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CARPETS & TEXTILES FOR MODERN INTERIORS



Dutch designer rugs
– Edwin Vollebergh,
Kiki van Eijk

37
9 772042 706004

178 Richard Tuttle on show
'I Don't Know – The Weave of Textile Language' in London

90 Street art for the floor
LA firm Soho Design House rocks the home with rugs

116 Alfredo Häberli interiors
The collecting of ideas for textile, rug and interior design

94 Hidden Consciousness
Carpets by artist Mohammad Ehsai and Hossein Rezvani

THE IDEA COLLECTOR

Following the launch of Alfredo Häberli's new textile collection for Kvadrat, Lucy Upward finds out about the Swiss-Argentinian designer's multi-dimensional inspirations

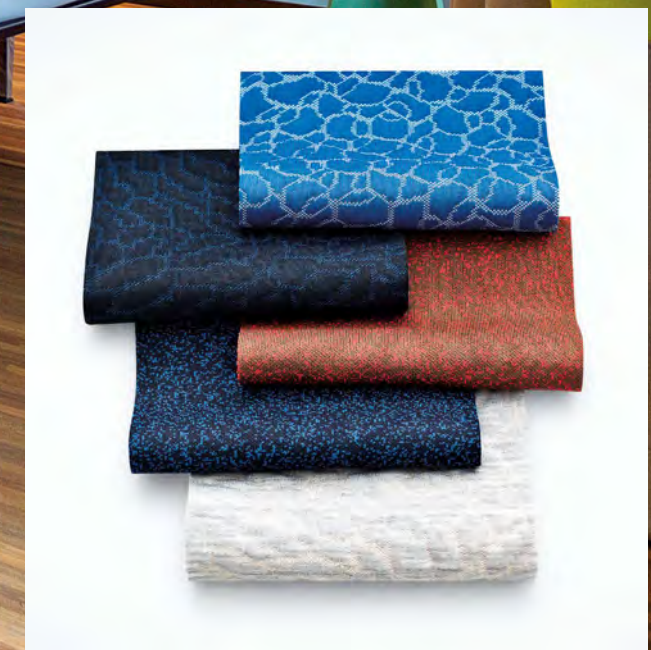
In September, the London showroom of Danish brand Kvadrat hosted Alfredo Häberli's installation *DIS-PLAY*, an oversized three-dimensional mood board spread across the far wall. The occasion was the launch of Häberli's third textile collection for Kvadrat, which coincided with the London Design Festival.

The composition included a chair, textile panels, a sofa and a selection of objects with intriguing shapes, one being a gigantic replica of a canoe boat seat that Häberli had found and kept. In this meticulously composed showcase, each element was perfectly placed in relation to its neighbour, offering a precise balance of colour, tone, shape and texture. Three nearby vitrines mirrored this, each containing a smaller-scaled mood board of objects, textures, and oddities. Each area was a story about the creative process.

For me *DIS-PLAY* made three things clear about the well-respected Zurich-based designer. First, despite this being the launch for a collection in a two-dimensional medium, it was apparent that Häberli thinks three-dimensionally – perhaps an essential quality for an industrial designer.

Second, he is a great collector of stories, ideas, and ephemera, or, as Häberli calls them, 'anonymous objects'. At the Kvadrat launch he explained that several of the items in the mood boards were things he had owned since childhood. When I asked what he enjoys most about the

“I draw in space, collect images, get a world of colours and describe a dream”



01 Guest room at 25hours Hotel Zurich West, Switzerland, interior design by Alfredo Häberli, 2012

02 Alfredo Häberli

03 *Galaxy, Nadir, Nebula*, Knit Collection by Alfredo Häberli for Kvadrat, 2014



04 Hallway space at 25hours Hotel Zurich West, interior design by Alfredo Häberli, 2012

05 Moodboard featuring *Galaxy*, *Nadir*, *Nebula* textiles by Alfredo Häberli for Kvadrat, 2014



design world, he said, 'I love to find ideas – which is the most difficult thing.' The third point that I came to understand at *DIS-PLAY* was that the man is a perfectionist.

Born in Buenos Aires, Alfredo Häberli moved from Argentina to Switzerland as a teenager. Aged twenty-seven, he graduated with distinction in Industrial Design at the Höhere Schule für Gestaltung in Zurich. Asked what first attracted him into the design world he says, 'In my childhood I drew with my grandfather and had my uncle in our house studying architecture. I still have pencils from them. Later, it was the work of Achille Castiglioni and car designer Giorgio Giugiaro.' Having drawn from all these influences, Häberli is now a designer of international renown, responsible for seating, lighting, textiles, rugs, shoes, interior spaces and exhibitions.

Despite his being a confirmed three-dimensional thinker, Häberli has had conspicuous success in developing surface pattern for textiles – he has designed three collections for Kvadrat and two selections of rugs for Ruckstuhl. He explains that textiles have become an essential part of his work. For him it is simple: 'I draw in space. It is really difficult to sketch textiles but I collect images, do drawings, do research about techniques, get a world of colours and describe a dream. Quite often it is all about a thought, a concept, an observation.'

Fifteen years ago Häberli met Anders Byriel, current CEO of Kvadrat, who had just started working in his family company. Häberli describes how they became friends and eventually colleagues: 'I told him about my dream – one day I will work for Kvadrat. He called me eight years later to commission me to design their Milan showroom and some textiles. Since then I have designed twelve fabrics.'

The current upholstery fabric range for Kvadrat comprises three new knitted textiles, *Nebula*, *Nadir* and *Galaxy*. Each is available in a range of colourways and tones that have been carefully adapted for use within interior schemes. The fact that they are knitted gives them a thicker, more three-dimensional feel, and added stretchability.

As usual Häberli drew his inspiration from a range of places,

experiences and collected objects: 'At the time I was interested in the roof textiles on cars. Meanwhile Kvadrat came with the idea of producing knitted textiles, so we started from there. I found the inspiration for the colours in my anonymous objects, in my picture collage diary, in postcards, toys, fragments from nature. The designs came from leaves, from a Japanese pattern [*Nebula*] and I was thinking about rings, coffee marks from the cups [*Nadir*]. The car roof ended up in a pattern which looks like a star sky [*Galaxy*]. All the pattern has no direction, which means you can use it on cubic or organic furniture.'

GRABBING ATTENTION

It was Häberli's 1991 diploma work that instigated his collection for Ruckstuhl. Peter Ruckstuhl had noticed a rug design by the new graduate and many years later called Häberli to sound out a possible cooperation. Focusing on felt, the Swiss carpet manufacturer and the Swiss-Argentinian designer are working on their third collection together, to be released next year.

Rugs were also an important element of the 25hours Zurich West hotel and restaurant. This grand project was completed by Häberli in 2012, giving it the working title 'The Smile of my Hometown'. With a description like that it is inevitable that the rooms are bright and playful. There is a large focus on textiles made by Kvadrat and twelve bright and attention-grabbing rugs, which Häberli developed with Tai Ping. Häberli decided the 'H' of 25H stood for 'Heart, Honesty, Humour and Home'. He aimed 'to create a feeling of being away from home but at home' and the rugs and textiles work to that purpose.

Now to the future. As a designer who specialises in many different media, Häberli is naturally working on a wide spectrum of projects: from a prefab house, to tableware and bathroom interiors, to 'a vehicle which is not a car, not a plane and not a boat'. Despite the variety of ideas, certain elements are guaranteed for all these schemes. They will all have their own individual story and all will be carried out with the same exactitude found in all Häberli's work.

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