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Sustainable style

Visionnaire's art director Eleonore Cavalli tells *Emily Stefania Coscione* about the brand's green approach and, overleaf, we select four stylish design houses leading the way in environmentally friendly interiors



For Eleonore Cavalli of Italian luxury brand Visionnaire, the handcrafted pieces in her new furniture collection are more than beautiful objects; she describes them as "functional tools working towards a whole new eco-friendly lifestyle".

The Greenery collection was launched at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan, and the furniture reflects a greater use of natural materials. Hero pieces include the outdoor sofa Greenlife, by Maurizio Manzoni and Roberto Tapinassi, in wood and weather-resistant leather; the indoor sofa Bastian, by **Mauro Lipparini**, the fine details of which reference handcrafted saddlery; and the Harmony bathroom console in marble by Alessandro La Spada.

"When we ask our customers what luxury

means to them, the most common response is to be able to enjoy a green space," says Cavalli. "It is not just about owning expensive products. Being in contact with nature brings positive energy, so we have created a 'green heart', an intimate space that brings nature inside every home."

The collection is the start of what she refers to as Visionnaire's "Green Re Evolution", a new sustainability programme that will ensure the company creates as low an environmental impact as possible. "We are working towards becoming eco-friendly at all levels, in the production as well as the packaging and delivery processes," Cavalli explains.

"We choose materials whose provenance is known and certified, so that they do not release toxic substances." This means that the wood used in upholstery frames comes from plantations where trees are cut only when they reach a certain age. The leather is free from chemical additives and the rubber is vegetal based. Visionnaire also uses natural materials such as jute (to replace elastic straps used in suspension systems) and cushions are

Above: the eco-friendly Convention range was designed by Giuseppe Viganò to complement natural green spaces, enjoyment of which Cavalli, below, believes is the essence of luxury



Far left: each of Alessandro La Spada's Swanson lights comprises seven hand-blown glass lamps. Below: Steve Leung's Princess bed, finished here in green leather

"WE HAVE CREATED AN INTIMATE SPACE THAT BRINGS NATURE INSIDE EVERY HOME"

filled with hemp or wool rather than feathers. Cavalli stresses that these ethical choices are made according to the values established by three generations of the Cavalli family, starting with Vittorio, Eleonore's grandfather, who co-founded the design company IPE with his brother Pompeo in 1959.

Craftsmanship is still at the heart of the Visionnaire business and the brand collaborates with an army of small family-run manufacturers spread across Italy. Cavalli explains that from its launch 13 years ago the company has selected each artisan according to the particular project, resulting in pieces that are reproducible and yet handmade and unique. "It is a very flexible, healthy approach, which helps smaller companies and ensures high levels of quality," she says proudly.

Cavalli confesses that Visionnaire's green, ethical approach results in a complicated business model with high costs and complex logistics, but it has also managed to create a working structure. She hopes that others in the design industry will follow its lead. "The potential is enormous," says Cavalli. ■

