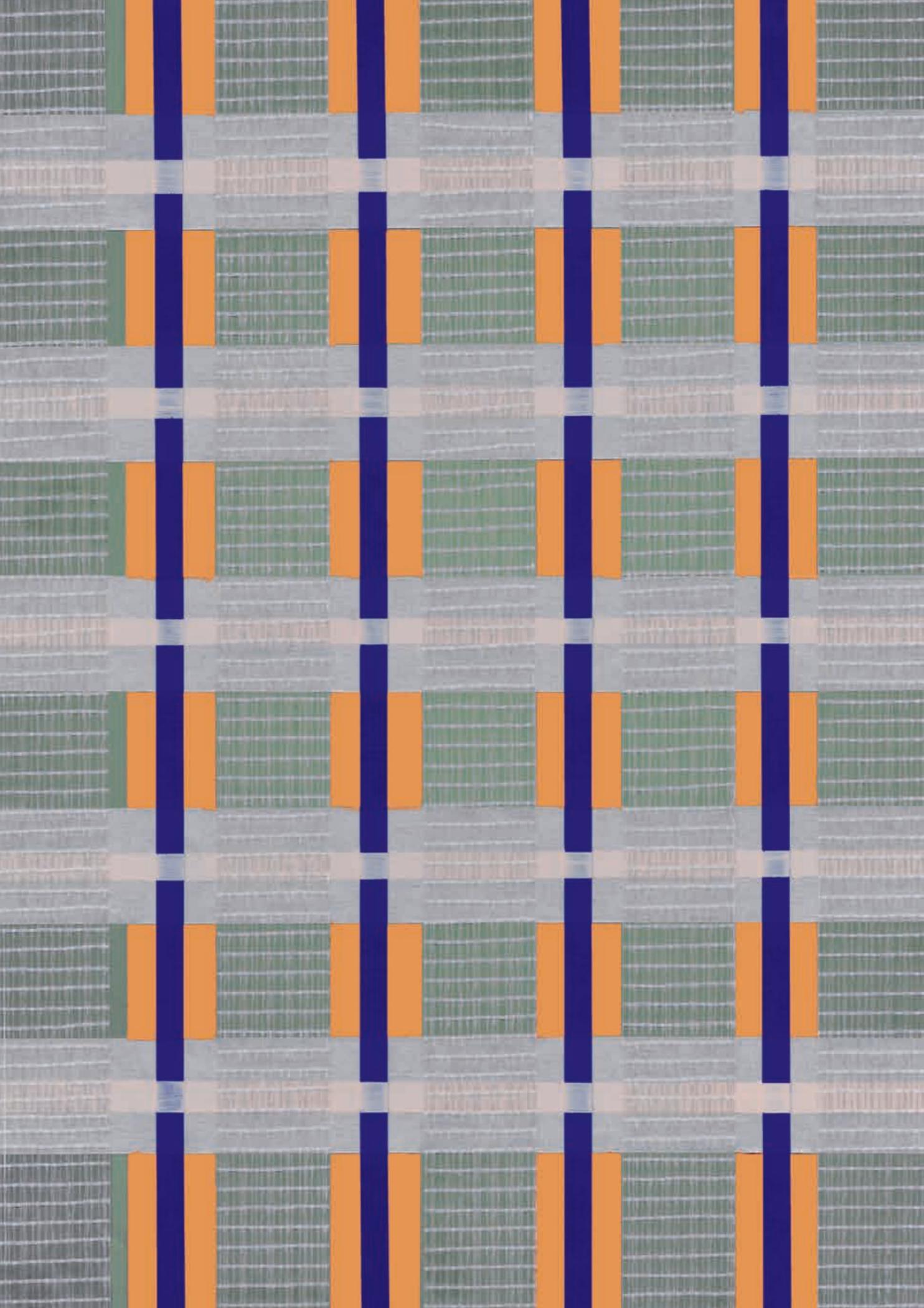
The year 2019 represents a very proud moment for everyone at Bolon. Seventy years ago, our grandfather founded the company, and since then it has passed down through three generations of our family. The history of our family and the history of Bolon are the same thing – 2019 will be a family celebration, but it's also a celebration for everyone who has been part of shaping the company into what it is today. From the beginning, Bolon has been a company built around production. While each generation of the Eklund family has steered the company in new and unique directions, our entire history has been united by the realities of production on the factory floor and a desire to create designs that we believe in. It's a great privilege to lead a company that has been going strong for 70 years, and the best part is not only seeing everything that Bolon has achieved to date, but also knowing that it won't stop here – this anniversary year is also the beginning of something new. Some things about Bolon will never change. We will always be based in Sweden, and we will always produce high-quality products infused with design. That's our core business, but we're so excited to see what other opportunities there are for our material out there. In the future, we see Bolon being able to design spaces from the floor up – can Bolon's material be used to design furniture or to create the interior design for a room? That's why, since 2017, we have been talking about everyone who works here at Bolon as “innovators at heart” – we always want to experiment and see what new opportunities are out there. We want to write a new future for the company without ever losing sight of where we've come from. Family is at the heart of Bolon and it is very important for us to maintain that spirit.

For that reason, ideas of diversity and celebration are so important to us in 2019. This year's new collection is called Diversity and it's a range of flooring designed to bring together different colours and patterns – it's about finding beauty in complexity and plurality. It's a joyful and welcoming collection. This sense of hospitality is essential to everything that we do here at Bolon, particularly as we invite everyone around the company to celebrate with us during this anniversary year. To mark the occasion, this year's edition of the magazine has received a special treatment. *We Love* is devoted to the stories that lie behind everything that we do at Bolon, and shares our passion for the projects of other designers and companies that inspire us every day. In this spirit, we've highlighted the fantastic work with sustainability done by the clothing brand Patagonia and design gallerist Rossana Orlandi's campaign to reuse plastic waste. This issue also includes a glimpse into our private family photo-albums – a chance to look back at the history of our family and the company. When you open this magazine, we want you to feel the energy and happiness that has gone into making it: it reflects the spirit of Bolon.

*Annica Eklund, Chief Creative Officer Bolon*

*Marie Eklund, Chief Executive Officer Bolon*





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“Man dansar där uppe  
– klarvaket är huset  
fast klockan är tolv.  
Då slår det mig plötsligt  
att taket, mitt tak,  
är en annans golv.”

## INFALL

*Poem by NILS FERLIN  
Photo by CARL KLEINER  
Words by IMOGEN GREENHALGH*

*“There’s dancing up there –  
the building is alive, but it’s after midnight  
suddenly I realise the ceiling,  
my ceiling, is someone else’s floor.”*

**T**here is a palpable sense of excitement at the Bolon headquarters in anticipation of the company's 70th anniversary in 2019. "When we were thinking about our 2019 collection, we knew we wanted to connect with the anniversary and base it around this idea of celebration," says designer Petra Lundblad, a member of the company's close-knit design team.

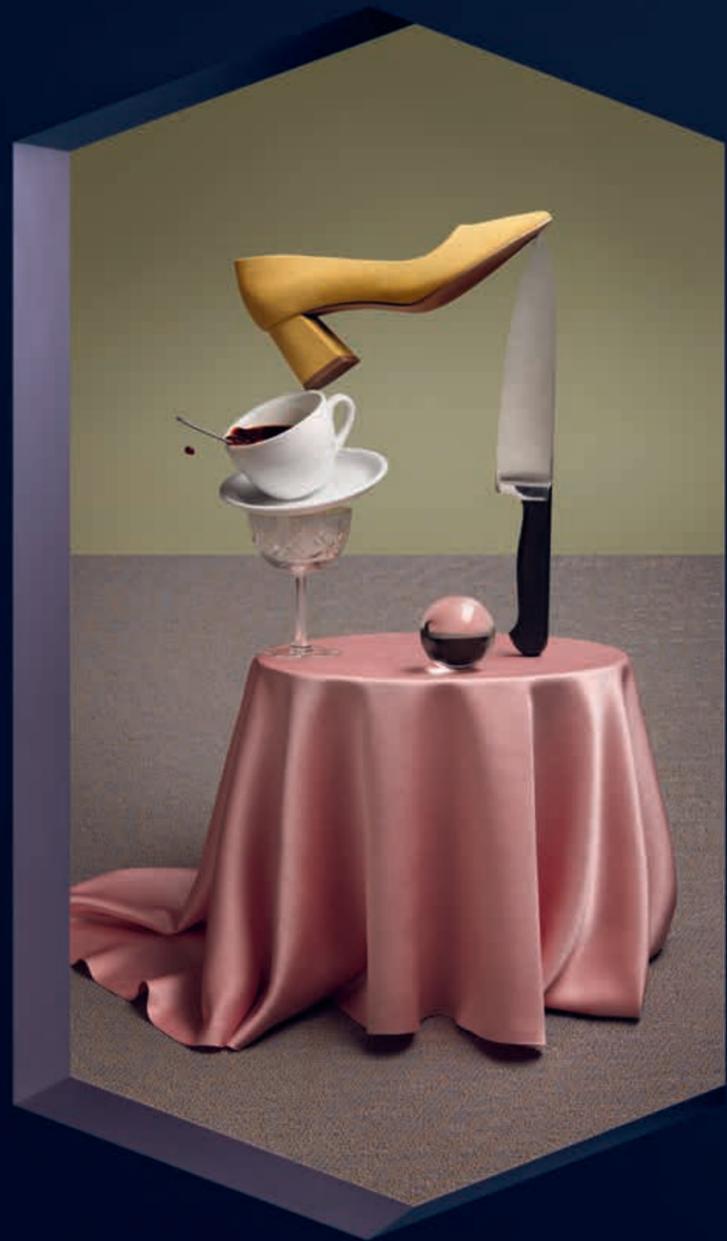
Bolon's latest collection, Diversity, is the result of this sense of occasion. "While we always try to do something new with each collection, this one is a little bit different," says Lundblad. "We wanted to make something that felt playful, and that was about bringing different elements and colours together." In this vein, Diversity puts pattern front and centre, and represents a fresh approach for the company in its 70th year.

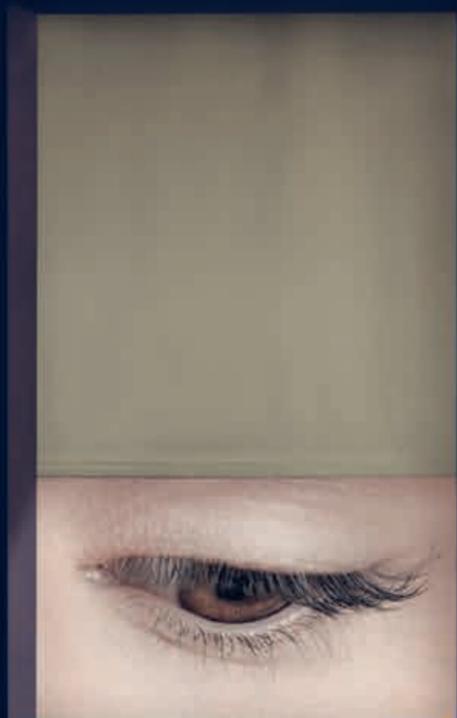
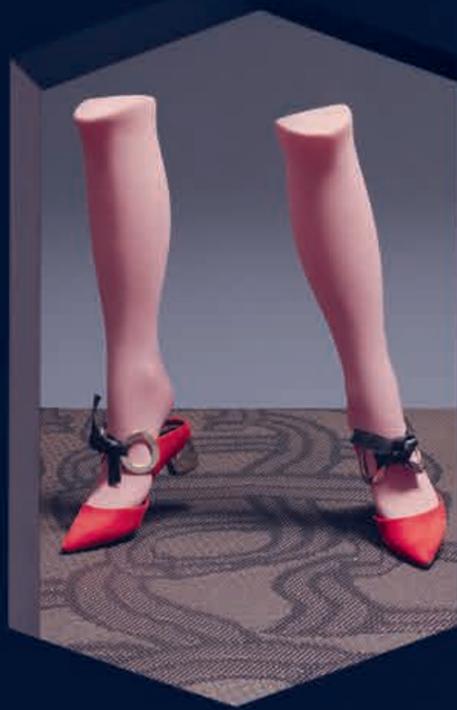
The collection contains three patterns – Bling, Buzz and Bouquet – which are available in 12 colourways, all made using recycled materials. Each pattern is woven on Bolon's jacquard looms, and united by a carefully refined colour palette. As Lundblad points out, "We've kept the colours in the collection quite toned down, there's nothing too loud." Instead, the designers opted for a range of rich, earthy hues with "a blackness to them", which means the collection, while eye-catching, remains in keeping with Bolon's sophisticated approach to colour. The four base colours in the warp are black, brown, grey and beige, into which vibrant, natural hues including amber, gold, aquamarine and pine green have been introduced.

Up until now, distinct patterns such as these have only appeared in Bolon By You, a range designed for customisation. But, as Lundblad explains, Diversity further builds in the freedom for customers to bring together divergent patterns in a single space. For Lundblad, this is indicative of a growing feeling of boldness and experimentation at Bolon. "I think 'diverse' is a good word for the way we are working at the moment, in that we are exploring new business areas and materials for the future," she says. "And that's what the Diversity collection is all about."



*Diversity, Bling Topaz*







ROSSANA  
ORLANDI  
*ICONOCLASTIC*  
*PLASTIC*

*Photo by* ANNICA EKLUND

*Words by* ANNICK WEBER

**W**hen an initiative aiming to reduce plastic pollution in our oceans is called into life by one of the world's most influential design curators, it's bound to make waves.

Launched at the 2018 edition of the Salone del Mobile in Milan, the Make Plastic Guiltless movement was born out of gallerist Rossana Orlandi's ambition to encourage the use of recycled plastic among designers and, with it, fight the harmful effects of plastic waste on the environment. "As sea pollution is reaching critical levels, my aim is to incentivise designers to do amazing things with plastic, rather than letting it end up in our oceans," says Orlandi. "I have always been interested in experimental and sustainable design made with waste materials. Today, it is clear to me that the promotion of good projects also involves the safeguarding of our planet."

Safeguarding our planet, for Orlandi, meant hosting a series of Salone talks at her celebrated gallery – Spazio Rossana Orlandi on Via Matteo Bandello – to raise awareness of the versatility of recycled plastic as a material for quality design pieces. Among the speakers were the Dutch designer Dirk Vander Kooij, who creates sustainable furniture from discarded plastic, and Madrid-based Alvaro Catalán de Ocon, who is best known for his lampshades combining PET plastic bottles and traditional weaving techniques. During the events, Catalán de Ocon's PET lamps dangled from the gallery ceilings, casting light onto Pentatonic flatpack furniture made from recycled materials on a larger production scale, as a total of more than 30,000 visitors attended the space. The Make Plastic Guiltless initiative has now carried on well beyond Milan's furniture fair, with regular art exhibitions, film screenings and designer showcases held at Orlandi's gallery.

Orlandi has a history in forecasting international design trends and bringing up-and-coming talents to the spotlight by exhibiting their work





# ICONOCLASTIC *PLASTIC*

at her sprawling showroom housed in a former tie factory. Since opening in 2002, Spazio Rossana Orlandi has become a pilgrimage site for design journalists and collectors, having previously showcased creations by household names such as Piet Hein Eek, Jaime Hayon, Maarten Baas, Nacho Carbonell and Formafantasma before they gained worldwide recognition. Now in her mid-70s, Orlandi, whose background is in fashion, has become emblematic within the design world, known for her ever-present white sunglasses, playful sense of style and energetic spirit. Now that energy is being directed towards plastic, with the Make Plastic Guiltless initiative aimed at changing the perception of this once loathed waste material.

"I want to make plastic guiltless by ensuring that it is used responsibly," says Orlandi. "If recycled and transformed correctly, we can give new life to old plastic and make beautiful pieces out of this material that is commonly thought of as evil." Another long-term goal of the project is to make those who throw plastic into the sea aware of the consequences of their actions by creating a "senso di colpa" (feeling of guilt). During Milano Design Film Festival, Orlandi hosted a screening of a film by American photo artist Chris Jordan, which shows tens of thousands of dead albatross chicks, their bodies filled with plastic. Just like the Salone talks organised by Orlandi, Jordan's film underlines the importance of responsible consumerism and improving the circularity of plastics – making the world realise that recycled plastic can make a significant contribution to a sustainable economy and play a vital role in marking the departure from today's throwaway culture.

Working with plastic, in Orlandi's eyes, could offer long-term solutions to the current environmental crisis. At a point in time where the use of wood is becoming more and more controversial for contributing to alarming levels of deforestation, she sees recycled plastics as a viable alternative for designers. "We need to save wood, it is part of an ecosystem that is indispensable to humans," says Orlandi. "Already we're destroying more forests than we can ever replant in the next 20 years. Plastic, on the other hand, exists in abundance and is often free to source; it has only been waiting for the design world to recognise its potential and make use of this worthwhile resource in its recycled form."

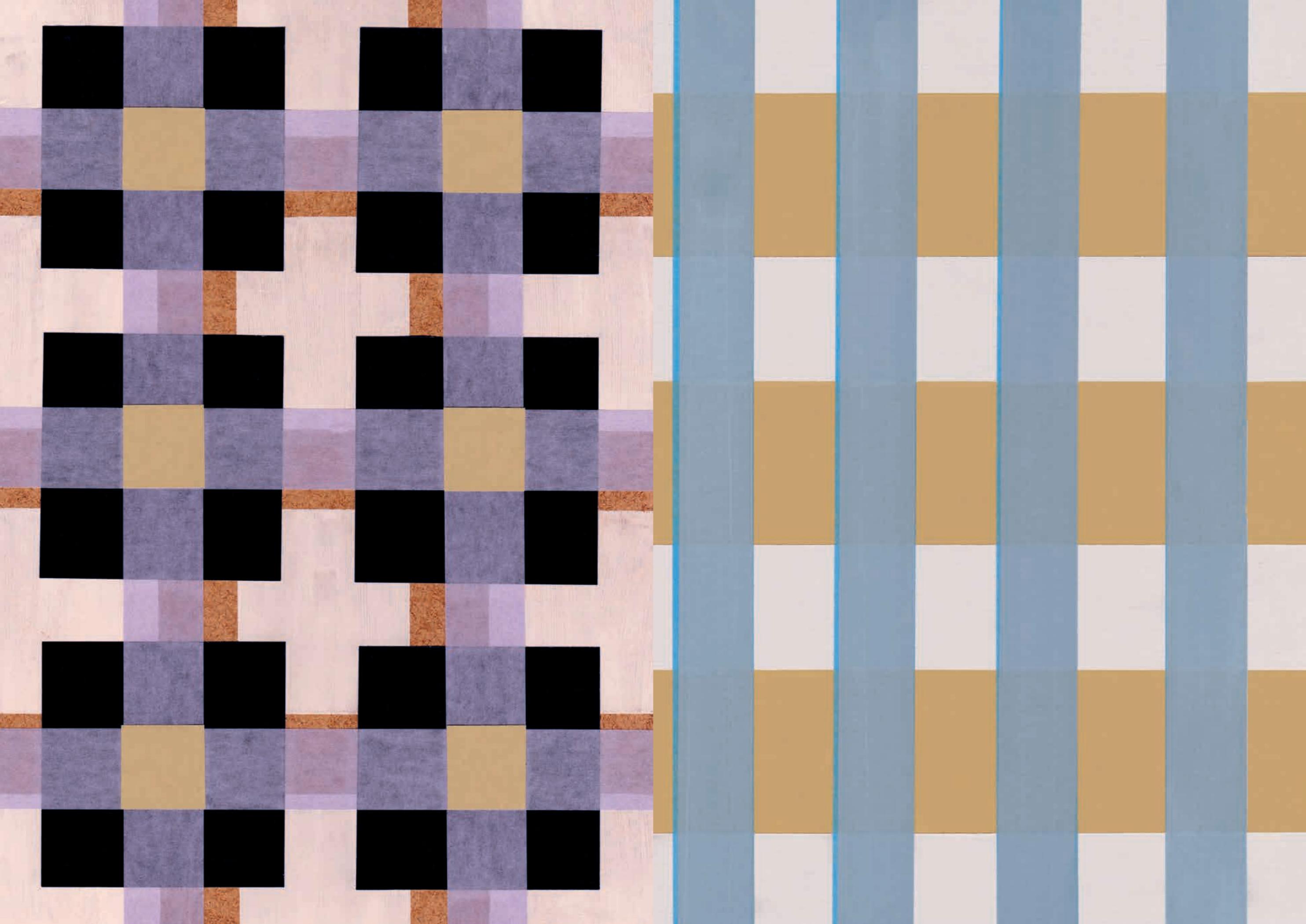
Dirk Vander Kooij – a favourite of Orlandi's whose furniture is exhibited and sold at her gallery – is one of the pioneers working with the waste material, and has been doing so for more than 10 years. His collections incorporate plastic waste from items such as fridge doors, toys and garden chairs, which he melts down and builds up again with the help of a robotic arm that he developed himself. The outcome is an impressive blend of technological innovation and skilled craftsmanship: his award-winning Endless chair is made by layering one seemingly endless piece of plastic string, while his Meltingpot table exposes the marbled surfaces and bright colours of the plastic material in an un-manipulated way. "When you first see Dirk's work, you don't understand if it's produced from wood or marble," says Orlandi. "The eye-catching textures mimic those of raw, natural materials. He's great at showing the multifaceted and surprising nature of plastic."



Alexander Lotersztain is another industrial designer who participated in the Make Plastic Guiltless initiative and has been showcased at Orlandi's gallery. His QTZ range of colourfully speckled, sculptural lounge chairs is entirely made from melted LDPE, a thermoplastic that can be remelted an infinite amount of times without altering it. "Designers who are part of the plastic renaissance are showing that plastic can have multiple lives, which is why it's so powerful in bringing much-needed relief to the impact on the ecosystem," says Orlandi. Advanced recycling technologies have transformed plastic into a highly durable material, making the creations suitable for all kinds of settings, climates and conditions.

As each one of Orlandi's handpicked pieces underline, the plastic renaissance unfolds in a kaleidoscope of colours, patterns and textures that many other materials would struggle to reproduce. With a growing number of creators looking to take a more responsible approach to their craft, the world is starting to wake up to the fact that working with recycled plastic offers all the design opportunities necessary to produce good-looking, long-lasting and, most importantly, sustainable pieces. Recycled plastic was appointed material of the year at the 2018 London Design Festival, while the festival's *PlasticScene* exhibition highlighted the work of independent designers in examining the potentials of the material. From plastic's history as an industrial material par excellence, the potential to recycle it is now generating a groundswell of practitioners exploring its properties for themselves. Meanwhile, Orlandi is continuing to champion its use by launching the Make Plastic Guiltless design award, which will go to a young design talent incorporating recycled plastic in the most original way.

"Design has a lot to do with the original problem around the mismanagement of resources like plastic," says Orlandi. "The design community needs to work together to become part of the solution."





**PATAGONIA**  
*DESIGN FOR THE*  
**ENVIRONMENTAL AGE**

*Photo by ANNICA EKLUND*

*Words by DEBIKA RAY*

*Press images by PATAGONIA*



**W**hen Patagonia's founder Yvon Chouinard started making climbing equipment for himself and his friends in the 1960s, it was always with a great respect for the natural environment in mind.

Forty-five years later, the company's collection has grown to incorporate clothing and equipment for skiing, snowboarding, surfing, fly fishing, paddling and trail running. And as Patagonia has grown, so too has its interest in preserving the nature in which these sports take place. "We have always had an appreciation of the wild places around the world and a concern for their protection," says Ryan Gellert, the company's general manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "This has steadily evolved as the issues that our planet faces have grown in significance."

And grow they have: since the industrial revolution, the impact of humans on the environment has led to a depletion of natural resources, pollution of air and water, and destruction of rainforests and biodiversity. A report in October by the UN warned that we only have until 2020 to find a way to keep the global temperature from rising more than a critical maximum of 1.5°C, above which we are likely to see more natural disasters and dangerously unpredictable weather. If the UN target is to be met, the impact of industry on the planet is one of the major factors that needs to be addressed.

Increased awareness around environmental degradation means businesses of all kinds can no longer afford to ignore these issues – especially those engaged in industries such as clothing production, which uses huge amounts of natural resources (it takes around 20,000 litres of water to produce 1kg of cotton) and produces pollution in the form of dyes and pesticides. For Patagonia, the problem is all the more complex because its customers, as lovers of the great outdoors, are perhaps more attuned than average to environmental issues. Moreover, its entire business relies on society being able to continue to enjoy nature in its best form.

Whether for the sake of the environment, its bottom line or both, Patagonia has embedded sustainability deep into its design, marketing and business strategies. The company's mission statement now pledges to "cause no unnecessary harm" and "use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis".

In design terms this has meant experimenting with materials, manufacturing techniques and the supply chain. For example, it took years of research to find nylon products that could be recycled to create fabric of high quality. Patagonia ultimately settled on a combination of post-industrial waste, yarn from a spinning factory, waste weaving mills and discarded industrial fishing nets. It has also introduced high-performance materials such as Synchilla, a soft, double-faced fabric that does not suffer from surface degradation; Capilene, a new polyester with a high melting temperature suitable for commercial

dryers; and Yulex, a natural rubber that is used to produce wetsuits.

Patagonia also claims to be the first outdoor clothing manufacturer to make fleece out of recycled plastic soda bottles, while other ranges are made of down reclaimed from old cushions and bedding, and wood pulp that is extruded through fine holes to produce fibre. Since 1996 it has used 100 per cent organic cotton, instead of the pesticide-intensive variety, and it has introduced hemp into its product line in the hope that laws surrounding the production of this durable and eco-friendly material will be loosened in future.

These measures, and others like them, have allowed Patagonia to continue to operate as a global business while still maintaining an anti-big business ethos, appealing to people who consider themselves to be environmental activists but still want branded products. As Chouinard wrote in his book *Let My People Go Surfing*: "I've never respected the profession. It's business that has to take the majority of the blame for being the enemy of nature."

What these innovations do not solve, however, is a crucial question: how can a business engaged in mass manufacturing and global distribution reconcile its existence with society's inherent need to produce and transport less? This conflict is one that design businesses have become increasingly conscious of in recent years. The annual churn of new designs at fashion and furniture weeks is emblematic of the wider societal problem of a culture where items of low quality – whether \$10 jeans, a mobile phone or a flatpack shelving unit – are produced cheaply in poor countries, with consumers then encouraged to replace products rather than investing in longevity or repairing them.

Today's heightened climate of environmental awareness is not, however, the first time that such questions have arisen in Patagonia's history. Before launching his clothing range, Chouinard started out making reusable steel pitons for climbing, rather than the commonly used soft iron ones that would be left in the rockface. By 1970, Chouinard Equipment had become the largest climbing hardware supplier in the US, but its success was a double-edged sword: as climbing became more popular, the impact on well-used routes was visible. Pitons, which had to be hammered into rock, were causing damage to the very environments that inspired Chouinard to take up the sport. For the entrepreneur, this was an early encounter with the conflict at the heart of his business – that in seeking to help people enjoy nature, he was also helping to destroy it.

In response, Chouinard and his partner Tom Frost made the decision in 1972 to phase out their lucrative production of pitons, and start making aluminium chocks that could be wedged in by hand. "Mountains are finite, and despite their massive appearance, they are fragile," the duo wrote at the time.

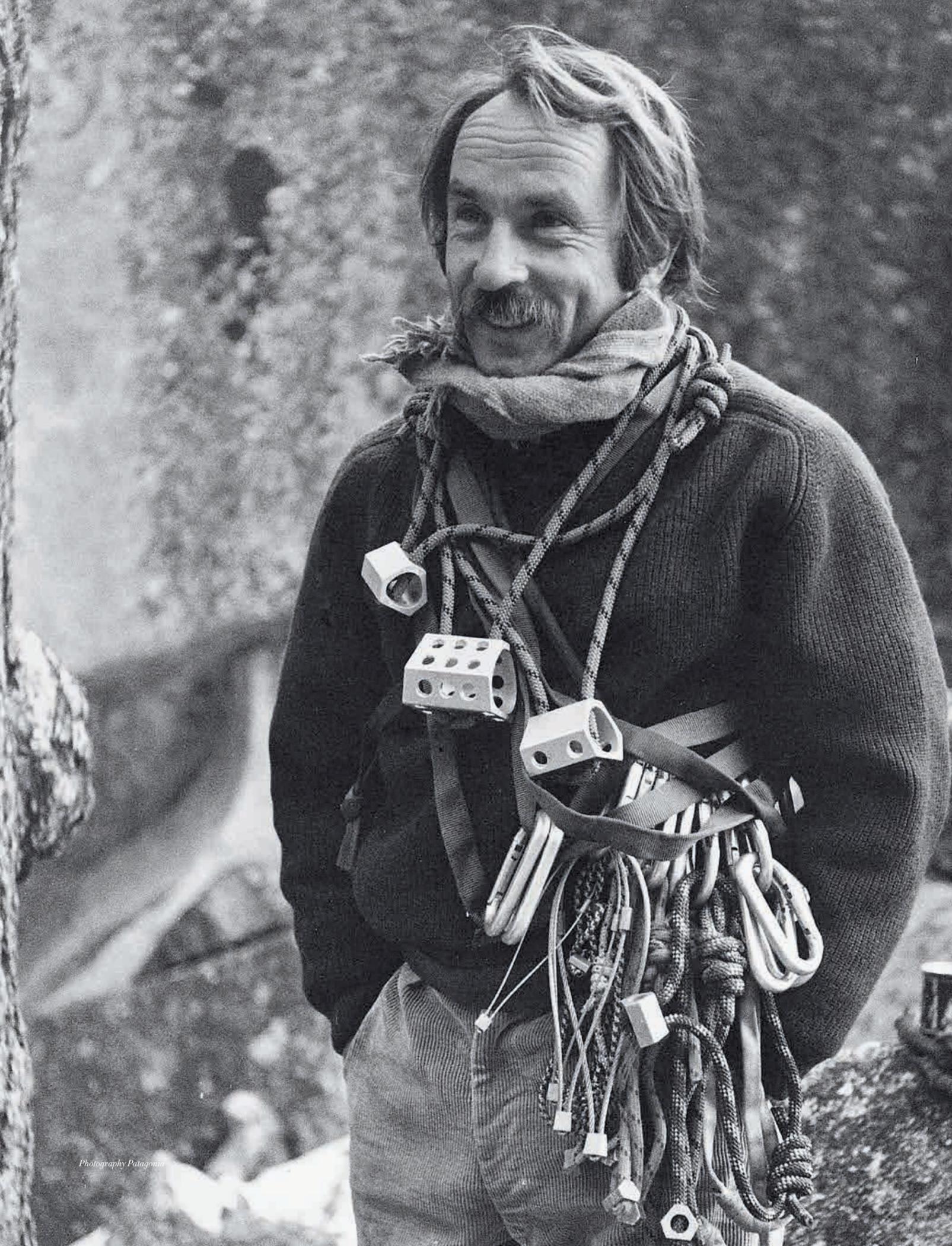


Photography Annica Eklund



Photography Patagonia

*As a fellow vinyl producer, Bolon identifies with Patagonia's environmental stance. Sustainability has been integral to Bolon's identity since the start, and the company is invested in realising increasingly ambitious environmental initiatives and practices. Bolon's flooring is already comprised of around 33 per cent recycled material, and the company strives to close the recycling loop entirely on its products. To safely recycle its post-consumer waste, Bolon has developed a new technique for installing its products – NoGlue® – which allows for more of the floor to be recycled.*

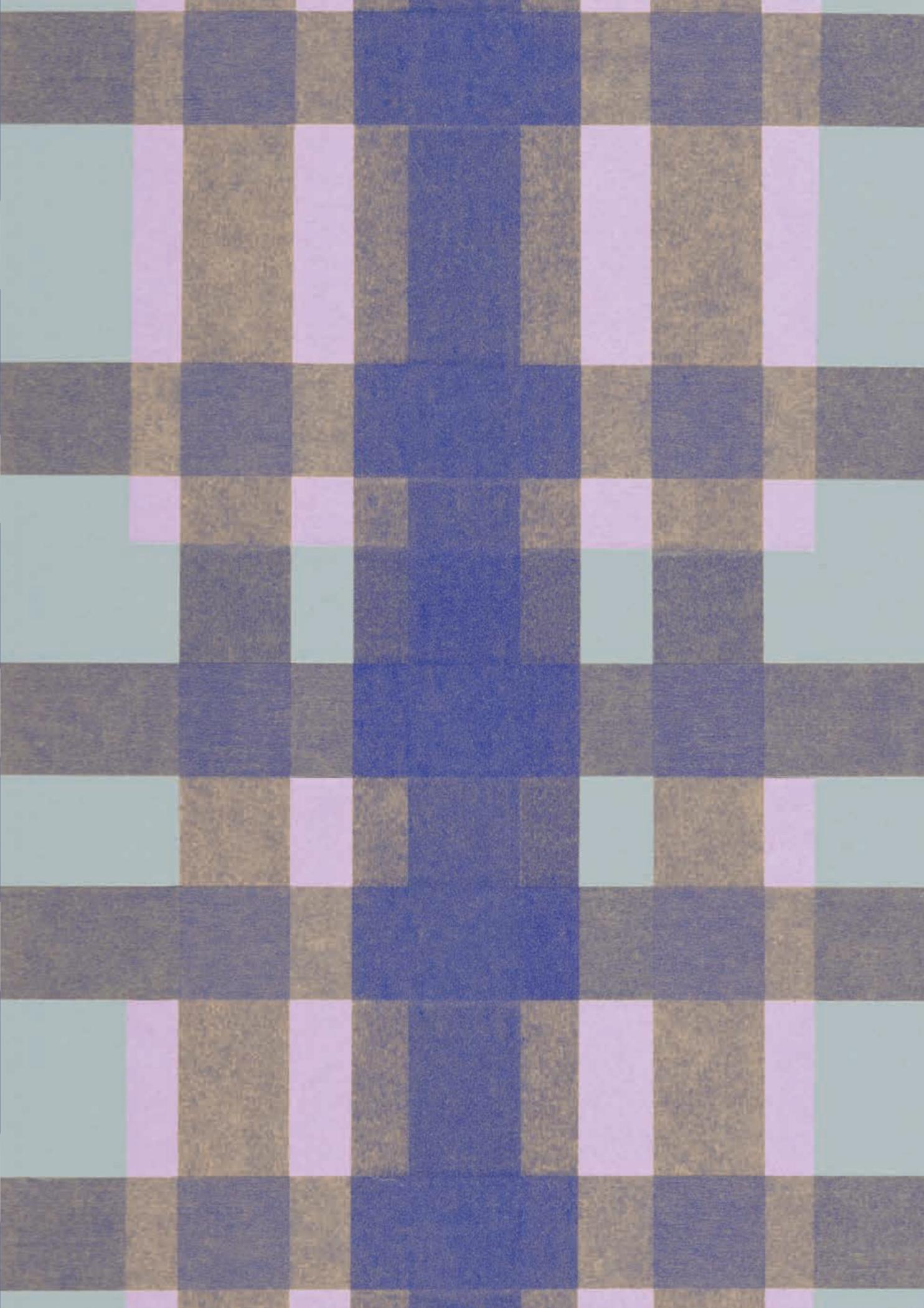
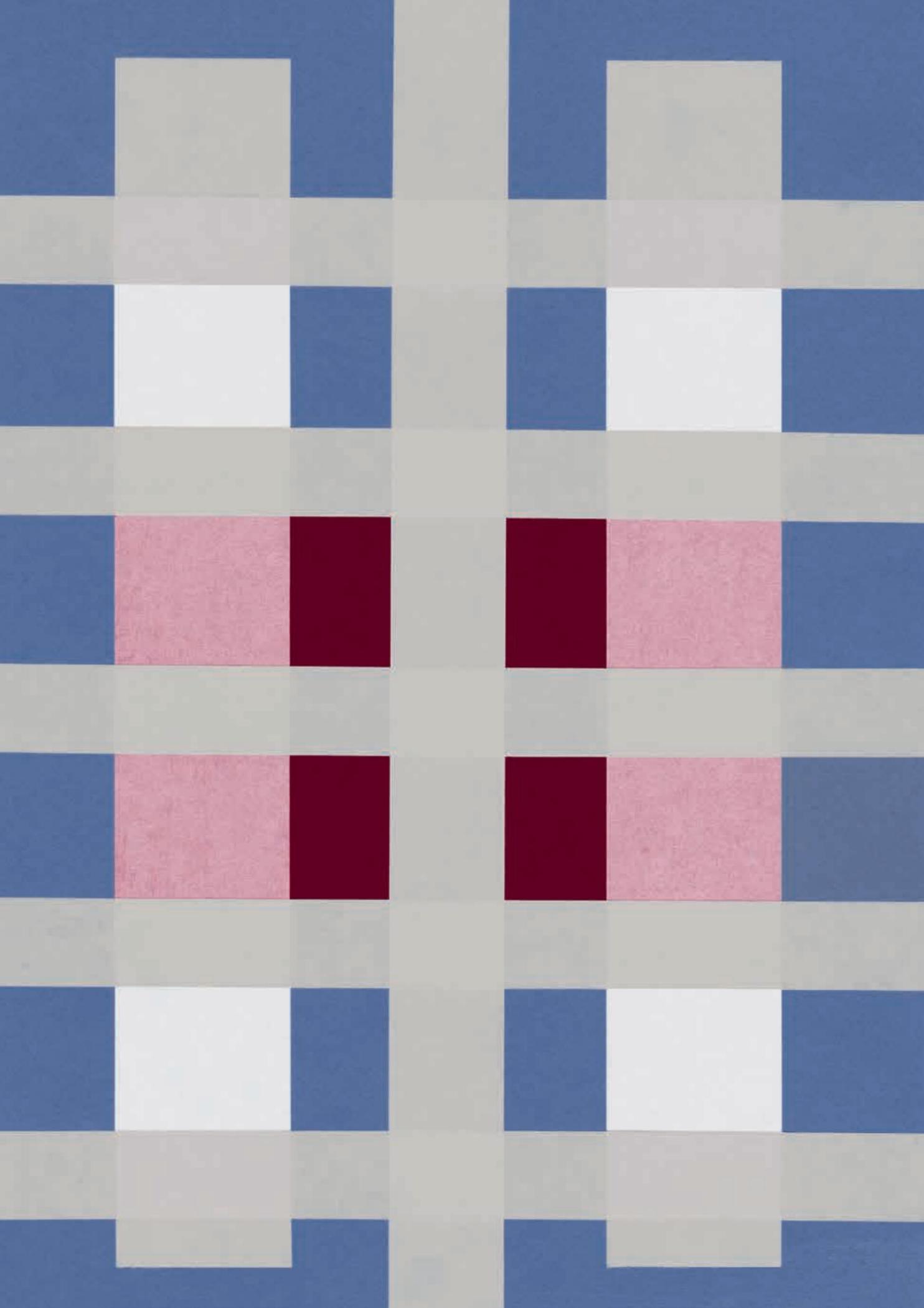


**C**houinard and Frost advocated for what became known as “clean climbing”. From an economic standpoint, it was a risk to be guided by environmental concerns rather than sales figures – but one that paid off. Within months, sales of chocks rocketed.

Just over a decade later, Patagonia has reached beyond the hardcore sporting community to become a mainstream fashion brand – according to Forbes, its revenue rose from \$20m to \$100m between the mid 1980s and 1990. Then the 1991 recession hit and the company was forced to cut 20 per cent of its workforce to help pay its debts. For many companies, this would have been a moment to refocus on the bottom line, but Patagonia took a different approach and put sustainability at its heart. In the 1980s the company had already spent money and time supporting initiatives focused around clean water, air and soil. In 2002, it formalised this idea by co-founding 1% for the Planet, which gives away 1 per cent of all sales to grassroots environmental groups worldwide. Since 1985, the company has given nearly \$90m in grants and donations to such initiatives. Its 1991 catalogue pointed to an unavoidable conclusion that, in order to live up to its sustainable values, it needed to discourage its own customers from buying too much.

In 2011, Patagonia ran an advert on Black Friday that said “Don’t Buy This Jacket”, explaining the environmental impact of that particular item of clothing. It is also calling on customers to keep each item for an extra nine months. In 2013, it launched Worn Wear, a scheme that allows customers to trade in their used Patagonia clothing in exchange for store credit, which then gets repaired and resold. As a business, it is banking its future on a more sustainable mode of consumption.

Of course, such a strategy only works if you’re confident that your product is the one people will choose, and if it’s reliable and durable enough to last. It’s another risk, but one it seems that Patagonia is willing to take.





**DIVERSITY**  
*the* **COLLECTION**

*Photo by* PÄROLOFSSON

*Words by* IMOGEN GREENHALGH

*Stylist* SAŠA ANTIĆ

*Stylist* NIKLAS HANSEN

**T**his year, Bolon is proud to launch Diversity, a collection of three flooring patterns. Designed to celebrate plurality and freedom of choice, Diversity represents a statement of intent from Bolon as the company increasingly breaks fresh ground.

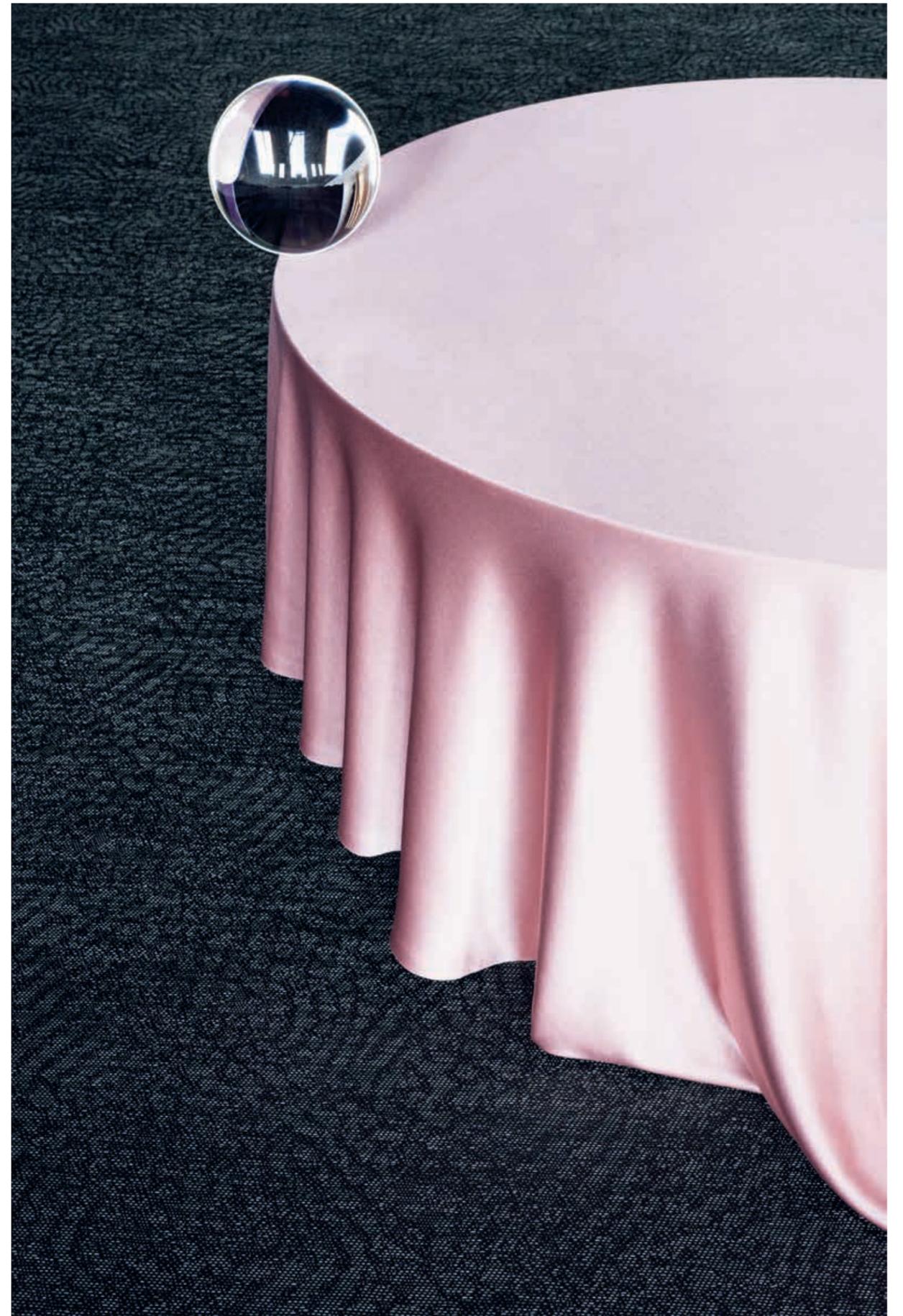
The collection comprises three patterns – Bling, Buzz and Bouquet – that are available in a total of 12 colourways and are all produced using recycled materials. “We see them as a family that can be brought together in different combinations,” says designer Petra Lundblad, a member of Bolon’s design team, explaining that the brand’s customers are encouraged to mix and match the patterns based on the type of statement they hope to make.

As with any family, the patterns relate to one another while still having distinct identities of their own. Of the three, Bling is the most exuberant – a sinuous design that resembles a knot or chain. “It’s quite dramatic, and has this luxury feel to it. We believe it will stand out,” says Lundblad. Meanwhile, Buzz is more discreet – it has a uniform appearance designed with an eye to the sprawling spaces that have become a mainstay of Bolon’s business. Last but not least is Bouquet, named after the array of colours it blends together like a watercolour painting to create a soft, diaphanous feel.

Bling comes as a roll, in three colour combinations, while Buzz and Bouquet are available as both rolls and in Bolon Studio™ – the former in seven colourways and the latter in two. Buzz is also available as tiles. All of the yarns used in the collection have a subtle gloss, producing a shimmering effect as light reflects from their woven surfaces, and all three also share an expressive, hand-drawn quality – a playful counterpoint to the mechanised processes harnessed in their making.

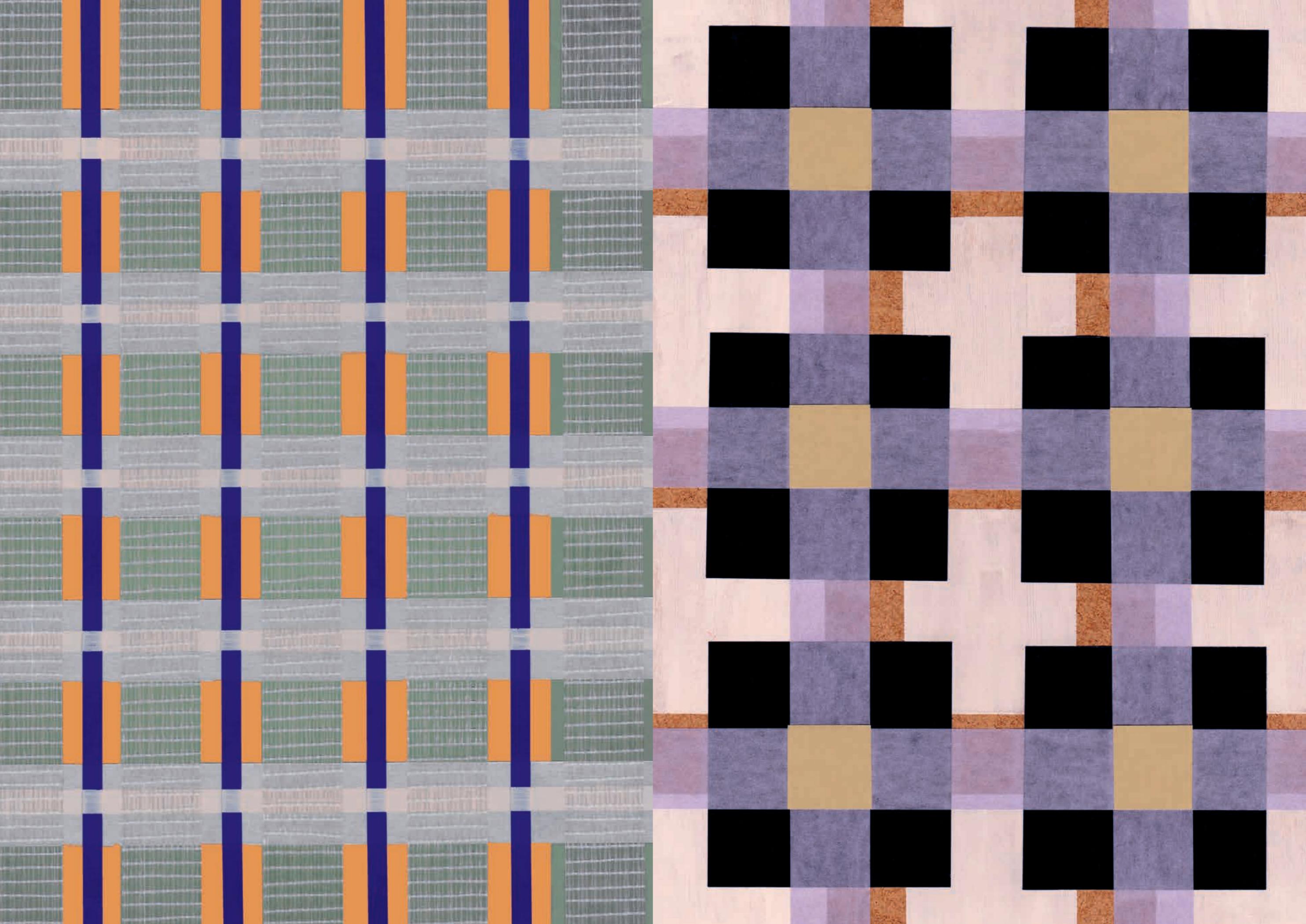








*Bolon Studio™ Hexagon Diversity, Buzz Grass  
Bolon Studio™ Link Diversity, Bouquet Pure*



A FAMILY AFFAIR

*since*

*10* *10*

*Photo by PRIVATE*  
*Words by LIA FORSLUND*

**L**ars Eklund – a member of the second generation of the Eklund family to run Bolon, and the father of its current leaders, Annica and Marie – welcomes us to the company’s factory in Ulricehamn. In his makeshift laboratory – complete with a workshop, club chairs, cigarillos and chocolate truffles – Lasse, as he’s known, tells us about love, parties, failed experiments and Bolon’s passion for recycling.

My dad, Nils-Erik, was selling packing solutions at the end of the 1940s. He had a small shop in Stockholm and next door was a company that sold vinyl wash bags and aprons. Vinyl was a new and exciting material that felt both durable and precious. My dad and the neighbouring business had lunch and began discussing what to do with all the waste cutting of the vinyl – throwing it away just didn’t feel right. That same day, my father collected a bunch of scraps, cut them into strips and gave them to a group of independent rug weavers. At that time, rag rugs made from strips of cotton fabric were popular across Sweden. When he introduced the same rug made in waste vinyl that was water-resistant, it became an instant hit.

My dad set up his factory in a basement of a residential low-rise outside Stockholm. He teamed up with an industrial weaving technician, Arne Carlsson, from Västergötland in the south of Sweden, and they bought machinery and equipment that could make plastic waste rugs industrially. The company was initially called Industrial Packaging Ltd, so that had to change. In 1950, my dad registered “Bolon”, compressing the names of the two materials used in the warp: bomull (Swedish for cotton) and nylon.

Arne was not a big fan of Stockholm, so my father tried to set up production of the rugs in Västergötland, keeping administration and sales in the capital. He bought Bolon’s first factory in Odensberg in 1951, but it burnt down four years later. He had to move to larger premises in Blidsberg, an old cardboard factory 20 minutes from Ulricehamn, where Bolon is located to this day.

In 1958, I was 15 and already working in the company full time. I was selling rugs from the back of a van in Stockholm, and sometimes my brother and I would drive to set up pop-up rug shops at dancehalls around the country. Sales were high, and we actually sold more rugs that way than through our distributors. The factory in Blidsberg was extended and by the 1960s we had more than 30 employees. We were always experimenting with vinyl – although most of these attempts were unsuccessful. One time we took all the waste material from making the rugs and put it through a plastic extruder we had built ourselves. It was completely cheapskate, but the idea was to create a garden hose made from recycled vinyl. It either came out with holes in it, or swelled up like a balloon. The quality was not there yet, but we never stopped inventing.

It was in Ulricehamn that I met the love of my life, Monica. On a Saturday in 1965, our paths crossed at the town’s hotel. I can still recall that night as if it were yesterday. The following year brought both heaven and hell. My father died suddenly, in the aftermath of spinal surgery, and so my brother and I took over the company. Meanwhile, Monica was pregnant and we married in June.

We moved the bulk of production to the site where it’s still done today, although we kept the colouring in Blidsberg. But with the oil crisis in the mid-1970s, the company took a big hit. We filed for bankruptcy in 1978. It was both good and bad news – my brother wanted to pursue a wholesale business, but I had a new idea I wanted to work on. Throughout the 1970s, Monica and I had taken Annica and Marie on camping holidays. We spent most of our time in the awning tent outside of the caravan. With a vinyl rug laid out on the floor, it became much more liveable. Previously, Bolon’s rug was 70cm wide, but when we reintroduced the company to market, we sold rugs as wide as 150cm, which were made to cut – so they could be as long as you wanted. We were at a turning point, but all I could think of was developing flooring for caravan awnings. I managed to extend the size of the flooring, but it was still light enough to be portable. The product was launched in 1979 and it became our bestseller for years to come.

In the mid-1990s, we made it into the American market and our production doubled. After the second expansion of the factory, we threw a big party for the leaders of the caravan industry. I remember emptying the factory hall, placing 20 caravans inside it, and then inviting everyone to stay over.

Bolon was a weaving company when Marie and Annica took over from me in 2003. I stepped down, but was still eager to experiment. So it was here, in this back part of the factory, that Bolon’s technical officer and I started testing ways to melt plastic in a frying pan. I felt so energised again. I wanted to bring production home to Bolon, including that of the backing. We now produce both the threads and the backing ourselves, and we also take care of all our own waste, as well as that of our suppliers and others.

I’m so grateful that my daughters have shown such love for the business. What was first a rag rug became a caravan carpet, which became industrial flooring, and next... well, the girls are on to a fourth iteration, and I know that they will continue to innovate.

**A**nnica and Marie, the third generation of Eklunds to run the company, have come together in Stockholm to prepare for Bolon’s 70th anniversary. They meet in the newly renovated Bolon Lab Store to reflect on turning points in the life of the company, discussing innovation, hard work, the importance of passion, and learning on your feet.

The factory in Ulricehamn was always at our core. That’s where we grew up, where we have our roots, and where we were brought up with the ethos that hard work pays off.

In the 1990s, we joined Bolon right at the very bottom. It was a time when the factory was transitioning from being a successful producer of awning mats for caravans to becoming an industrial flooring company. We were always involved with Bolon, but until then we had had no direct responsibilities. The culture of the company, however, ran through us – it was something passed on to us directly from our mum and dad. We had all kinds of roles initially – from factory floor workers to visual merchandisers building fair stands – but the flooring industry at that time was traditional and, to be frank, a little dull. We saw that we could contribute with something special – a new method that would later attract a lot of attention.

When the 2000s came, we created our first marketing campaign for Bolon – *Floor by Fashion*. We were in Italy when we picked up an Armani catalogue at one of the city’s fashion boutiques. To our surprise, the catalogue was filled with installations of Bolon flooring. It was a big deal, and a testament to what we were trying to achieve. Suddenly it became clear that our vision for the company was a real opportunity.

At the time, Bolon had an external CEO, who was not sure about the direction the company was heading in. He came from a different professional background, and one day called us into a meeting where he said he believed we were ready to take over the business. We had never done anything like it before. We came from backgrounds in fashion and competitive show jumping. There was never any pressure from our parents to take over the company, but in 2003, that became a reality.

We had to professionalise quickly. We still remember the presentations we did at the beginning, which were ambitious but ridiculously naive. We stayed humble, however, and we knew we had to learn on the job. We were extremely driven, motivated and wanted to succeed; we might not have had the skills, but we knew how to work hard and stay focused. Taking over from our parents was a huge personal and professional development, but Bolon as a company has always allowed for experimentation, innovation and failure. The ethos of the brand is still built on trusting your gut to try something new.

What made all the difference was that although we were a traditional floor company, we didn’t behave like one. Early on, we made two large investments: the first was to invest in the machinery in Ulricehamn, where we brought in most of the technological advancements needed to make our flooring almost entirely in-house; the second was to create marketing campaigns that would position us as a design brand.

The most significant of these early campaigns was Botanic in 2007. It was a visual campaign that didn’t show any flooring – we illustrated the capabilities of our material by making a series of flowers with the weave. Designers such as the Campana Brothers approached us, having seen that campaign, and were interested in using the floor in a similar fashion. The important lesson was that we could now speak to designers in a way that made them feel included. We gave designers freedom to be creative and make something that would match their installations, and a series of collaborations began with designers and brands such as Jean Nouvel, Cappellini, Missoni and Paul Smith.

For almost a decade, we have kept a close-knit team. Building a brand is all about keeping close relations and being agile enough to act when you have to. We used to have Sunday dinners at our parent’s house where we would talk about everything to do with Bolon – from large strategic decisions to small details. If we see an opportunity or a trend, we never have to wait. We can act on it straight away, and catch it before it’s gone.

Manufacturing-wise, our process has become leaner, and we assess the quality of our production more systematically. We now make our thread ourselves, and we have an environmental station where we can cut and grind waste material to reuse in the flooring. We have gone from a €7m to €57m turnover, which we’ve achieved by making sure we always have a dual vision – we’re down on the factory floor, as well as in the driving seat. Today we are the market leaders and that’s something we are very proud of.

Large questions may be important for longevity, but it’s the details that people actually experience, so we should never let one thing become more important than any other. Bolon has always been about the small and the large, positioned with equal importance. What we are today will have evolved in 10 years’ time. Bolon is currently focused on interiors, but as we approach another generational shift, there may be many new product areas to evolve and explore.

Lars & Monica  
Marstrand  
Wedding



Annick & Marie  
Mullis 1989

Milan design week  
-2017-



Dorino

Steeny Windows



150 cm  
equestrian



Hästens beds way  
back then!

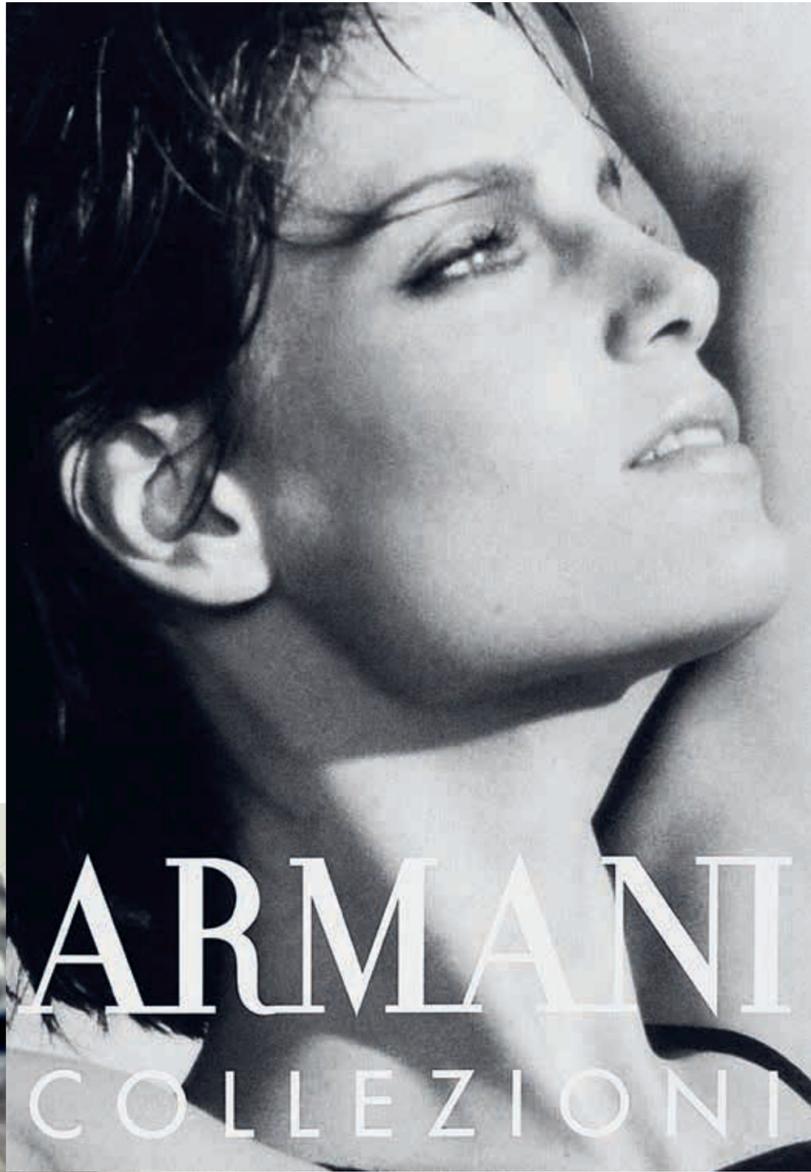
Paris → Venice  
by train

André and Max

Sisters in Paris



Bolon in Armani  
Lookbook 2003



Huswagners semester

Trailer holiday  
Somre -1973-



😊

Nidput Shift



Ullmanns

Newspaper



Milano



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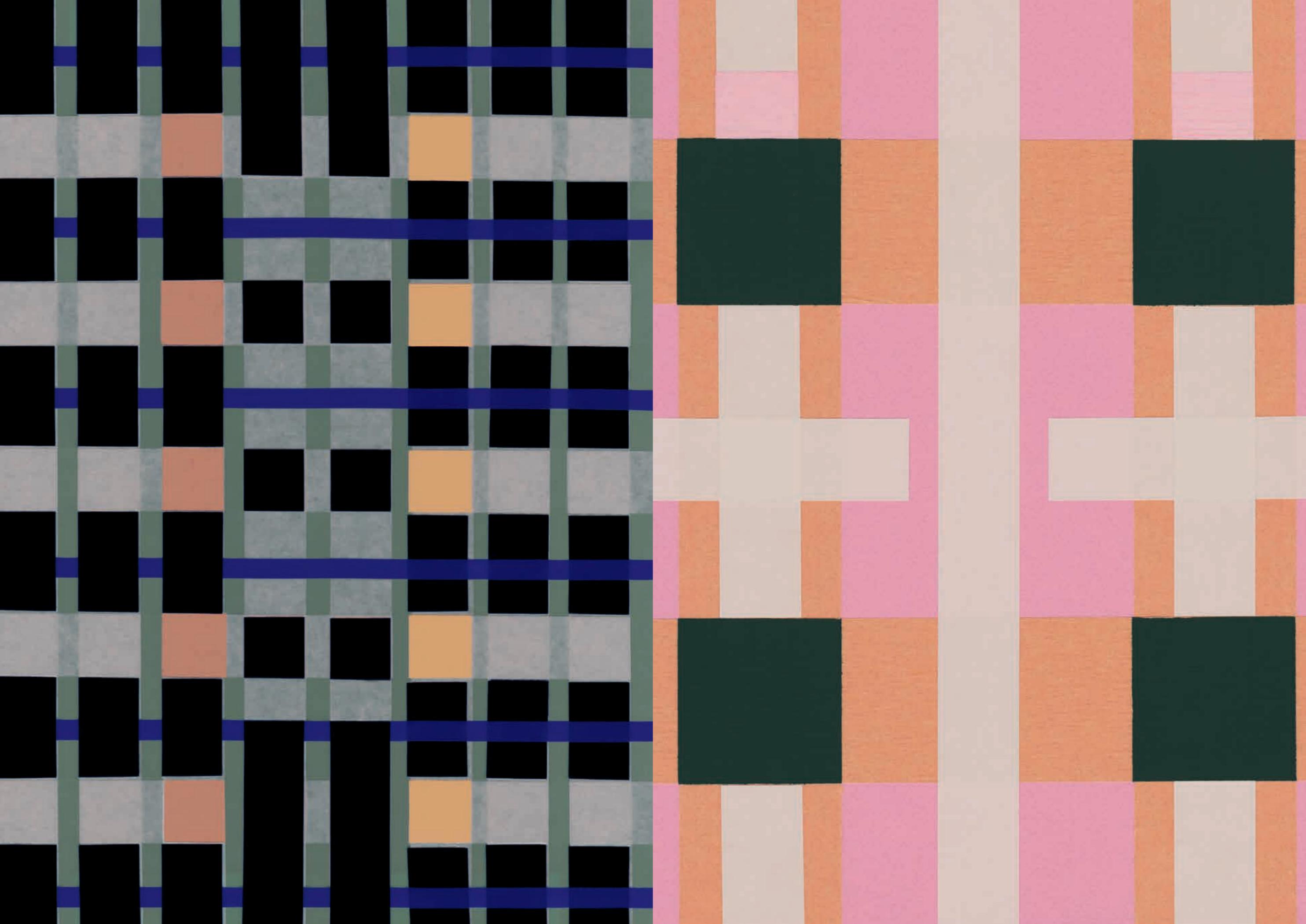
Marie ↘



for the love of fashion.



Great grand father  
Nils Eric





**CELEBRATE**

***DESIGN FOR  
CONVIVIALITY***

*Photo by* ERIK WÅHLSTRÖM

*Words by* LIA FORSLUND

*Scenography* MOA MÖLLER

**H**ow do we breathe new social life into our designed environments? In seeking answers to that question, we could do worse than look to Ivan Illich, author of the 1970s books *Tools for Conviviality* and *Deschooling Society*, who painted a vision of a world in which “social arrangements[...] guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community”.

Illich believed that genuinely social environments are those in which we are free from stifling institutionalisation. “As an alternative to technocratic disaster,” he said, “I propose the vision of a convivial society. I choose the term ‘conviviality’ to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value.”

In October 2018, an audience at the Design Museum in London gathered to hear discussions about Illich’s thoughts on social design. Titled ‘Convivial Tools’, the event brought together leading curators and thinkers such as Joseph Grima, Nina Power and John Thackara to discuss what design today might learn from Illich’s ideas about conviviality. Fluent in eight languages and an inveterate traveller, Illich was deeply concerned by the fetters that strict systems might come to have on people’s lives. “The institutionalisation of knowledge leads to a more general and degrading delusion,” he wrote. “It makes people dependent on having their knowledge produced for them.”

Looking back, his ideas seem prescient – forewarning of a society shaped by the internet. Freedom of thought, democratic decision-making and autonomy within systems were central themes for Illich, and *Tools for Conviviality* points out how a good tool can easily be turned into a harmful one, offering recommendations for how to hinder this evolution. His ideas about the “web of learning”, his interest in social meetings and the relativity of things makes him particularly resonant today. Unsurprisingly, Illich’s thought became popular with 1970s technologists – the people who came to build the internet – but how are these ideas useful for design in the public sphere today? In part, Illich noted the need for spaces that break away from institutional formality, and which instead work to encourage genuine spontaneous connection and learning. “Most learning is not the result of instruction,” he said. “It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting.”







If we look at our public design environment today as tools, what might make them convivial? Bicycle lanes and playgrounds weaved through a streetscape? Break-out areas in an office, and open doors inviting local residents to use a hotel lobby as a public space?

In answer to these questions, Illich spoke of the need to support people to shape their own environment. “[People] see their own personal growth as an accumulation of institutional outputs, and prefer what institutions make over what they themselves can do,” he wrote. “They repress the ability to discover reality by their own lights.” In this sense, Illich advocated for a greater focus on autonomy, which is something that contemporary companies are now trying to harness too.

Illich also wrote about the growing environmental crisis. “Honesty requires that we each recognise the need to limit procreation, consumption, and waste, but equally we must radically reduce our expectations that machines will do our work for us. The only solution to the environmental crisis is the shared insight of people that they would be happier if they could work together and care for each other.” And with contemporary shifts towards design as a tool for learning and associated hopes for a more co-operative society, Illich writings are more prominently reflected in the design industry than ever before. The fourth Istanbul Design Biennial, for example, opened in autumn 2018 and was themed ‘School of Schools’ by its curator Jan Boelen. “Design as learning and learning as design,” Boelen said in his introduction to the project. “We want to talk about an expanded notion of design[...]. At School of Schools, we want to go beyond the framework of the traditional design education, as we know it. We try to discover new ways and new spaces of learning.” As Illich before them, Boelen and his contemporaries want to challenge the authority of existing structures, and instead see whether more spontaneous forms of expression and collaboration might better serve societies and peoples. Designers today are increasingly interested in introducing their own ideas around conviviality into projects. Bolon, for instance, has created dedicated hospitality venues such as Lake House in Ulricehamn and Villa La Madonna in Piedmont; design collaborations with studios such as Neri & Hu, Form Us With Love and Doshi Levien; and the experimental Bolon Lab Store in Stockholm. Design has become one of the brand’s strongest tools, and the company sees conviviality as vital to the development of new ideas. “Caring for each other is central to the Bolon brand, and our ambition is always to extend that philosophy through to how our design is applied and used,” says Annica Eklund, chief creative officer at Bolon. “We empower architects and end-users to be creative, just as much as we use design to cater for our clients around our dinner tables. Design for conviviality has always had a great deal of appeal for us.”



**BOLON X  
MISSONI  
*COMPLEMENTARY  
COLOURS***

*Photo by* **MAX ZAMBELLI**

*Words by* **JOELLOYD**

**F**rom architecture and furnishings to ceramics and textiles, colour is fundamental to design. When we first encounter any object, colour is amongst the first things we perceive. Colours interact with shapes, materials and light, as well as with each other. They conjure a web of associations, both with other objects and with abstract concepts. And yet colour is also a volatile property: a poorly selected shade, or a mismatching collection of hues, can jeopardise the success of a design project. “Colour is life, for a world without colour seems dead,” noted the Bauhaus master of colour, Johannes Itten. “As a flame produces light, light produces colour. As intonation lends colour to the spoken word, colour lends spiritually realised sound to a form.”

Missoni and Bolon are both companies that aspire to understand colour’s full significance and potential. The Italian fashion and textile brand has long been known for its vibrant, polychromatic designs and zigzagging patterns, all rendered in delicate, finely woven textiles. Bolon, meanwhile, has developed its vinyl flooring in a panoply of shades, meticulously chosen to work with the patterns that the company’s design team has carefully crafted. For the past eight years, the two brands’ work has come together in Bolon by Missoni, a series of collaborative collections that bring Missoni’s vivacity to Bolon’s flooring panels. Products such as *Zigzag* – which adapts Missoni’s signature diagonal lines – and *Optical*, with its interlocking arch-like curves, connect the two company’s aesthetics in a single locus.

Bolon’s Annica and Marie Eklund previously met with Missoni at Milan’s Salone del Mobile before deciding to embark on a formal collaboration in 2011. There were strong commonalities from the get-go. Bolon and Missoni both work with looms, bridging traditional technology with contemporary design. Both are also family businesses with mid-century origins, based in the small towns of Ulricehamn and Sumirago respectively. While Bolon began by recycling textile offcuts into carpets, Missoni was founded in 1953 by former hurdler Ottavio Missoni and his wife Rosita, whose family ran a shawl-weaving business. Ottavio, who had previously designed woollen tracksuits, started experimenting with placing coloured threads in Rosita’s family’s looms. By the end of its first decade, Missoni had established itself as a distinct presence in Italy’s post-war fashion firmament. Since 1981, Missoni Home, which Rosita has led since 1997, has adapted the company’s fabrics to encompass home textiles and furnishings, opening up the fashion house to a wider purview.

At Missoni, each textile is the result of concerted research into colours and patterns. Fabrics in dozens of hues – dyed to order by a local firm – are woven together into samples, which are then assessed until the right matches are found. “Every single combination is trialled extensively and studied with great attention to its particularities,” says Paola Dallavalle, creative manager of Missoni Home. “It’s a long and demanding creative process, where we carefully choose each specific tone.”

The Bolon by Missoni range shares this exacting approach. It takes around a year to develop a collection, sometimes more. “Each time it is a new experiment, in which both companies invest important resources,” says Dallavalle. “The development requires special attention to details.” During

this period, a brief is developed jointly that sets the parameters of the project, such as how many designs to include, the type of product – whether rolls or tiles – and the general character of the collection. At these initial meetings, Missoni often gives Bolon digital drawings of suggested patterns and samples of Missoni Home textiles. Then, for more specifically visual references, Missoni shares hues chosen to reflect the company’s textile patterns. “Missoni has a very free way of using colours,” says Bolon technical designer Sofie Ekwall. “Each piece has its own colour language, which makes their fabrics really unique and delicate. We investigate what the fabric stands for.”

Once they have settled on the tone, sampling begins in Ulricehamn, where, as Dallavalle puts it, “Bolon translates the language of our motives.” Capturing one of Missoni’s textile designs in a similar medium would be tough enough, but capturing it in a material so different to the company’s usual fabrics is sometimes difficult. “Missoni’s textiles are very fine, while Bolon has a coarser, denser structure,” says Ekwall. “The real challenge is to capture the delicate details of the fabric using less threads and colours.”

Although the hard-wearing, functional nature of flooring allows for less variance than is possible with fabric textiles, Bolon still has a broad repertoire of colours to draw on. To match Missoni’s work as closely as possible, Ekwall melds pigments to replicate Missoni’s colour cards, a careful act of balancing different dyes. These pigments are then subjected to a melting process with vinyl granules, before being extruded through a nozzle into yarns. The resultant yarns are then woven in a loom to create either rolls or tiles of flooring. Thus far, the complexity of the Bolon by Missoni patterns has necessitated using one of the Ulricehamn factory’s seven Jacquard looms: a machine invented in France at the turn of the 19th century, which uses a series of punched cards to control the action of the loom’s warp threads and allows for the precise weaving of elaborate patterns.

The transposition from textile to vinyl can be unpredictable. For Ekwall, this is a boon, and allows the creation of new, unexpected patterns that are, nevertheless, possessed of the spirit of both companies. “The most interesting projects are those where you cannot immediately see what transforming Missoni patterns into Bolon would do,” she says. Trial and error thus plays a significant role in proceedings. “It’s difficult to know if a single yarn is relevant to a design before we’ve tried to weave it,” says Ekwall. “All yarns affect each other.” Up to five rounds of sample weaves are tested for durability and ease of cleaning, and assessed for the saturation and vibrancy of their colours, before swatches are delivered across to Missoni. This continues until a design is produced that pleases both companies.

As Bolon has learnt to translate Missoni’s complex patterns, Missoni has also worked with Bolon’s palette, which is specifically suited to flooring. “Missoni’s way of working with colour is very expressive, focused a lot around mixing and matching good colours with the patterns,” says Ekwall. “As the years have passed, they have also worked with colours more suited to functional use as flooring.” This growing understanding of each other’s colour development has been essential to the success of Bolon by Missoni: a testament to colour’s centrality to good design.



# NERI & HU

*LEARNING  
FROM LANES*

*Photo by ANNICA EKLUND  
Words by RIYA PATEL*



**T**he spectacular megastructures and dizzying forms of 21st-century urban China have been taking shape at breakneck speed. In the race for modernity, vernacular modes of building and traditional patterns of urban development have often been supplanted by ideas, and indeed architects, borrowed from the West.

The construction boom that began in the 2000s gave rise to a number of flagship projects – such as OMA's divisive CCTV Headquarters in Beijing – that led to a cynical view of Chinese cities as mere playgrounds for iconic forms. Marking the growing displeasure at Western architects using China as an experimental testbed, President Xi Jinping famously called for “no more weird buildings” at a Beijing literary symposium in 2014. The time was ripe for a respectful architectural language drawing on local tradition, material and form, but still serving contemporary needs. For Shanghai-based architects Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu, who set up their practice Neri & Hu in 2004, the answer to this conundrum was already under their feet.

Seeing piles of old rubble on building sites caused Neri and Hu to think about the architecture of their city that was being rapidly swept away in favour of modern development. Much of this demolition was of lane houses (“nong-tang”) – narrow three-storey dwellings that were typical of Shanghai in the 1930s. “One of the most phenomenological ways these houses have an impact is the materials themselves,” say Neri and Hu, explaining their fascination with this type of architecture. “Brick, wood and tile – they give us a very direct, primal connection to the past.” Built originally to accommodate families and their servants, these houses are entered by a rear lane, and have a more public front where the main living spaces can be found. The lane houses have a split-level formation, with the rear spaces sitting half a level above the more generous front spaces. The two areas are connected by a tight stairwell that brings daylight into the deep plan. Not always constructed to a high standard, these houses have rarely been conserved. The easier and more profitable option for developers is to raze them and start anew.

Split House (2012) gave Neri & Hu a chance to directly engage with the typology, turning a dilapidated shell of a former lane house in the Tianzifang district of Shanghai into three apartments. The split-level formation was kept intact, with a new black steel winding stair inserted. This semi-public space – encompassing a stairwell and landings where different residents might meet – is a particular point of interest for Neri and Hu in their research into privacy in densely populated spaces. Like Georgian houses in London, the lane houses of 1930s Shanghai later came to be inhabited by several families on different floors, rather than one affluent family occupying the whole building. The front of Split House is glazed from floor to ceiling, making transparent the threshold between city and domestic life. Daringly, the bathrooms of the three apartments in Split House are also fully glazed and can be seen from the public staircase. “The blurring of boundaries is one overall issue we explore, and one of those is the boundary between interior and exterior,” say Neri and Hu. “This allows a new way of looking at conventions and that's what we like to do. To push the boundary and see where we can get to.”





A similar disintegration of exterior and interior is at play in Neri & Hu's design for the Xi'an Westin Hotel (2012). The architecture borrows strategies from courtyard housing to bring light to internal spaces encased in thick fortress-like walls. Working in Xi'an, a city in northwestern China with a history of more than 3,000 years of civilisation, the architects wanted to express a sense of monumentality with a dark stucco and stone-clad exterior, and a low roof with overhanging eaves that is a nod to traditional Chinese architecture. The hostile exterior makes the inside all the more surprising, revealing Neri & Hu's deft handling of spatial sequencing. There's a clear playfulness in making familiar references, yet also recognising a contemporary desire for light and open spaces. "Since we are not interested so much in style in architecture, we tend to explore the essence of Chinese spaces and understand how they apply to our work," say the architects.

Neri & Hu's design of a showroom and office in Shanghai for the shoe brand Camper (2013) expressed the architects' love for the materiality of the lane houses and the urban qualities of the lane itself. A two-storey "house" made of reclaimed wood and brick infill sits within a larger warehouse space. These leftover spaces give room for spontaneous interaction, mimicking the street activity of a Shanghai neighbourhood. The wood, reclaimed from lane houses, still bears the paint and scraps of wallpaper of the houses it is taken from, giving the new building an immediate connection with the fabric of the city outside. "Old buildings can bring us realisations about what history means for people in the present," say Neri and Hu. "It isn't that there is one right way to do this, but being critical about how we use history is most important."

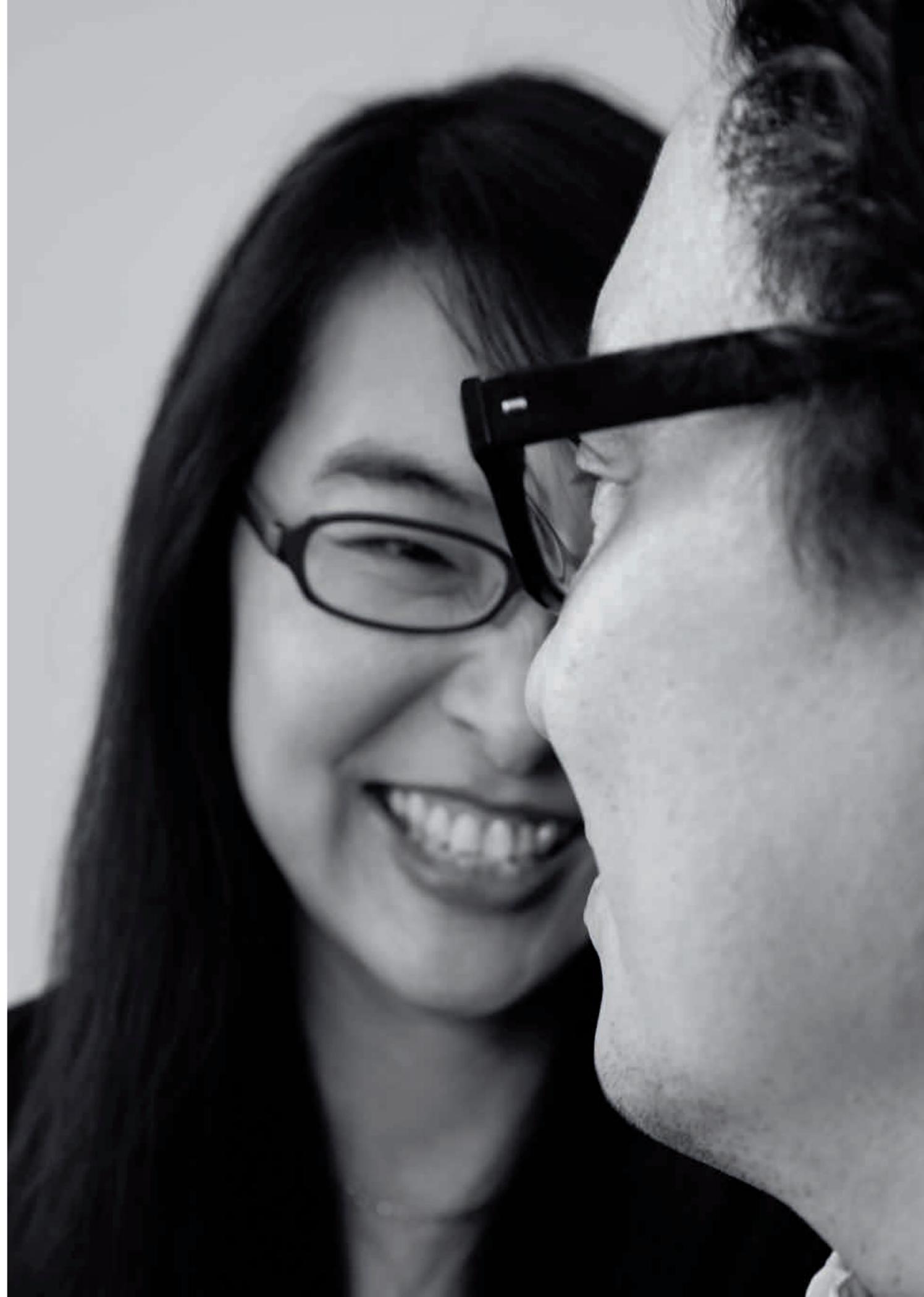
References to the lane house typology, and other vernacular traditions, surface regularly in Neri & Hu's work thanks to an alignment of research and practice. As much as their architecture is about looking forward and anticipating growth, it is equally about sifting the past to find models and methods deserving of contemporary reinterpretation. "Architects often get so caught up with designing so fast and so intuitively that it's almost borderline acceptable for us not to spend a lot of time thinking," say Neri and Hu. "We have a responsibility in everything we design. When there is meaning in the things you do, you can truly give something back to society."

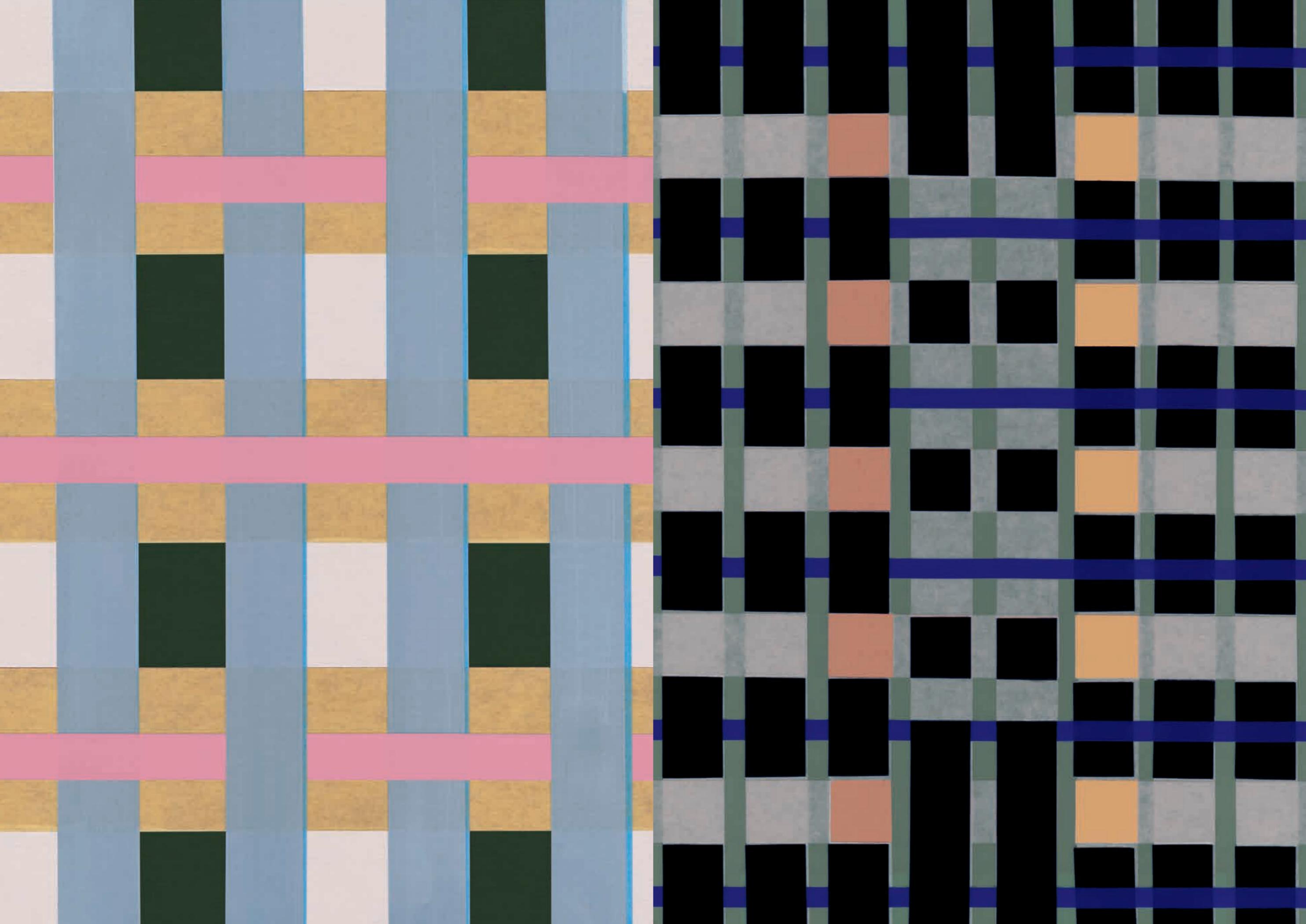
Not that Neri & Hu are specific about which society this might be. With a global project list, and multicultural staff based in offices across

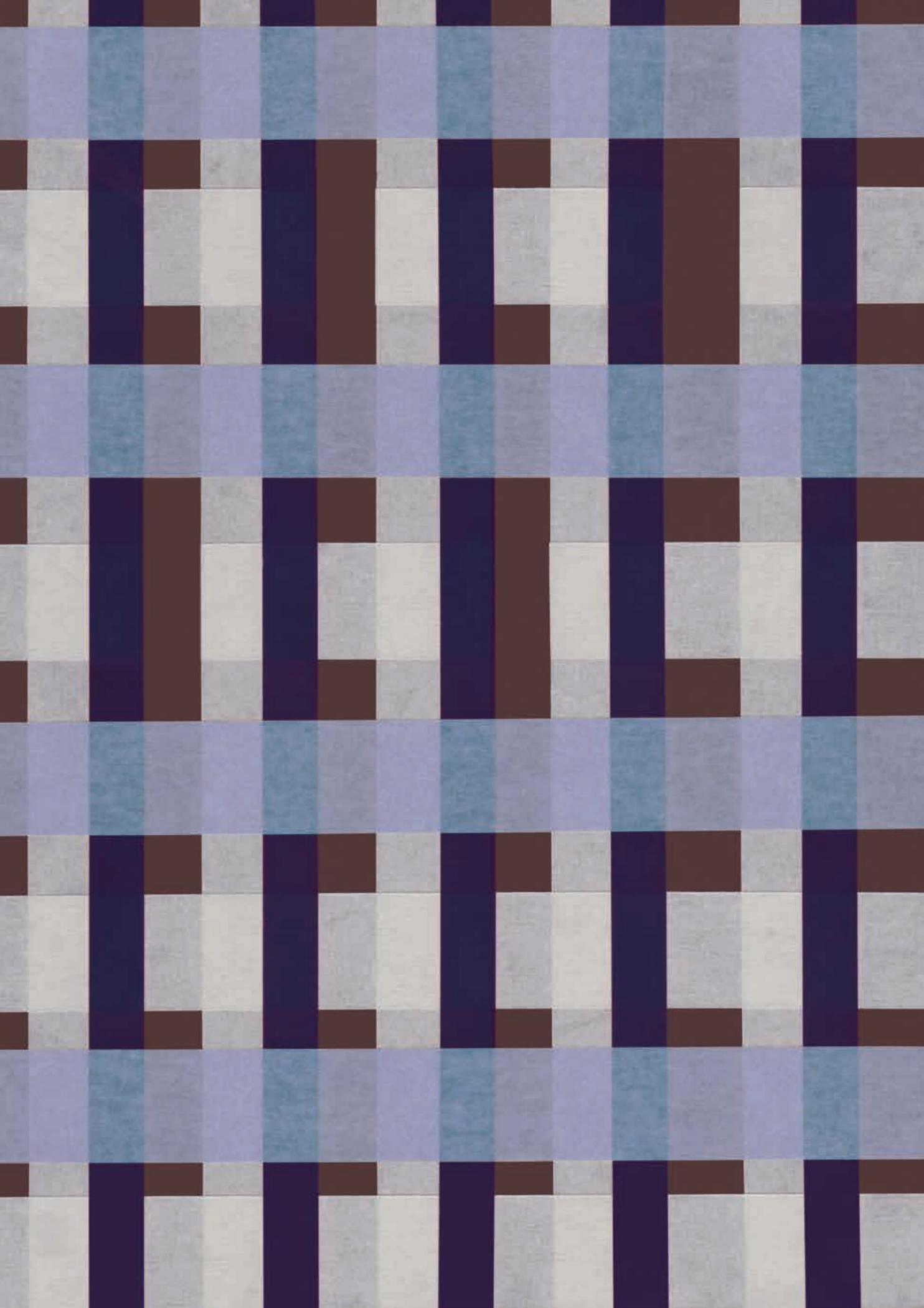
London and Shanghai, Neri and Hu don't just see their research applied to the Chinese urban condition. What they do in a particular location, they say, "has architectural qualities that could inform others who are outside of that specific context". This came to the fore in 2018, when they collaborated with Bolon on the brand's stand design for the Stockholm Furniture and Light Fair, and the Salone del Mobile in Milan. Drawing on the landscape of Swedish forests surrounding Bolon's Ulricehamn showroom, Neri & Hu created a canopy of abstract trees – suspended tubes wrapped in Bolon's fabrics that transported the peaceful qualities of a Nordic forest into a busy trade fair.

It's clear that the practice's sensitive handling of history and place has lessons for those working in other parts of the world with rapidly growing urban populations. There's an increasing sense of urgency in both India and Africa to find local identities and climate-specific techniques for building densely and sustainably. But many of Neri & Hu's themes are common to all cities as we face new questions about how to comfortably co-exist on a planet with limited resources and under urgent climate threat. They advocate for a "critical probing" into local issues before pen touches paper, or digger hits ground. They push for re-use, responding to the vibrancy of streets and neighbourhoods, and a careful consideration of local environments. They have been openly critical of a perceived lack of Chinese design culture, and designers that pursue commercial viability at all costs. On the global future of the industry, they say: "Architecture will continue to be a powerful tool for cultural and social invention, but it will become more and more dematerialised and deformed. There will be many new typologies in architecture driven by new programmatic and cultural requirements."

Both designers trained at the University of California, Berkeley, and spent time working in the US during the early portion of their careers. Like anyone who straddles international cultures, they say they want to be judged on their merit without regard to their heritage, but equally know they are bound by a unique cultural responsibility. "No matter what we do or like, our work will inevitably define the new China," say the pair. "It will be viewed as representative of this time. Therefore it's that much more important that we find a new way to speak our design language, and find a way to communicate what a new Chinese era means to those of us living in it."







## EVELINA KROON

Seeded throughout the pages of this magazine are nine pieces of art. Delicate grids of colour and pattern, they are new works by artist Evelina Kroon, produced in response to Bolon's textile flooring. She told us more.

Who are you? *I'm an artist living and working in Stockholm. I'd describe myself as a cross-disciplinary creative in the fields of painting, illustration, set-design and colouring.*

Tell us about your work. *I'm inspired by traditionally female crafts, and I like to explore the boundary between fine and decorative arts. I have a graphic yet eclectic aesthetic, and I'm mostly known for my tape paintings and patterns.*

Tell us about your work in this magazine? *They are patterns built with tape – a mix of structures and different colour blocks. They were inspired by the new Bolon collection and the colour theme for the magazine.*

How do they differ from your previous work? *Usually I work very intuitively. With this project, I had to set up some rules based on the material I received from Bolon. I kept the structures and colours of the flooring in mind for every pattern I produced.*

What was it like working with Bolon? *I'm familiar with the brand, but I hadn't had anything to do with Bolon until taking on this assignment. I love the design and concept, and it was very smooth, fun and inspiring to work with Bolon!*

