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**"If I'm going to collaborate with someone, it's because I consider them to be a master at what they do."**

—Pharrell Williams

# WELL THREAD

The Parisian duo behind Combray Design will have you in stitches.

BY ROYA SACHS

**“Like in fashion, everything** works in cycles,” explains Aurélie Hug, on the growing interest in textiles that seems to be trending right now. “One hundred years ago embroidery was very popular in interior design; you had entire rooms filled with embroidery.” But the Parisian sister duo Aurélie and Laure do not follow trends, adapting their style to each client and maintaining personal integrity in their designs. “We wanted to do something really special, really high-end,” which led to the Hugs first collection of customized, handmade embroidery.

In 2012 they formed Combray Design, an embroidery and textile company based in New York. Aurélie lives and works in the city, handling all of their U.S. clients, while Laure deals primarily with European clients. All of their embroidery is handmade in Mumbai, India, explains Aurélie, “so it’s very international.”

Asked what inspired their designs, the sisters cite everything from modern and early abstract art to current fashion, South America, Art Nouveau, Art Deco and antique Asian fabrics. They are also heavily influenced by designers such as “the cultivated and elegant” Jacques Grange, Kelly Wearstler (a current client) and Jean Paul Gaultier, plus artist Steve McQueen. “You take different energies from different places and then something happens. It’s a creative process.”

Among other new endeavors, the pair developed a branch of their company called Linens of Cartago, a project that focuses on the embroidering traditions in Colombia, where Aurélie’s husband is from. They create handmade textures using the ancient Morisque tradition of openwork stitching onto Belgian linens—the first ever of its kind. The technique entails cutting threads and opening the fabric, creating different designs and then restitching them to create a pattern. It’s embroidered within the fabric rather than on top. “We wanted to create a table linen collection bringing modernity to traditional motifs,” says Laure. “We would like to experiment more with colors, patterns, materials—and also in larger scale.” The exclusive collection is now also available at Barneys.

The talented duo continues to push the realms of contemporary embroidery by mixing different cultures, traditions and techniques into their textiles. They work with more than 30 types of stitching techniques; experiment with metal beads, rings and springs; and have even collaborated with a tattoo artist on developing edgy and eclectic new designs.



*Monstrua*, an  
embroidered  
pattern on linen,  
from Combray  
Design; below,  
the company's  
founders Laure  
and Aurélie Hug



COURTESY OF COMBRAY DESIGN