



For the love of linen



Bernie de Le Cuona shows us round her new store on Pimlico Road. By Cally Squires



Why did you pick Pimlico Road as the location for the new showroom?

There is so much expertise here and it's a great showcase for the best in design and craftsmanship. I also had this idea of creating a hub for designers, where we can host interesting events and speakers. It's perfectly positioned for that, and for many of our customers who are within walking distance.

Tell us about your vision for this showroom?

I commissioned Waldo Works to challenge and work with me to design a new type of fabric house – one of tactility and respect for raw materials partnered with innovative thinking. The space houses our fabrics and home collections all under one roof and lets me break with some of the norms within the industry and create a really exciting environment.

The opening marked 25 years of the brand. How did it feel to reach that milestone?

Yes, we're planning for the next 25 years. This is a really exciting time and I believe that 2019 will be a huge moment of change for the industry, which needs to happen.

Can you take us back to how and where de Le Cuona began?

It was a love of linen and a youthful belief that I could achieve anything. I was intrigued by a little linen shop in Brussels that sold everything from tablecloths to bolts of fabric and washed vintage French bed linen. I did not know it was 100 per cent linen in those days, I just knew that this was something special and completely opposite to cotton cloths.

Where are your fabrics made?

We source the finest natural fibres from around the world, which are then woven using traditional and innovative techniques by specialist mills. Fibres include linen from Belgium and France, fine silk from China and the highest quality wool from Australia. One of my all-time favourites is a very, very heavy linen that I called Buffalo, and I would not want to live without it. It's stonewashed to show all the marks of the stones, and looks vintage yet modern.

How sustainable are they?

Using sustainable sources is something we have always been conscious of improving upon since I started the company. Most textile merchants do not own their own mills, and so do not know the source of the fibres in their products, or how production processes affect our environment. I visit mills and check all the fibres because our customers want to see luxury labels that have sustainability at the heart of the design process. I believe we are trailblazers in the interior textile business on the sustainability front.

Where did the new furniture and accessories collection in the basement of the new store come from?

The nature-inspired furniture is by industrial designer Charles Haupt and John Vogel. Both are based in Cape Town and reflect my South African origins. There are also limited-edition cushions by Pippa Caley, who is an RCA [Royal College of Art] trained textile artist specialising in embroidery.



What could somebody pick up as a Valentine's gift for an interiors lover?

I would say one of our Italian cashmere throws, available exclusively from the Pimlico Road store.

Have you had any weird and wonderful requests on the bespoke side of the business?

We have covered tents in our linen for a polo match in Windsor Great Park and have upholstered Land Rover seats in one of our wool paisleys. We also often get asked to cover walls and floors in linen.

How would you describe the style of your own house?

Home is a Georgian townhouse and inside it is all about quiet, tactile luxury, with handcrafted pieces that I have brought from South Africa and all over the world. I use natural materials throughout like linen, cashmere and wood. The kitchen is made from the wood of one tree found by my carpenter and the bedroom is flooded with natural light. I have always loved design inspired by nature and travel.

Who do you admire in the design industry?

We work with great interior designers, but I really admire the simple but fine designs of Christian Dior, one of the most influential couturiers. There is little embellishment but great attention to detail. I'm looking forward to Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams, which opens at the V&A on February 2.

de Le Cuona, 44 Pimlico Road

