

Blurred Lines

Virserius Studio seamlessly brings the indoors outdoors with new collection

By **STEVEN C. O'CONNOR**

It's been said a designing eye can transform even the most mundane object into something desired, so it's no surprise that hotels might clamor for the TVD Rooftop Collection of outdoor furniture created by Therese Virserius and Virserius Studio.

In a product line usually considered largely for its durability, Virserius has brought that aspect together with a modern design aesthetic that could place the Rooftop Collection pieces inside the trendiest of urban lofts—something, the designer admitted, gives the collection great flexibility.

"When designing this collection, we wanted to take the indoor feel and bring it outdoors, but in an eclectic way. Outdoor collections are either very traditional or very contemporary, but we wanted to create something in between. Because time is always of the essence with projects, flexibility was important, too. We wanted pieces that could be used anywhere for a variety of hotel spaces, where simply changing a fabric could change the mood or direction very easily," said Virserius.

She also wanted the TVD Rooftop Collection to be very accessible to both consumers and other interior designers. "Knowing the fast-paced environment that we all face, the idea was to create something thoughtfully designed for those 'OMG, we need something now' moments. We wanted this to be the line to turn to without compromising individual design adjustments, since the collection can be customized to fit specific dimensional space while still looking smart. That is what we all look for when in crunch mode," said the New York City-based designer.

The collection, which includes seating, a coffee table and accessories, is made from resin crafted to resemble wicker and designed to withstand the elements. Bright pops of color enhance the collection, such as the modern color combination featured on the sofa, which measures 102 in. wide x 38 in. deep x 28 in. high.

Virserius said going from prototype to production was "a process," taking about 12 months "to get it right." Similarly, when choosing materials, besides being weatherproof, she also wanted to ensure they met the design plan.

"We wanted a residential feel, something you can pop into and hang out in but, architecturally, we wanted to show the structure of the pieces since they are very 'Eiffel-ish' [based on the skeletal structure of the Eiffel Tower], and then have the structure finished in a contrasting color," said Virserius, who also maintains a Paris office overseen by her sister, Regine.

However, she stressed, form and function are equally important, especially when creating something new.

"For me, one doesn't come before the other; they're both important. Flexibility is key, especially in a hotel setting—i.e., are the materials durable and operational? As designers, we also make considerations for the hotel patrons and the weather, etc. For example, in our latest project, the Caribe Hilton in Puerto Rico, we had to be conscious of the materials used because of the salt, wind and sun there. But, the pieces also had to fit and be aesthetically pleasing."

At the Caribe Hilton, the designer added two pieces to the TVD Rooftop

Collection: a chaise longue and cocktail table. "But, then we mixed them up with pieces from three other collections to create a more-layered effect and to blur the lines between indoor and outdoor," she said.

As far as what hotel owners and guests are looking for in terms of "an experience" with outdoor furniture, Virserius felt the goal on the guest side is to have a "completely unique experience to cherish when they return home. Owners want to provide that experience. You travel to go away and have something different. The key is to make guests feel good, welcome and comfortable, so they always want to return."

She added sustainability also is important, not only from an awareness standpoint, but from a financial standpoint as well.

"For example, at our upcoming projects in South Africa for Big Easy Wine and Grill and the executive lounges at the Durban Hilton, all of the pieces are being locally sourced. It has been a learning experience. You have to think about the local resources available. It creates an economy by providing jobs and also a sense of pride and community around a project as well," she said.

The designer noted working with a variety of projects demands that each receive its own approach. "Each project we work with has its own character, catering to different guests with different expectations. That affects things. What works one place may not work somewhere else. These properties have personality, and that's what we design for," she said.

Interestingly, the "personality" exuded by Virserius Studio's outdoor furniture collection has checked a lot of design boxes for at least one global mega-chain, according to the designer, who said part of the TVD Rooftop Collection became the brand standard for outdoor furniture for Hilton in 2015. "So we are very proud of that."



Structured in waterproof resin, the dining chair features a cushion that's available in an assortment of Sunbrella fabrics.

Structural elements are highlighted in each piece of the TVD Rooftop Collection. For example, the sofa frame is composed of a durable, waterproof resin made to resemble wicker. Cushion and pillows are in assorted Sunbrella fabrics, allowing for versatility based on the needs of a project.

