

Christophe Harinck thunders on with Roolf Living:

‘I have always had more affinity with outdoor than indoor’

Sometimes the best ideas arise in the most unexpected situations. Christophe Harinck can talk about this. In 2017, he and his cousin Bruno Descamps (CEO of parquet manufacturer Lamett) were sitting over a drink philosophising about entrepreneurship. ‘Who has it better,’ they asked themselves. ‘A company that delivers white label or rather a company that markets a label.’ A few Belgian beers later, they were out; a strongly positioned label takes precedence over selling white label products.

After this philosophical conversation, Christophe started making a concrete plan. ‘I wanted a unique product. Something that was instantly recognisable. Both for the retailer and the consumer,’ says Christophe as he thinks back. ‘At one point, the idea arose to design a soft-seating seat.’ From this, the label Roolf Living was born in 2017.

Love of outdoors

At the time Roolf Living saw the light of day, Christophe had already been active within the outdoor sector for 17 years. With his company Oostro Carpets, he had been selling (outdoor) rugs since the turn of the century. So the choice for outdoor was quickly made. ‘I have always had more affinity with outdoor than indoor. Apart from the fact that it is a growing market, there is a friendly atmosphere. Companies are not afraid to cooperate with each other.’ Over the years, for instance, Roolf Living has teamed up several times with companies such as Heatsail and Mon Dada.

Despite the differences between Roolf Living and Oostro Carpets, the sister companies share the same DNA. Those who are really sharp will recognise Oostro Carpets’ “O” and “C” in Roolf’s logo (Floor written backwards).

Long trajectory

After the initial start-up years, young Roolf Living immediately faced its first challenges. ‘Fortunately, we were able to build a retail network before covid made its appearance. Indeed, projects and hospitality came to a complete halt. Nevertheless, we managed to achieve substantial growth during that period,’ Christophe says.

Now that the corona period is behind us, the hospitality sector is back in full swing. This obviously benefits the contract market. At Roolf Living, they see that there are still quite a few steps to take there. The vast majority of turnover currently comes from retail. Partly because of covid, the project part is still in its infancy. ‘Hence, we have strengthened the sales team with experienced people from the sector. It is a long trajectory, but with a lot of potential.’

American Dream

Besides European countries, Roolf Living focuses on international markets. For instance, its furniture can be seen at international trade fairs such as Salone del Mobile Milano, Maison&Objet Paris and The Stockholm Furniture Fair. A hub in Singapore also contributes to

global visibility. 'Fame in the United States is one of our next goals,' Christophe explains. 'We recently opened a distribution centre in Dallas (Texas). With our Quick Ship Programme, we offer Americans an extra service.'

This investment should contribute to the conquest of the US. Christophe is optimistic, but also remains realistic. 'Placing a branded product in the US is quite a challenge. With white label products from Oostro Carpets, we have been doing business here for a long time, but that is very different clientele. It takes time. I think we will only be able to gauge how things stand in about three years' time.'

Ears and eyes on the market

Roolf Living also continues to evolve at product level. Its furniture, which is entirely manufactured in Belgium, recently received a major upgrade. 'We were asked by partners whether the seating comfort could be increased even further,' he says. That was among the possibilities, but it also came with a price tag. 'We started discussions with them and listened to them. After all, they are our ears and eyes on the market.' No sooner said than done. At the past editions of Maison&Objet and Ambiente, the updated products were presented to the public.

Thanks to its powerful construction of 100% thin-spun UV-stabilised polypropylene, the fabric effortlessly withstands both sun and rain. With a lush, robust textile structure, the beanbags with premium Quickdry outdoor foam, offer ergonomic comfort. They adjust effortlessly to the body's movements for an ideal sitting experience.

Bright future

As a young label, Roolf Living has had to compete against established names. Yet it has managed to carve out its place in the market. Now it is time to increase this share. 'All in all, we are positive about the future. Not only instinctively, but also numerically, we see that the market is a lot more favourable than last year. When the weather also improves and the sun breaks through, things will be fine,' Christophe concludes.

In the coming months, Roolf Living's softseats will be on display at Salone del Mobile Milano, Antwerp Design Week and Casual Market Atlanta. As icing on the cake, there will be a house show for the first time in September in Oostrozebeke. And if Christophe is to be believed, this is going to be a party. More on this later...

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LINK URL: ["Ik heb altijd meer affiniteit gehad met outdoor dan met indoor"](#)