



PLAYING WITH HAPPENSTANCE

Claudia Caviezel and the Swiss Grand Award 2016

When textile designer Claudia Caviezel received a call from the Swiss Federal Office of Culture, she couldn't believe her ears: she had won the Swiss Grand Award for Design 2016, the biggest prize in Switzerland – once-in-a-lifetime recognition accompanied by quite generous financial support. "I feel extremely honoured, especially because this has happened so early-on in my career, and I can hardly believe it." DAMN° spoke with the extraordinary designer at Palazzo Litta during Milan Design Week.

TEXT Veerle Devos
PHOTOS Claudia Caviezel

Amongst other things, her work is being paraded across the catwalk, is keeping you warm at night, is making your interior radiate with bright, exotic colours and patterns, and soon it may contain your coffee. You can see her hand in fashion textiles, curtains, sofas, lampshades, wallpaper, rugs, pillowcases, and bedcovers. She was, however, not predestined to become a textile designer. "My parents assumed I would go to law school because as child I already fought for justice in 'little things'. Apart from that, like many parents, they advised me to study something 'serious', and do keep the rest as a hobby." That her grandmother was a seamstress and her grandfather a carpenter must have been an influence. After training at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Lucerne and receiving a Master's degree from the Istituto Europeo di Design in Madrid, she worked for haute couture textile manufacturer Jakob Schlaepfer. Even though she is well

educated, has accumulated expertise in materials and techniques, and has invested a lot of time and energy in research, Caviezel claims that she avoids planning too much beforehand and is very open to any kind of coincidence that occurs along the way. This free approach, together with a dedicated curiosity and eagerness to experiment, is something she cherishes tremendously.

When Caviezel visits carpet weavers in Turkey, she invites them to participate in the creative process. "These craftspeople have been in carpets all their lives; that they share their experience and knowledge with me is priceless. It gives enormous added value to the project." She is known for her inquisitiveness and sharp eye for the potential of everyday objects, and she absorbs colours and patterns in her daily life as much as during her travels. All these impressions somehow culminate in new, original,

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left to right: 1 Shanghai; 2 Portugal; 3 Shanghai; 4 Milan; 5 Shanghai; 6 Cinque Terre, Italy; 7 St. Gallen, Switzerland; 8 Istanbul; 9 Yangshuo, China; 10 Segovia, Spain; 11 Isla Mujeres, Mexico; 12 San Juan Chamula, Mexico



1-4. Shanghai West Bund Art & Design fair; print on textile, 5 x 8 metres

5. PATINA, for the Indian Art Fair in New Delhi



vibrant, and joyful collections. "I've been building a kind of living archive in my head – which comes out when I need it to. It fuels my inspiration at any given time and provides me with a sense of freedom."

Hence, it is no surprise that Caviezel will be investing a portion of the award's 40,000 Swiss Francs (about 36,500) in travelling, which is basically for research. These experiences are reflected in her work in a very organic way. A three-month stay in Mexico in 2007 gave her an appetite for travelling as a means of sharpening her inspiration; it ultimately resulted in a colourful new collection. "I loved the food. I also had my new shoes ruined while Salsa dancing. And I adopted a strong love of colour." Her experience includes going to California on a high school exchange programme, being an artist in residence in New York, living and working in Paris, staying in Madrid for a while, and travelling through

Turkey and China. When she visited Portugal, she realised she actually wanted to miss her flight – so she'll soon be back there for her new ceramics project. "I have been wanting to do ceramics for many years – I very much like Japanese dishes, for instance. So I'm now starting to experiment." Her first ceramics project in Portugal is for Atelier Pfister, a brand she has been collaborating with since 2011. "I just love doing things by hand. With ceramics, you can decide on the material, colour, and shape, just like with textile projects. The outcome is different, that's all. And all of my projects influence each other – a carpet can also be a coat." She mentions British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood as an inspiration in regard to "her open attitude and punk spirit as an artist". The appreciation seems to be mutual, since Westwood used a fabric designed by Caviezel for Jakob Schlaepfer in 2009, to make a dress, a skirt, and a coat.

1-2. TOMILS, handwoven kelim made in Iran in collaboration with Werner Weber, © Atelier Pfister

3. Marmorera wool carpet, © Atelier Pfister

4. Caviezel developed a porcelain plate for the DONATE A PLATE project, in collaboration with Suisse Langenthal, from which the total revenue went into the Swiss breast cancer foundation PINK RIBBON

5. LUVEN, cotton bed linen, © Atelier Pfister





1. PATINA, for the Indian Art Fair in New Delhi; 2 x 2 metres

2. 150 Years of Swiss Design, travelling exhibition, Japan, 2015

3. The making of the 5 x 8 metre print on textile for the Shanghai West Bund Art & Design fair

4 -5. Inspiration from the streets of Shanghai

6. Claudia Caviezel at Kino Rex in Thun, Switzerland

Caviezel lives in the Swiss countryside, more precisely, in the former textile-producing part of the country. "Switzerland is an excellent place for designers – there's a lot of money available for investing in quality and production, which opens up many opportunities." The fact that she exchanged city life for the countryside is telling. She did an internship with the famous Eindhoven design-trend guru Li Edelkoort, and it must be said that Caviezel would be an excellent trend-forecaster herself. Or should we say a trendsetter, since she soaks up tendencies in the air from all over the world and translates them into products. "Cities are increasingly stressful and polluted, so I decided to enjoy fresh air when I wake up. I also appreciate that mobile phones are not omnipresent. Of course, I still love going to cities every now and then, to eat at a good restaurant or to meet people." •

Along with Claudia Caviezel, furniture and interior designer Hans Eichenberger and graphic designer Ralph Schraivogel also won this year's Swiss Grand Award for Design. The award originated as a means of encouraging, supporting, and ultimately honouring the Swiss design scene. It communicates and indicates Swiss design traditions. The winners receive their awards on 14 June 2016 at the opening of the Swiss Design Awards 2016 exhibition. Running in parallel with Art Basel and Design Miami, 14 – 19 June 2016, the show includes interviews with the award winners. The publication accompanying the Swiss Grand Award for Design 2016 was presented in Milan during the Salone del Mobile.

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