



DISCOVER THE PERFECT BED

IN YOUR DREAMS

*Passionate about natural textures, rich colors and old-world craftsmanship, **Matthew Lenoci** spends every waking moment dreaming up the world's most comfortable bedding.*

PHOTOGRAPHS JEN SISKA | WORDS CLAUDIA BAUER



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-Matthew Lenoci

STANDING AT A SAMPLE TABLE IN THE BASEMENT OF HIS DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES WORKSHOP, SURROUNDED BY stacks of textured cotton blankets and quilted linen, Matthew Lenoci passionately extols the beauty and intimacy of bedding. "There is nothing more personal than your bed," he says, running his hand over a leaning tower of the softest percale.

When you talk to Matthew, he often speaks in the collective "we" — a word that speaks volumes about him and his collaborative approach. "We touch the fabric, we shake it. We like lots of layers. We found if we layered different textures, it created a new look on the bed. And then when you added in color, something pretty exciting started happening," he states.

"We" are the artisans that make up Matthew's team — a small, close-knit cadre of 100 who work side-by-side to create the world's finest garment-dyed bedding. Founded on the revolutionary notion that bedding should be about choice, every piece is sold individually — bespoke, if you will. The result? A bed that's as unique as the person sleeping in it.

Matthew's hands-on approach informs every piece of bedding, every luscious layer that emerges from his studio. "To me it goes back to the craft of finding a raw material and talking to the person who made it or transformed it. What is it that I would want on my bed? Let me try that and see if other people might like it, too."

His is an old-school kind of craftsmanship, a way of making things that takes a little longer, of do-

ing things in small batches, that favors the right way over the expedient way. For although the East Coast transplant is an entrepreneur with a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford, his motives and methods come from the soul. "I lived in Italy for almost five years, from the age of 9 to 14. One of the things that I learned to appreciate about Italy was craftsmanship, whether it was a grandfather working with wood or a fourth-generation cobbler crafting shoes."

That ethos has informed his company since he founded it in 1996 in this industrial neighborhood of LA, once a proud garment and textiles center. Back then it was only Matthew and one sewer. "I had just a corner about yea big," he recalls, drawing an imaginary line around a few square feet in his spacious showroom. "I slept there and I cut there. I was interested in what was happening with new types of fabrics. I went to Italy and bought some fabric, sewed up a couple of sheets and sold them. And then I bought another bolt."

He built his company from that humble beginning. And engineer that he is, his primary satisfaction is still in the details. Having focused on the finer points of production and manufacturing for more than 25 years, he's perfected the practices that he now applies to textiles. "The raw materials are just everything," Matthew says. "We go out and talk to the farmer growing the flax. From beginning to end, we've gone all over the world," he says, describing an itinerary that takes him from Italy and Portugal to Brazil, Bolivia, India and beyond in search of intriguing new textures.

When Matthew finds a knit or weave that trips his imagination, he and his team play with it, literally sleep on it (there's that hands-on approach again)



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and brainstorm ways to make the most of its inherent natural qualities: softness, lightness, lushness, warmth.

After a fabric passes the all-important sleep test, it's ready to be transformed into a bedding collection. "There's a lot of magic that happens," Matthew says, acknowledging that he's as much an alchemist as an engineer. Matthew's team carefully cuts, sews and finishes the bedding by hand. They hem each piece with 12 stitches per inch, twice as many as is industry standard, a process that takes extra time but yields durability as well as sublime comfort. "Our sewers are craftspeople," he says, and he relies on their expertise and extraordinary devotion to quality. "A lot of them have been here many years, and they know how to cut it better, how to sew it better, how to fold it better, how to dye it better."

Indeed, his bedding is as prized for its dreamy colors as for its relaxed beauty. After they're sewn, the pieces are garment-dyed by master dyers who share Matthew's passion for process and palette. "There are tons of incredible dye houses in the Los Angeles area. We are really conscious of using low-impact dyes and doing it in an eco-friendly way." Finally, the pieces are washed with water and sodas, salts and enzymes, a natural way to produce the luscious, skin-loving feel that drew Matthew's hand back at that sample table.

The process is all in pursuit of one goal, really. "At the end of the day, we're trying to make people sleep better," Matthew states.



LEFT: SWATCHES OF FABRIC FOR THE NEW BESPOKE GARMENT-DYED BEDDING COLLECTION.

CLOCKWISE, UPPER LEFT TO RIGHT: MATTHEW LENOCI IN THE SPECIALIZED STEAM AND IRONING ROOM; A BUNDLE OF SEWN TICKING STRIPE DUVET COVERS, READY TO GO TO THE DYE HOUSE; A DYE-HOUSE WORKER INSPECTING A QUILTED COVERLET AFTER IT COMES OUT OF THE FIRST WASH MACHINE; A NEW BLUE DYE IN DEVELOPMENT; MATTHEW'S TEAM CELEBRATING THE OPENING OF THEIR NEW FACILITY IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES.