



PETRA ARKO



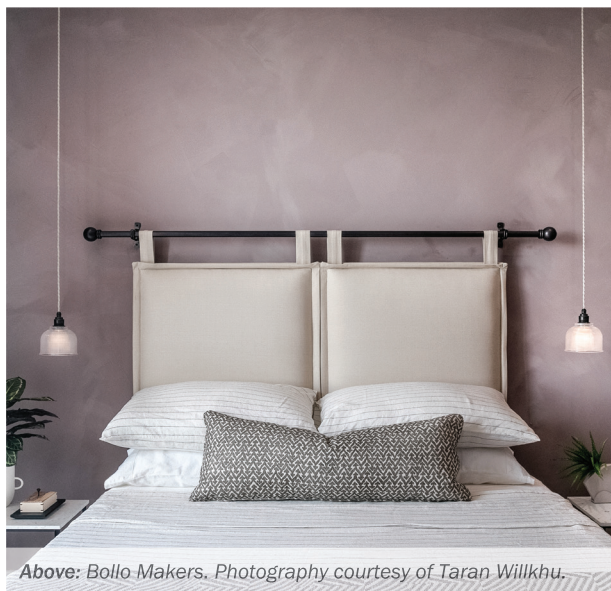
Furniture

By **Petra Arko**

Founder and Creative Director, **Bergman & Mar**

Bergman & Mar is a creative interior design studio with a curated, luxury furniture collection. The team works with private homeowners as well as the finest, most forward-thinking developers in London and abroad to provide beautiful show apartments, communal spaces, and turnkey solutions. Bergman & Mar is led by Founder and Creative Director, Petra Arko. Born in Slovenia, Petra studied economics and international business in Slovenia and Australia. After working for a business consultancy, advising on strategy and human resources for multinational corporations, she pursued her lifelong passion for interiors. Since gaining her interior design degree, Petra has worked on notable commercial and residential projects across London and abroad. Her passion for and extensive knowledge of furniture, lighting and art is a hugely beneficial resource for projects of all sizes and styles.

My approach to furniture sourcing is like finding all the puzzle pieces that fit together perfectly, and I struggle to give up until I get to the right result. The combination includes style and quality first and foremost. Then, of course, it needs to fit the budget and delivery time needs to work with our timeframe. The ultimate satisfaction is when you uncover a piece that meets all four criteria. That's a happy moment! I see it almost like a hunt, searching in all sorts of places to get to the desired finish. While working on a recent project, we found that we have so many makers in the UK that make beautiful handmade pieces that can be produced in less than four weeks, have a fantastic



Above: Bollo-Makers. Photography courtesy of Taran Willkhu.



quality and craftsmanship. We're excited about these finds as we get to support local makers and reduce our carbon footprint, building a better, more sustainable design business. Our studio places a significant amount of weight on the practicality of the furniture we supply. Even if we are designing a show apartment, I think it's still essential that the furniture makes sense in the space. For example, dining chairs need to be comfortable, we need to provide enough storage, and lighting needs to serve its purpose. The idea is, should someone move in, everything can be used as a home. I am passionate about creating homes, and interior design shouldn't just be an art installation. The furniture has to stand the test of time, both in style terms and quality.

For us, we note that private clients place great emphasis on storage. Hence we always create secret pockets of storage space in the pieces we make. All our beds have built-in storage; we add ottomans instead of coffee tables that double up as storage. Then we place a hand made timber tray on top to provide ottoman with a solid finish. We think ahead about the usage of pieces, such as including cable management solutions. The most important question we ask our clients is how will their space be used. There is a considerable difference in designing for a family to a show home, so this question is vital in understanding what is being asked of us. Recently we worked on a show home that wasn't working for the developer. They wanted us to reuse as much as possible. The brief was to lift the space, make it more homely and luxurious, the budget was limited, and we were



*Above: Bollo Lane project.
Photography courtesy of Edmund Dabney.*

asked if we should remove all items and start again or if we should save some pieces. Removing and starting again is the most natural solution, however it is the least effective solution for the client and the environment. We decided to identify all quality pieces in the space and reuse them. Instead of removing some of the items were reupholstered them in more exciting and luxurious fabrics. We paired it with fresh styling and a more informed choice of art, and we got an incredible result. When it comes to furniture, I am

a hoarder of inspiration. I look just about anywhere I can. I wish I would have enough time to visit all the furniture trade shows. I always make time to spend a week in Milan at Salone. I think it's one time of the year when you can see the most designs from all over the world, and it fills my knowledge bucket the most. In addition, I love Scandinavian furniture design, both vintage and present. They have a perfect mix of quality, price and delivery. For me, the most defined and unique pieces are coming from the US at the moment. Some most notable makers are BDDW,



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Matthew Fairbank, Egg Collective, Apparatus, and one of my recent favourite finds is Cathrine Raben Davidsen lighting. There are some incredible furniture curators in the US that I look up to and I think their curation is unparalleled in the world. Two of my favourite are Una Mallan and Future Perfect. They both cherry-pick most gorgeous collections and exhibit them in their showrooms. What I love about them is that they support and promote the most quality and truly unique pieces.

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The greatest challenge we have as designers is that all our clients would like a fantastic space now and for as little cost as possible. I am sure most designers would agree. Of course, it's not an old request, but I think the expectations are demanding more impossible timeframes and budgets. Therefore, the temptation can be to fill the apartment with ever more accessible fast furniture. I think as designers, we haven't done our job, and do a disservice to the client if we choose this route. Our job is to provide a service that is far more sophisticated and will give a client a unique space that isn't easily replicated. I firmly believe this can be achieved on any budget.

Recently we completed a show home in a mere four weeks after a phone call with the client. There wasn't even any time to

meet! I love challenges like that. Across the years we have developed a list of suppliers that we can reach out to so we can deliver bespoke items in such tight time frames.

As a designer, it is imperative to grow and learn all the time.

The perpetual search for new innovative and creative products is the only constant.

Such extensive knowledge then helps meeting ever-increasing clients expectations.

For the future, we are working on

our own collection of carefully curated furniture, lighting, accessories and art suited for quite a range of budgets and delivered under eight weeks. Our priority is to make sure these pieces will be an investment, future icons, that will stand the test of time both quality wise and style. In addition, we are doing our best to feature as many UK makers as possible.

bergmanandmar.com

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*Above: Lillie Square project.
Photography courtesy of Edmund Dabney.*

