









Diane Becker

Tutor Craft the Leather



It is very rare today to really know where "things" come from. Products. materials, ingredients are just there (or easily accessible)- ready to be used, transformed, consumed. But even as we have become aware that there is no "away" to throw things after our use, we also realize we need to look upstream to understand the whole picture. Designers and makers know that it is indeed our concern and responsibility to comprehend the impact of our work and the choices we make.

The values that determine our choices create the structure of our lives.

In Tuscany, in the Leather District, we can perceive directly the culture of values of a community that shapes the production of an iconic traditional material, Tuscan veg-tanned leather.

Each year Craft the Leather brings together a group of exceptional talents, inviting them to share in the daily life of the territory to experience first hand how these values are expressed across multiple activities. First and foremost

is the sense of respect for nature, most obviously present in the research facilities dedicated to the reduction of the environmental impact of the tanning industry and the impressive water treatment plants, but echoed in the strongly rooted sense of seasonality in the food (Slow Food and Kilometer 0). the local wines and olive oil. Then there is a strong sense of the continuity of aesthetics and ethics in the stewardship of this area along the Arno River valley. so rich in art and architecture. Even the choice of hosting this activity honors the practice of apprenticeship as an approach to knowledge, learning through the experience of working along side a master, to understand the gestures of the craftsman that transmit far more than

Every Craft the Leather workshop has its own distinct character, created by the interests of the members of the aroup. This year, in addition to a well-rounded company of designer/makers, the director of the Material Library at RISD.

technical knowhow.

Mark Pompelia, joined us, with his highly informed interest in the process of the development and qualities of leather, and Dean Snyder, an artist who has worked extensively sculpting rawhide, who focused on the plasmatic qualities of the skins on their way to becoming the finished leather. Dinner conversation and the creative exploratory workshops were enriched by their contributions. Ultimately, we can appreciate that the value of inspired hard work has informed the creation of the individual collections presented in this book. Everyone shared the same experience and had access to the same raw materials. The final results reflect both the culture of each learning institute and personal vision of each student as they "craft the leather".

Disne Becker

Toward Material Understanding

Mark Pompelia

Art Librarian for Visual + Material Resources Fleet Library at Rhode Island School of Design



Craft the Leather offers an incomparable experience as both immersion and exhibition program.

From its focus on a single material and a particular process - vegetable-tanned leather in the San Miniato leather district of Tuscany - we learn the totality of that material: its centuries-old mission and purpose, the trajectory of that origin to continued relevance, and ways to engage anew through creative inspiration.

We learn its culture.

This is of huge importance to an institution such as Rhode Island School of Design. One of the oldest art schools in the United States, it was born of a time when manufacturing production and artisanal design were the two chambers of a still-young nation's industrial heart. In the 21st century, RISD - with its continued focus on disciplinebased learning - teaches students that critical thinking + critical making = the best design. It makes me wonder if the founding women of the Rhode Island

School of Design happened to spend formative time in San Miniato As a librarian who oversees the non-text collections in the Fleet Library at RISD (digital images, video, and a six year old collection of 32,000 material samples) - an exhilarating charge at such a preeminent institution, I work not just to acquire items and provide the best access to them, but to activate them, to foster their teachability. All those parts, but especially the latter, require my own learning. Craft the Leather provided a unique and unforgettable experience where that material can no longer remain just static samples in a bin on a shelf. Craft the Leather set a standard by which I hope to engage other materials. I came to Craft the Leather through a very fortuitous process. Having hosted part of the exhibition in my library space when it traveled in October 2014 to Providence, I met the key organizers and personnel of the program. That made such an impression that I added a Craft the Leather style immersion experience

into an upcoming sabbatical proposal. The very next day after submitting that proposal, I was asked to be the tutor for the 2015 program: instead of waiting two years for this experience, I waited only two months.

Without doubt, Craft the Leather is an idyllic week in the heart of Tuscany that few tourists will ever enjoy. But the program has generated a forwardlooking legacy for me: overwhelmingly positive feedback from colleagues led to the idea to modify the program for librarians whose subjects and collections cover materials, fashion, costume, and textiles, to be offered in autumn 2016. This coming spring I will speak formally on the experience at several different conferences: as a way to learn qualitatively more about our collections, as a model for embedded librarianship where we participate in the educational life of our students, and as a model for our profession where digitization has taken us too far away from the material.



Arnhem - The Netherlands		Fashion Institute of Technology	New York City, N
The ArtEZ Product Design Department values ambition, craftsmanship and know-how. Being a successful student to us means making the field of design your own, reinterpreting existing ideas and standards. We ask our students to foster an inquisitive attitude, a workshop mentality and a critical view of the world. Educating a new generation of designers is possible only in close cooperation with the field of professional design. We would not want it to be otherwise,	it makes our department energetic and enterprising. Our teachers work internationally, connecting a network to our department. All this makes Product Design Arnhem an educational node of expertise and diversity. Our network is extensive and includes collaborations with companies, so our students can develop a unique perspective on material and collaboration. www.artez.nl	Fashion Institute of Technology	FIT's Accessorie first of its kind in Associate in App and the Bachelo plus the country programs in Milli Athletic Footwea to design, consti range of access are industry prof the skills needed
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A school that is a world leader of fashion, Bunka Fashion College is a forerunner of fashion education in Japan. Knowing that it must produce powerful leaders for the fashion industry, the college has established four courses that follow all aspects of the industry. Among these courses, Fashion	Accessories and Textile Department aims to teach expertise and skills that can respond to footwear, bag, millinery and jewelry industries' trends, and to develop human resources that can demonstrate creativity with imagination. www.bunka-fc.ac.jp	Häme University of Applied Sciences HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES	Häme University (HAMK) is a mult education institut in the most popu Finland. HAMK h around 7200 stud other staff and 30 which 6 are deliv HAMK Design st three study paths glass and ceram
London - United Kingdom			at mastering the
MA Design; Jewellery is part of the renowned 'by project' Masters in Design at Central Saint Martins where specialist students from jewellery, ceramics and furniture, design and innovate together. Course Alumni include Fernando Jorge, Gunjan Gupta, Alice Cicolini, Noor Fares and many others who are changing the face of the industry. Central Saint Martins, part of University of the Arts London (UAL), is internationally	renowned for the creative energy of its students, staff and graduates with an exceptional reputation for educating foundation, undergraduate, postgraduate and research students in arts, design and performance. Alumni include Francesca Amfitheatrof, Emilia Clarke, Gilbert and George, Christopher Kane, Stella McCartney, and Alexander McQueen. www.arts.ac.uk/csm/	Hiko Mizuno College of Jewelry H H K Q H H 2 ⊻ N 0 € Q L L E 6 E S	Tokyo - Japan Hiko Mizuno Col the only governr jewelry college i nurturing "makin techniques, it ha creation of the W departments, an College Cycle D We are very prov
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bries Design Program - the d in the U.S. - offers the Applied Science degree lelor of Fine Arts degree, try's only certificate Millinery and Performance vear. Students learn how instruct, and produce a full essories. Faculty members professionals who teach ded for success in the industry. FIT's Manhattan location provides unparalleled opportunities for real world experience through field trips, networking, industry-sponsored competitions, and internships at top accessories firms. The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), a college of the State University of New York, has been a leader in career education in art, design, business, and technology for 70 years. www.fitnyc.edu.

- Finland

sity of Applied Sciences nultidisciplinary higher titution situated centrally opulated area of southern K has 7 campuses with students, 750 teachers and d 30 degree programmes, of elivered entirely in English. In studies are divided into aths: clothing, footwear, amics. The studies aim he entire design and manufacturing process of the product, with a customer orientated approach and understanding the importance of economic and ecological standpoints in the design process. The students gain expertise in the materials of their design field and product-specific quality requirements.Our footwear department is the only one giving Bachelor-level education in the whole of Scandinavia. www.hamk.fi

College of Jewelry is ernment authorized ge in Japan. As a college aking" and creative design thas grown with the e Watch, Shoe, and Bag and in 2012, the Tokyo e Design.

broud of having attracted iition, with numerous brograms, as an academy of developing design fields. Our educational policy "Man & Object" informs all areas of study: all products are designed with a good understanding of the human structure and the relationship of objects to the body. The pieces produced by the students can be considered art pieces as well as fashion/product designs directly related to contemporary life styles. www.hikohiko.jp London - United Kinadom



Kookmin University is one of the leading private universities in Korea. Its educational goal is to foster and educate leaders who make a difference in the global community. Kookmin University provides students with opportunities to have academic, cultural, and professional worldwide experiences and an insight for the future. Designers of the 21st century are expected to create sustainable designs that resonate with the individuals in society.

At the same time, the designers need the ability to incorporate scientific technology with artistic visions in their creative work to keep current with the worldwide trends, and to maintain traditional and cultural relevance to the society. In this respect, College of Design at Kookmin University aims at providing the students with an established curriculum incorporating the spirit of time into design education.

design.kookmin.ac.kr

London College of Fashion -University of the Arts London



Europe's largest specialist arts and design university, with close to 19,000 students from more than 100 countries. Established in 2004, University of the Arts London is a vibrant world centre for innovation, drawing together six colleges with international reputations in art, design, fashion, communication and performing arts including the London College of Fashion, which was founded in the early 20th century. The tradition of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers is at the heart of the footwear and accessories courses.

Originally a prestigious school for shoemakers, the education has evolved over the past 125 years to accommodate new ideas and new needs. Today the BA (Hons) Cordwainers Fashion Bags and Accessories: Product Design and Innovation course is concerned with the design, development and realization of fashion bags and accessory products for the fashion accessories market through both traditional craftsmanship and modern technologies.

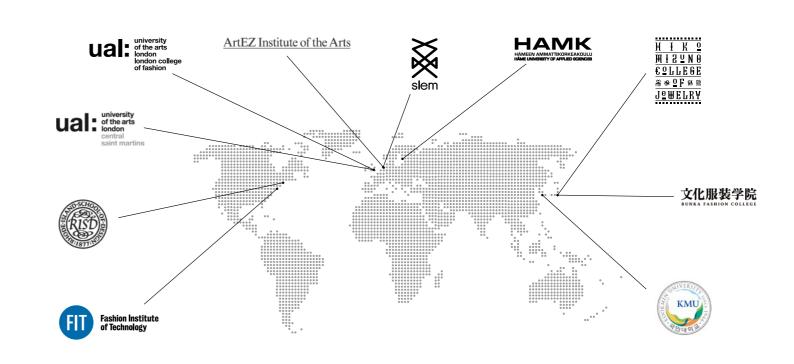
www.arts.ac.uk/fashion/

SLEM

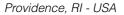


Waalwijk - The Netherlands

SLEM (Shoes Leather Education Museum) is an international innovation and education center for footwear that includes a consulting department, a forecasting department, a footwear museum and an education institute that offers full time master programs as well as part time workshops for professionals. At SLEM our aim is to transfer, maintain and improve footwear knowledge and the overall industry by bringing new technologies, creative thinking and cutting-edge methods into practice. We do all this through research, teaching and applying new methods that are suitable for the future for



Rhode Island School of Design



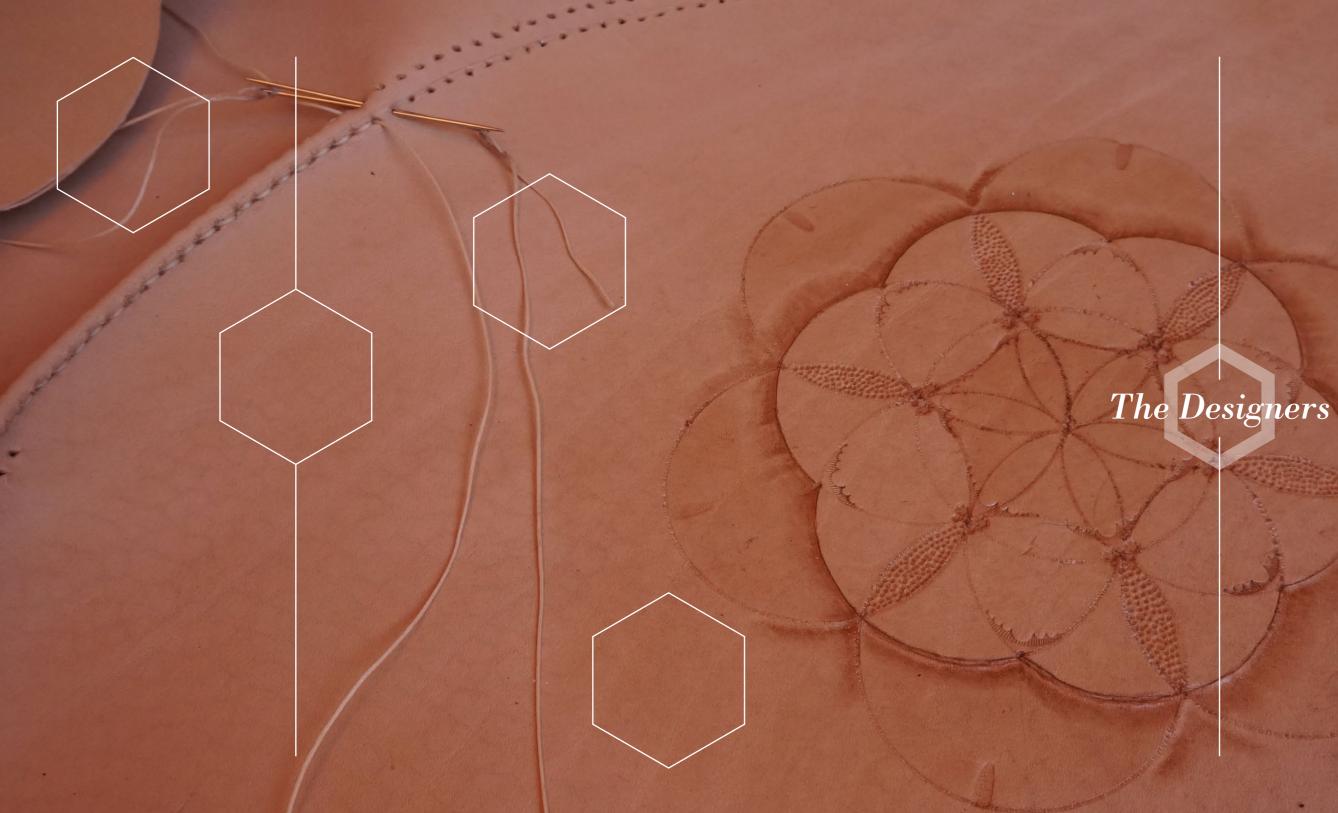


The Rhode Island School of Design, RISD's mission, through its college and museum, is to educate its students and the public in the creation and appreciation of works of art and design, to discover and transmit knowledge and to make lasting contributions to a

global society through critical thinking, scholarship, innovation and critical making.

www.risd.edu

which we prepare our students. Our Master program of Footwear Innovation eliminates the typical department divisions between technology, design and marketing, providing a multi-disciplinary platform for both students and professionals from diverse backgrounds. The program deals with translating future visions into sustainable designs as well as in innovative business concepts that are capable of uniting the creative, commercial and technical dimensions of the footwear industry. Ultimately we aim at creating meaningful, applied innovation in the footwear and related industries. www.slem.nl







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_Timoth<mark>y Jacob Hooke</mark>r

han Xuan Pan

Sanae Kitamura

Meri Kirjavainen—

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Joowon Bae

Mahs<mark>a Kordba</mark>che

Eva Klabalova

Maria <mark>Sole Ferr</mark>agamo

Joowon Bae

The luminous beauty of leather



The beauty of working with leather is that the more you use it, the more fabulous it becomes. This vintage and classic beauty is what I love about leather. These days, when trends are superficial and quickly changing, I miss the past when we used well made hand-me-down leather bags.

Once I bought a leather backpack that I always wanted to have, and went to school shouldering the bag with excitement. When I arrived at school, my friend asked me what kind of leather the bag was made of. I said that it was elephant hide, and he said "Poor elephant...you should use it with loving care for the sake of elephant". I thought what he said was admirable. (Of course, some people would disagree with using elephant hide from the start if it comes to "the sake of elephant".)

But I believe treasuring old well-made products is better than throwing them away because of change in trends. The classic, enduring aspect of leather is the concept I am focusing on in this project. I started to research Hanbok, the traditional Korean costume, and other traditional products. After that, I made those items, including Hanbok, with leather. In order to create an impression similar to the fabric of Hanbok, I made the leather translucent.





Joowon Bae

The luminous beauty of leather





Maria Sole Ferragamo

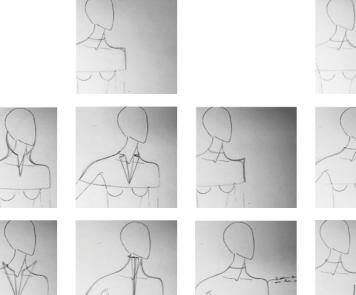
Cutting Edge

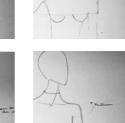


Cut it, wet it, stretch it, mould it, dry it. The discovery of the unique characteristics of vegetable-tanned leather led to an unstoppable iterative process. Working and playing almost compulsively with this material set the foundation for the collection. An explorative journey through vegetable-tanned leather's materiality, using a jewellery designer's eye and approach for the re-visitation of three traditional women's garments. Such garments acted as shields for protection, now enhanced by the intimate relationship a wearer establishes with a product that ages with them, telling a personal story.

In the first piece leather remains in its natural state and stretch is conveyed through cuts. In the second one, "cutwet-stretch-mould-dry" has an aesthetic reason, to open the cuts and reach a subtler materiality. In the third one, the same processes have a structural necessity, being that the entire piece is supported only by the rigidity of the leather strips.

Where it was indispensible in the making process, the collection has been produced by hand. In other parts, I have enhanced the process using machinery like the cutting plotter.







Maria Sole Ferragamo

Cutting Edge





Timothy Jacob Hooker

Devised Burden in Degradé



The San Bartolo Murals of Guatemala, their significance, and specifically the way in which their creators chose to reflect natural beauty are a direct influence in the creation of this project. The darkness of the actions taking place in the murals is hopefully echoed in the overall effect of the ensemble, as well as in the exquisite details -- initially hidden, but becoming more apparent upon closer inspection -- a layering of techniques, some becoming totally lost beneath the final applications. Integrating the hard, curvilinear lines with the softness of degradé, and fusing a juxtaposition of masculine and feminine body language, in material-conscious wearables.







Timothy Jacob Hooker

Devised Burden in Degradé







Meri Kirjavainen

Bare skate runner



I love sneakers and casual street fashion. My collection is inspired by sport footwear. I studied the structures of barefoot shoes, running shoes and skateboarding shoes. I wanted to experiment using vegetable-tanned leather with these structures. The whole collection has been handmade from laser cut vegetable-tanned leather. With laser cut patterns I wanted to imitate mesh textile and other materials often used in sport footwear. Hand stitching and leather soles inlaid with rubber are also important to my creative concept. Old traditional ways meet innovative technique and fashion.







Meri Kirjavainen

Bare skate runner







Sanae Kitamura

Life of a woman and her kimono -Embroidery-

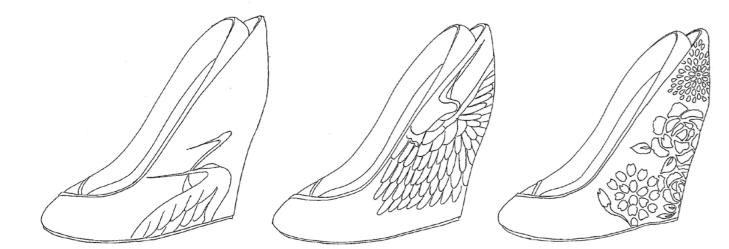


I made three symbolic shoes inspired by kimono, which is a traditional costume in Japan. I focused on embroidery among the decorative techniques of kimono, because I feel one stitch is like one step of life. There are 3 types of kimono. They each have different meanings. The first one is "FURISODE" worn by an unmarried woman. Here an abundance of flowers express youthfulness and energy. The next one is "SHIROMUKU", worn by

a woman at her wedding. The crane is a symbol of good luck for the beginning of a new life. The last one is "TOMESODE", worn by a married woman. The two cranes represent the eternal best partner. Each person colors their life individually,

that's why I didn't color the leather of my shoes.

Life advances stitch by stitch, so embroidery is important to me.





Sanae Kitamura

Life of a woman and her kimono -Embroidery-









Eva Klabalova

Nomad



Breaking the rules about dividing shoes between an upper and an outsole. Think vertical not horizontal. My goal is to create a sustainable construction with mechanical connection by using one material – Vegtanned sole leather - with no glue. After returning from Italy I began researching ethnic footwear, taking inspiration from the Shoes or no Shoes museum collection in Belgium, I studied the connection between the 2 main parts of the shoe as we know it today - upper and outsole – across the last 1000 years. I took inspiration from old craft and tradition combining it with future technology. I wanted to create a construction where there would be no difference between the upper and outsole. The properties of veg-tanned leather allowed me to break the rules about dividing the shoe into the upper and outsole by creating a sustainable construction with no glue where the outsole is the upper and the upper is the outsole.



Eva Klabalova

Nomad





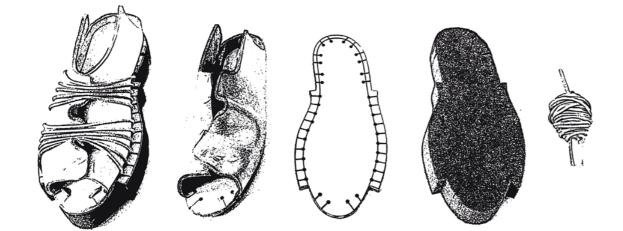
Mahsa Kordbacheh

Beyond Limitations

ArtEZ Institute of the Arts

I have always felt a certain resentment toward sewing and stitching machines because they are so definite and unforgiving in their execution. With this strong but mouldable vegetable-tanned leather I was able to avoid the standard connecting (stitching) technique. Having one sole that is the base of the collection, which defines the possibilities for endless shoe tops, also creates limitations. Because of these limitations the design

makes sense and feels very logical. This vegetable-tanned leather doesn't need decoration and embellishments and I focused on the qualities, characteristics and properties it already possessed. The focus point is the leather; external materials are only used if highly necessary. Because this design is going to travel and be exhibited packing material was implemented to complete all logical functions.











Mahsa Kordbacheh

Beyond Limitations







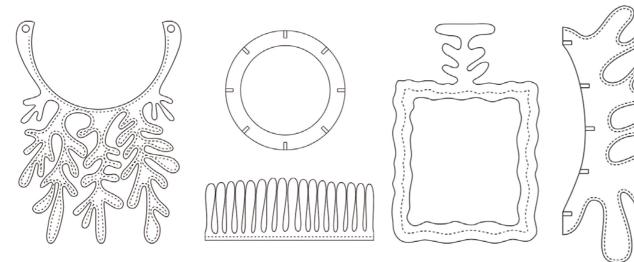
Zhan Xuan Pan

In the sea



The inspiration comes from animals living in the sea, including coral, sea anemone and starfish, which are so beautiful and fantastic.

Another source of inspiration is plywood. I saw some design furniture made of plywood, and it occurred to me that leather has some similar features, although even more special, because leather can be twisted and crafted. I polished the leather. For me, that's the most attractive part, the glamour of vegtanned leather. The look of it can change year by year and become more beautiful, especially the shine and patina. As time goes by, it speaks stories. Each of the pieces is sewn completely by hand. I think handmade has more character and feeling, it's better than machine made.







Zhan Xuan Pan

In the sea







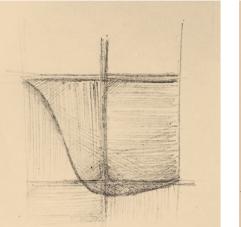
Alejandra Simonetta

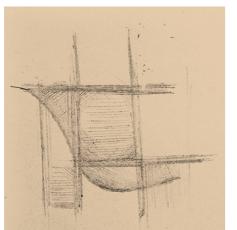
White Mondrian. The wooden shoes

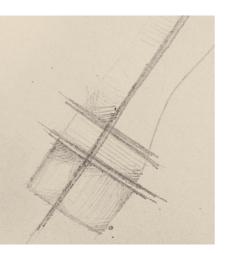


Inspired by the masterpieces of Piet Mondrian. This project is based on veg tan leather as the main material and source of inspiration and secondly the geometric lines of the well-known artist . In this project the idea was to experiment and push the boundaries in the use of the material to create new aesthetics within the footwear industry. Being familiar with the properties of veg tan leather, my intention was to unify my previous knowledge and explore new possibilities. The shoes were constructed thanks to a leather layer that was moulded on the last. Over this layer other layers were attached to create the main structure for the sculptural shapes. Separately, blocks of leather were glued and cut by knife. As a result, strips of leather with a wooden appearance were obtained. White Mondrian is about wooden shoes that are made with leather. A mixture of old white wood and the look of shiny brown wood contribute to make a noticeable contrast between the geometric lines, the volume of the figures and the textures.









Alejandra Simonetta

White Mondrian. The wooden shoes







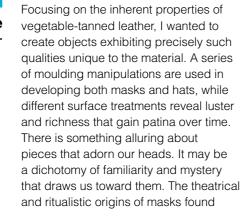




Arnold Wong

Recupero dal santuario dio pelle





throughout all cultures in antiquity lend a primal impression to such objects. Hats – due to their functional or aesthetic purposes – allude to characters and personas that leave a conscious or subconscious impression in our minds when donned.

By exploring these emotional traits that emanate from "headwear", I was intrigued by what impulses could be evoked in the viewer while in the presence of this triad.











Arnold Wong

Recupero dal santuario dio pelle





The Consortium

Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather Consortium



The Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather Consortium was founded in 1994 by a small group of traditional Tuscan tanners. Today the consortium includes 22 tanneries, all operating in Tuscany, in the area between Pisa and Florence, and sharing the same standards of production. In the Tuscan Leather District, high quality vegetable-tanned leather is still produced according to an ancient method. The expertise of master craftsmen, using tannins extracted exclusively from tree bark and plants and all the time necessary, creates natural leathers that are perfect for a wide variety of end use. By the skillful combination of technology and tradition, the members of the consortium produce leathers that satisfy the demands of a niche market where not only high quality, but also style and individuality are fundamental. The mission of this non-profit organization is: to promote vegetable-tanned leather;

to safeguard a typical Tuscan product;

to guarantee the quality of raw materials

origins lie deep in Tuscan history. designers, makers and producers. Students from fashion and design of the leather. ambassador of Tuscan excellence throughout the world. leathers produced by its member

and processes used in its production and to highlight traditional techniques whose Yet the consortium also looks to the future: sponsoring research, organizing events and seminars on emerging trends, and holding workshops for young institutes are given guided tours of the tanneries, and information is published exploring the characteristics and quality

The consortium acts as guarantor and

It has consolidated this position with the creation of a trademark guaranteeing the quality, origin and traceability of tanneries. Presented as an elegantly scripted certificate of warranty, the Pelle Conciata al Vegetale in Toscana label is the property of the consortium and can only be used by its member tanneries

that respect the Rules of Production and Technical Standards established by the consortium or, under license, by manufacturers who use leather produced by consortium members. www.pellealvegetale.it



Artist in Residence

Dean Snyder

Professor: Sculpture Rhode Island School of Design



visiting artist and guest of the Consorzio at this year's "Craft the Leather" workshop in San Miniato. I was eager to learn more about the tanning processes and understand the properties and forming possibilities of vegetan leather. For many years I worked with rawhide, (untanned cowhide), in my sculpture studio practice. I taught myself the basics in the craft of harness stitching studying First Nation Peoples, Gaucho, Paniolo and Cowboy rawhide craft. For me this was a unique opportunity to acquire new skills in workshops with esteemed leather craftsmen in San Miniato and Florence and to learn about the process of vegetable tanning at the source. My interest in cowhide reaches back into my youth. I grew up on a livestock farm in Pennsylvania. I observed my father, who was a large animal veterinarian, working with livestock on a daily basis. During annual butchering I witnessed how no part of the cow

was incredibly enlightening and

was wasted including the hide. In our community the cowhide was tanned and then worked into useful items. Leather was an integral byproduct in our agricultural ecosphere. As a sculptor I have used cow hide in the rawhide state, pelle non conciata, for its cultural associations and physical properties. It is translucent, and readily formed into complex shapes, while never surrendering the factness that it is unprocessed, unrefined, crude skin. Overall my experience in San Miniato energizing. While there I had the chance to experiment in forming and carving vegetan leather and work with the finest rawhide of my career. I have made rawhide in my studio from green hide, however, the hide I was gifted by the owners of the Tannery we visited was by a long measure a superior product to anything I had worked before. I was particularly aware that the hide at this stage of the tanning process was by far more supple and

formable than any I worked before. The installation I made in the olive trees at the Monastery was a gesture to the overwhelming compliance of the material and the benevolence of the source of it to humans. Working in hide I experience a complex array of emotions along the timeline of my life. From my youth on the farm to this moment, at San Miniato, I was particularly moved to let the material speak for itself Here, back in my studio in the United States retrospectively, I am particularly aware of how my understanding of what is required to work leather at the upper tier of the craft sustained an enormous blush of growth through my brief but significant encounters with Stefano Parrini and Mario Bemer.

Sincerely, Dean Snyder



Catalogue of the work inspired by the weeklong international workshop exploring the culture, tradition and innovative possibilities of a product of local excellence: Tuscan Vegetable-tanned Leather. Photography by Luca Palatresi.

with special thanks to all of the community that makes Craft the Leather possible: Mario Bemer, Stefano Parrini, Giorgio Testi, Calzaturificio Buttero, Pelletteria CI-VA, Dott. Domenico Castiello, PO.TE.CO., Consorzio CuoioDepur and all the staff at the Fondazione Conservatorio Santa Chiara.



Consorzio Vera Pelle Italiana Conciata al Vegetale

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