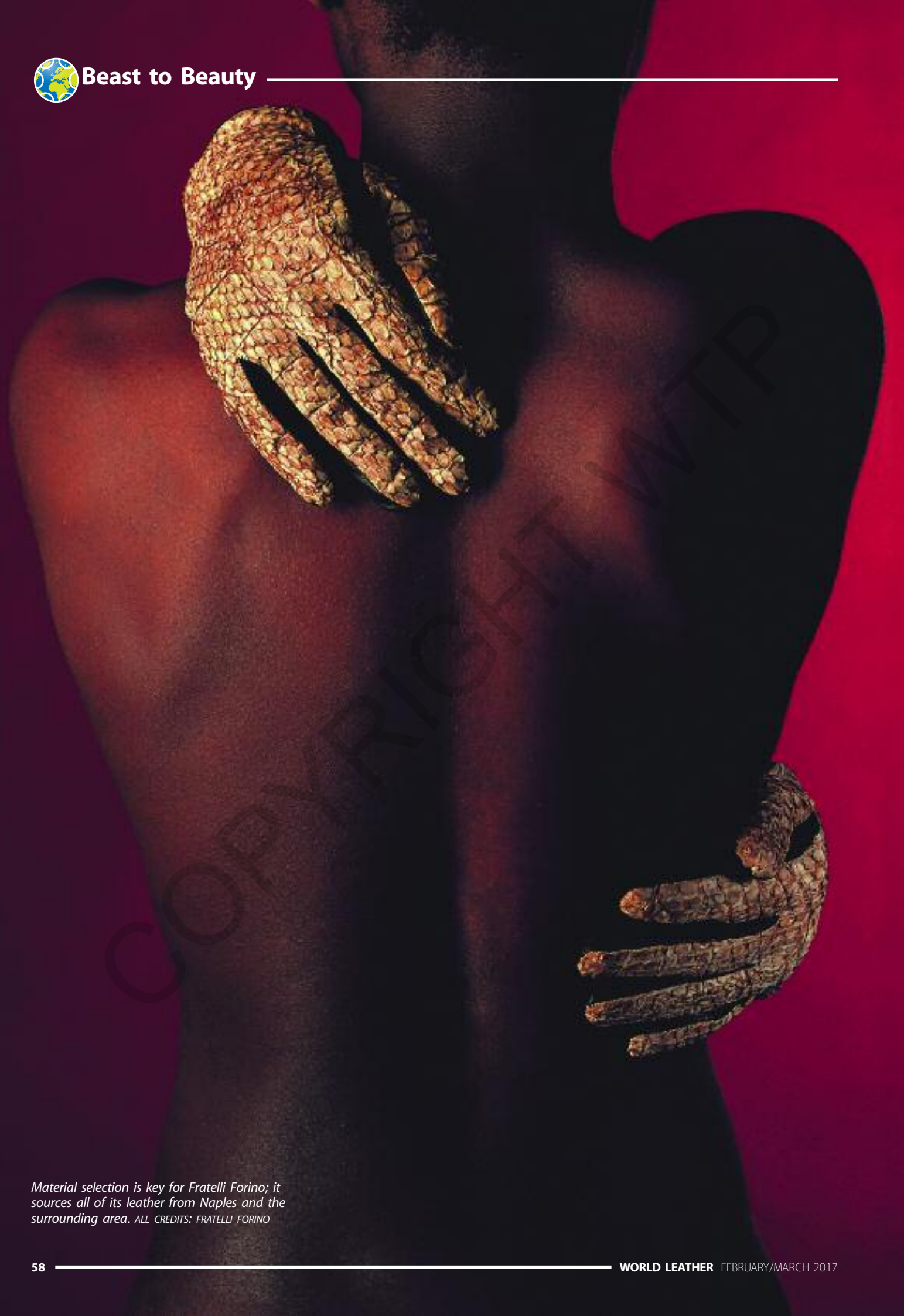




Material selection is key for Fratelli Forino; it sources all of its leather from Naples and the surrounding area. ALL CREDITS: FRATELLI FORINO

Naples-based Gloves dei Fratelli Forino relies on the age-old combination of skilled craftspeople and carefully selected materials to produce a range of elegant leather gloves for all occasions.

For the love of gloves

The glove is love: it is life": it may sound like the deliberately ambiguous tagline to a Hollywood thriller but it sums up the passion that Gennaro Forino Snr., boss of Gloves dei Fratelli Forino, has for his craft. When he took over the running of his family's glove-making business in 1980, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, the challenge facing him was to uphold a legacy dating back to 1899. Now past his 80th birthday, he continues to be inspired by the smell and the softness of leather, describing the feel of it between his fingers as like "a small piece of you that recounts your stories, your sacrifices, your labours and your successes". Mr Forino retains an active presence at the company's factory in Naples, where it manufactures gloves for men and women. Its range of more than 200 original designs extends from dress gloves to those for use in driving and golf.

Work of art

The success of Fratelli Forino suggests the glove-making heritage of Naples is alive and well; it remains Italy's heartland for this particular form of leather craftsmanship. "Since the 1980s, the revival of 'Made in Italy' has brought the glove back to the forefront of the fashion industry," the company states. Gloves are now considered an "essential fashion accessory", it adds, but only if the quality is high. It believes the key to achieving this is the material used. "The selection of raw materials is fundamental," it explains; among those it uses are lambskin and deer skin. It sources all of its materials from Naples and the surrounding area, where it knows the tanners are highly skilled in leather manufacturing, and has built strong relationships with a number of



Fratelli Forino has capitalised on the rebirth of gloves as "an essential fashion accessory".

leather manufacturers in the region. It manually inspects the raw hides and skins before they are tanned, discarding those with natural defects before its trusted craftsmen take over and begin the process of turning the leather into beautiful finished products.

The company compares an expert glove-maker to a master sculptor: "Making a glove is like creating a sculpture. The quality of the marble and the skill of the sculptor can turn a simple sculpture into a work of art; it is the same for a glove." It has resisted the allure of China and its lower labour cost in favour of keeping its manufacturing in Italy, considering this to be the only way of safeguarding the quality of each pair of

gloves it produces. "To manage a simple piece of leather and transform it into a piece of art is very difficult," it says, adding that to do it well requires a great deal of skill and experience.

Traditional methods

It employs a method that is deep-rooted in Naples when cutting the leather for its gloves; this involves the skin being stretched on wooden boards to prevent sagging and stretching, before templates and scissors are used to hand-cut the required shape. It remains loyal to this tried and tested method as it would be "useless to abandon a tradition that has proved so successful". The material for the lining is selected next, with cashmere and silk



among the most popular choices. Different stitching techniques are used depending on the style of glove; inseam stitching for classic gloves, twisted purl stitching for gloves made from thicker hides like deer, and saddle stitching for sports gloves. They are then finished with buttons, decorated cuffs or straps according to the design. All of Fratelli Forino's products are subject to strict quality control; after being stretched out on irons to eliminate any folds in the leather, the tightness of the seams is checked, as is the quality of the lining and the fit to ensure each pair of gloves meets its exacting standards.

Taste for beauty

Mr Forino's children are now in charge of the day-to-day management of the company. Since taking on this added responsibility, they have put in place strategies to build on its success. An increased focus on online sales channels has contributed to a growth in international revenue, as has a presence at global trade events such as the biannual Mipel leathergoods fair in Milan. At present, 80% of its products are exported, with Japan and Russia among the most important markets.

Although committed to preserving the practices that have served it well in its more than 100-year history, Fratelli Forino also wants to move with the times, blending the talent and imagination of Neapolitan artisans with the latest ideas in product innovation. All of its designs are still drawn by hand; the company has complete faith in its team, meaning it feels comfortable leaving modern digital methods "out of the equation".

It appreciates the value of expert craftsmanship and is conscious of the need to pass on to younger people the skills required to make luxury gloves. Its master craftsmen are already actively engaged in transmitting their knowledge to the next generation of artisans. It says being based in Naples, an area with such a pedigree in glove-making, means it isn't too difficult to find young apprentices who are eager to learn. It hopes to preserve the region's "taste for beauty", which has been passed down through the generations, for many more years to come. 🌐



The company continues to employ traditional methods to craft its gloves. Through each stage of production, from cutting and stitching to final quality control, it relies on the skills and experience of its expert craftsmen.