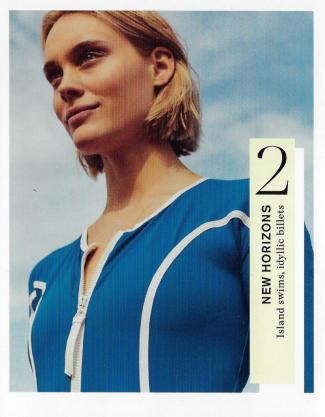
KONFEKT

The Magazine for Sharp Dressing, Drinking, Dining, Travel & Design.

PORT AND STARBOARD An audit of seaside fashion finds Holiday adventures and chic stays. KONFÉKT is an elegant title by the creators of MONOCLE SET SAIL





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Feathering the best

Brazilian-born Parisian designer Janaïna Milheiro has reinvented the traditional French craft of feather work, taking it beyond fashion into art galleries and architecture. Dior and Cartier knock on her door and her down-based fabrics are very much in demand. This singular artist thrives on collaboration, cross-pollination and experimentation.

> Photographer — Elena Heatherwick Writer — Ilona Marx

Bathed in the pale light of a high-ceilinged Her adopted city, Paris, also has a long traconverted police station on Rue Saint-Gilles dition of feather art. "Until the Washington in Paris's Le Marais, Janaïna Milheiro is watch- Convention came into force in 1975, which ing her mother Ana (one of three employees rightly banned the processing of exotic feathin her atelier) steam a clutch of large, cobalt- ers, there were hundreds of ateliers. The blue ostrich feathers over an open, bubbling most extravagant hat creations were made kettle to bring their feather branches into for the Parisian ladies." line. "They are naughty, they have a mind of Milheiro mainly uses feathers from their own," she says, smoothing the slightly geese, turkey and ostriches, which are har-

and, subsequently, at the École Nationale innovation has been part of her atelier for Supérieure de Création Industrielle design some time. "[For my thesis 11 years ago] I school in Paris, Milheiro is taking the tra- had the idea of developing a structure from ditional French craft of the plumassières feathers," says Milheiro, running her finger into the future. She experiments with gently over the soft surface of the sample a wide variety of textile techniques to piece she conjures up from her archive cupcreate delicate two- and three-dimensional board. "So I stretched the down into a yarn works for her international luxury clients. and wove the feathers into a silk fabric." The "We are always finding new methods and chessboard-patterned piece from back then techniques when working with the feath- is still in her collection. US fashion designer ers. Experimentation has become our Proenza Schouler became enthusiastic trademark," says Milheiro, who wears high- about the material and used it in six pieces waisted jeans with a wide leather belt and of her line, as evidenced by a picture of the a tight-fitting caramel cashmere jumper.

On her work table are samples of various feather creations; on the walls, a patchwork of pictures shows what breathtaking creations the designer, who was born in Rio de Janeiro and grew up in Paris, has already realised. "I came to work with feathers during an internship in Brazil," she says. "My tutor took me to a shop that sold feathers for carnival costumes. I bought some beautiful specimens 1. Janaïna Milheiro with a work there and took them with me to France."

damp feathers with a narrow brush. vested during food production. Her work After studying at the École Duperré goes way beyond shaping and steaming: catwalk above Milheiro's table.



made from goose feathers

Visits from designers and the big fashion houses have not been a rarity for Milheiro since she was given a grant and a workspace by the municipal institution Les Ateliers de Paris in 2011 after graduating and was able to take part in the Première Vision fabric fair in Paris. "That was the kick-off," says Milheiro as she sits down with her colleague Mailys and begins to cut feathers into shape with a steady hand. "Everything happened within a few months. I transformed from a graduate into an entrepreneur,"she says. On the high white walls behind her, large-format graphic artworks with feathers are a reminder that Milheiro also exhibits in galleries. Her three-dimensional objects, which often use precious metals such as brass and copper or rhinestones in addition to bird feathers, have adorned the shop windows of exclusive clients such as Hermès, Cartier and Guerlain.

Even so, about 50 per cent of the atelier's work goes into fashion. "Often we use the feathers like beads to create a 'feather fabric', as happened with our most challenging commission to date, for Dior Homme," says Milheiro. "We applied feathers to a white tulle shirt with feather embroidery, based on an iconic lace fabric, the toile de jouy. Two thousand hours went into this shirt. Every feather was cut into shape. It was crazy elaborate work."

The lace fabrics and embroideries that inspired her during her studies are still her greatest source of inspiration. "Feathers have a magic for me, a beauty that I can't escape," she says, confiding that the Dior Homme commission was not the only challenge. Another recent hurdle was the collaboration with the German fashion designer duo Talbot Runhof, who asked her to realise a feather-mesh top with Mayer'sche Hofkunstanstalt, a Munich mosaic workshop. Her latest experiemnts also revolve around the medium. "I am working on integrating arrangements of feathers into glass panels - more precisely into windows, doors and room dividers," says Milheiro.

The Parisian morning sun shines onto samples of her work that stand on a halfheight archive shelf. Filigree translucent patterns cast ornamental shadows on the floor. "There are so many possibilities that this opens up," adds Milheiro. "People in the fashion world might know my name but architecture is a new field for me." She hopes to continue working across discplines, marrying modern technologies with ancient craftsmanship to once again reimagine this métier. — K

- 1. Cutting feathers into shape
- 2. Milheiro with her mother, Ana
- 3. Graphic work made from dyed goose feathers
- 4. Ostrich feathers, the most beautiful of which come from South Africa
- Nook in Milheiro's studio
- 6. Surface made from feathers
- 7. Working on a couture waistcoat



'I came to work with feathers during an internship in Brazil. My tutor took me to a shop that sold feathers for carnival costumes. They have a magic for me, a beauty I can't escape"





