Projects we love

2013

BOLON'S WONDERFUL WORLD OF FLOORING

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Graphic sensations

CLOSE UP

Giulio Cappellini

The story of Bolon
Falling in love

As a child I loved animals, especially horses, and I dreamt about becoming a vet. Horses were my life until the age of 25 and I’m quite sure my years as a professional show jumper had a profound effect on my personality. I have always been bold and brave, even when I was very young. I remember the day when I thought I was a cowboy being hunted by an Indian. I clung tightly to my reins, squeezed my saddle and took off in canter, jumping over hedges... before falling. With my feet still attached to the stirrups, I was hanging off the panicked horse for some 100 meters. Bleeding and bruised, I finally got myself to the stables on foot. Learning the hard way was how I found my character.

Decades later, the story is the same. In 2003, my sister Marie and I decided to embark on an exciting new challenge – to team up as sisters and as businesswomen, to become the proprietors of Bolon, a traditional weaving mill run successfully for many years by our visionary and dedicated parents. With ambition and possibilities to the fore, we would be bold once more, turning Bolon into something new and fresh, something the flooring business never had seen before. We believe in pushing ourselves forward. Learning in your 40s and having faith in your product is a very powerful thing.

Ten years after taking over the family company and filled with a wealth of new experiences, I’m happy to share our new magazine; Projects We Love. It’s a publication featuring some of our most令人印象深刻的collaborations and design projects, each one with a different starting point, but all have one thing in common: a clear vision, passion and a positive, “let’s do it” attitude. I’m proud of falling in love, this time in love... with Bolon. With this magazine, I hope we can inspire you to enjoy a piece of our world – the world of Bolon.

ANNICA EKLUND, CEO BOLON

Contributing Editors: Simon Mills, Johanna Agerman Ross, Rosie Spencer

Head Photographer: Tobias Regell

www.bolon.com
MADE IN SWEDEN

Keeping all the production of the flooring on home turf is important in order to stay at the forefront of innovation and environmental awareness for Bolon. Over the last three years, the company has invested over 100 million Swedish Kronor (8.3 M Euros) into expanding the factory and warehouses in Sweden, as well as developing the factory and warehousing facilities with the help of architects and interior designers. What the future will hold for the architect and designer concept is not yet to be unveiled – but in the world of Bolon nothing is impossible.

BOLON + JEAN NOUVEL

Last year, cool grey mannequins of the French architect Jean Nouvel reclined on the ceiling and sat on the walls of Bolon’s installation at both Milan Design Week and Stockholm Furniture Fair. Jean Nouvel has used Bolon flooring for several projects in the past but this was the first creative collaboration between the two companies and Nouvel created a spectacular interpretation of Bolon’s new 2012 collection, Create – an exciting concept in the form of an exhibition stand that challenges gravity as well as the traditional idea of flooring. The stand was inspired by Nouvel’s view of the world: a place where ceilings and walls are as good a place to walk as a floor. Featuring a textile-like feel and strong geometric patterns, Create is woven in such a way that its vibrant colours vibrate between shades of light and dark depending on where you stand in the room. The collaboration showcased the creative possibilities of Bolon’s flooring and continued the tradition of working with international designers and also inspired a new project: Architect Friends, an initiative to explore the possibilities Bolon’s flooring affords for architects and interior designers. What the future will hold for the Architect Friends concept is not yet to be unveiled – but in the world of Bolon nothing is impossible.

Something old, something new

2013 marks the 10 year anniversary since third generation sisters, Anna and Marie, took over Bolon and transformed the company from a traditional weaving mill into a global design brand. Considering Bolon’s roots date back to 1949, it’s been a company in constant motion as well as change and this year everyone will be able to be involved and take part in the inspiring journey.

On a blustery February evening during the Stockholm Furniture Fair, Bolon invited Swedish’s design elite for an intimate gathering at Ett Hem Hotel and a preview of “The Story of Bolon” – a limited edition book complete with an exclusive collection of black and white images and interviews portraying the people and stories that have been an important part of Bolon’s journey. Designed by British interior designer Ilse Crawford to have the look and feel of someone’s house (‘Ett Hem translates as ‘a home’), the hotel was the perfect setting to celebrate 10 years of Marie and Annica Eklund at the helm of Bolon. Among the guests were the Architect and Designer, Thomas Sandell, Eero Kortelainen and Gert Wingardh. While the open fire roared in the living room, people sipped champagne and were treated to some intriguing stories from the past and the present world of Bolon.

A family affair

What happens when award-winning Swedish design meets legendary Italian fashion? The answer was revealed in 2012 when Bolon and Missoni launched a joint flooring collection based on Missoni’s signature patterns and vibrant colours. But the story doesn’t end there – the two family businesses have continued forming a tight bond and are currently working on extending the successful collection with new colours. One of the colours in the making, a new version of the Flame pattern in stone instead of black, was visible during Milan Design Week in both Missoni’s stand and showroom. So, keep your eyes peeled for this vibrant addition to the Bolon by Missoni collection that will be launched in the near future.

95,000 sqm of Bolon

At 236m high, Milan’s curved Palazzo Lombardia skyscraper is Italy’s tallest building. What’s more, as the seat of the regional government of Lombardy – Italy’s most populous region – it is also one of the country’s busiest. To cope with this high level of footfall, the skyscraper’s interior architects, Tizzoni, turned to Bolon. The architects selected the New collection, a hard-wearing woven vinyl floor which is intended to be unbearresque enough to suit large spaces, yet a competing design influence – baroque extravagance – is portrayed by the glowing metallic back that is threaded throughout. For the Palazzo Lombardia project 95,000 sqm of Now Anthracite tiles were laid throughout the building over a period of two years. Designed to absorb sound and enhance heavy use, Now provides a discrete, unifying design solution for the sprawling Palazzo Lombardia.

House of design

For many years, Marie and Anna have had their eye on a house located on the shores of the lake Åsunden in Ulricehamn, the town where Bolon is located. So when it came on the market they decided to buy it and turn it into a house for entertaining Bolon’s many international guests. Due for completion this summer, they enlisted the help of fellow Ulricehammar, Kall Architects, to realise their vision.

“We want the interior to have a cozy and home-like feel and we want to furnish it with Swedish design choices from both the past and present,” says Marie Eklund. However, the pièce de résistance is the exterior – in an attempt to push the applications of the Bolon product, the facade will be covered in Bolon tiles. “It will look a bit like the shimmering scales of fish,” says Eklund.

Long-lasting

“Nothing is out of fashion anymore, the most well-used in the world. In order to enter our ceiling line of passen- gers, the floor must be long-lasting and easy to clean. When Svenska, who own 10 airports in Sweden, looked at chang- ing the floors at the gates at Lambort- ter Airport, outside of Gothenburg, the choice fell on the Bolon Antartica edition because of its combination of easy main- tenance, high quality and strong design. The colours are no run of grey bases – Coal, Eira and Slate – to recall the glit- tering rocks of the West Coast archipelago.

BOLON’S UNIVERSE

PROJECTS WE LOVE: In the Spotlight

Warehouse in China and are looking into the possibility of building warehouses in the US to be able to match the demand in the US market. “We want to share our experience and knowledge to help others in the same industry,” says Marie Eklund. As well as expanding the factory in Sweden, Bolon also rents a factory in the neighboring town where Bolon is located. So when it came on the market they decided to buy it and turn it into a house for entertaining Bolon’s many international guests. Due for completion this summer, they enlisted the help of fellow Ulricehammar, Kall Architects, to realise their vision.

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THE STORY OF BOLON
Projects we love: the story of Bolon

Around 25–30 people, found a serendipitous persuasion. Bolon's future in the wider world … but, initially beginning a creative journey that would shape the company. Marie and Annica Eklund, took over the enterprise in 2003—how it reacts with the light to give a three-dimensional effect. It is also 100% recyclable. It’s a story that begins back in 1949 when Nils-Erik Eklund who called his newly established rug company BOLON, a compound reminder to the bravery of a long-established business that is not afraid to adapt and which thrives on modernisation.

It's a story that began back in 1949 when Marie and Annica Eklund's grandfather, Nils-Erik, first established his business in Stockholm producing canvas for seaweed packaging. After noticing that the next-door factory, which manufactured vinyl aprons and tablecloths, was producing large amounts of textile waste, Nils Erik gathered up the unwanted, excess PVC sheet material, cut it into strips and hand-wove it into simple rag rugs. “It was early eco-production,” says his son Lars Eklund. “You could even say that my father was a precursor to environmentalism.”

Nils-Erik Eklund who called his newly established rug company BOLON, a compound reminder of the first and last letters of the Swedish words for cotton (“bomull”) and nylon (“nylon”) passing the business on to Lars and his young wife Monica in the 1960s.

By 1971, the Bolon factory, now employing around 25–30 people, found a serendipitous niche via the owner's new-found hobby. To provide mobile vacation fun in the Swedish countryside for his young family, Lars Eklund bought a caravan, quickly realising that the quality of life in his little mobile home could be vastly improved by a lightweight, but hard-wearing floor covering.Ordinary carpets proved too heavy or portable, as a result, Bolon's product was born. It's a story that began back in 1949 when Nils-Erik Eklund who called his newly established rug company BOLON, a compound reminder to the bravery of a long-established business that is not afraid to adapt and which thrives on modernisation.

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The third generation of the family, Marie and Annica Eklund, took over the enterprise in 2003 beginning a creative journey that would shape Bolon's future in the wider world … but, initially, at least, getting them involved required gentle persuasion.

Both sisters were keen show-jumpers, competing on the international arena on the equestrian circuit. Marie had her sights firmly set on a career in fashion. But when their father opened a smart new factory in Ulricehamn, the sisters' interest was piqued.

In time-honoured tradition, they started at the bottom, on the factory floor, watching how the wearing production worked. Soon the family began talking about handling over the business. Annica as CEO and Marie taking on the role of Head of Design, working from an initial concept down to the final touches, ensuring that all things maintain very high standards and brand values.

Annica and Marie decided that their family’s traditional product could be very credibly rebranded as “sexy, sensual, elegant, rock ’n’ roll flooring.” Their flooring-meets-fashion concept galvanised when Marie came across a familiar-looking, charcoal black floor covering in an Armani advertisement shot on location in Mr Armani’s home.

But the idea of turning the old Ulricehamn outfit— which was then a catalogue-based, contract business—into a fashionable venture, met with some negativity. “Some old employees said we couldn’t do it,” says Annica. “I would show people pictures from the Giorgio Armani brochures and say, ‘are you crazy? How can you attract someone like Armani? We must be doing something right.’”

Reactions to the new product line were similarly infectious. At a trade fair, an American architect was overheard describing Bolon as “sexy flooring,” prompting Annica Eklund to embark on a bold business strategy establishing Bolon as “a creative workplace filled with ambition and kindred spirits.”

An exciting new range of design options inspired international interest in the product. Jean Nouvel used Bolon as part of a key museum design and Gaetano Cappellini chose different coloured Bolon floorings in all his new showrooms around the world. Paul Smith and Tom Dixon opted for Bolon for their respective exhibition spaces and exciting brand collaborations with the Campana Brothers and Missoni were brokered by Marie and Annica. The Swedish fashion designer Lars Wallin, meanwhile, was so enamoured of its sensual, textural effect that when he first encountered it, he actually bent down on his knees and stroked it with his surface. Why Bolon? The feeling of the textile is unmistakable. It is not dull or institutional like many other floor coverings but has a personality that is almost organic. It has the advantages of vinyl: great appearance retention, versatility, easy maintenance and simple installation, but all the beauty of a bespoke, fashion product that plays off the accents, finishes and textures of contemporary architecture and interiors. Customers talk about its sensual qualities—cool but practical texture that feels like fabric—how it reacts with the light to give a three-dimensional effect. It is also 100% recyclable.

Fuelled by Annica and Marie Eklund’s energy and passion, the Story of Bolon continues, with fresh products, new innovations and an ever-growing family of fans and clients from around the world. “The last four years have been really amazing,” says Annica. “We have grown so much … and all from our little factory in the forest. It fills you with so much energy and love.”

“Annica and Marie decided that their family’s traditional product could be very credibly rebranded as sexy, sensual, elegant, rock ‘n’ roll flooring.”
Right from its inception back in 2010, the 18 Feet & Rising team wanted to do things differently. Conceived by a trio of maverick London advertising executives, this bold new agency would be deploying a development process called ‘prototyping’, “borrowing more from the engineering philosophy of iterative testing than the overblown, power-point heavy, strategic approaches of most agencies,” explain its radical founders. The left-field strategy would work, too. In its first two years, 18 Feet & Rising moved fast, winning contracts for Freeview, Selfridges, Lovefilm and Virgin Media. But there was no deep-pocketed founding client to fund the ambitious start-up. With fresh creativity and new ways of thinking to the fore, every new contract would have to be won in open competition against some of the best agency brains in the industry.

So, when the team took the lease on a building in central London, a tight budget and the notion of a youthful and unique working environment that would engender fresh ideas and enthral clients, were major considerations for the architects. The agency’s new HQ in Clipstone Street, W1, was a large space for a relatively small amount of employees. “It needed to be a fast and inexpensive yet original solution,” says Chris Romer-Lee
Projects we love: 18 feet & rising

of Studio Octopi architects. “Within five years the agency may out-grow the unit, and, therefore, whilst they were there, it needed to reflect their creative approach to the industry.”

Inspired by four buzz words given to them by the 18 Feet & Rising board – emergence, vortex, action and illusion – concepts for the design came quickly. “It was theatrical, surprising and whimsical,” continues Chris, who proposed, amongst other things, a dark but decorative tunnel for the middle of the office. “The unit is very well lit from all the perimeter windows which meant that the design could play with perception. It was essential to make the agency look bigger than it was, so the desks we designed were arranged on a curve... almost as a cog.”

The floor plan of the building and the ample natural light serving it meant that the famously light-sensitive Bolon weaves could be exploited. “We laid Bolon as parquet planks, twisting their way around the cog.” With the guidance of London-based Flooring Concepts, a Bolon partner, the architects were able to get Bolon tiles cut into plank-shapes to form a parquet-effect area. For other areas (besides the aforementioned tunnel and boardroom) the tiles were alternately quarter-turned providing an attractive ‘blocky’ contrast. “With the light falling across the unit, the results were outstanding and so much more powerful than we had initially predicted. In the boardroom we wanted a more punchy but understated response. With Bolon’s ‘Limited’ collection we achieved that effect.”

All through the build, the architect’s desire was to take simple, straightforward materials and push them into something truly special, providing the client with an exceptional and original environment in which it could win work and deliver exemplary results. Bolon played a key role working in parallel with the stained plywood material for the office partitioning, with the colour and finish of the wood referenced in the flooring.

Why Bolon? Studio Octopi staff had already visited the factory in Ulricehamn, Sweden and were immediately won over, entranced particularly by Bolon’s state-of-the-art weaving machines. “We like that it’s a flooring made like a tailored garment,” says Chris Romer-Lee. “On the back of our visit we specified Graphic Screen for a Saatchi & Saatchi project.”

For architects working on commercial and office projects, vinyl, rubber or linoleum floorings seem to offer less creativity, and are less contemporary or in line with current trends. “More traditional flooring options seem very formulaic and laden with references to their predominant use. Lino is very institutional while rubber elicits memories of service corridors in factories. We’ve now worked on five advertising agencies and each time we’ve presented Bolon amongst other floorings, each agency has gone with Bolon, for its originality and cooperation.”

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“it was theatrical surprising and whimsical.”

— Chris Romer-Lee —

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PROJECT INFORMATION:

OBJECT:
18 Feet & Rising

LOCATION:
London, England

ARCHITECTS:
Studio Octopi Architects, octopi.co.uk

YEAR:
2012

BOLON COLLECTION:
Bolon Artisan Slate, Bolon Limited 1001_Black
Projects we love: interview with Luis Pedra Silva

“There is a lot of creativity in science too.”

— Luis Pedra Silva —

Johannesburg-born architect Luis Pedra Silva, is clear about his influences. “Louis Kahn,” he says. “And the Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan is someone who I’ve really enjoyed working with; he has a way of developing minimalist architecture in a warm and inviting way. It’s a line of work that I can identify with easily.”

Extracting warmth from simple, unobtrusive elements is a hallmark of Pedra Silva’s work, visible in both his 2011 design, white designs for the O Meu dentista dental practice in Sintra, Portugal and the unadorned rooftop running track he created in 2012 for the Hotel Ritz in Lisbon. Pedra Silva’s connection to the latter city also is vital to his work. Born to Portuguese parents, he studied at Lisbon’s Technical University and, in 2003, he established his own practice in the city: Pedra Silva Architects.

But one of the practice’s recent projects has led Pedra Silva to a different Portuguese city: Porto. Asked to design the interior of the city’s Fraunhofer scientific research institute, he turned to Bolon for inspiration. A wave of the company’s Botanic Lotus flooring surges through the institute and the office is adorned by coloured stripes.

“There is almost a curved plane that runs through the office, and the curve breaks and creates different areas,” says Pedra Silva. “So you have individual offices, lounges, chill-out rooms and client rooms. The unblat- ting were continuous in the main meeting room, which is the centrepiece of the office, where it covers the floor, ceiling and two walls.”

This was the first time Bolon flooring had been used in such a way and it presented a number of challenges for the architect. “The biggest challenge was that we had very high expectations for the acoustic levels in the room, so we perforated the Bolon ceiling to help with this,” he says. This involved gluing the woven vinyl material onto wooden board and drilling 6mm-wide holes in it, every 8mm.

The concept for the 1,660 square meter office was born out of a desire to stimulate creativity and break away from conventional notions of what an office should be. The graphic design elements on the walls, created in-house, were added to bring “a certain degree of formality”, says Pedra Silva. Despite having offices in Brighton, London and Maputo, Mozambique as well as its Lisbon headquarters, Pedra Silva’s office remains a relatively young one and many students from the University of Porto intern there.

For the studio, Fraunhofer was an opportunity to bridge the gap between research at university level and the commercial market. “Even though they work in science, we thought it was very important to reflect that they are creative people,” says Pedra Silva. “You associate creativity with art or architecture, but there is a lot of creativity in science too.”

Pedra Silva adds that Bolon flooring influenced a lot of design decisions in the project, including the colour scheme. He initially chose it for its material qualities. “Architects are looking for surfaces that are easy to maintain and can withstand wear and tear,” he says. “A lot of the time in the office environments you end up with conventional vinyl, which can look very artificial. But Bolon has made this interwoven vinyl that has an almost textile texture. It’s good for architects because of the quality of the durable surface, but at the same time it has a cosy, comfortable feel.”

Luis Pedra Silva

“You associate creativity with art or architecture, but there is a lot of creativity in science too.” These words are Pedra Silva’s who has created a feeling of movement in the interiors of the research institute Fraunhofer in Porto.
Lucky Stripes

Streaks of swirling colours adorn the walls, floors and ceilings of the Fraunhofer offices in Porto, a new project from Portuguese architect Luis Pedro Silva.

Fraunhofer Portugal is a non-profit private research association and is responsible for many important innovations, including for example, the MP3 file format.

An important asset to the award winning project is the introduction of several small social and meeting spaces, named silent rooms, which allow for personal retreat, as well as informal meetings or resting.

Circulation is the project’s backbone; all spaces appear along a distribution route located next to the glass façade. The route also allows access to all different spaces. These spaces, with different functions and sizes, are generated and consolidated through a bold gesture across the plans that give the office floors, meeting different spaces and ambiances.
A former Rotterdam factory has been enlivened with triangular patterned Bolon tiles in a project from interior architects Maasdam.

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

Object: Tapwacht
Location: Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Architect: Maasdam
Area: 500 m²
Year: 2012
Bolon Collection: Bolon Botanic Cilia, Osier, Tilia, Viva, Ivy, Iris

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

It’s a triangular-shaped building, so the triangle pattern of Bolon’s Botanic flooring tiles worked perfectly,” says Andre van der Ende, interior architect at Dutch firm Maasdam and head of the Tapwacht offices project. “I also liked the feel of the material and the colour range.” These colours are echoed in various ways throughout the space, in chairs and rugs and on walls. “You can play with the parts and the colours of the Bolon tiles to get different effects throughout the building,” says Van der Ende. The triangular tiles are configured in various shaped patterns throughout the space, combining greys, greens and yellows in different ways.

The 500 square meters offices for hospitality services company Tapwacht – which is part of international facilities provider Facilicom – are located in a former factory in Rotterdam. It was important to retain the industrial feel of the building, so the construction remains on show, with pipes visible in the ceiling. Van der Ende also wanted to create a space with a relaxed, open atmosphere that conveys the nature of the Tapwacht business. This included the construction of a six-metre-long bar where office workers and Tapwacht customers can mingle. Here there are chairs from Danish furniture brand Hay, who also provided tables and conference room chairs. For other areas the architect specified office chairs by Dutch manufacturer Lensvelt and 111 Navy chairs by American brand Emeco, made from recycled Coca-Cola bottles. There are also large tables designed and made by Maasdam. “You can choose where you want to sit and where you want to work,” says Van der Ende. “It’s a very fluid, open space.”

There is a lounge area as well as a number of closed-off units for meetings. The walls of these are all made from glass, so the theme of transparency and fluidity remains. “The whole interior, from ceilings and lighting to walls and floors, we did ourselves,” says Van der Ende. The timeline of the project was particularly challenging – from design to completion was just three or four months, as Tapwacht’s contract in its previous building was coming to an end and the company needed new premises fast. The offices were completed in December 2011.

Previous Maasdam projects by Van der Ende, whose work is influenced by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, include several Rabobank premises across the Netherlands, and he is now working on a series of Trajectum mental health clinics in Berkeland, in the east of the country.
Projects we love:  interview with simon park

Simon Park

Simon Park at PDM International has spent the last six years in Shanghai, a city that simmers with creative freedom and energy. This is reflected in a project for Adidas HQ where Bolon’s floors show the way ahead.

FACTS SIMON PARK
Age: 35
Based: Shanghai
Career: Simon joined PDM International Shanghai as Design Director in 2007. He leads a 35 strong interior design and 3D team of varying nationalities. Before his time in Shanghai he earned a reputation in the hospitality industry for creating admired, contemporary bars and restaurants that successfully meld the distinct target audiences here with the vision of the client.

Simon Park

“Projects we love: interview with Simon Park”

You work in Bangkok, Beijing, Chengdu, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Singapore and Sydney. We’ve had it pretty tough in Europe for the past few years… how’s business out in the Far East and the Southern Hemisphere?

“There is so much happening here it is hard to keep up. To be honest I can’t employ enough skilled concept designers to respond to requests for proposals for all our clients… seriously! We have had a lot of high profile clients – many regional – who trust us with their HQ and client-facing facilities. These include Adidas, L’Oreal, Microsoft, all in multiple locations. Projects around 8–12 square kilometres are common in this part of the world. When you are working with such big projects on such high profile, big hitting names, is it a struggle to stay creative and cutting-edge?

“We still offer our services to boutique companies and do not believe scale is a barrier. We look more for a synergy with our clients and like to have common objectives. From Saatchi & Saatchi, TBWA and WPP to companies such as Wells Fargo and Credit Suisse, PDM International employs a range of professionals to help deliver such projects in a creative and unique manner. We also have a retail and F&B portfolio that is exciting but not our core focus of work.

Do you find that there are more adventurous projects to be had in your part of the world?

Absolutely! There is no limit to what you can achieve especially in a city like Shanghai. Clients are really looking to us to challenge them and push the boundaries of how an office should function and operate. There are no longer any rules; creative freedom and spirit is celebrated and rarely tamed or rationalised in this city. The timeline for projects is very aggressive and this only adds to the excitement and urgency of delivering concepts that are experimental and extraordinary.”

Tell us about PDM International’s design for the Shanghai-based Adidas HQ offices?

“We designed a reception area, with a desk sculpture that wrapped around the office called ‘The Heart of House’. ‘The Realness Room,’ is where concepts and ideas are brought to life. A ‘Treehouse Room’ on the second floor was kitted out with padded walls and flooring. For downtime, we installed an office foosball table and a boxing bag to venting frustration. PDM International recently designed the Shanghai HQ for Adidas. Did you manage to integrate the world famous ‘three stripes’ brand Icon into the interior?

“Yes! We installed a stretched membrane three stripe lighting feature right through the premises, tying all the pantry spaces together. Every floor’s pantry had a theme that related to the business function on that particular floor so while they are linked by the lighting and the three stripes, none are identical.”

What are you working on right now?

“Current clients include the Nvidia (computer technologies), Microsoft and the Fonterra (New Zealand dairy) a law firm and some high end fashion boutiques.”

Tell us which city is inspiring you at the moment…

“I am very fond of Auckland and Melbourne at the moment for their street culture, cuisine and the general good nature of the people who have grown up and reside there. But Shanghai and Hong Kong both have such amazing energy that I really don’t have to look that far afield! After coming from Wellington NZ and spending the last six years in Shanghai I have come to appreciate culture from down under, you do really miss that in Asia.”

Which contemporary building do you wish you’d designed?

“I think I would prefer to have been involved in a creative process with Buckminster Fuller or Frank Lloyd Wright than designing any specific building.”

“...I have come to appreciate culture from down under.”

SIMON PARK
Shanghai, China. Commercial design practice PDM International lands the contract to create a new, far East-era HQ for German sportswear behemoth Adidas. The brief from the client is texturally rigorous, detailed and demanding of the highest standards. For an umbrella company that comprises the brand names of Adidas Sport, Adidas Originals, Adidas Neo, TaylorMade Golf and Reebok, the designers are instructed that it is essential for a general ’group feeling’ to pervade the building maintaining the carefully controlled Adidas image, but also that each business segment’s workspace has its own department identity and is easily distinguishable from its neighbour.

Each separate brand would be requiring specific meeting facilities and spatially adapted work settings. “Quickly, we realised that this was not going to be a run-of-the-mill project,” says Simon Park, design director at PDM International. “Tailor-made solutions were to permeate literally every square metre of space with every single square metre of space requiring a unique design.” Conceptually, the space would have to cater for Adidas’s diverse client and brand base by providing varying layers of formality and informality appropriate to the particular relationship. Work and play converging and synthesising effortlessly.

So, in order to increase integration between the spaces and teams and to stimulate interactive and dynamic work flows, Park and his team decided to transform typical office spaces into co-working spaces. “Each brand would have access to variations of formal and informal solutions, depending on what their particular, typical ‘world’ looked like in relation to organisation and customer type,” explains Simon. “The strict brief from the client was also a key guiding tool throughout the design process, and the high standards required by Adidas were literally actualised during the process of the project, both aesthetically and strategically.”

In a way, Simon explains, all aspects of the entire office were retail inspired. But sportswear has moved on and Adidas’s collaborations with the likes of Yohji Yamamoto and Stella McCartney have proved to be a significant game-changer. “With a great heritage and forward thinking vision, Adidas is just as much a fashion house these days as it is a sports performance brand.”

As in many large retail spaces, the use of natural light and a more general open setting engendered a climate for more effective communication. “We created natural dynamics between individual solutions and a greater sense of integration, for example using shared, connecting zones,” says Simon. “The choice of Bolon products was key. “We love the material and the design for its timeless quality, its depth and special texture,” says Simon. “Compared to hard floor coverings, the excellent wear resistance and sound absorption of this flooring was also a determining factor.”

The combination of concept, innovation and heritage at Bolon was particularly appealing to the PDM International creatives, who appreciated its qualities of depth, texture and durability. “Bolon is unique,” says Simon. “It was appropriate to the overall concept of the Adidas project – a perfect combination of resilient flooring that’s hard-wearing with partial acoustic properties, as opposed to a polished concrete, timber or hard surface. I designed a pattern that referenced the ‘trilogy’ theme that was expressed through the project, via triangles, in three tones. Bolon was the way forward.”

BOLON COLLECTION: Bolon 101, Sisal Plain Steel, Sisal Plain Black, Sisal Plain Mole.

PROJECT INFORMATION:
OBJECT Adidas HQ
LOCATION Shanghai, China
ARCHITECTS PDM International
AREA 12,000 sq ft
YEAR 2012

TEXT SIMON MILLS
PHOTO: ARTHUR SHEN
DIVINE INSPIRATION

Contrasts give rise to magic, as in the Dutch church from the 15th century featuring a modern, Swedish floor from Ulricehamn.

“"A fascinating mix: 15th century meets modern design."" - Marie ek Lund, Creative Director Bolon
Durability and functionality were the keywords when Swedish e-wholesaler CoolStuff were looking to design their new office next door to their warehouse. They hired interior design agency, RUMRUM, who had the vision of letting the floor speak. Flooring from Bolon was their first choice.
coolstuff was founded back in 1999 when the world wide web was still rather new. Fourteen years later, the company and its product range has expanded enormously which demanded a larger office space. The location fell on Malmö’s old port district where they found an old, raw industrial building which, back then, was anything but welcoming.

“The premises in Malmö’s old port district was a challenge in itself,” says Nicklas Jansson and Magnus Andersson, interior designers for the project. “How do you turn a raw industrial building into a functional, modern and inviting office?”

The demands on wearability was also extremely high as the office would be adjacent to the warehouse,” continues Jansson and Andersson.

Inspired by the challenge to create a characteristic and uncompromising office space, RUMRUM decided to let the flooring do the talking, which required an irregular, flexible product. By attending the Stockholm International Fair and the Bolon del Mobile for years, the agency had come to know Bolon and its flooring qualities well enough for it to be on top of their minds.

“We knew that Bolon’s quality and functionality was completely in line with the project demands,” says Jansson and Anderson. “We also knew that one of the keys to our interior design concept would be for a floor that had wow-factor and character.”

RUMRUM did not solely want to be limited to pragmatic qualities such as durability and high functionality. So, in addition to meeting the demands of their customer, they set the goal to create a completely unique interior. And with a bar raised so high, they decided to use three Bolon collections – all with different design qualities and personality. Elegance and metallic shimmer combined with rustic tones and irregular patterns created a perfect collection of CoolStuff’s vision.

“We felt strongly that we wanted something more exciting than just sheer durability”, explains the designers. “We wanted to create a value on the floor by letting it ‘speak’ and enhance the interior.”

Even though RUMRUM wanted creative freedom, they still had to ensure its quality. Therefore, the flexibility of the flooring was crucial for succeeding the idea of the concept. By using the floor as a base for the rest of the concept, the office is not what you would call a traditional space divided by square walls. Instead, the walls were designed after the design and installation of the flooring which creates an amazingly uniformed effect where the office is constantly guided by Bolon’s collections. The various sections of the space are divided by the contrasts of the floor and the different departments have their own designated colour based on the flooring.

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Wing, the new tile allows you to utilize Bolon’s earlier collections into one masterpiece adding a graphical expression and attitude to any venue. The strong architectural form interacts elegantly with furnishing and building details. The results are striking – the new format reenergizes existing collections with all new characteristics – especially in combination with one another.

PHOTOGRAPHERS: CHRISTIAN GUSTAVSSON AND KRISTOFER JOHNSSON
Projects we love: The Wing

Bolon Create Simulo
Bkb Sisal Plain Black, Botanic Osier, Artisan Slate.

Bolon Create Simulo
Bkb Sisal Plain Brown, Ethnic Abisko, Now Pink.
PROJECTS WE LOVE: THE WING

Projects we love: the wing

Bolon Now Silver, Creara, Effice, Como, Pario.
Giulio Cappellini

Giulio Cappellini is one of Bolon’s first Designer Friends and the collaboration had its start in 2008 when Giulio was asked to furnish the entrance hall of the Stockholm Furniture Fair. Since then Giulio Cappellini has used Bolon flooring in several projects, among others in the Malpensa and Linate airport VIP Lounges in Milan, Italy.

For 2013.
ITALIAN STYLE

Giulio Cappellini uses Bolon flooring in all his new showrooms around the world. Not one showroom is like the other, since he always wants to adapt the concept to the special atmosphere of the city and the place itself.

Projects we love: Cappellini SHOWROOM

Giulio Cappellini uses Bolon flooring in all his new showrooms around the world. Not one showroom is like the other, since he always wants to adapt the concept to the special atmosphere of the city and the place itself.

Projects we love: Cappellini SHOWROOM

‘I choose Bolon for several projects of showrooms and public spaces because I believe that this material is beautiful, contemporary, resistant and above all allows to customize the spaces in an optimal way. Bolon wide range of colors and designs allows me to always create different spaces in the case of the Cappellini showrooms, I like to create different coloured boxes each time according to the idea and the location in which they are located. Floor, walls, and ceiling are in the same tonalities,’ says Giulio Cappellini.

PROJECT INFORMATION
OBJECT: Cappellini Showrooms
LOCATION: Milan, Paris, Cologne
ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER: Giulio Cappellini
AREA: Entire showroom area
COLLECTION: Bolon
The Milan, Paris, and Cologne showrooms use different Bolon collections, creating a unique aesthetic for each location.
PROJECTS WE LOVE: GADEN LAWYERS

Projects we love: Gaden lawyers

"The spacious Brisbane offices of Australian law firm Gadens, completed in June 2012, are focused on the principle of connectedness. Designed by Kirsti Simpson, director of the Brisbane office of international architecture and design practice Hassell Studio – which has 14 partnerships across Australia, China, Southeast Asia and the UK – the 7,000 square meter workplace has a generous entrance lobby designed to accommodate large-scale artworks by local contemporary artists, connecting the law firm to its surrounding community. This space links with the offices via a dramatically curved, sculptural staircase leading to individual, glass-walled workspaces that each contain an original artwork visible to all.

"Once in the workplace proper, cross-floor views are filtered through the completely transparent offices with books and artwork on full display," says Simpson. "The focus was able to challenge the traditional legal workplace planning model to increase relationship connectedness."

The idea of weaving together these different relationships through the physical spaces of the office, from the local community to clients to Gadens colleagues, was echoed in the use of Bolon flooring. "Bolon was used extensively in the high traffic areas," says Simpson. "Both because it reinforced the metaphor of woven components used and because it was durable." The use of Bolon’s striped Lotus flooring from the Botanic collection in a meeting room, for example, added a level of dynamism to the space as well as visibly emphasising this notion of connectedness, with its colour scheme continuing in other elements of the room.

Sustainability was also a very important part of the Gadens project. The workplace has targeted a Green Star (the Australian environmental rating system) score of five, which represents excellence in the field of eco-friendly practice.

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Bolon’s vast London base sets a familial, playful template for the brand’s future showrooms.

WORDS: ROSIE SPENCE
PHOTO: TOM MANNION
We didn’t want to create a typical showroom where you can look but you don’t want to touch,” says Susanne Gräsberg, project manager for Bolon’s showrooms worldwide.

“We built this vast space which we labelled the ‘playground’ where you can play and work with the flooring and experiment with it and create different patterns. That’s an important part of all our showrooms now.”

Marie Eklund, CCO and co-owner of Bolon, along with her sister Annica, designed the 200 square metres London space with assistance from London firm, Archer Architects, in sourcing materials and sketching plans for the construction of the space. The showroom, which opened during Clerkenwell Design Week in May 2012, is in the heart of the Clerkenwell district, home to an abundance of young architects and designers.

“Clerkenwell is a natural playground for Bolon – there are more architects, designers and creative businesses here per square metre than anywhere else on this planet. That was an important part of the decision to place the showroom here and it is a main focus when opening up showrooms in other global design cities,” says Helen Emanuelsson, CMSO of Bolon.

Opening up showrooms in design cities around the world is part of Bolon’s long-term strategy and business plan. In addition to London, Bolon has showrooms in Cologne, Gothenburg, Lisbon and, most recently, New York. The New York showroom is already on the move, leaving its Tribeca site for a bigger, 900 sq m space in Brooklyn that can accommodate the growing interest from the American design community. “A place where the young designers are is an attractive place to be,” says Emanuelsson. There are also plans for a Stockholm showroom in early 2014 (Bolon is currently searching for the right venue for this) as well as researching the opportunity to eventually open showrooms in selected design cities within Asia, Europe and South America.

Gräsberg could not be happier with the space they have created in London. “I think we reached the goal to make it warm, vivid and welcoming, with the feel of a home as well as a showroom,” she says. “The lighting is really important to create that atmosphere and emphasize the light reflecting abilities and characteristics of the flooring, as well as how the area is furnished and planned. All of our collections are showcased here and visitors will notice that the showroom is in constant motion – one month we present our latest collection, another we may have a workshop around sustainability or an event dedicated to maintenance and cleaning.”

The main focus is the ‘playground’ area where there are sample trolleys with rolls of flooring material for visitors to pull out and experiment with. “Each product can change rapidly simply according to which direction they’re in or how the lighting falls,” says Gräsberg.

Bolon’s new tile shape, Wing, which is being launched during Salone del Mobile in Milan, will be on show in the London showroom during Clerkenwell Design Week in May. There will also be celebrations for the ten-year anniversary of Annica and Marie Eklund taking over the company from their parents. “It’s been a great journey they have made from a traditional weaving mill to a global design brand,” says Gräsberg. “During 2013, the London showroom will be dressed with beautiful black and white photographs that portray this amazing journey and the people that have made it possible. It will be a truly inspirational place.”