

van der postings

Lucia van der Post, **the grande dame of luxury**, delivers a trio of first-class dispatches

It's time to think about swimwear, as it's about now you'll have the pick of the crop. The mood around the pool or by the sea remains distinctly retro – and this year there are plenty of exciting labels to ponder on.

Biondi, the little boutique off London's King's Road that specialises in beachwear (and offers a bespoke service for those with figures that don't conform to preordained sizing), finds its sophisticated, much-travelled customers are looking for simpler styles and a perfect fit. This season its own range, Biondi, features some cute bikinis, but I like best the reversible Vipera one-piece (£185, pictured top far right), which can be worn in plain Amazon green or a purply, snakeskin-like pattern, and is available in sizes up to an F cup.

Karla Colletto, which launched 30 years ago in the US but is less well known in the UK, also concentrates on simple designs in innovative fabrics that offer terrific support; its one-pieces are sculptural and ultra-flattering. Perhaps most becoming is the Basic Constructed one-piece (\$267, pictured right); for something with a tad more flair there's a version (Surplice Neck Silent UW Tank, \$264) with some rather beguiling draping across the front that gives good support. Both come in a splendidly chic array of colours.

Orlebar Brown, launched in 2007 by Adam Brown because he was so ashamed of the way British men looked on the beach, has since turned its talents to designing for women. Key ideas are to give us sleek one-pieces (from £185) with high cutaways to lengthen the legs and flattering low-cut necklines, as well as simple mix-and-match bikinis. There are retro bandeau (pictured far right)



Clockwise from left: **Karla Colletto Basic Constructed one-piece, \$267. Solid & Striped with Poppy Delevingne Poppy Mailot in Flamingo, £150. Biondi Vipera one-piece, £185. Orlebar Brown Ravenna bikini top, £95, and Barletta**

and classic bra-shaped tops (both £95), and triangle (£95, pictured below left) or more 1950s-esque high-rise (£100) bottoms, all in lots of colours such as fuchsia, orange, cobalt blue, black and white.

And finally, Solid & Striped has cut-out swimsuits and bikinis with a cute, vintage aesthetic. Chicest are the dark-blue and black or cream and dusty-pink striped one-pieces (£125) and bikinis (tops and bottoms, £55 each). Its new collection, designed in collaboration with Poppy Delevingne, is also charming – look out for the flamingo-printed (pictured above left) and colour-blocked cut-out swimsuits (from £130) and matching bikinis (from £130).

Biondi, 020-7349 1111; www.biondicouture.com. Harvey Nichols, 020-7201 8081; www.harveynichols.com. Karla Colletto, +1212-391 7062; www.karlacolletto.com and see Biondi, Harvey Nichols and Selfridges. Net-a-Porter, www.net-a-porter.com. Orlebar Brown, 020-3441 6289; www.orlebarbrown.co.uk. Selfridges, 0800-123 400; www.selfridges.com. Solid & Striped, www.solidandstriped.com and see Harvey Nichols and Net-a-Porter.



Jam packed

Those of us lucky enough to have seen some of Egypt's treasures in its own museums and temples know what a rich cultural heritage it has – so it seems odd that so little contemporary Egyptian design reaches Europe. Egyptian-born Hedayat Islam Taymour, who lives with her husband and children in London, has put that right. In November she opened Jam Space, in Chelsea, in Chelsea, in Chelsea, many designed and made in the country of her birth.

Every item comes with a card explaining what the product is, who made it and anything else of interest. Take, for instance, the lovely handmade coloured glassware (decanters, from £78; glasses, from £18; pictured left). The card talks about the ancient Egyptians' passion for glassmaking and reveals that this range comes from a company that started out making traditional hookah pipes. There are some enchanting cushions (from £85) made by villagers in remote rural areas using appliqué, patchwork and beadwork. Acrylic tables are embellished with laser-printed classic Egyptian patterns (from £895, example pictured below) or embedded with handwoven tapestries inspired by suzani textiles (from £995). I like, too, the Nuniz handbags (from £195) in soft leather and simple shapes.

Jam Space, then, is great for pieces for the home and superb for sourcing unusual – and not outrageously priced – presents. 118 Fulham Rd, London SW3 (07903-820 655; www.jamspace.uk).



Loose change

Frédéric Malle has just launched a very chic Bakelite case (pictured below) perfect for holding a 10ml travel phial of any of his 20 Editions de Parfums. Clean and functional and available in red or black, it slips easily into a handbag. The case costs £30, while three of his En Passant 10ml sprays are £65; a single is £26. Other fragrances vary in price. www.liberty.co.uk.

