

Report No. 19 - Winter 2023

# the TEXTILE EYE

INSIGHTS FOR INSPIRED DESIGNERS



## UK CHIC

*Exceptional Surface Design of the British Isles*

## VIVID VISIONS

*Unique Palettes in British Aesthetics*

*And from the V&A*

## THE TEXTILES OF CHANEL

# Q&A

WITH BERNIE DE LE CUONA

## DE LE CUONA

Est. 1993

Windsor, UK

## Studio size

60

## What they create

Interior fabrics

Soft accessories

Bespoke service for cushions, throws,  
curtains, bedspreads

## Market level

High-end

## Who they sell to

Interior designers and retail customers

## Where to find

Standalone showrooms in London  
and New York, representative  
showrooms worldwide  
[delecuona.com](http://delecuona.com)



## THE ART OF UNDERSTATEMENT

Founded in 1993 by Bernie de Le Cuona, the Windsor-based de Le Cuona brand pays tribute to subtlety and simplicity with an exquisitely tactile collection of natural fiber textiles and accessories. Rooted in nature and responsibly crafted, de Le Cuona designs are created with a mandate of sustainable luxury in mind. At heart, each understated piece embodies its founder's overriding inspirations: craftsmanship, nature, and a global perspective on design.

**Tell us about your design background and what spurred you to establish de Le Cuona.**

I am originally from South Africa where I studied architectural design in Johannesburg and came to Europe to travel. I saw hand-dyed vintage linen when I lived in Brussels and was struck by its raw, yet gentle nature that had a texture and nature that took me back to Africa—it's where the passion began. Moving to England, I set about producing linen fabric for interiors.

**Choose three words that define your brand.**

Unique, natural, innovative.



### **How would you describe your aesthetic?**

A subtle, elegant aesthetic, but one that is unexpected. The craftsmanship behind our fabrics is an utter art—we take so much care in our approach.

### **Do you have an English design sensibility?**

We share the English love of comfort and character, an understated take in luxury.

### **What is your greatest inspiration for the collection?**

Nature. Craftsmanship. A global perspective on design.

### **Is your personal style mirrored in the de Le Cuona Collection?**

Coco Chanel famously said, “Simplicity is the keynote of all true elegance.” This is true of our fabrics and my personal style. Clothes beautifully made from premium materials that feel wonderful and feature unfussy silhouettes.

### **Tell us about your newest collection and which designs you are most excited about.**

The extraordinary structures behind the textiles in the new Paper Shadows Collection. For example, Kyoto is a tightly woven linen and wool boucle combined in this artisanal undyed and unbleached fabric that has a unique three-dimensional structure.

Sashiko is a reversible, pocket cloth jacquard weave with an irregular texture reminiscent of a traditional Japanese embroidery method. A special finishing technique creates a textured surface evocative of quilting.

### **Why did you choose to create an organic collection?**

We invested in organic textiles to educate consumers and designers on their benefits to affect change in the

Previous: Bernie de Le Cuona, founder, CEO, and head of design direction.  
Above, L: Aura in Parchment, Tatami in Tea, Lotus in Morning Dew, and Geisha in Satin from the Paper Shadows collection.  
Above, R: Naturally Organic Curtains, Shore Sofa, Cape & Hoxton cushions.

industry and change mindsets—to be kind to people, the planet, and animals, too.

We wanted to create top-quality, totally organic linen that's sustainably produced without harmful chemicals and is beneficial to health and the environment and give it a high aesthetic and design value.

### **What would you like everyone to know about the benefits of buying 100% organic textiles?**

It's beneficial for those who are looking to invest in a healthy lifestyle while protecting the environment. Linens sustainably and responsibly produced without harmful chemical means no damaging particles are emitted into the environment or the air we breathe in our living spaces.

### **As an organic textile maker, you are among the first to receive the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).**

It's important that the organic textiles used in homes are certified to make sure the products have been through the rigorous certification process. Pure is GOTS-certified but all our natural fabrics have accreditation. We know the origins of all the raw materials used, from sourcing the natural fibers right through to designing stylish recycled packaging. Sustainability and protecting the environment is a core part of the brand identity.

### **What draws you to linen as opposed to other fibers?**

It's the most exciting natural fiber to work with. It's not only the oldest fiber known to man, but also the most versatile. You can do anything with it—from creating the sheerest curtains to the heaviest upholstery. The naturally anti-bacterial and hypoallergenic qualities of linen make it perfect for use in living spaces.

### **Any plans to introduce new fibers?**

We're interested in hemp.

### **What advice would you give to your younger self when starting out in the industry?**

Believe anything is possible—it just depends how hard



you are prepared to try to get it.

### **What role has Africa played in influencing your collection?**

I was born in Pretoria and grew up on a farm which engendered a lifelong love of the bush and conservation and contributed to my love of nature which inspires the de Le Cuona collections.

The natural beauty of South Africa informs my palette. The colors are strong but bleached and often delicate. There are so many shades of sand and thunderous skies, warm sunsets, and sunrises. These colors live and change like landscapes. They are not harsh and modern, but natural and timeless.

### **What are your favorite resources to spark inspiration?**

Running. I run early in the mornings wherever I am in

Above: Aura in Wisp, Sashiko in Bobbin, and Lotus in Blossom from the Paper Shadows collection.



the world. Travel. Heading off down the Zambezi in a canoe with a tent, cooler boxes, very few clothes, and a hat for a few weeks. Zambia is really inspiring—it's such a calm, unexplored, and uncommercialized place.

#### **How do you approach palette creation?**

Create your own color references instead of relying on Pantone or paint charts. Our signature naturals and even our bolder shades have a knocked-back elegance and mix beautifully. Stronger colors also cease to be overwhelming when given texture and that is what de Le Cuona's collections are about.

#### **In terms of craft, what do you love about your process?**

I am lucky enough to travel, and that's where I really discover craftsmanship. I search for the best fibers, the best skills, or unusual techniques. I meet the most inspiring people—the last keepers of old techniques which are about to be lost in time, the most courageous people who are ready to try something that no one in

the industry has tried before. Our confidence to do the unexpected comes from a mastery of the craft and how de Le Cuona produces the cloths allow them to last and be loved for years.

#### **Is there something about your creative process that would surprise people?**

We often work in an unorthodox way. For linen, the mills need to spin the yarn to specification then weave and dye it. At this point, it might go to a separate facility that stonewashes it, and possibly to another country for embossing or embroidering. Then it will return to the place of origin where it's tumbled to soften and crackle any embossing. It can take months for one roll to be produced.

Above, L: Mangrove in Hazel, Lotus in Frost, Burnished Linen in Lantern, and Nara in Black Pine from the Paper Shadows collection.

Above, R: Lotus, Thicket, Nara, Island Felt, Kyoto, Mangrove, and Kanoko from the Paper Shadows collection.



**What can you share about the finishing techniques you use to achieve such a supple hand on your linens?**

We spend a lot of time and money finessing the way a fabric feels and flows. Our fabrics go through several finishing processes, including washing with real pumice stones to give it a soft handle and flexibility.

**What new techniques are you interested in exploring?**

We're exploring embroidery and embossing linens. Craftsmanship and the provenance of products matter and this knowledge enriches their appreciation of beauty and quality. The pace of technology means there will be some shifts, but I do believe that a product which has a soul and the human touch will always be important and appreciated.

**What's up next?**

Taking a photographer with me to Africa to capture the rooted-in-nature ethos of de Le Cuona and tell our unique story.

***"The craftsmanship behind our fabrics is an utter art—we take so much care in our approach."***

Bernie de Le Cuona

Above L: Burnished Linen in Midnight from the Paper Shadows collection.

Above R: Mangrove in Hazel, Lotus in Frost, Burnished Linen in Lantern, and Sashiko in Chalk from the Paper Shadows collection.

R: Inca in Grain, Cocoa, Corn, Cassava, Pure, Equator, Fungi, and Linen from the Pure Edition II.