

PERFECTLY SUITED

Tailoring fabric on the furnishings and a lamp that's a shirt. Why Brioni and Michael Anastassiades joined forces to create this year's best dressed room

PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILIP SINDEN WRITER: ROSA BERTOLI



If Wallpaper* Handmade were an academy, we'd like to think of Brioni and Michael Anastassiades as two of our most notable alumni. Over the last five years, both have lent their vision and expertise multiple times to our annual celebration of design and craftsmanship, helping to create unique products to be exhibited in Milan during Salone del Mobile, and showcased in Wallpaper's August issue.

Greek-born, London-based designer Anastassiades has reproduced a Jaipur street barber's hut with Studio Mumbai (W*149), and created impossibly curved marble 'Miracle Chips' with Tuscan marble producer Henraux (W*173). Brioni, meanwhile, hosted the Handmade exhibition in its Milanese

palazzo, on via Gesù, for three years. It also collaborated with architects Carmody Groarke on an installation based on the 12,000 stitches of a Brioni suit jacket (W*137); with designer Konstantin Grcic on a cape inspired by the brand's archive (W*149); and with Dutch artists Lernert & Sander, who outfitted a hand with a suit (W*161).

This year, we brought together these two Handmade stalwarts in another Wallpaper* first. 'I have been an admirer of Michael's work for a long time,' says Brioni creative director Brendan Mullane. 'I thought how great the simplicity and purity in his crafted work was, and that it would be amazing to do something with him for Brioni.' In April, the two joined forces to work on a project that

was previewed with a teaser in Wallpaper* Handmade's debut off-site installation during Milan's Salone del Mobile. Anastassiades and Mullane upholstered three windows of the Brioni palazzo with the brand's suit fabrics, alongside a display of the designer's lighting. Now, their collaboration is about to come to completion, with an installation to mark the opening of Brioni's new boutique, a 1,200 sq m space within the palazzo.

'I was interested in finding common ground,' says Anastassiades when describing the initial stages of his planning for the installation. 'I realised that Brioni and I share many values, and one is definitely quality – quality of making, quality of materials – but also an appreciation of the way things are »

MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES
AT BRIONI'S TAILORING
WORKSHOP IN PENNE, TRYING
AN UNFINISHED JACKET FOR SIZE

OPPOSITE, A MODEL OF THE
INSTALLATION HE HAS CREATED
WITH BRENDAN MULLANE,
A ROOM SET AND FURNISHINGS
UPHOLSTERED IN BRIONI FABRICS





LEFT, DETAILS FROM THE SHIRT-MAKING PROCESS AT THE BRIONI FACTORY

01. THE INSTALLATION COMPRISES A BOX MADE UP OF UPHOLSTERED PANELS, FEATURING FOUR SHEETS OF BRIONI SUITING FABRIC ON EACH SIDE

02. THE PANELS WILL BE 5CM THICK, IN TIMBER OR ALUMINIUM, AND ARE DESIGNED TO BE EASILY DISMANTLED AND REASSEMBLED

03. THE FINISHED STRUCTURE, 2.7M WIDE AND DEEP, AND 3.2M HIGH, WILL HOUSE THE UPHOLSTERED FURNISHINGS AND SHIRT-FABRIC LAMP

ILLUSTRATOR: EOIN RYAN

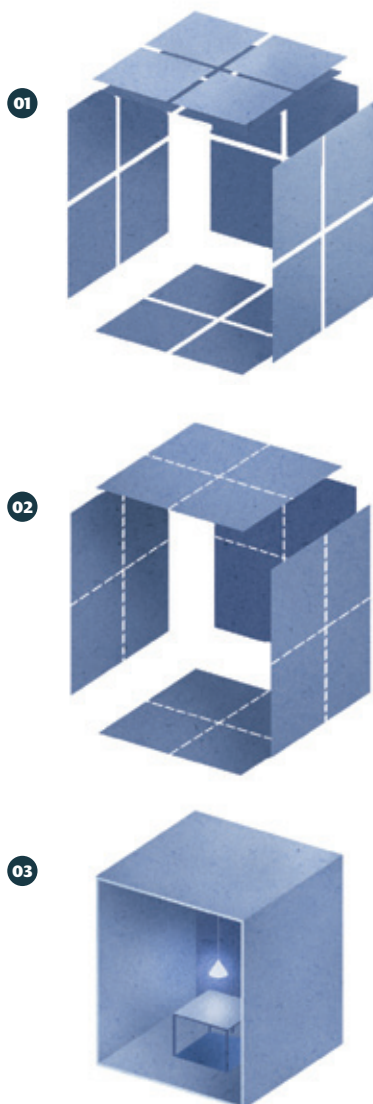
made, and the skills that go into making something of a simple nature.'

Anastassiades had a brief glimpse of the fashion world when he designed Hussein Chalayan's fashion show sets in the late 1990s, but hasn't worked in fashion since. 'I find it interesting, the idea of me as a designer coming into the world of fashion, exploring its different techniques and materials; I like to submerge myself in a different world.'

For this project, design and tailoring met half way, and Anastassiades' ideas developed into a room inspired by the layers that go into a suit, and the intricate stitching that holds everything together. The installation is a box, whose walls, ceiling and floor are lined with dark suiting fabric, furnished with two chairs and a table dressed in the same material, with a lamp made of crisp white shirt fabric hanging above. 'It's a rather archetypal scenario,' Anastassiades explains. 'Archetype of a table, archetype of a chair, and a light.'

The collaboration has a serendipitous feel. Both Anastassiades and Mullane are humble souls with a perfectionist attitude to their work. 'Michael has a passion for materials, something I am also obsessive about,' says Mullane when describing the synergies that brought the two together. 'I can see we both have a real appreciation of the beauty in how things are constructed. In our work there is a sense of control that leads to things being expressed and created in a pure form, the working process is full of details and finishing that are almost invisible to the human eye, but we know they are there.'

Hidden detail is at the core of the installation, where the lighting lends a sense



of discovery. Anastassiades developed his shirt-fabric lamp as a cone with a dark base, so that the light, instead of being directed downwards, is cast outwards into the room as a soft glow through the translucent shirt material. Entering the dim space, he explains, the viewer doesn't immediately see the details, as the materials absorb all the light. 'As your eyes adjust to the light, slowly you start discovering more.' Details such as the stitching, the simplicity of the visual language and the archetypal shapes come to life. 'As a concept, this reflects the common language that Brioni and I share,' he adds, describing the installation as 'a suit for furniture and a shirt lamp'.

A triumph of craftsmanship and precision, the installation is being hand-assembled and retouched by the Brioni team, headed by master tailor Angelo Petrucci, under the close supervision of Mullane and Anastassiades. 'Our tailors are fantastic and really rise to the challenge of working on a project like this with such passion and skill,' notes Mullane, adding that 'handmade to me means something made with a human touch, thinking and feeling'.

To be unveiled on 21 June, when the new Brioni boutique opens, the installation sees the passion and craft of Anastassiades and Mullane collide in the perfect joint expression of their aesthetics. Which is very much the essence of Wallpaper* Handmade: bringing diverse strengths together to create the extraordinary.

Brioni, via Gesù 2A, Milan, www.brioni.com, michaelanastassiades.com. You can see this year's Wallpaper* Handmade projects in the August issue, on sale 10 July