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NOTES ABOUT VEGETABLE TANNED LEATHER

The “ERREMME ” has been dedicated to vegetable tanned leather since 1987 and although this tanning process has antique origins, there is still much mystery about it today. And so we have decided to explain the most important characteristics of this

type of tanning, to provide the information essential to all those who use and love this unique product.

1) The Tanning

The process of tanning, that is the transformation of animal skin into leather, is called "Concia al Vegetale" (Vegetable Tan) because of the exclusive use of vegetable tannins to perform this change. It is an entirely natural process. These tannins exist in the bark and trunk of trees such as chestnut, quebracho and mimosa. The tannins are extracted from the by-products of the woodworking industry, thus without depleting forests. ERREMME PELLAMI is specialized in "Concia Lenta " *Slow Tan*, so called because of the many days of long, intense and precise work necessary to its realization.

2) Hypoallergenic

Our leathers are free or chrome, pentachlorophenol, benzidinici and azo-colorants. All the colors used in our production are strictly to legal norms.

3) Treatment "a *VACCHETTA"*

The quality and nature of the emollients is essential to the vegetable tanning process. Not only do they serve as lubricators, but they also give the leather strength and suppleness, and impede the contact between air and the tannin, thus avoiding damaging oxidation.
The emollient process "a *VACCHETTA*" uses oils of animal/vegetable origin (with very low levels of acidity to avoid rancid effects over time) which make the leather particularly reactive to buffing, brushing and hand finishes that produce the high shine or warm glow prized in high quality shoes, belts and bags. This reaction is different, and much slower, in the presence of fixatives.

4) Color-fade resistance

Oils and waxes are essential to our tanning process, but it is very hard to fix and isolate them during the Aniline finishing process. Treatments "a *VACCHETTA"* may sustain natural color-loss through wet or dry rubbing. The reduction or substitution of these oils will improve the resistance to color-loss, however some of the natural qualities of the leather will be lost. The technicians welcome any question or suggestion that may help in the creation of a high quality product able to satisfy your needs.

5) Difference of colors

Another typical characteristic of the vegetable tanned leather is the slight variation of color from skin to skin which is due to the presence of natural oils. Also, on the same skin, one can immediately notice the classic bi-color effect of the "puntina nera", where the uppermost part of the leather appears darker than that underneath.

Naturally the oils used are not derived from endangered and protected specie on the list of those banned by the Washington Convention, May 3rd 1973

6) Perfume

Vegetable tanned leather, treated and enriched with special oils, has an unforgettable perfume that brings us back in time, to when our fathers crafted these refined, rich leathers. To maintain this distinctive perfume, the leather must NOT be treated with solvents, pigments or resins.

7) Climate

In certain conditions of humidity and temperature the natural oils and creams used in the "*nourriture*" (the emollient phase) may resurface giving the leather a whitish patina called "*repousse*." Vegetable tanned leathers behave differently than other leathers that present the same problem, as they return to their original state of suppleness and shine by simply rubbing them with a wool or cotton cloth. The *repousse* on vegetable tanned VACCHETTA leathers must not be considered a flaw or defect but rather a natural process. Time and use enhance the very quality and beauty of the leather itself.

8) Lightfastness

Another distinctive characteristic of vegetable tanned leather is the change in color it undergoes when exposed to a natural (sun) or artificial (electric, neon) source of light. Ultraviolet rays and the air itself are the principle agents in the oxidation that gives a yellowish hue to the cellulose of the tannins and determine this natural process called "Viraggio di Colore" (Veering of Color).
The darker colors: Cognac, Brown, Testa di Moro, Maroon and Black, are not very affected by the change in hue. Meanwhile the natural colors, or the very light ones, are sensible to the veering and move towards a reddish hue.
Particular attention must be paid to the colors **Turquoise** and **Aqua Marine**, all the tones of **Blue**, **Lime** and **Yellow,** which, if exposed for prolonged periods of time to light, will undergo a radical shift in color. The resulting color is often a non-definable color in the Green/Brown range; Green will also shift towards tones of Yellow/Brown. This process is a natural phenomenon, much like our skin tanning under sun, or a newspaper that turns yellow with time.

A word of advice: in order to avoid unpleasant surprises we advise all our customers to inform their stores to take small precautions in the display of their merchandise; rotate the objects, keep them away from direct sunlight. One must always remember that vegetable tanned leather is a natural product and thus subject to change in time.

9) Concia Bianca

ERREMME PELLAMI offers the alternative of the "Concia Bianca" (White Tan) for all those who do NOT appreciate the characteristic color veering. In order to slow down and attenuate the natural change in color, we use synthesized tanning products, petrol derivates, followed by the finishing application of colored pigments and specific resins. These pigments especially enhance the leather's resistance to photo damages. The synthesized products also improve the leather's elasticity.

Disadvantages:

- The leather is no longer tanned with natural products; it therefore cannot be considered a vegetable tanned leather and cannot bear the trademark "Vera Pelle Italiana Conciata al Vegetale".
- The leather loses the natural aspect, typical of a vegetable tanned product.
- In order to obtain stable colors resistant to light there must be a minimum of 3% drum dye, otherwise the predominating color will be the white base, as shown in the lab tests we have conducted.
- Longer production times.
- Higher production costs.

10) Concia alla Tara

For light colors, has been developed a specific tanning process, the "Concia alla Tara". TARA is a natural tannin extracted from a Peruvian flower; it has an ivory white color used as a base to obtain light toned leathers.
Tara, being a natural tannin, will also change when exposed to light.
As it is a natural product it is guaranteed by the "Vera Pelle Italiana Conciata al Vegetale" trademark. The cost of tara is superior to that of classic tannins.

11) Water

When using a product realized in vegetable tanned leather one must pay special attention to water. Contact with water, for example rain, may cause a slight damage to the leather as it will tend to change color and to swell slightly on the fiore (surface). It is possible to apply a waterproof treatment to the leather, but this will alter slightly its visual and tactile properties.

12) Thickness

Vegetable tanned and chrome tanned leathers have different technical and mechanical characteristics. Depending on the type of product used in the tanning, different types of bonds form with the proteins in the leather. In vegetable tanned leathers these bonds are weak but intense, therefore if the leather is left uncut, or of sufficient thickness, the leather presents mechanical resistance that permits it to be used in the various industrial applications. Sometimes, for product construction requirements, the

leathers are exaggeratedly thinned, which compromises its mechanical resistance. The problems that a dry split vegetable tanned leather can present are essentially two:

1) Poor elasticity of the surface fiore, therefore a tendency to crack
2) A weakening of the fibers, therefore low resistance to traction and friction.

This does not mean that vegetable tanned leather cannot be thinned, but rather that one must be careful during this process to avoid drastic stress to the leathers.
Problems with split leathers are almost always due to a poorly performed operation or because the very structure of the leather cannot support the imposed thickness.
When the use of very thin leather is required it would be helpful to contact a factory technician to find the right solution, thus avoiding eventual flaws and damages to the finished products.

Additional notes

Natural color vegetable tanned leathers – tumbled or drummed- has a peculiar characteristic: when rubbed by hand it emits a particular sound…the tanners say that it “SINGS”! Vegetable tannins are also present in fine wines, and in the past in the production of inks.

Conclusions

Vegetable tanned leather is such a natural product that one can recognize and appreciate all of its minute qualities, its perfume, veins, marks and nuance of color. All these characteristics are the authentic proof of a luxurious product of high intrinsic quality that becomes more beautiful and valuable through the passage of time and use.

For us at the ERREMME PELLAMI leather has an antique fascination, ever modern, in perfect harmony with man and nature.

In faith

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