

## A visionary artist

In his hands leather is treated as a living material, continually changing and becoming art

When not travelling round the world João Carvalho, born in 1962 at Torres Novas, Portugal, lives and works in Alcanena, about a hundred kilometres from Lisbon. On his mother's side he comes from a family of artists (his grandfather was portrait painter Luis Pereira) and his father's family were artisanal tanners. With this double background, half artist and half technical expert in the tanning sector, he is now renowned as both a sculptor and consultant in the international field of leather technology. He has developed a link between chemical products and film transfers to transform fashion trends into incredible effects on leathers.

**You experiment with leathers like works of art. What is your rapport with this raw material?**

A great attraction. Leather in itself is dead, unusable, it decomposes but can be brought back to life through tanning. To obtain results of prestigious quality in both finishes and a variety of treatments calls for a perfect technical expertise as well as creativity.

**What training did you have?**

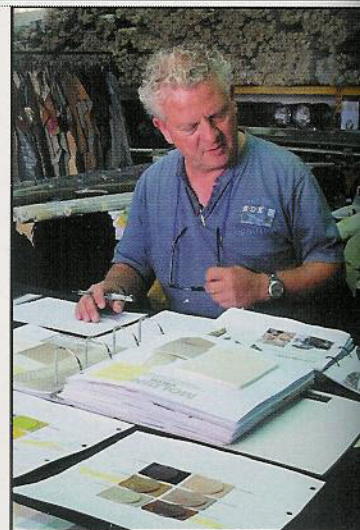
I got my first experience in tanning from my father and grandfather from whom I learned exclusive ways of treating leather. On the other hand, my maternal grandfather gave me a taste for art and painting, it was he who introduced me to designing. To complete my knowledge of tanning techniques I decided to go to Germany in 1983 to study at the famous University of Applied Science of Reutlingen in Baden-Württemberg, among the most innovative and technologically advanced in Germany.

**Tell us something about your leather sculptures, those amazing "creatures" that recall Body Art, already exhibited on many occasions, that always make a great impact.**

In 2004 I started working on models through the technique of "skin on skin", in fact specially tanned and treated leather (the prime material I use for my sculptures) that adheres perfectly to the body and takes on its lines and forms, capturing unique moments that seem to be held in eternity. That is why I call my creatures Eternal Nudes. Also in my artistic works I adopt traditional methods derived from the ancient artisans, that I have learned and used over the years and integrate into new, inventive processes I have patented.



THE NEW JOAO CARVALHO HEADQUARTERS IN ALCANENA  
RENDERING DELLA NUOVA SEDE DI JOAO CARVALHO AD ALCANENA



THE ARTIST AT WORK  
L'ARTISTA AL LAVORO

**When you are not sculpting, what does your work in the tanning sector consist of?**

I offer my clients, that are mainly tanners or machine producers, a personalized technical-stylistic consultancy service based on research and innovation. Each new season starts with preliminary in-depth analysis, then creating trend charts that include guidelines of concepts and ideas to identify future moods and the basis for conceiving possible new effects on leathers.

**With such an inventive mind, busting with ideas, where do you find inspiration for your work and, above all, when?**

From streets all over the world, it's important to observe lifestyles. I think of ideas, adjust them, make sketches even on the plane during my long trips from one part of the globe to another and I often find myself daydreaming.

**What projects are in sight?**

In April of next year, to mark my fiftieth birthday, I'm going to inaugurate my new headquarters in Alcanena. This is a building/warehouse of 1,000 sm, a "futuristic" project I have had in mind for a long time and worked a lot on its conception: a dream that is finally coming true. It was conceived as an enormous multipurpose space, a centre to launch various activities: a sort of gallery/showroom where I can display my sculptures, organize seminars and meetings, hold workshops, offer presentations of trends and new materials, propose initiatives and, last but not least, welcome clients for whom actual guest quarters have been arranged. Above all it will be my place of work.

**The next dream to realize?**

When I am finally in my new premises I would like to travel a little less and dedicate more time not just to my "creatures", my sculptures, but to people I love, my family, my wife and children.



EXAMPLES OF SOME LEATHER FINISHES  
ALCUNI ESEMPI DI FINISSAGGI SUI PELLAMI