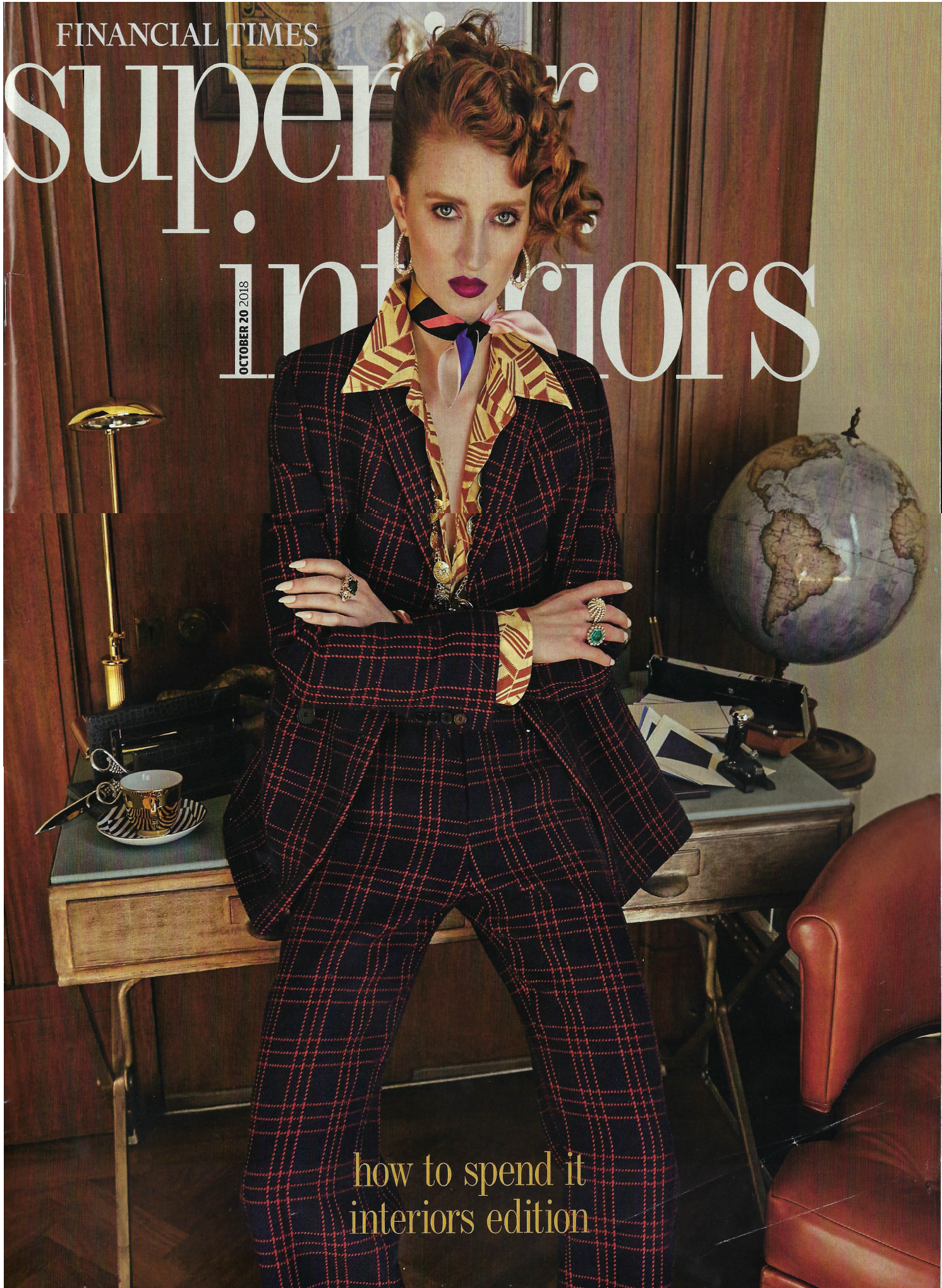


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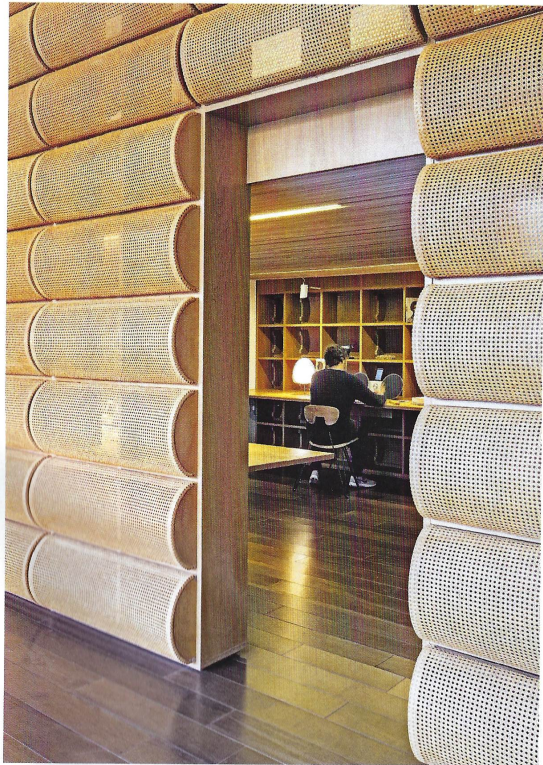
# ALL ABOUT WEAVE

A revival of the artisan art of weaving is bringing back a familiar feel-good factor to contemporary interiors. Amy Bradford reports

As designers increasingly return to the grassroots of their craft – experimenting with traditional artisanal techniques and natural materials alongside modern mediums – a new contemporary aesthetic is emerging, elevating the visual and tactile appeal of woven designs. Take Tom Dixon, a designer synonymous with contemporary industrial materials such as brass and cast iron. His latest designs include highly textural Abstract cushions (£100, pictured on third page) made by Indian craftsmen using thick, tufted wool and techniques borrowed from traditional rug making that signal a new direction for the British luminary. “I feel the time is right to use softer natural materials,” he says.

The mood for all things woven has been simmering for some time – Nigel Coates’ 2014 woven-cane Bodystuhl chairs (£870 each, pictured on final page) for Gebrüder Thonet Vienna is a notable piece – but the trend came to the fore at this year’s Milan Design Week. Materials like raffia and wicker are experiencing a huge revival, alongside oversized weaves in leather,

Norm Architects for Ariake Collection oak, paper-cord and fabric Braid chair, €2,246, references the linear patterns of traditional oriental tatami mats



Clockwise from far left: Argentinian architecture practice Estudio Normal's canework-designed study for a Buenos Aires apartment. David Thulstrup for Brdr Krüger oak and paper-cord Arv chair, from £1,350. Hermès Murano glass, wicker and calfskin Delta vase, £2,370

*"The paper-cord detail was important to René because it reveals the craftsmanship involved," says designer David Thulstrup*

paper, fabric and even plastic. Their renaissance reflects a desire for the handmade, and their popularity suggests the taste for glossy, hard-edged interiors has lost its lustre – for the time being at least.

In some cases, the handmade element of woven finishes meets a desire to preserve artisanal crafts by using them in new ways. So it is with Marni and its annual forays into limited edition furniture: colourful PVC wicker pieces made by artisan collectives in South America have become a signature for the fashion brand. Its La Vereda collection is inspired by the vibrant folk designs of rural settlements in Colombia, with chairs, baskets and sculptures in stripes and geometric patterns. The collection has already sold out, with part of the profits going to a children's charity in Milan.

Woven furniture has a history in the west, stretching back to the 17th century. In 1803, cabinet maker Thomas Sheraton wrote that such styles should be used where "lightness, elasticity, cleanness and durability ought to be combined." These words could have been written for the Arv chair (from £1,350, pictured top right) – a design conceived by chef René Redzepi, designer David Thulstrup and Danish cabinet maker Brdr Krüger for a new venue by iconic Copenhagen restaurant Noma. Redzepi wanted a comfortable dining chair that was formal without being fussy, so Thulstrup created a clean-lined oak frame with a woven paper-cord seat that draws on traditional Scandinavian style. "It's a classic-looking chair, but the sculpting is done partly with digital processes and partly by hand," says Thulstrup. "The paper-cord detail was important to René because it reveals the craftsmanship involved."

Fellow Danes Norm Architects' Braid seating (€2,246, pictured on previous page) for Japanese brand Ariake Collection explores the ethos of simplicity that is shared by the two cultures – and is another new design featuring braided paper-cord, but here referencing the linear patterns of oriental bamboo homeware and *tatami* mats. Like much midcentury Danish seating, it should be placed in the centre of a

room – rather than against a wall – so its woven arms and back can be admired from all angles.

Of course, weaving plant fibres into functional crafts dates back to the earliest times in Asia and Egypt, and woven furniture – often made for high officials – from around the 12th century BC. Japanese company Yamakawa Rattan has been in business since 1952 – an era, coincidentally, when interior designers and photographers including Cecil Beaton sought to revive woven forms in the booming American market. It now makes highly contemporary designs for the home, such as its Wrap sofa (£4,200, pictured overleaf) by Hiroomi Tahara and Ami basket table (£370, pictured overleaf) by Jun Yasumoto, and has an international outlook, collaborating with designers such as Spaniard Marta Ayala Herrera who conceived its open-weave Nassa screen (from £1,185). Nonetheless, all of its creations are crafted using rattan from Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi in Indonesia, which it cites as the best sources for the material. "We want to bring rattan back to the living environment because it's such a wonderfully light, natural material," says the brand's art director Paola Bellani. "It's extremely malleable and every part of the plant can be used by furniture makers: the cane, the core and the peel."

It's this inherent eco-friendliness that appeals to Lulu Lytle, founder of British furniture brand Soane and a long-standing rattan obsessive. In 2011, she took over Britain's last remaining rattan factory, a Leicestershire concern that had been family owned since 1912. It now makes Soane's sculptural woven furniture, lighting, mirrors and vases. Highlights include the Turkic table lamp (from £1,400), which reinvents a classic shape with a textural twist, and the Ripple mirror (from £5,600), in which an undulating woven frame contrasts beautifully with

glass. The company can be commissioned for bespoke designs, and offers the option of coloured finishes like rhubarb pink and paprika orange. "The style of our commissions varies enormously," says Lytle. "We made the rattan bar at Chiltern Firehouse designed by Studio KO, and more recently a contemporary bench for Foster + Partners." For the home, Lytle appreciates the material's romance and warmth. "Its airy, three-dimensional quality brings softness to even the most austere space," she says. "It's also very eco friendly as it grows faster than timber."

London duo Doshi Levien are also fascinated by the three-dimensional depth that can be created through weaving, resulting in their new Bay collection (example pictured on final page, from £4,036) for B&B Italia – a series of braided garden seats that look equally elegant in the home. The pieces are made from polypropylene-fibre braid, layered over an aluminium frame that is formed into a double-walled structure, creating air pockets that enhance air flow around the sitter. "Bay is an exploration of the solid volumes that are achievable with weaving," says Jonathan Levien, who designed the range with his wife Nipa Doshi. "The chair contains about 400m of rope, which is necessary to achieve the fine shape. There were many challenges, because the frame is so sculptural and yet weave is essentially a linear technique. The process of disguising the complexity of the making while maintaining a visual simplicity was really interesting."

This design approach extends to accessories where simple woven materials add new interest and tactility to luxurious surfaces. Hermès' Oseray tray (from £555) and Delta vase (£2,370, pictured left), for instance, mix humble wicker with luxurious calfskin and Murano glass, while Poltrona Frau has used its famed leather expertise to make a range of woven-hide





Clockwise from left:  
GamFratesi for Poltrona  
Frau cuoio leather and steel  
Cestlavie storage containers,  
from £4,500. Jun Yasumoto  
for Yamakawa rattan and  
laminated Ami table, £370.  
Tom Dixon wool Abstract  
cushions, £100 each. Hiroomi  
Tahara for Yamakawa rattan  
and synthetic fibre Wrap  
sofa, £3,500



*"A woven material has romance and warmth. Its airy, three-dimensional quality brings softness to even the most austere space"*

containers. Its Cestlavie design (from £4,500, pictured above), created by Copenhagen studio GamFratesi, is based on the sewing baskets seen in midcentury Danish homes. It could be used to conceal clutter – iPads, remote controls, magazines – but most importantly, it is intended to communicate a sense of homeliness. "For us, it's fundamental to include elements in the home that show the value of time and the skill of the artisan," says Enrico Fratesi, who collaborates with fellow architect Stine Gam. "The sewing basket's original function highlights the living area as a place of family recreation, meeting and conversation. We also liked the idea of introducing some informality to the world of luxury."

Adding texture to an interior wall instils a similar cosy feel, but opulence remains key in the extraordinary decorative surfaces of Fameed Khalique, which feature intricate and incredibly tactile weaves (£1,250 per sq m) using hand-embroidered raffia in its natural straw hue, or colours like black, midnight blue and silver grey. They can also be dyed to match any colour scheme. "Our raffia collection was developed as an alternative to straw

marquetry," he explains. "Many of the patterns have the same art deco feel and can be used as wallcoverings, chair backs and cushions. The various styles of embroidery, from floral to geometric motifs and bespoke patterns, show off raffia in different ways." For Khalique, the appeal of woven textures is deeply rooted in our collective past. "Weaving is an ancient craft we are all drawn to – it feels familiar yet is open to reinterpretation," he says. "I love that raffia is both a high and accessible material – at once utilitarian and associated with craftsmanship and luxury." To celebrate his studio's 10th anniversary, he is launching handmade *intrecciato* (ribbon-style weave) leather rugs and parchment panels later this year.

Innovation has always had a role in rug making, and unsurprisingly the idea of weaving is being taken in new



directions by designers such as Luke Irwin. His Tessuto by Sahar collection includes designs inspired by vintage fabrics such as Harris tweed, linen and tartan, with alternating colours in each knot creating a richly textured effect. The Harris rug (from £1,200 per sq m) replicates the salt-and-pepper look of Scottish tweed on a large scale. "Rugs that rely on texture rather than colour really add something extra to an interior," says Irwin.

Kent duo Elvis & Kresse fulfil their mission to reuse materials by repurposing leather waste from Burberry fashion collections into striking woven rugs (from £195 per sq m). "We've developed a modular system that consists of three interlocking shapes and can be made in any size or pattern," says co-founder Kresse Wesling. "Damaged or stained pieces are easily replaced, so the rugs can be remade over time." As well as recycling some of the 800,000 tonnes of hide that are cast aside each year by the leather-goods industry, 50 per cent of the profits are donated to The Fire Fighters Charity.

An indication of how influential the woven trend has become is its impact on architecture – where a sense of emotional resonance is explored through the tactility of a space. This year's Serpentine Pavilion by Mexican

