

interiors[®]

A modern interior space with white walls, a wooden floor, and a white platform. Three white, illuminated, rectangular objects are displayed on the platform. The background features a large white pillar and a series of circular wall lights.

ART IN DESIGN



VISPRING A SIXTH SENSE

TEXT: ARIANNE NARDO





Monarchs and aristocrats mastered the "marriage of convenience." It was a business affair with decadent spoils—expanded real estate, killer art, a rotating cast of lovers. These matrimonial power plays and their juicy storylines ruled the centuries. We do, however, have evidence that at least one Victorian-era husband, an English engineer named James Marshall, actually loved his wife. Hoping to alleviate her malaise, Marshall created the ultimate valentine in 1899: A specially devised bed supported by steel springs that were individually wrapped in muslin and fashioned exclusively for her comfort.

So enamored was she that business partners John Nolon and Frederick James in 1901 began producing the mattress under a brand bearing Marshall's name. Each one was handmade in London with close attention paid to Marshall's unique design of pocket springs. By 1911, the company was established as Vispring with the Roman numerals VI alluding to the six-turned spring, the humble, hidden sensation responsible for all that divine comfort. What was once an industrial expression of romance is today a story about British craftsmanship—the kind that enchants the master bedrooms and private suites of discerning and very well-rested clientele.

The pocket spring is Vispring's signature, and it is the most elegant structural achievement that no one ever sees. "It's sublime what those springs can do," says Mary Pat Wallace, founder of Chicago Luxury Beds, a specialty boutique, and one of the first showrooms to represent the exclusive mattress collection in the United States. Wallace offers nine Vispring models from the Elite to the Masterpiece Superb. Each mattress is a made-to-order creation of seemingly infinite options, up to 80 variations, handcrafted in the company's Plymouth, England, workshop. Only 144 are custom crafted each day.

Sourcing the highest quality vanadium steel, the company creates each spring in-house, an impressive and fastidious feat. "We turn and form that spring into a six-turned coil, which is like a suspension spring," says Vispring Operations Director Chris Harrison. "We then encapsulate the spring in pure cotton, which is sewn within that pocket. Within that pocket, the sewn edge allows the spring to move. Whereas most of the pocket spring manufacturers would sonically glue the pocket, restricting the movement of the springs and restricting the comfort, Vispring allows the spring to perform its own movement and adapt to the contours of the body."



Fashioned in a honeycomb pattern, the springs are hand-nestled in one, two or three deluxe rows. The next step is side-stitching, a needle-and-thread operation patiently performed by the most experienced artisans. It can take up to eight hours to hand side-stitch a super king mattress. However it's a competitive tie for the most elaborate and specialized skill at Vispring. Tape-edging is a late-stage process by which a craftsman traces the perimeter of the mattress, often working backwards, to seal its luxurious contents in place. A visit to the workroom confirms the aerobic prowess and strength needed for both—even the slightest miscalculation during either step results in a crushing do-over.

While most of us sink into bed and crave relief in caveman terms, "soft or hard," Vispring articulates the pleasures of rest in natural materials, assembling a layer cake of slumber using the same luxurious elements couturiers and interior designers routinely seek. Depending on the type of model, each mattress features a select blend or "recipe," which can be individualized for each side of the mattress—one firmness for you and another for your bedmate to ensure lasting peace in the kingdom.

Certified British Fleece Wool is sourced exclusively for Vispring, courtesy of hardy Shetland sheep who rough it in Scotland, as well as Highland-bred Cheviot sheep whose bounty offers bounce and comfort beyond anything synthetic. Wool has the distinction of not only of being an insulator; it is also fire retardant. South American horsehair is vetted for its strength, with long fibers that create more spring in addition to wicking moisture. Other materials include premium cashmere, silk, bamboo, alpaca, mohair and the most regal of all, certified, hand-combed vicuña from Peru for unrivaled softness.

In addition to customizing the firmness and size of a mattress, the company also fulfills custom wishes for special embroidery, initials and family crests. (One client in Asia requested gold-plated springs, which the company obliged, says Harrison.) For interior designers, a choice of headboards, fabrics and inspiration also heats things up in the boudoir. The Vispring story is not only an opportunity to properly use the word "bespoke"—it is antithesis of typical retail mattress offerings and an indulgent proposition for something the world takes for granted.

"Interior designers have to be versed in a lot things, and be experts for their clients," Wallace says. "People go to a designer for their creativity and talent but also for the functional side of creating a home, and the mattress is part of the bedroom...even though you don't see it. For designers, mattresses don't garner the same reaction from clients as a special fixture or millwork does, but at the same time they are adding value to their clients' lives in terms of health and wellness." ■ *Vispring, vispring.com*