

WHEN BOLON FLOORING COMES TO LIFE

2016

Projects we love



DOSHI LEVIEN ON

The nature
of beauty

GERT WINGÅRDH REDISCOVERS

SWEDISH
MODERNISM

THE BOLON BY YOU COLLECTION

A design for
every vision

PEOPLE WE LOVE
DOSHI LEVIEN

WORDS OLI STRATFORD
PHOTOS KRISTOFER JOHNSON

Nipa Doshi and Jonathan
Levien share how their
pursuit of beauty guided them
to provide the art direction
for Bolon's bespoke
Bolon By You collection.

*Thinking
beautiful*



Doshi Levien's studio above Columbia Road
Flower Market in London.



A display of vernacular objects atop the studio's Manzai dining table, which was produced for the 2012 Das Haus installation at the imm Cologne trade fair.





Nipa Doshi and Jonathan Levien discuss the Bolon By You collection with Bolon's in-house designer Petra Lundblad.

FACTS DOSHI LEVIEN

NAMES: Nipa Doshi and Jonathan Levien
AGES: Both 43
PROFESSION: Designers
HOMETOWN: London, UK
NOTABLE PROJECTS: Doshi Levien has a longstanding relationship with Italian furniture brand Moroso and Spanish design brand BD Barcelona. The studio has also designed a collection of shoes and several stores for Camper. Doshi Levien is currently working on a collection of editioned pieces for Parisian design gallery Galerie kreio.

Nipa Doshi is clear about her role as a designer. "For me, beauty is very important," she says. "The feeling that a person has towards a material can go beyond the rational. But even if it's sometimes easier not to talk about beauty, because it's not something concrete and quantifiable, I think it's something that we as designers unashamedly pursue."

Doshi and her partner Jonathan Levien are the founders of Doshi Levien, an east London-based design practice. Doshi and Levien have created furniture, furnishings, installations and accessories for design brands and institutions such as Moroso, Kvadrat, Cappellini and Galerie kreio. Now, they have collaborated with Bolon, providing art direction for Bolon By You, a new flooring collection that can be tailored to suit different architectural projects. "How can we get people to love Bolon's material?" asks Doshi. "That's the most important thing for us."

It is an area in which Doshi Levien has enviable form; the practice's work is preoccupied with the way that people connect with objects. Scottish-born Levien has a gift for form-making and materiality, sculpting designs such as the enveloping Almora lounge chair for B&B Italia. The Almora's structure is built up from three separate elements that delicately wrap around one another to cocoon

the user. Meanwhile, Doshi, who was raised in India, imbues projects with both a narrative flair and a keen understanding of the ways in which colour, decoration and ornamentation enrich objects. The studio's Principessa daybed for Moroso stacks multiple mattresses on top of one another, each mattress upholstered in jacquard weaves that bear floral or geometric patterns, or else iconography of hairdryers, sunglasses, shoes and cocktail glasses – rich and sumptuous, but also a witty veneration of the everyday. It is difficult not to like.

Doshi Levien's studio, a sunlit space above Columbia Road Flower Market, is crammed with prototypes. There is a chair with a curved back that gently encompasses the sitter, and a vast Chandigarh-inspired textile that hangs from the wall. The studio's surfaces are cluttered with art materials, as well as a display of vernacular Indian objects. Newly arrived in the studio is a curling metal lamp diffuser, created in concert with a vintage car restorer. Such ephemera suggests the practice's diverse portfolio, but everything that Doshi Levien creates is united by an overarching sensibility. "It boils down to trying to create beauty," says Levien. "That's what drives us."

It is certainly what drove Doshi Levien to provide the art direction for Bolon By You, a bespoke flooring collection that offers six patterns, with further customisation possible through four different warp colours and 12 weft colours. It is a sprawling project, and



This page: Nipa Doshi in the studio. Behind her hangs a model of Doshi Levien's Impossible Wood chair for Moroso.
Opposite: Jonathan Levien standing next to the tagine from Doshi Levien's Mosaic range of cookware for Tefal.

one that represents a new direction for Doshi Levien, taking the studio beyond its traditional heartlands of furniture and objects. "We have never art directed a campaign before and the most obvious thing would've been for Bolon to ask us to design a floor instead," says Doshi. Yet both she and Levien relished the challenge. "I believe that as a designer you are using your mind," adds Doshi. "You can apply design thinking to anything. Being a designer is about understanding what the needs of a project are."

The Bolon project has been a major undertaking. Doshi Levien has designed the company's concept art, as well as display pieces for Bolon's showrooms, sample books for the company to send to clients, and online tools to help architects specify flooring for buildings. What links these strands is a theme of presentation. "We were looking for a more intuitive, direct way of engaging with the products," says Levien. "We wanted people to be excited about getting this material in their hands."

Levien's mention of material is vital. Central to Doshi Levien's work for Bolon is a desire to emphasise the physical traits of the company's vinyl flooring. By placing the vinyl in dialogue with other architectural materials, the studio hopes to accentuate its tactile and aesthetic qualities. "What is important is that people appreciate this material," says Doshi. "These floors are essentially textiles; they're jacquard floors."

When I went to see them being woven at Bolon, I fell in love with them."

"It was a case of what the material wanted when we had it in our hands," adds Levien. "This flooring wants to be with other materials. That guided us during the design process and Bolon totally trusts the process of design."

Materiality is front and centre in the images that Doshi Levien developed for Bolon. The studio designed a series of interior settings, and built them in a warehouse using standardised screens and blocks. Each image takes a different Bolon flooring as a basis, surrounding it with glimpses of wood and brass, terrazzo and concrete. The settings are dusky and tantalising, replete with nods to the architecture of Le Corbusier, John Pawson and Peter Zumthor, as well as glimpses of furniture pieces designed by Doshi Levien: a Paper Planes chair peeping from behind a screen; a Chandlo dressing table emerging from a darkened aperture.

Doshi Levien's settings straddle the border between real-world spaces and abstract set designs. They are substantial enough to create a sense of place, yet nebulous enough to let the viewer's imagination fill in the detail, an important quality for architects considering how Bolon's flooring might fit in a space. "It's a balance between suggesting abstract space, but not something too abstract," says Levien. "We want these spaces to feel real, so we've put furniture in to give them a sense of scale."

That's a matter of design sensibility: how abstract can you go without losing meaning?"

Finding meaning is a recurrent theme within Doshi Levien's work. The practice's designs are essentially celebratory; Doshi Levien creates objects that luxuriate in their materiality and form, embracing the beauty of the world that surrounds them. One of the practice's most impressive projects to date was Living Objects, an exhibition of vernacular Indian items that the studio displayed at Belgium's Grand-Hornu institute in 2013. Here, Doshi Levien elevated everyday things – steel tiffin boxes, plastic bottles for calcium pills, low stools for bathing – into museum artefacts. Behind this exhibition, as with all of Doshi Levien's work, was an understanding that objects are not merely consumables: they can be things to treasure, things to which we form attachments. It is this same ethos that is visible in the studio's work with Bolon.

"We prize love and materiality, but also plurality," says Doshi. "It is possible to love all types of objects and materials; you can love something handmade and rough, and you can also love something very industrial."

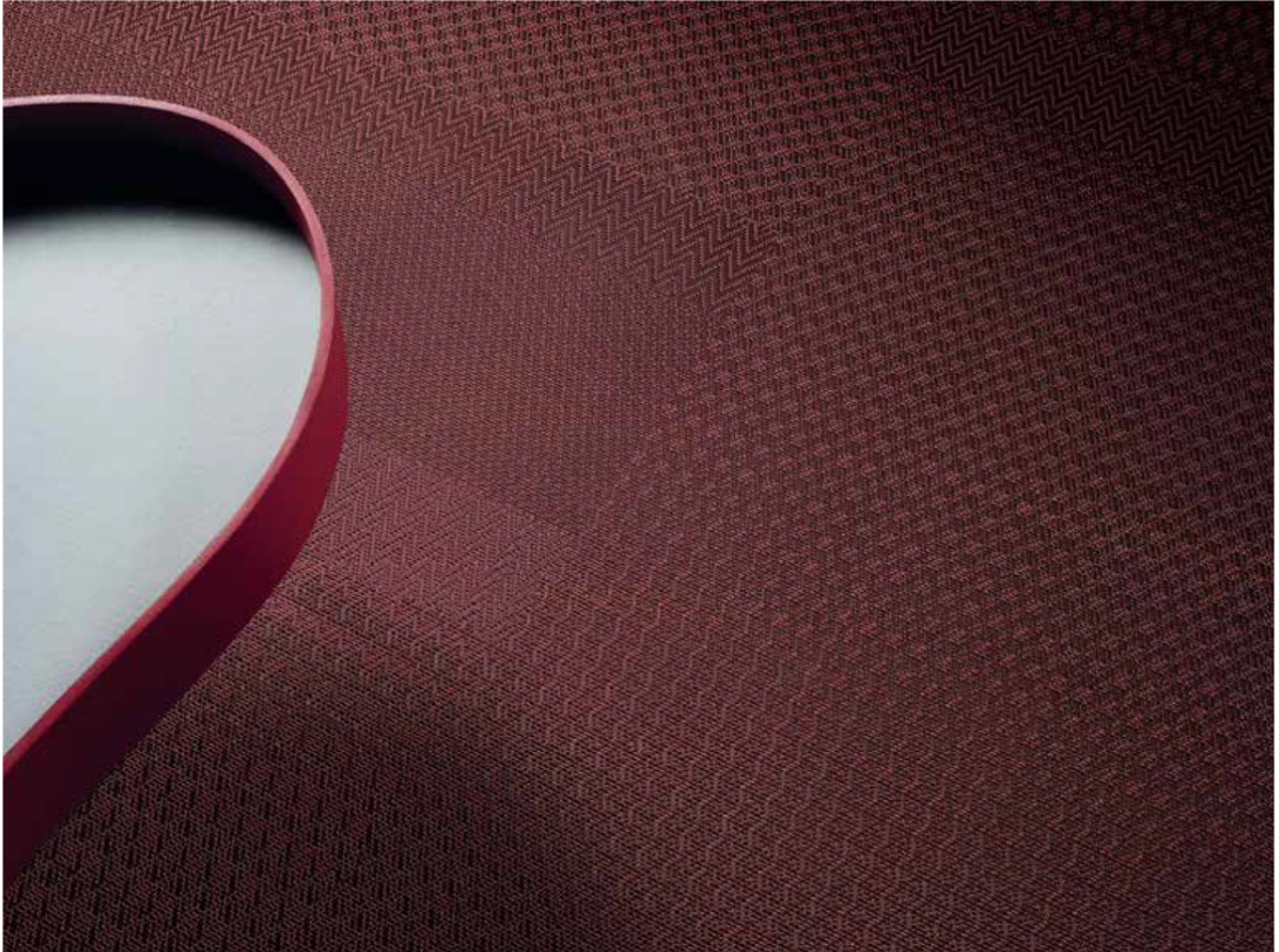
"We have to love whatever we create," adds Levien. "The nature of beauty is unquantifiable and yet such a durable quality. The criteria for us is that we have to be able to return to something. We have to enjoy it and we have to love it." ♦



“It really boils down to trying to create beauty. That’s what drives us to do what we do.”

YOUR FLOOR, YOUR WAY

Bolon By You is a revolutionary interactive flooring concept that personalises Bolon's product on a large scale. Using a variety of patterns, and warp and weft colours, Bolon By You lets you create whatever flooring suits your project.









BOLON BY YOU is an adaptable system that lets you create unique flooring to meet the aesthetic demands of any project. The collection features six patterns, four warp colours and twelve weft colours. By mixing these elements in different combinations, a vast selection of potential designs becomes available.

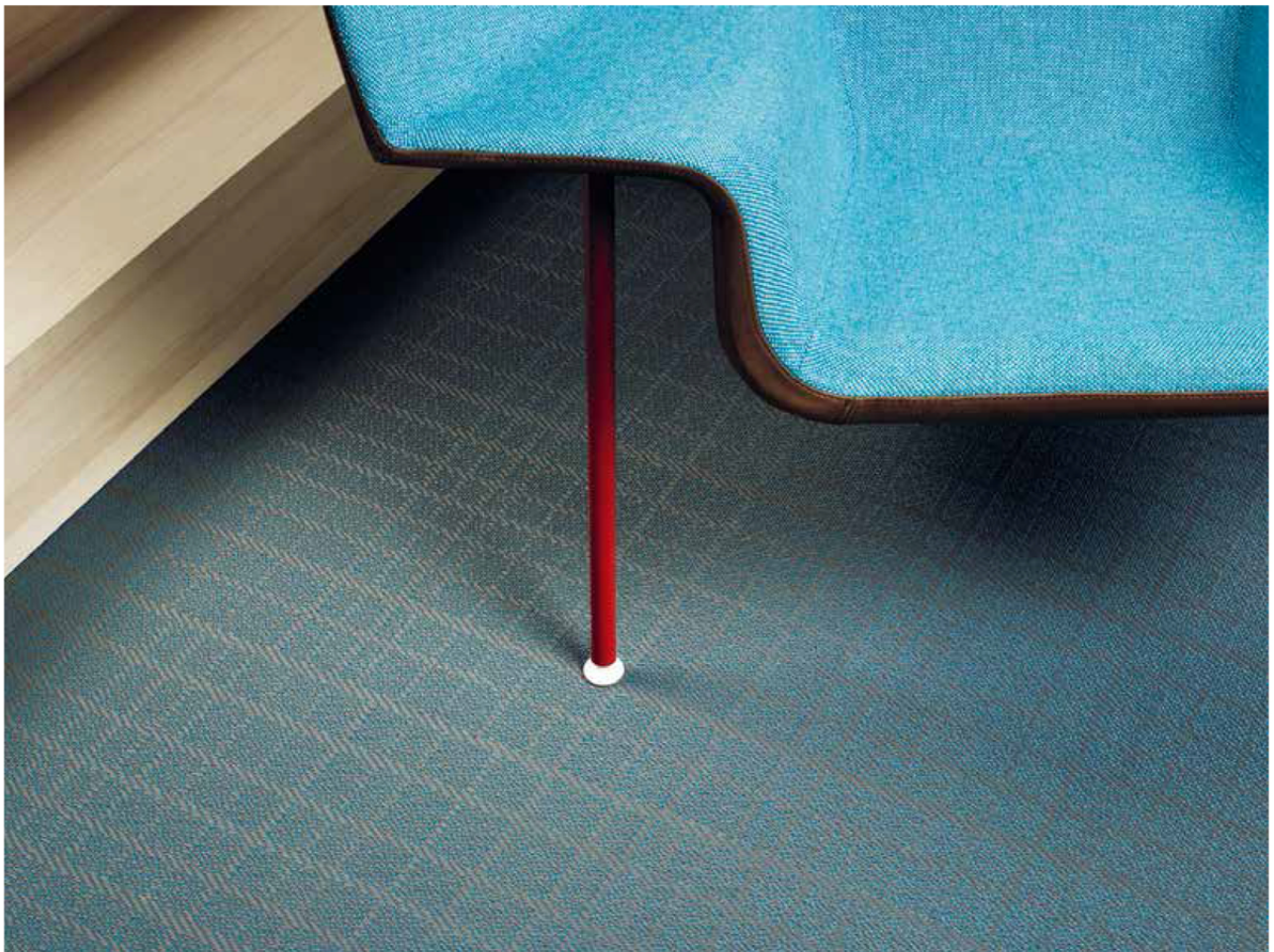
To demonstrate the possibilities of Bolon By You, London-based design studio Doshi Levien was commissioned to create imagery to communicate the new collection. Over the following pages, we are taken on a journey through a series of dusky and tantalising interior settings. Here, materiality is front and centre, letting the viewer's imagination fill in the detail. This is Bolon by You. ♦

Thanks to Moroso, B&B Italia and BD Barcelona Design for supplying furniture by Doshi Levien for the shoot.



**Bolon By You is
an adaptable system
that lets you create
unique flooring to meet
the aesthetic demands
of any project.**

NEWS Bolon By You; Grid, Grey, Dove Blue.



**By mixing elements in
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NEWS Bolon By You; Geometric, Black, Blueberry Blue.