

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



PICKY NICKY'S WISHLIST OF LORO PIANA PRODUCTS

Turtlenecks, from £1,195 each

These baby cashmere light turtlenecks are available in a range of colours; I would go for a dark number in black grey/grey/London smoke, and a lighter version in yellow/croissant/natural/cord.

3B sweater jacket, £2,485

A glove-fit patch pocket blazer cut in cashmere light jersey.

Crewneck sweater, £1,150

This jumper is made of baby cashmere light mousse, using a yarn that has been twisted together in a variety of colours with a very subtle melange effect.

Bomber jackets

It's hard to choose between the grey cashmere Ivy bomber (£2,160) treated with a Storm System membrane, or the double bomber (£9,740) in a blend of grey vicuña and baby cashmere, which comes with a cashmere knit collar and cuff in matching rib.

Maidstone shirt, £9,005

This grey vicuña and baby cashmere piece can be worn over a sweater as a jacket.

01 Just kidding

The superior quality of Loro Piana's baby cashmere is no joke

My official title at Wallpaper* is quality maniac-at-large, a moniker that I adopted after meeting Pier Luigi Loro Piana in early 2014 to talk about his vicuña, which, he explained, was prized by 'quality maniacs' (W*181) – something I could totally relate to. Another fun fact is that one of my first pieces for this magazine nearly 16 years ago was about the Italian brand's delivery van, which was emblazoned on its sides with 'Attention, cashmere in transit'. After spotting it in Milan, I explored the journey of a raw fibre that started in Mongolia and ended up as a finished Loro Piana product.

My interest grew when I saw a preview of the collection now hitting the stores and met Raffaella Redaelli de Zinis, Loro Piana's chief product officer. There is much to be coveted in the new range, which focuses on sublime understatement with subtle changes to proportions and palette. In a luxury market increasingly geared towards millennials, these kinds of products are as rare as the fibres they are made from.

So I set some time aside to visit Loro Piana's production facilities in Roccapietra and Quarona in northern Italy to witness first hand the transformation of the world's most select noble fibres – including cashmere, vicuña and superfine merino wool – into yarn, which is then knitted or woven into cloth before being tailored

into garments. The sweater pictured above is knitted from baby cashmere, an exceptionally fine fibre that comes in at 13.5 microns (one micron is one-thousandth of a millimetre). It's harmlessly brushed from a kid goat in Mongolia just once, at age four to eight months, with each brushing producing only 80g of raw fibre (compared to 250g of regular cashmere).

After being washed and checked in Loro Piana's own plant in Ulaanbaatar, the wool is transported to Roccapietra, where the fibres' purity and shape are examined under a microscope. Then it's passed under a UV light and someone counts the number of 'acceptable' black hairs – no more than five for every 10g. Once washed and dyed, it's turned into yarn in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. If the yarn is to be woven, like the cashmere and vicuña used for the bomber pictured above, that happens at Loro Piana's Quarona mill.

The most memorable part of the visit was watching the final procedures carried out by the menders. Armed with the eye of a goldsmith, a magnifying glass and a pair of tweezers, they check the finished cloth, inch by inch, pulling out any stray fibres that don't make the grade. Then another craftsman repairs any minute imperfections with a tiny needle. Only a quality maniac can fully appreciate that. ★ loropiana.com



02

Sweeten the pill

Master woodworker Pierluigi Ghianda once gave Italian style icon Marella Agnelli this pill box to replace her 'unsuitable' plastic one. €290, botteghighianda.com



03

Love bird

There's nothing quite like the porcelain of Manufaktur Nymphenburg. I'm smitten with this raven, designed in 1911 by Wilhelm Neuhäuser. €1,570, nymphenburg.com