



Bandit Queen

M U M B A I 2 0 0 9

Concept and design Valerie Barkowski

Bandit Queen could be 20 or a 1000.
She lives in each of us and belongs to all of us.
Legends and stories that tell of her lives and adventures are many.

A mystery, she is never where you expect her to be. She seems to have her ear to the ground and can foresee the future. She is never afraid; even in the face of troubling trespasses. She is nobody's fool, part of no clique, but connected to all and that is her strength. She has allies amongst the intellectuals and also distant travellers. She has enemies too.

What drives the Bandit Queen? Defending the freedom to think, to act, to love, to go overboard when she wants and with whom she wants. Is freedom, alive, more devastating than abstract confinement? She asks...

Her mantra: Find how the enemy hijacks dreams.





My body, eternally linked to the tumultuous path

Without a chaperone I travel, a flower caressed by the wind. I found myself one day at the outskirts of the Medina, the 'city of lights'. It is then when the rain clouds gouged the walls of the night and the river burst through its banks; and I experimented, with death and metamorphosis.

Nobody knows the answer to where the sky begins. At which height does yours begin?

Is a life without the possibility of godsend conceivable?

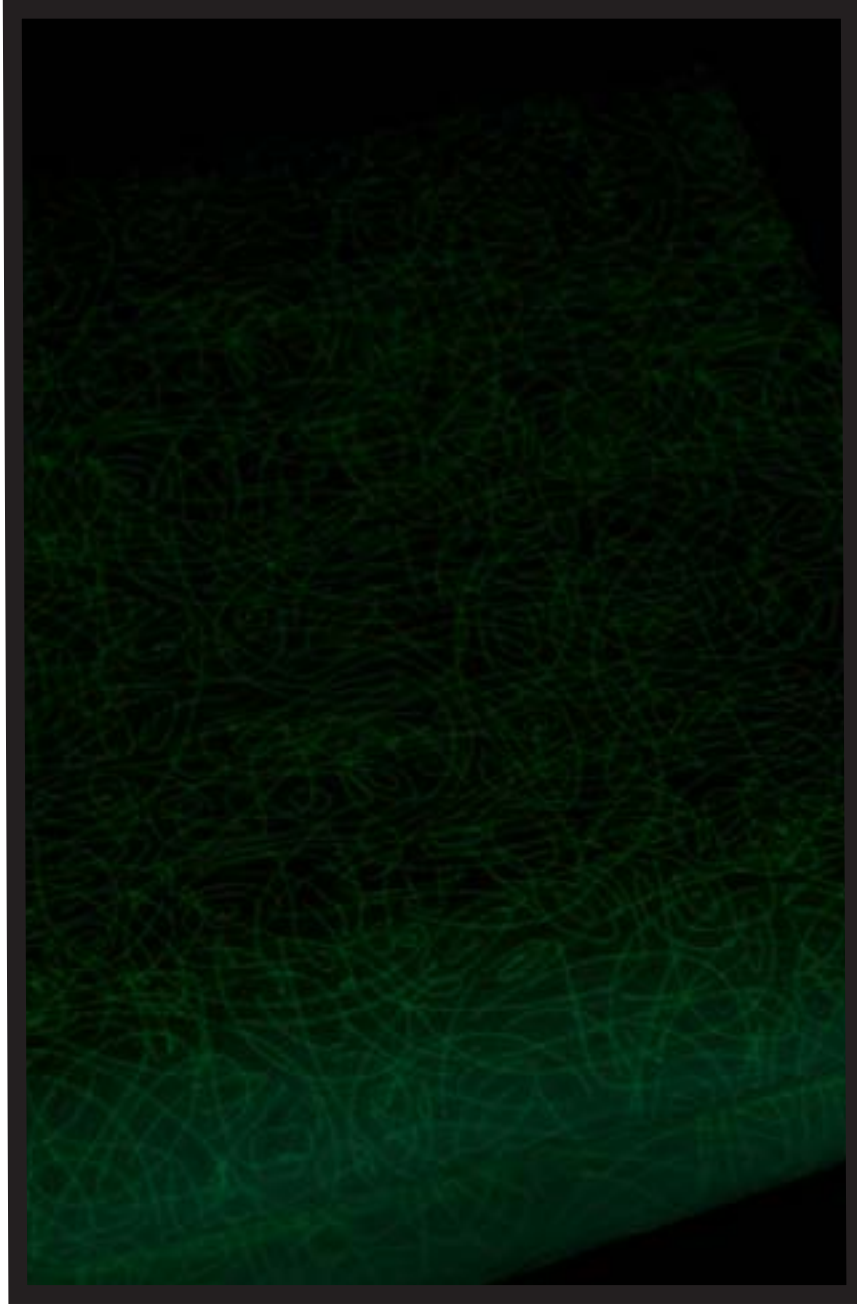
The nights of the Bandit Queen are abundant with materials woven for her dreams. Sheets of Swiss voile, organic mercerized cotton poplin, in forms and sizes that mirror the traditions of many countries. They have hand sewn hems lined with woven ribbons. The pillows are full width of the bed, some light up the night and have secret pockets...



To those who think they must attain the goal, I say "Look around and catch the flowers."

Seven different flowers, each handmade, can be removed from their base. The covers for the bed can be with 33, 22 or 11 flowers. The duvet and pillowcases are closed with delicate flowers, like jasmine entwined.





The little lights produced by certain verses makes me nostalgic. Fireflies make fire clouds, while looking for each other, amorously winged. They mate only after sunset, at full moon. Small lyrical bodies play in the big night, with the gaiety and innocence of a paradise regained.

Some bed pillows light up the dark, emitting a glow for several hours. The next morning they must be given daylight, to keep them phosphorescent for the night that follows.... Spirals and stripes shine; to make an atmosphere that is very special. Messages become visible, 'safe place', 'clandestine' and 'time to escape'. Some pillows have a secret pocket.



My soul is layered with dark folds... a stranger to myself. But how could the stranger be anyone else but me? Beneath the folds.... I am naked.

Minute pleats, flat and gradient folds... some pieces have pleats of three millimeters each, that run down the entire height and width. Such a piece can take almost 40 days of work. The slightest inaccuracy is unalterable. This collection of Swiss voile has bedcovers, duvet covers, pillow cases and bed sheets that harmonize with the entire collection.



Three designs on mercerized cotton poplin: tartan, sprays of paint and tinted edges... In two colours, charcoal and grey blue. The elegance is the three designs together on the same bed.



One day an Ace of Spades furnished with a love note, went inside my room and stole all my underwear. To study them he passed them under an x-ray. This was in New York, in 1910. He studied these prints with such precision, they say, that they left a lasting impression till the end of his days...

Photographing my intimate accessories; would that help you discover me?
But, do not expect a brassiere to give warmth to what it carries.

The lingerie of the Bandit Queen has been passed under x-rays, and its printed images scattered on the duvet cover and pillowcases.

Similarly, there also exist radiographic prints of flowers...

On the duvet covers of mercerized cotton, the printed portion, the screen as we call it, is removable. Throughout the collection, it is possible to buy only the screen, and assorted pillowcases.



Hotels often stage scenes of the unexpected. Like it happened one day in Barcelona, at the Hotel Ritz. In a charming room that overlooked the gardens, I arranged my few belongings in the dresser. There was the voice of a distinct vibration from the adjoining room.... so, I went, to greet him, wearing only my shirt. It was then that I had the vision of another shirt. It soared out of my room. It was carried on the back of a child, sword in hand, storming through the corridors, with the force of a citadel.

Two styles in silk, Swiss cotton voile and mercerized cotton, all woven by hand.
A woman or a child have the same ensemble. With the character of each style, they can be worn day or night, at home or anywhere else.



Stones are thousands of sheets of time, layered like river beds. They speak the history of the world. A strong night long ago, I hid
amidst them, I heard them. They sang, a ballet with water, exploding under the influence of the cold.
Polished, embellished by the hand of man, they touch my skin, link me to the stars for ever, humble me back to sand and to wind.



The charms have a secret power that is only ours to set ablaze. Their resonance, just like mirrors, exists to awaken our courage and boldness. I denied cynicism, choosing to believe in them, with no worry of return... If you only knew what happened to me then.

The 7 'charms' are shaped and then sewn onto a velvet ribbon; to wear around the wrist, on the ankle, or placed under the pillow. Each encloses a true secret.



After a long journey I'm invited to rest and a bath is drawn. I get in; a young man enters and chooses his phials with the utmost care. He unties every knot in my body with his strong and nimble fingers, our eyes never meet. As I abandon myself to pure bliss, I feel his hands flit over my breasts in their descent towards the burning core of my desire. I open an eye. His are fixed to the sky, a picture of innocence. I slap his face, compelling him to look at me. He scrutinizes me at length; and carries me into my chambers.



The towels of jacquard are woven with organic mercerized long fibre cotton. There are four sizes, bath towel, bath sheet, hand towel and guest towel. In the same weaves are bathrobes for the whole family.





It was necessary to spend one year in developing this material, woven especially for Bandit Queen. Immensely absorbent, it has long woven loops on one side and the other side has the effect of grass growing wildly. The towels are bordered with a flat cotton weave, some have a hand painted edge in charcoal grey.



Gathering to lunch where all habit is in vain.

Royal courts attend my dinners, alongside travellers, robbers, and observers of every kind. To shape the table into a feast, I envisage the personalities of my guests, their voices and their gaze. It is a whole day before that I choose the coloratura for the evening, its incense, its dramaturgy. Every detail is vital, but in the hands of guests the process breathes its own fate... They leave without a souvenir, but keep

Three fabrics, each different, make the table linen. They are Swiss voile, mercerized cotton poplin and linen. Three materials, to play with styles, influenced by the meal that will be served.

Linen, the 'bohemian', exists in several prints, that you may mix, or not, according to what you wish. The mercerized cotton poplin is chic. Mixed textures, stitching and embroidery, these give an unexpected poise to the table. The hems are rolled and hand stitched, to preserve the beauty of the all the prints.







The runner, napkins and tablecloth are all of Swiss cotton voile. Radiographic flowers play across the surface, some close together, others apart. The tablecloth is lined with the same fabric in white.



The runner is of mercerized cotton poplin. A bouquet of flowers, made in the same cotton and stitched by hand, are tangled together and buttoned onto the runner. The centrepiece becomes delicate, yet owns the volume of a sculpture ... There is an assortment of seven napkin rings, onto each a flower is sewn.





Within my den blackness prevails, forever and eternally... like fertile land. I invite you to throw light upon what waits to be unveiled...

It took me a long time to shape all the pieces of my home. I dropped the anchor that bound my love, in the 18th century. Since then, the space has been through momentous change, imposed at the discretion of my fantasies. Now, things have a life, towels and clothing that journeyed with me over centuries, have encountered a sparkling metamorphosis. Without these essential souls, this home would crumble. Perhaps you will be able to realize them...

Valerie Barkowski created the brand Mia Zia in Morocco in 1997. Her fashion accessories and home linen combined tradition with modernity and became a reference for the entire world. Today, based between Marrakech and Mumbai, she gives her creativity and experience to the service of home textiles brands, hotels and stores. Her work has an exacting style and personality which is dedicated to nomadic luxury.

The Bandit Queen home textile collection is born in India following the meeting of Sunita Namjoshi, entrepreneur and founder of the company Synergy Lifestyles, and Valerie Barkowski, art director and designer.

The experience in the field of textiles and production of the one and the creation and passion for traditional techniques of the other, has allowed the birth and development of the Bandit Queen brand. It is a brand without territory, which pairs the fine skills of the Indian heritage with timeless international design.

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