



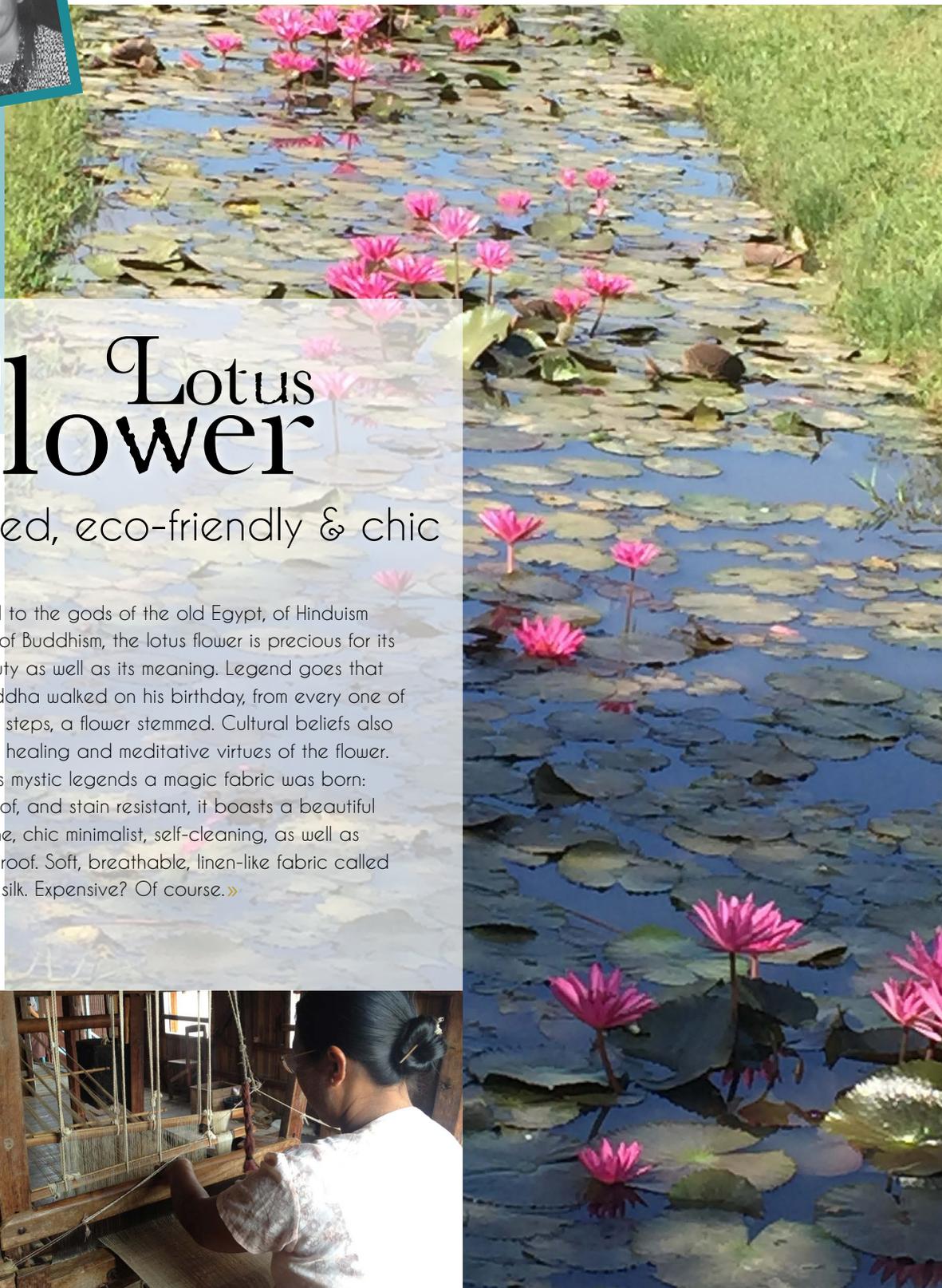
Inès de Belsunce came from Paris to Yangon two years ago and most of her time has been spent exploring Yangon's new venues and culinary corners.

Lotus Flower

Sacred, eco-friendly & chic

Linked to the gods of the old Egypt, of Hinduism and of Buddhism, the lotus flower is precious for its beauty as well as its meaning. Legend goes that when Buddha walked on his birthday, from every one of his seven steps, a flower stemmed. Cultural beliefs also claim the healing and meditative virtues of the flower.

From its mystic legends a magic fabric was born: waterproof, and stain resistant, it boasts a beautiful earth tone, chic minimalist, self-cleaning, as well as crease-proof. Soft, breathable, linen-like fabric called the lotus silk. Expensive? Of course. »





In Inle Lake, north of Yangon in Taunggyi, a variety of lotus called Padonma Kyar grows wild in the murky waters of the lake and produces this remarkable silk. In the villages of Inle Lake, Kyaing Khan and Inn Paw Khon, half of the local workforce rely on their livelihood to produce this rare fabric. In Kyaing Kan, men and women pull, weave and spin under the directions of U Tun Yee and Daw Ohn Kyi, head owners and managers of one of the few lotus flower production center in the world, the Aung Sakkyar Lotus Robe. The Intha community, members of a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group living around the lake, remain the sole retainers of the painstaking lotus silk weaving tradition.»

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PALOMA YA YA

The flower stems have to be threaded filament by filament, within 24 hours after having been hand-pulled from the lotus. The very weak fiber is then twisted and woven on a traditional frame loom, requiring around 6,000 lotus stems to produce one meter of fabric. Labor intensive with an incredible workmanship that goes into each and every textile piece, everyday a mere 50 centimeters of material will be produced (a jacket will take 10 days). One thing is certain—creating the lotus fabric is, itself, a handmade artisanal process. If a recent increase in demand has created a need for lotus stalks to be imported from other regions, the people of Inle Lake transmit their knowledge with passion, ensuring that eco-friendliness is sustained despite the lengthy process.

Every year, robes made from silk will be traditionally sold to monks and the occasional tourists will buy silk scarves. Slowly but surely, villagers will produce the 500 meters of fabric to be exported and wheeled out in Rome, Paris, Geneva and Tokyo. Italian multinational luxury goods brand Loro Piana, part of the French conglomerate LVMH, is so far the sole buyer of this export. However, following its exhibition of the first jacket collection at Parisian design fair Maison et Objet 2012, luxury brands in the US and Hong Kong are already queuing to sell lotus-flower jackets which will go for \$3,000 to \$4,500, making it something of a niche

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market. Myanmar has the know-how for this local, sustainable fabric, but the luxury industry has the clientele.

As the eco-friendly fashion market continues to grow, so will the production. Yet, for the future growth of this micro-industry, sustainable lotus growing and harvesting practices are needed, as well as consideration for the environment that carries it. As a flower that is symbolic, aesthetically pleasing, rare and high-priced, the sacred lotus truly ticks all the boxes of luxury. 

Paloma Ya Ya is a clothing brand made in Myanmar and run by a French designer who travels around the country to find the best handwoven textiles. Her collection includes lotus fabric. For more information, go to palomayaya.com or contact info@palomayaya.com

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