

April 2009 / Inspiring Feel-Good Designs

Designer Spotlight: Luisa Leonardi Scomazzoni

Name: Luisa Leonardi Scomazzoni of Dalaleo

Location: Riva del Garda (Trento), Italy

Number of years working in design: 2

Dreams do come true and each and every one of us can make a positive impact on this planet. Those are two inspirations Trendease takes away from our encounter with Luisa, a woman to admire. From the streets of Brazil, to the production in a favela, which helps to improve the lives of 40 women, to sales at fashion and design shows around the world, this is where the spotlight shines in April 2009.

1. How did you come to be involved in the world of design?

I met this world by pure chance, as my education does not involve the world of design and fashion, but that of the construction industry. I spent the first 10 years of my career working for my family's business in the property construction field. After that experience I had many different jobs, like a waiter and shop assistant for a couple of years. In 1998, I opened up a shop of furniture objects that I am currently running. During a holiday in Brazil, I discovered an object; I only realized its importance later. Through it, I met a world not yet known to me: that of fashion and design.

2. What influences you? From where do you find your inspiration?

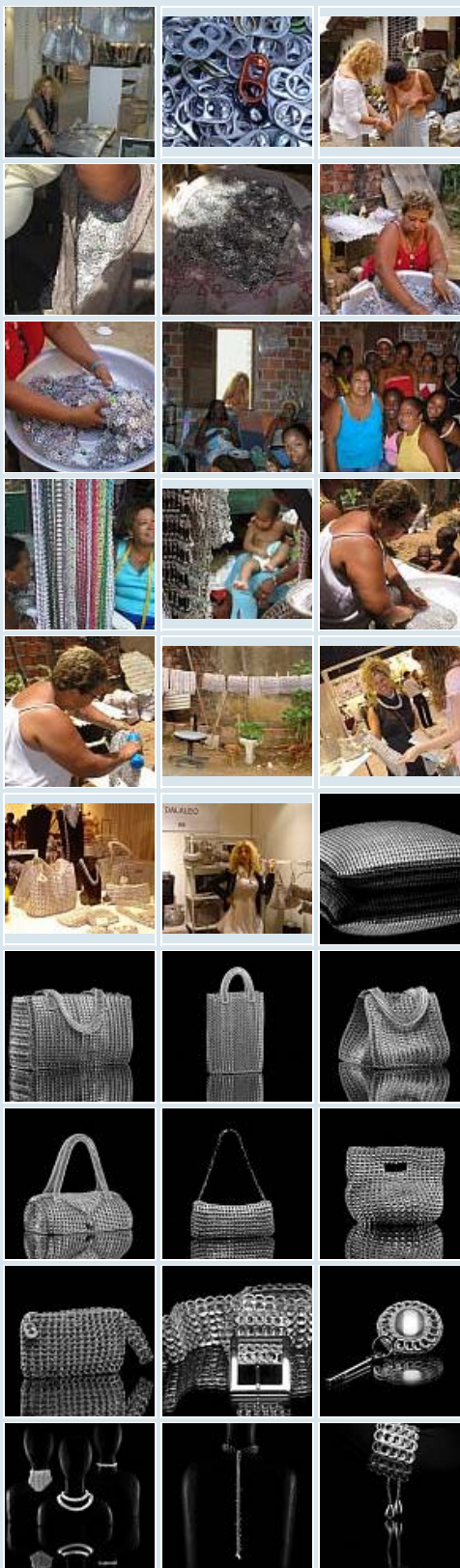
Paradoxically, my fortune is partially generated by the fact that I have not had any teachers or references. I reached the world of design free from any cultural structures, but with the disadvantage of not having any grounded classical basis and at the same time the advantage of expressing myself freely and without any influences. I'd like to point out that I have respect and admire all those who have a proper educational background in this field, but this is not my personal life story. While designing my objects I get inspiration from the pureness of the lines, from a certain minimalism, but I also take some liberties with this path every time I feel like it. The result is that my collections display items that are linear and others have more classic lines. When I want to create a new item, I always design it for myself out of personal necessity, imagining traveling, or rushing to my business consultant, or going out to dinner. As a consequence, I design a special bag or accessory for any occasion. In addition, I take into consideration the needs of the ladies, my clients in the shop, with whom I maintain constant relations. They help me with this designing process.

3. What is your preferred travel destination?

My favorite one is northeastern Brazil, the place where I met my working passion. It was in Salvador de Bahia where I first saw the use of the aluminum ringpulls of soft drink cans as the major raw material for the production of clothing and accessories. In the bay in front of Salvador there is Tinharé Island where I usually spend 2 months every winter. There I can relax, have fun and escape from the cold winters of the paradise where I live the rest of the year, Riva del Garda, a magic place. I also love other destinations, like Asia, but my preference is Latin America. I like the warm seaside places, where I understand the language and whose cultures have many common aspects with mine.

4. What is your favorite medium to work with? Product category?

Aluminum ringpulls of soft drink cans. Sketches help me transfer my idea into a specific image for the work of my partner Ivonete, to whom I owe my success. She is a great woman, she is the brain and she deserves the praise for this product. She creates the collection with me and then she has to explain and organize the work to 40 ladies, and this is not easy at all, believe me. We are in tune with each other, when I am there I live with her and her family. The collection is thought out there, maybe while we are having a typical Bahian dish for lunch or while we are watching the 8 p.m. soap opera. I particularly like women's bags, but also other accessories like belts, clutch bags and purses. Recently we created living-room pillows and home-decoration elements. I sense the challenge of designing items for men and I believe that this will be my future goal.



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5. Tell us about your recent project.

Almost without realizing it, I gave life to a business that uses this raw material for its creations: the aluminum ringpulls of the soft drinks cans. Totally recycled. The products are assembled with a thread and a crochet needle but also with a high-end material like the Swarovski crystals for my jewelry, where I've merged richness and poverty out of a crazy idea of mine. The production takes place in a favela (slum) of Salvador de Bahia, where I have been creating for 4 years now with a group of 40 mothers and each of them has four or five children! This aspect makes me proud of what I am doing. One can touch the economic stability brought to them thanks to this work. Their homes are more livable, their children can go to school and, in the future, these ladies will have the opportunity of teaching this job to their children. In addition, the use of recycled material gives me great satisfaction, as I think it is a good message to the future generations to wear aluminum instead of throwing it away. There is a whole world behind the recycling process in Brazil. It's different than in Europe or in the US, where there are specific companies taking charge of it. In Salvador, it is up to the poor to collect the cans at concerts, at the stadium, in the street, during the Carnival. They can be recognized from the sacks that they pull, full of garbage ready to come to life again. The recyclers sell the material by weight after separating it for different uses. Ivonete buys the ringpulls, which are then washed in the favela and she lets them dry. The material is then turned into the final product thanks to the work done by my girls.

6. What is your dream project?

It is already here; the one I am living now. I am proud of the job I am doing. This allows me to travel all over the world, exhibiting at international fashion trade shows and to be the spokeswoman of this great work I fell in love with the first time I could understand its importance. I hope that all this will last for a long time and I hope that I will be able to improve the use of this material even more so that I can impress my clients once more. Also, so that I will again be moved by seeing on my webcam that the other girls have refurbished their houses. My objective is to teach them the culture of always aiming at a quality product, together with value, respect and appropriate consideration for the worker. Those values were taught to me by my father. When I give speeches in different schools in Italy, they ask me to describe my history and it seems like a fairy tale to me. A fairy tale can be about anyone, you only need a dream. 