

selvedore

ISSUE 41 JULY/AUG 2011

UK £9.95 EUROPE €14.95
USA \$24.95 CANADA \$24.95
AUS \$24.95 JAPAN ¥3860
REST OF WORLD £14.95
www.selvedge.org

Coastal

Wonderful, windswept textiles

BLUSTERY

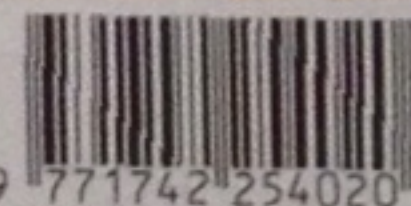
Hang-gliding, headscarves,
Nygårds Anna

BRINY

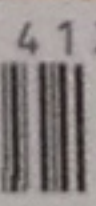
Bathing caps, wetsuits,
seaside style

BLUE

Indigo, Austria,
Tracey Emin



9 771742 254020



THE FABRIC OF YOUR LIFE: TEXTILES IN FASHION, FINE ART, INTERIORS, TRAVEL AND SHOPPING



Made to last

AGE HOLDS NO FEAR FOR VÄXBO LIN OWNERS HANNA AND JACOB BRUCE

Hanna and Jacob Bruce believe things get better with age, that includes houses, companies even fabrics. Especially fabrics, as they are the owners of Våxbo Lin the only remaining linen mill in Scandinavia.

They live in a small red-painted 18th century cottage called 'Målars' together with their children and while things may look idyllic now, reaching this level of calm and comfort was a long journey. They worked hard to renovate the building using handcrafted

techniques and natural materials. The result is a modern home with its traditional atmosphere intact.

The couple left a comfortable city-life in Stockholm and moved north to the small village of Rengsjö in the rural area of Hälsingland for the sake of the Våxbo Lin company. And their passionate interest in flax and linen, as well as a vision of linen production being a sustainable business for the future, has transformed the old mill into an important business on a European scale; the age-old quality of

Våxbo Lin towels and the unmistakable Scandi-style of their design has proved a winning combination.

Running Våxbo Lin is a lifestyle choice says Jacob "You have to love what you are doing. You have to be dedicated to the material, the products, the area and the way the community functions up here in the north. It is different from living in a big city like Stockholm. You get to know the people here very well and they show a genuine interest in your life."

"We gained a business which was barely





managing to survive," says Hanna, "but we saw its potential. The interest in well-designed textiles for the home is increasing in Sweden and also world-wide." The modernisation of the collection, without losing the 'soul' of the company, has started to yield positive results.

Familiarity with the area was crucial to their decision to move. Hanna spent the summers of her childhood in the village visiting her grandparents and Jacob's parents still live and work there. In Rengsjö they also found the house of their dreams in the 18th century cottage 'Målars'. Small and in a terribly neglected state, it had a friendly atmosphere and beauty that the young couple could not resist.

The little dwelling may have laid claim to the hearts

of Hanna and Jacob clear from the first moment – its cheerful red door originates from the area and dates from the end of the 18th century and still has the original lock – but behind that door lay an enormous task. Jacob recalls how he could stick his arm through the walls and there was no water, electricity or roof!

"Our first plan when we bought Målars, was to turn it into a summer house, but very soon we decided to renovate the building into a permanent home. It is such a lovely house, we wanted our children to grow up here," says Hanna. Every inch of the small house is used for clever storage. Behind the stove Jacob found a space for a wine cellar and beneath the stairs to the first floor is a corner where Hanna likes to sit and knit.

"The building has been on this spot since 1779

and before that it was in another location in the village. We know a wallpaper painter used to live here. When we started to take the building apart we found fragments. In the 'Salen' (dining room) the original handpainted decoration was found intact beneath several layers of old wallpaper. We decided to use the original colour scheme for the house and we have bought wallpaper in the same style."

The house, from floor to roof, has been taken down, cleaned, re-built and completed where parts were missing. Furniture and bits and bobs have been found in flea markets in the area. Both Jacob and Hanna have spent many hours looking for the right pieces for the interior. The sofa was found at auction and covered with a linen called 'Vargtass' ▶





from the Våxbo Lin range with cushions in 'Hertiginnan av Hälsingland'. The old wall clock is a gift from Hanna's grandparents and Hanna's grandmother wove traditional carpets and made the striped cushions. The chairs in the dining-room were handmade by a carpenter in the village (who also built the kitchen) and then painted in the typical colours of Rengsjö: light grey and black.

In the bathroom the wooden kitchen cupboards have been reused and an old iron bathtub stands on 'dolphin-noses'. As you'd expect surfaces are piled with Våxbo Lin towels and there is even a children's towel made from a linen napkin.

The philosophy of reusing and making do has been central to the entire project "When renovating

and decorating, we use lots of natural materials, it contributes to a peaceful atmosphere," explains Jacob. So it is fitting that his six-year-old son Alfons sleeps in an old traditional box bed beneath wallpaper by Swedish designer Josef Frank.

Style permeates the home and work of this couple. When Våxbo Lin attend fairs and meet retailers, Hanna dresses in clothes made of Våxbo Lin's fabrics, with linen scarves and her favourite embroidered boots. "It takes a while to convince people that linen is not boring. Linen is contemporary!" enthuses Hanna. "Once people see our linen with 'new eyes', they then want to try the products. There are a lot of young people today who have just begun to use linen products. They do not use traditional

tablecloths or curtains. They don't want to iron, but they do appreciate a fine towel for the bath, or a dish-cloth that you can use for years."

Being truly interested in the preservation of old buildings and tradition style, Jacob and Hanna recently bought another old building, to be renovated in addition to Målars. "Målars is a small house and our family has grown, so we would like to have a bigger bathroom, a sauna and other modern facilities. On the first floor there's going to be a studio, where we can work on our collections for Våxbo Lin. "But they won't be abandoning Målars, "This house is in our hearts. It will always be a safe place for us in our life and it feels great to be able to give our children the privilege of growing up here." ••• Cia Wedin