



# SHOWROOM SHOWCASE

INTERIOR DESIGN TODAY TAKES A LOOK THROUGH THE DOORS OF SOME OF THE UK'S BEST SHOWROOMS, OFFERING AN INSIGHT INTO THE COLLECTIONS CURATED AND CREATED BY THE DESIGNERS WHO RUN THEM. **By Jade Tilley**

**As we wrapped up for the Christmas holidays, towards the end of 2014, I had a few things on my agenda. I'm sure Christmas shopping/wrapping was in there somewhere but at my desk I had reams and reams of pages to prepare for our Interior Design Yearbook for 2015 and one very important pit stop to make in London before the year was out.**

Bundled up against the biting cold that had descended on the capital that day, I headed into

London, specifically Gatliff Road, SW1, to review the spectacle that is the Staffan Tollgard Design Store. My journey took me from Sloane Square to the Grosvenor Waterside area at dusk. There is something really peaceful (and bracing) about walking close to the water and as the street lights came to life, guiding my way to the front door of this impressive showroom, I couldn't wait to get in and experience the delights of this spotlessly appointed Design Store.

Although Staffan Tollgard the brand, has a history of 10 years, the Design Store is in fact only just celebrating its first birthday. It has a freshness and vitality that will live long in this glass fronted shop window, not least because of the constant shuffle and transition of new and exciting designers, coming in and out of the doors, offering visitors a taste of something different, something with character, each time they visit.



Before I meet with Staffan I have the chance to meander around the store. The space is full but still spacious and the layout flows like a contemporary penthouse that harbours a lot of furniture. Hovering above the space is the design studio where Monique Tollgard is busy with the team working on various projects. I'm greeted by Staffan who, after pursuing the latest issue of IDT, asks 'how do you want to do this?' I explain that I tend not to write/transcribe, but prefer to just sit with the designer and chat; I absorb more that way. Given how much we covered, perhaps I was mistaken this time but the memory of my visit still holds strong now and I'm glad I wasn't punctuating our talk with my silent scribbles and constant need to look at my notebook. Staffan's approach to design and the way he and Monique have worked to establish this brand, has that effortless 'Scandinavian cool' about it. Everything happens when it is ready. Brands and designers are discovered by Staffan and brought in to the store when something special is created. We choose a space to sit and take in the surroundings. I had a great view and an even better feeling about the roots of this showroom.

As I said before, the Design Store is a mere year old and yet instead of trying to crawl first, it has leapt into a full on sprint, taking the interiors world by storm. Now that the store is standing on its own two feet and the studio is running like a well-oiled machine, Staffan has the opportunity to explore other areas of design and to take himself away from the hustle and bustle of the vibrant studio for some 'ideas time'. It's a lovely position to be in, watching the Design Store flourish and being able to commit fully to new and exciting projects and collaborations. Staffan is a member of a museum that provides some much-needed thinking space for him to escape and create. I won't give away which one but the museum in question has royal connections. Staffan has several product collaborations to his name and there is certainly more to come. I can see that these choices have been made after a long and well-considered process of what to do and how to create the best out of it. These collaborations have led to European exhibitions and a full branch out into product design for the company. Staffan designed his first light 'Belle' for Contardi, which was launched at Maison et

Objet last year. The Belle collection adorns several spots in the showroom, behind the front desk, they sit, glinting and reflecting every light in the room. There is also stunning Red Thread rug collection, a creative journey between Staffan and JAB Anstoetz (as we went to press, Staffan was at the Cologne fair with the collection). The Red Thread collection really caught my eye and held my attention. Not just because of its beautiful simplicity and deep luxury and artistry of each piece, but Staffan's explanation of the whole concept. I am a huge fan of stories; books, scripts, creative articles, you name it. Staffan explained to me that The Red Thread is derived from a Scandinavian notion 'Röda Tråden' of a journey, the heart of the idea that connects everything together and guides it on a chosen path. Design is a story and this collection tells it beautifully. From Scratched motifs to the resonate nature of Beneath – a design that looks like lava erupting – and the original and simple Red Thread, these designs tell a story, as do all of the pieces in the showroom. It is how they are chosen in the first place – nothing is throwaway,



no design is disregarded as just design – it all tells a story. I have to say, my favourite rug in the collection is the Drop, a tranquil pool of rippled mimicry that is so impressive for its manipulation of the material.

With this storytelling in mind, we start to move around the space to take in with more detail, the nuances of the designs on show. Staffan's passion for those who feature in the Design Store is honest and infectious. There are pieces by Mark Albrecht, a New York based designer whose dedication to hand-crafted metal and woven leather has us knelt down to see in exact detail, just how Mark has achieved such perfection in each piece. There is a stunning sideboard at the front of the store with delicious little leather feet that beckons my attention. Linteloo is another brand featured. Created by Jan te Lintelo in The Netherlands, there features an impressive dining/office/banquet table in a beautiful solid wood that reveals huge sturdy steel legs. It's all brilliantly crafted by the way, nothing is clumsy or rustic to the point of rough finish. These pieces are seamless, their stories are complete and cyclical.

Piet Boon features as well. This Dutch designer oozes refined sophistication. Luxurious leather padded dining chairs invite

you to sit and never move from that spot again. Another treasure chest of a sideboard sits perched near the back wall. This time the designer is Emmemobili, whose motto 'excellence in wood' doesn't do it justice until you see it. This perfectly carved diamond-patterned piece of furniture has a whimsical feel about it, but it is solid, right to the very core. For me it was Alice in Wonderland meets impeccable production. I won't detail every item in the Design Store but I will tell you that at the moment there is a huge lighting installation by Aqua Creations that resembles a glistening topaz alternative to Superman's Kryptonite, hovering over another beautiful JAB Anstoetz collaboration rug.

There is so much more to say about this space but it really needs to be seen to be believed. If I were to write a sequel to the Staffan Tollgard Design Store showroom visit, it would exist under the title 'The Quest of the Red Thread' as this editor is hooked.

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