

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) The Green Circle has reached its third edition. How has the project evolved since its first presentation at Milano Home? Sustainability is often used as a marketing label. How does The Green Circle go beyond aesthetics to become true systemic responsibility?

The Green Circle is an exhibition created precisely to bring order to the habit of Green Washing that is rampant in the market in the interior decoration sector. "Sustainability" moreover is a much-abused term and interpreted in a very individual way. Our bio-architecture studio Goldmann & Partners is a B Corp: it therefore strongly feels the mission to guide the market toward conscious living. With our Raremood.com department, entirely dedicated to home objects, we conceived The Green Circle exhibition which displays only products made according to responsible and environmentally and people-friendly criteria. Each company and product, before being chosen, receives a green light from our IRCAS research center (www.goldmann.it/ircas), obtained after verification performed according to the 17 UN SDGs. Without a green light, there is no access to Raremood.com, and therefore not to The Green Circle either.

2) As a bio-architect, how do you personally define "domestic sustainability" today?

The home is a place where many sustainable actions can be exercised: from the choice of materials in furnishing, to the choice of objects for use in the way they are made but also in the functions they suggest. For example: cooking in a cast iron or titanium pot is much healthier than cooking in a non-stick pan, but requires a different way of conceiving and preparing food. In this way, the choice of sustainable objects and materials helps and educates toward more sustainable attitudes and habits in daily life. It's a continuous evolution and discovery of a more interesting and attentive way of living, less distracted, as well as healthier and more responsible.

3) You developed the IGBI - Isabella Goldmann Bio Interiors Method. What makes this methodology different from conventional approaches to sustainable design?

The IGBI method is organized on three fundamental pillars: WHO, WHERE, and HOW. WHO: who am I, or who is the person for whom I'm thinking about the home, or even an object they might use. What culture do they have, what habits, what needs. Whatever must be done for someone, first they must be known very well, if you want to make the right choice about what to suggest to them. WHERE: where is the home of the person we're thinking of doing some intervention for, or even simply for whom we're choosing an object (a vase, a sheet, etc.). If it's by the sea or in the mountains, in Alaska or in Greece, everything changes: the intensity of light changes, the air temperature changes, the shadows, smells, sounds change. Not everything is perfect everywhere. HOW: once the two pillars above have been studied, the right choice comes by itself, following the correct indications we provide.

4) In your book "A Green Architect As a Friend," you describe the home as a form of medicine. Could you explain how materials, light and space planning influence physical and emotional wellbeing?

The human body is an extremely sensitive seismograph that records all physical and chemical aggressions that surround it. It reacts to all of these with equal and opposite actions, normally of a pathological nature, when these are excessive. Just to give a few examples: synthetic materials, or the presence of mold, or chemical finishes of certain furniture or objects, exhale or diffuse for years in the air we breathe at home some toxic components that are unknowingly inhaled and generate discomfort, malaise up to chronic and lethal diseases of the respiratory system, but not only.

Similarly, physical actions such as electromagnetic fields, or incorrect lighting intervene in our circadian cycle altering the sleep-wake rhythm and generating over time neurological and behavioral disorders. These are just examples: in reality the damage produced by materials in the home and by the very location of homes is much more articulated, complex, and the repercussions can be composite and affect many different organs of the body.

5) Many designers focus on recycled materials. You emphasize material ethics and ancient techniques. Why is cultural heritage fundamental to sustainability?

In reality, and I'm sorry to say it, many recycled materials are even worse, in terms of toxicity and danger, than non-recycled ones. The ethics of materials and ancient techniques lies precisely in ancient practice that always privileges simple access to "nearby" and accessible raw materials, not elaborated or altered, and simple techniques that respect their chemical-physical nature without generating particularly toxic impacts on operators and users. In the end it emerges that in this way everything was done in the right way for everyone: people and planet.

6) What are the most common mistakes you see in so-called "ecological interiors"?

The mistake about "ecological interiors" is fundamentally one: believing that everything that seems ecological, really is. Now "natural" moods are in fashion: light wood, light fabrics, natural colors (earth, mud, beige, sage green) without considering that that light wood could come from who knows where, have been varnished with who knows what; those "natural" fabrics could come from territories where slavery is practiced and have been "washed" with who knows what before being spun; those "natural" colors so reassuring could have been obtained with toxic and fume-emitting dyes or paints. And so on. It's not enough therefore to stop at the look, but to ask yourself how each component of that look was made. This is a true ecological attitude.

7) You refer to alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. How measurable is sustainability in the furniture sector today?

Our architecture studio, precisely because it's a B Corp, decided, to be consistent with the philosophy exposed so far, to equip itself with a research center, precisely IRCAS. This has developed verification and analysis protocols based on UN SDGs. Through the adherence of companies we involve in our activity to these 17 objectives, it's possible to understand how much they are inserted in the path toward sustainability. I say "toward" sustainability because this is a mobile objective, in continuous movement, and must be pursued. It will never be reached, because fortunately objectives improve, and will become increasingly ambitious. Important therefore is not being completely sustainable, but tending to be, continuously updating one's practices. It's very easy to understand, and companies most oriented to this attitude are the ones we favor.

8) For those who wish to embrace a more sustainable lifestyle, what are the first three significant changes they can make inside their homes? And, equally important, what are the common habits or choices they should avoid?

Very simply, the first three attentions that can be applied immediately inside a home are: 1) ventilate the house as much as possible always, to avoid stagnation of toxic materials that are then inhaled; 2) pay attention to light: use cold lights in the morning (which stimulate cortisol, the waking hormone), and pay attention to the color temperature of lights in the evening (use warm lights that stimulate melatonin production, which relaxes and prepares for sleep); 3) pay attention to the composition of everything you buy for the home, from furniture, to utensils, to cleaning

materials: try to always buy only truly natural materials, that don't exhale fragrances or toxic particles.

The general suggestion is to ask yourself if what we're doing can be done better, in a less toxic and impactful way. A good reference, even if it might seem bizarre, is to ask yourself how things were done at home 100 years ago, what was used. In very many cases the right answer is there.

9) If tomorrow you could redesign a global consumption habit, what would it be?

Read, read, read: read product labels, inform yourself, ask yourself what impact our daily actions have and act accordingly. Don't go by hearsay and don't follow trends. Apply a critical and informed approach.

10) Finally, how does a truly sustainable home present itself from an emotional and sensory point of view?

If we want to find a general rule, a truly sustainable home is noticed immediately upon entering the house: first of all it's orderly (order is the first emotional medicine), bright, not overstuffed with objects. It doesn't need to be large, nor even rich. It must be consistent with who lives in it and with the place where it's located. To do this we must learn to follow our instinct and listen to it more. Our brain instinctively sends us signals if something works or not. It's not interested in trends, it knows nothing about brands or trends. It knows very well what's emotionally good for each of us. But we often silence it. The problem is all here.