

BRAND PROFILE

WOO - A Message in a Bottle

Words by Alexandra d'Arnaud



“It is so rewarding to be part of creating a global sustainable luxury product.” The WOO team.

The festive season is the perfect time to highlight the extraordinary story of WOO, a luxury global lifestyle brand that is leading the way in sustainability and transforming the lives of hundreds.

WOO, an acronym for Worlds of Opportunities, makes beautifully hand-crafted scented and beeswax candles that are set in recycled wine and vodka bottles.

Launched in 2009, it is the brainchild of philanthropist and entrepreneur Saskia de Knecht, whose vision to blend talent with local resources has helped establish livelihoods, engaging and connecting those living in remote and impoverished communities throughout Vietnam.

With a background in medicine and business administration, Saskia first worked in the medical field in Africa and South America before switching to Development Aid for five years.

WOO was launched with the intention of bringing power to the people so that they would be able to help themselves, and form secure and prosperous communities, very much in line with Saskia’s own goal of helping to lift one million people out of poverty within the next 10 years – clearly a woman with a mission.

“I wanted to stimulate local economies, partnerships between rich and poor communities, and empower people born with less chance than others to get a new hold on their lives,” she explains.

All WOO products are made within a sustainable work culture where everyone involved actively participates in respecting nature.

Rapidly emerging as one of the most innovative lifestyle brands around, WOO is certified as 100% eco-conscious and uses 100% natural ingredients.

“WOO has nothing to do with charity,” adds Saskia. “We help people to enrich their lives on their own with the creation of authentic hand made products, using what we have on location in terms of the people’s potential and raw material”.

Focusing on innovation, craftsmanship and great design, WOO operates within 12 provinces across Vietnam involving close to 1000 farmers within communities that are not considered part of the formal economy.

The beeswax is sourced locally where farmers remove it from the hives and deliver it to the workshops. The farmers are also encouraged to sell honey and Royal Jelly products for added income. At the workshop, the beeswax is carefully filtered and melted so not to cause damage to the wax.

Premium quality fragrances, concocted by leading European perfumers, are then added along with a handmade cotton wick, which allows the candle to burn slowly and evenly for as long as 100 hours.

Meanwhile another team of WOO workers collects empty vodka and wine bottles from local streets, hotels and restaurants. Workers then clean, cut and sandblast the WOO logo onto the bottle, all done by hand. The bottles, sized small, medium and large, are filled with the purest scented beeswax and given names evocative of the brand’s philosophy: Radiance, Tranquility and Treasure.

The opportunity to be involved in the manufacturing of authentic products provides WOO workers with renewed self-esteem as they learn skills that will not only bring them increased prosperity, but also allow them to stay on their land with their families.

WOO has put together an exchange model which encompasses learning, sharing and giving.

“In this way we can grow together, create a better world and enjoy a new quality of life,” says Saskia, who is very good mobilising energies.

WOO’s generous commitment has forged a strong link between the east and west, not only through employing European perfumers but also through the consumers who are falling for the wonderful WOO products.

Hand wrapped in a paper and cardboard packaging, each candle embodies a message of hope, bringing light to our own lives while also enhancing the lives of those involved in their making...

Our own mission at Esensual Living is to help spread the goodwill of WOO and highlight their beautiful products as a must-have gift this festive season, available now at Esensual Living.

www.welcome2woo.com

Portrait and production photos courtesy of WOO, Interior photo by Caroline Menne