

AN ACCELERATED CULTURE

RAW
EDGES

RONAN AND ERWAN
BOUROULLEC

JORIS
LAARMAN

KONSTANTIN
GRGIC

NACHO
CARBONELL

THOMAS
HEATHERWICK

MARTINO
GAMPER

STUDIO WIEKI
SOMERS

ALDO
BAKKER

PAUL
COCKSEGE

MICHAEL
ANASTASSIADES

BERTJAN
POT

STUDIO
JOB

MAX
LAMB

TORD
BOONTJE

MATALI
CRASSET

MAARTEN
BAAS

JULIA
LOHMANN

NENDO

JERSZY
SEYMOUR

Curated by Libby Sellers & Brent Dzekciorius

May 3 – June 8, 2019

Friedman Benda

AN ACCELERATED CULTURE

If design gives shape to the hopes and anxieties characteristic of each generation, what would the work from the so-called 'Generation X' reflect? As a moniker for an entire cohort born between the mid-1960s and early-1980s, Douglas Coupland's 1991 book title was co-opted by marketers and sociologists to suggest a generation of apathetic slackers, slouching between 'McJobs' with as little engagement and as much ennui as they could muster. Yet these listless tales are in conflict with the energy, exchange and alliances witnessed in emergent design at the time. *An Accelerated Culture* (itself, an unauthorized co-option of Coupland's subtitle) questions the stereotype through a survey of selected designers who came of age around the same time as their fictional counterparts, yet who have been relentlessly redefining the possibilities for design ever since.

Any attempt to define a generation is rife with disclaimers. Though perhaps the common denominator of this group is their complete disavowal of a fixed definition. After all, the 'X' stood for the great unknown or the lack of collective adjective. It seems more relevant to describe theirs as an attitude, rather than a formal position. From the early-1990s on, when establishing their respective design practices, they questioned everything, the design industry included. Materials, method, typology, function, taste, authorship, time, identity, locality –

all was re-evaluated in order to explore what a contemporary practice could encompass and the territories where design could tread.

In contrast to the singular, grand narrative of modernism, this generation embraces plurality and prides themselves on being independent of both mind and action; open to new ideas that did not conform to any one ideology. As such, their lineage draws in various parts from the radical designers and counter-cultural agitators of the 1960s, from the ultra-permissive messages of Postmodernism, a particularly north-European appreciation of design as self-expression or critique, and from 1990s theories of relational aesthetics that blurred boundaries across all cultural disciplines. The inherited lesson from each is that design, like all social conduits, is not neutral; that it cannot and should not aspire to universal ends.

Rather than seek the impossible democratic object (by who's standards, for which culture's needs, and at what cost?), they articulate a myriad of rich and generous responses that solve localized problems and serve nuanced practical uses. They address monetary, material and ecological concerns as well as attending to such human needs as our emotional, intellectual, cultural, sociological, and political well-being.

Though if this generation were encouraged to explore autonomy, they were not necessarily free. Two seemingly contradictory forces defined their formative years: economic insecurity and the unleashing of potential as a result of advanced technology. New tools, systems and networks which would have seemed inconceivable twenty, even ten years earlier, made design methodology more fluid. While now commonplace, the nascent forms of email, the Internet, computer aided design and manufacturing systems, rapid prototyping and aligned processes such as 3D stereo lithography, expedited the manufacture of smaller runs of products which were tailored to meet either the individual needs or the budgets of the designers. This is the first generation of designers who could control the

development process until the final stage of prototyping, enabling them to present fully formed ideas to potential clients and manufacturers and giving the designers greater influence over the finished object. Though for all the benefits, these rapid changes were also extremely unnerving. As Alberto Meda said of the advances; "Technology must be tamed in order to realize things that have the simplest possible relation with man – we must reject technologically driven industrial goods that have no regard for human needs and no communicative rationality."

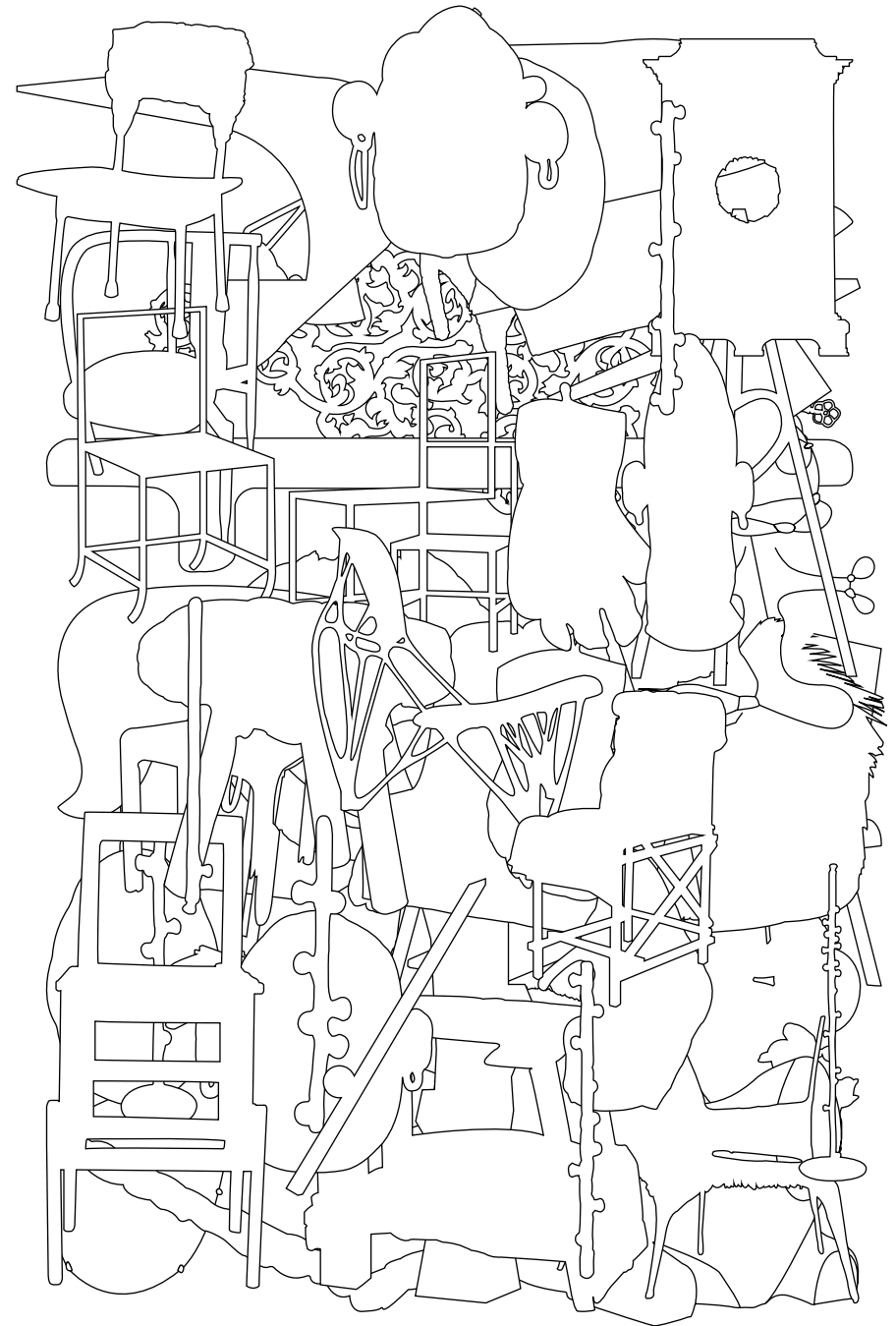
Presented with a cacophony of choice, dwindling financial and natural resources; caught between their analogue youth and an increasingly digital future, and entering a guarded industry suffering from surplus – the options could have been stultifying. Rather than surrender, they developed idiosyncratic and entrepreneurial methods to forge their own futures and create a new design language.

It is no coincidence that a significant proportion of these designers graduated from the Royal College of Art, London (RCA) and Design Academy Eindhoven, Netherlands (DAE). During the 1980s and 1990s, both schools employed as heads of department, designers who had achieved international recognition for their autonomous work. Ron Arad (RCA), Jurgen Bey (DAE and RCA), Gjis Bakker and Hella Jongerius (DAE) were amongst the first generation of designers fighting to expand the definition of design. The spoils of their victories were passed to their students in the form of enthusiastic encouragement and an increasingly predisposed and sophisticated design-buying audience. Those graduating from north-European countries including the Netherlands, France and Denmark had the additional benefit of various governmental and cultural funds, offering development grants to recently graduated students for studio space, international exhibitions and books. Inevitably, this vital exposure and support was a lifeline enabling the designers to establish independent careers earlier than many of their international peers.

As both demand and supply increased, so too did the opportunities for promotion. This new generation found its champions in the growing number of cultural magazines, in the commercial design galleries and dealers who looked to contemporary design for innovation and context, though collector's fairs such as Design.05 (later Design Miami/) and specialist contemporary design departments at established auction houses. The recession of 2008, though harsh for all, did little to shake their convictions. If anything, it strengthened design's resolve to acknowledge the uncertainty of its time and find solutions. That all of the designers featured here continue to have successful studios is testimony of their potency.

An Accelerated Culture specifically looks to those who create highly visible and charged objects that define the visual and material culture of their age. By its very nature, the exhibition is not an exhaustive presentation of every designer of the generation. Yet as a survey it represents the shared experiences and key themes of their age – in particular, the technological imperative, problems of recession, environmental crisis and design's changing remit in an increasingly saturated consumer culture. As form-givers, story-tellers and as commentators, they have given us the visual tools to both access the world around us, and sometimes help us escape it.

Libby Sellers, May 2019







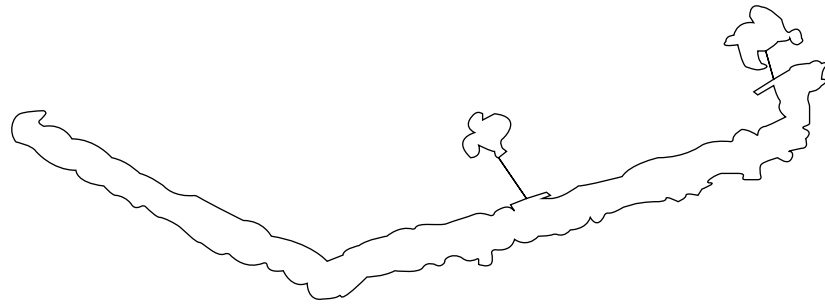
Huggable Atomic Mushroom: Priscilla, 37 Kilotons, Nevada, 1957,
From the 'Designs for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times'
series with Michael Dunne & Fiona Raby, 2004–2005
Reflective fabric, polyester stuffing

Shooting Star, 2014
Pine, glass

Anastassiades is renowned for his graceful balance of materials and light, creating pared-back designs and poised lighting collections for numerous international brands. His personal thoughts on design, however, reveal a more nuanced, darker commentary. From his early career – and particularly through collaborations with design partnership Dunne & Raby – Anastassiades explored the emotional connection between objects and users. Drawing on issues of mental illness and irrational fear, the 2004 'Designs for Fragile Personalities...' project offered objects as psychological therapy, allowing us to physically embrace our fears. For example, Priscilla – a huggable representation of the Nevada Test Site bomb explosion – channels both a nostalgic promise of nuclear power and portends the real-world horrors it released.

Reflecting on this, Anastassiades remarked “anxieties can be universal, the geography is often irrelevant; history repeats itself.” His thoughts create a subtle link with the more recent Shooting Star floor lamp, designed for the 2014 'Reload the Current Page' exhibition in his home country, Cyprus. The exhibition was a meditation on the Greek Cypriots' fears of invasion and their unease over economic collapse during the time of the Greek government's debt crisis; Shooting Star, referencing stock market analyses and a type of reversal pattern presaging a falling stock price. As both works show, Anastassiades' commentary on the socio-economic troubles of our time offers an alternative domestic landscape that reflects our collective anxieties in a rational way.





MAARTEN
BAAS

b. 1978, Germany



Real Time Sweepers' clock, 2009
Brightsign player and router in aluminum housing

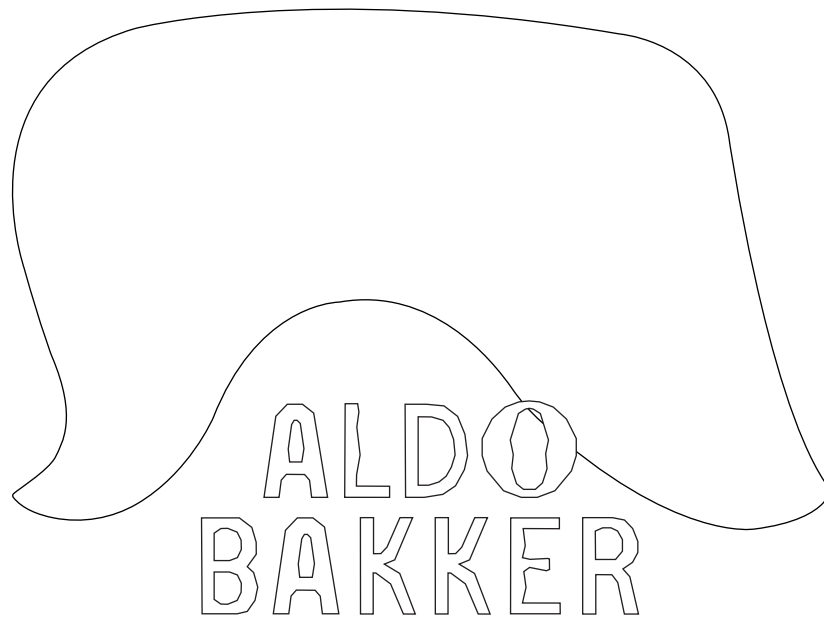
Where There's Smoke: Zig Zag chair (Rietveld), 2004
Charred wood, epoxy resin

Maarten Baas arrived on the design scene in 2002 in a literal blaze. Smoke, his graduation work from The Design Academy Eindhoven, began as a series of anonymous and outmoded furniture pieces that Baas charred then preserved. Designed in a period in which the world itself was on fire – post 9/11; wars raging in the middle east; natural disasters escalating – Smoke felt like the apotheosis of its time: dark, violent and full of unanswered questions. For Baas, it was a research project about “keeping things as they are, to strive for perfection, to not show the passing of time.” Yet the series served to highlight time’s negative flip side – aging and obsolescence. To further emphasise this dichotomy, Baas evolved Smoke to include design icons such as the Rietveld Zig Zag chair and Ettore Sottsass’ Carlton bookcase.

While Smoke was the first series in which Baas addressed his preoccupation with time, his Real Time series initiated an ongoing obsession with time-telling. In Sweepers’ clock Baas intended for the work to be deliberately allegorical; “Dust is a symbol for the passing of time. Cleaning is a symbol for trying to get things back in its original shape. Two people sweeping dust, like a perpetual movement says a lot about how we, human beings try to get a grip on something abstract like time.”

As an outspoken critic of design industry norms and the marketplace, Maarten Baas has a notable understanding and intuition for the design world’s underlying mechanics. The Dutch designer regularly leverages his characteristically witty, anarchistic furniture and product designs to communicate current misgivings about newness, value, and expectations.





b. 1971, Netherlands

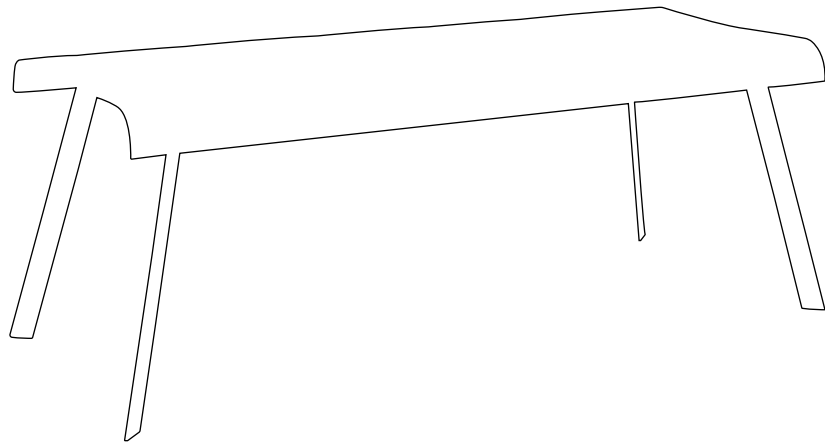
Stained Tonus, 2019
CNC-milled, hand finished solid Oak

Aldo Bakker rarely approaches a project from the need to solve a problem or address practical needs. Instead he starts with the fascination for a timeless form or the movement a particular material might suggest. As he says, “I allow my designs to acquire physical shape only when I deem them to be ‘autonomous entities.’” This exactitude of both aesthetic and formal intent stems from his early silversmith’s training and now follows through all his works – be they in metal, clay, glass, urushi or wood.

Hand finished from a solid block, Tonus is an eloquent lesson in the behavior of wood. Carved while still wet and fresh, the sinuous curves and sculptural form respond to the inherent knots, cracks and dynamism of the block. As it continues to dry, the wood reveals itself as a living organism – constantly active and moving. As the name suggests, Tonus is a muscle at rest; “like the young oak it is made from, gradually it will emphasize the shape through cracks and bursts.”

Born to the Dutch design icons, Gijs Bakker and Emmy Van Leersum, Bakker grew up in a scholarly environment infused with a strong aesthetic sensibility and pioneering spirit. He eschewed formal design education in favor of an apprenticeship and established his studio in 1994. His projects, either alone or jointly with some of the most prestigious brands (Karakter, Georg Jensen, Puiforcat and Sèvres), become an expression of ontological questions, where objects become something more like characters with their own sense of being. Bakker claims that by positioning his works as individual characters, he forces his audience to shift its perception. “We are no longer looking at an inanimate object on which we project our knowledge of style, shape or material value. Instead, these creatures invite us to engage in a conversation about their behavior and language.”





Rough-and-Ready chair, 1998 (2004)

Painted pine, wool fabric, plastic straps

This version signed Tord Boontje / 2004

Wednesday Perforated metal table, 2001

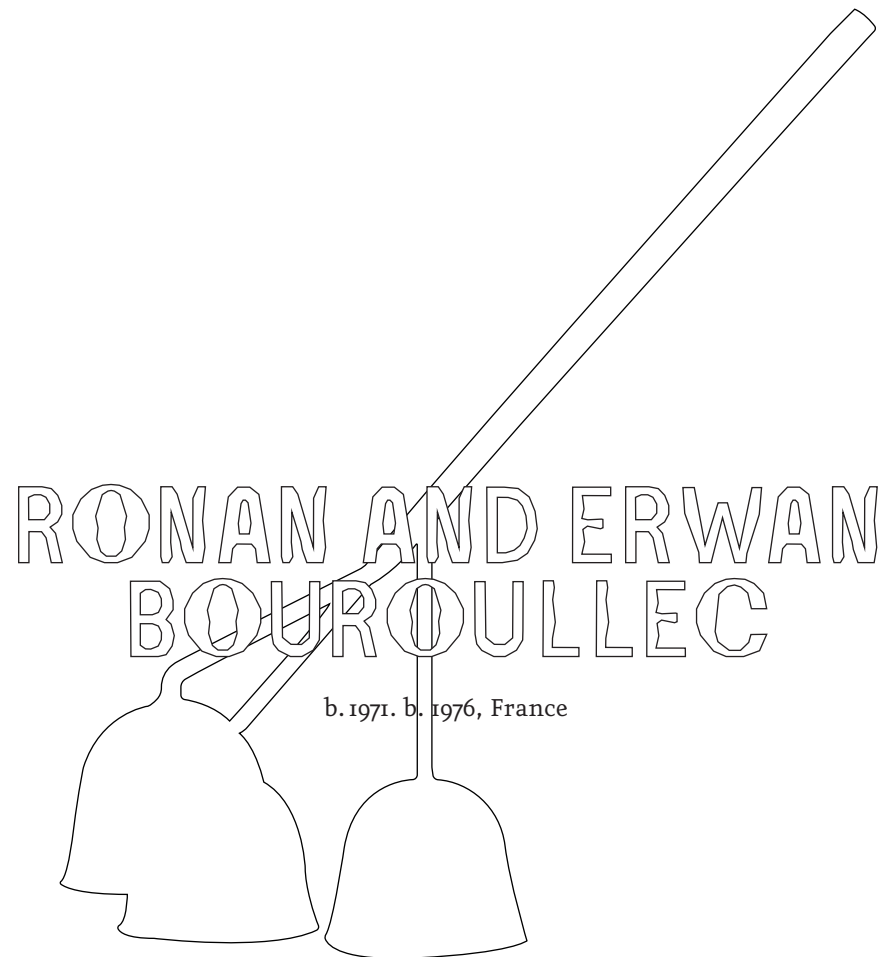
Stainless steel, mild steel, resin

As instruction manuals for making DIY furniture from salvaged or readily available materials, direct parallels can be drawn between Tord Boontje's 1998 Rough-and-Ready series and Italian designer Enzo Mari's 1974 publication *Autoprogettazione*? Each project explored notions of democratic design, open source information and the quality-quantity imbalance of their respective times. Yet while Mari's was a printed didacticism on industrial design processes, Boontje's was a downloadable critique on the design industry in general. Like many of his peers, Boontje was unimpressed by the industry's lack of empathy he discovered on graduation from London's Royal College of Art – so introduced his own convictions, narratives and memories. As an antidote to slick, 1990s minimalism, he offered “a sense of incompleteness, a feeling that things might change... the beauty of imperfection.” Like the generation before them, including Tom Dixon and Ron Arad, Boontje and his peers sought their inspiration from the urban landscape. Recycling and appropriating existing materials was a practical necessity and offered a panacea for the over-consumption of the earth's resources. While Boontje made only a few dozen Rough-and-Ready pieces himself, the series was a prescient example of a digitally-generated, multiple one-off, and his open-call to the-then nascent Internet community has become a proven model for younger generation designers (many of whom he has mentored).

Although wildly contrasting in aesthetic, his later Wednesday collection of furniture shares the same personal principles. Following the birth of his daughter, Boontje began working folklore, nature and fantasy into his aesthetic vocabulary. Through the newly available laser-cutting and digital production processes, he was one of the first to explore industrial design's potential to be decorative. With pieces such as the Blossom chandelier, the Garland light and even his 2006 Christmas range for retailer Target, Boontje earned the title of the 'William Morris' of his time – taking localized messages and practices and, through the universal filter of nature, translating them into an international dialogue.



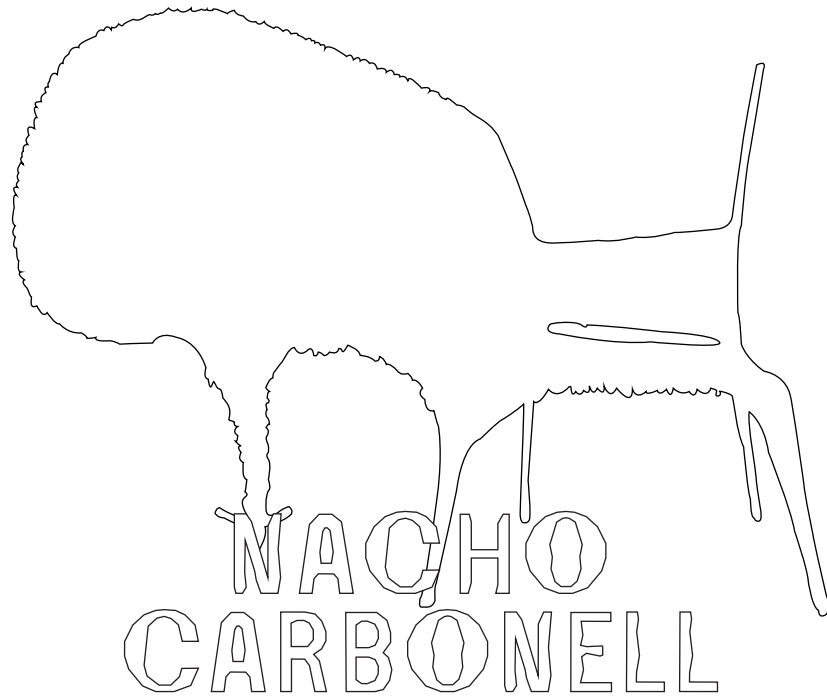
Triple Black light, 2008
Painted aluminum, fiberglass



French industrial designers, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, are masters of reinterpreting and reinventing the objects of everyday life as something more essential, more elegant, more humane. They begin each project by imagining, not what that product is like already, but how it ought to be, and design a new one accordingly. Creating fluid, modular and multifunctional furniture pieces and spaces, their approach is phenomenological as much as aesthetic: they think in terms of systems and entire environments, but never sacrifice the beauty and functionality of the individual objects to the higher logic of the system. Perhaps this has something to do with their being brothers; resisting the 'sum of the whole being greater than its parts' type analogy. Either way, since founding their firm in 1999 they have developed a long and rewarding partnership that has resulted in numerous iconic works for galleries and brands including Samsung, Vitra, Kvadrat and Cappellini. Most recently, they collaborated with Swarovski and the Fonds pour Paris foundation to design six rotating bronze fountains embellished with over 3,000 crystals on the Avenue de Champs-Élysées.

The Triple Black light develops themes and forms established in their Assemblages collection from 2004. The unique proportions of these pieces are free from existing typologies and domestic conventions. The long black lamp invents a pivoting principle that leans on the ceiling. It moves like a living organism, like a three-headed hydra.





b. 1980, Spain

Evolution One Man chair, 2008
Steel skeleton, wire, papier-mâché

Nacho Carbonell visualizes objects as living organisms. He designs furniture in hybrid shapes reminiscent of fantastical creatures and parasitic cocoons that offer an escape from “the chaos and frenzy of our modern world.” These somatic forms have earned him international praise and numerous awards for their instinctive, angst-ridden energy and prescient observations on the human condition. One of his earliest – The Evolution series of iron frames covered with wire and papier-mâché – foreshadowed the paranoia of our post-truth society. His specific use of recycled newspapers offers an artist’s commentary on the “excess of information and media produced by our society.” Like many Design Academy Eindhoven graduates, Carbonell has remained geographically and ideologically close to the community he studied with – drawing on both their camaraderie and shared dedication to concept- and narrative-led design. Though his other-worldly creations seem to have been generated from the territories they occupy, as if Carbonell has just stumbled across them on one of his many international adventures.





Styrene, 2002 (2019)

Polystyrene

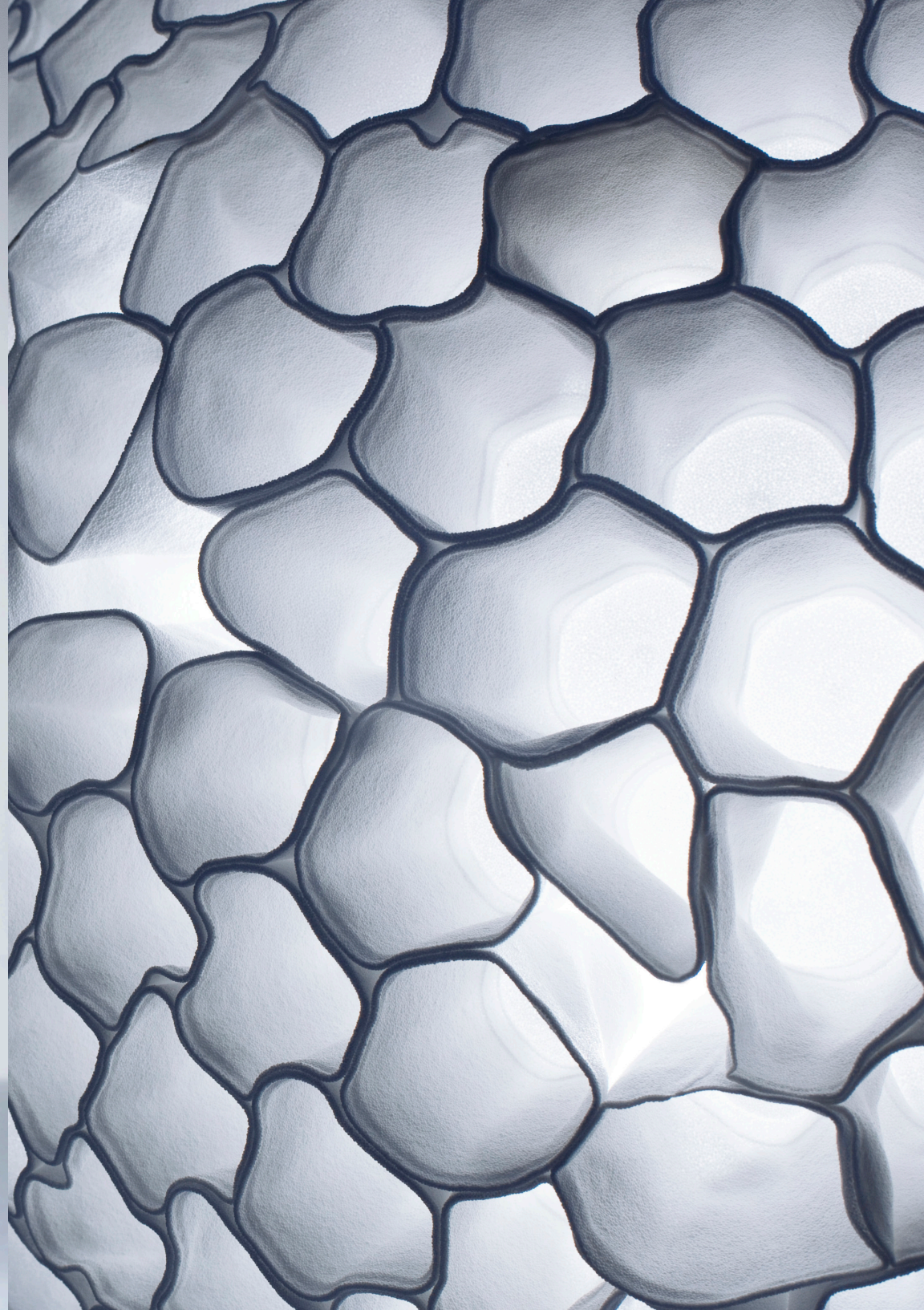
Poised (Right), 2013

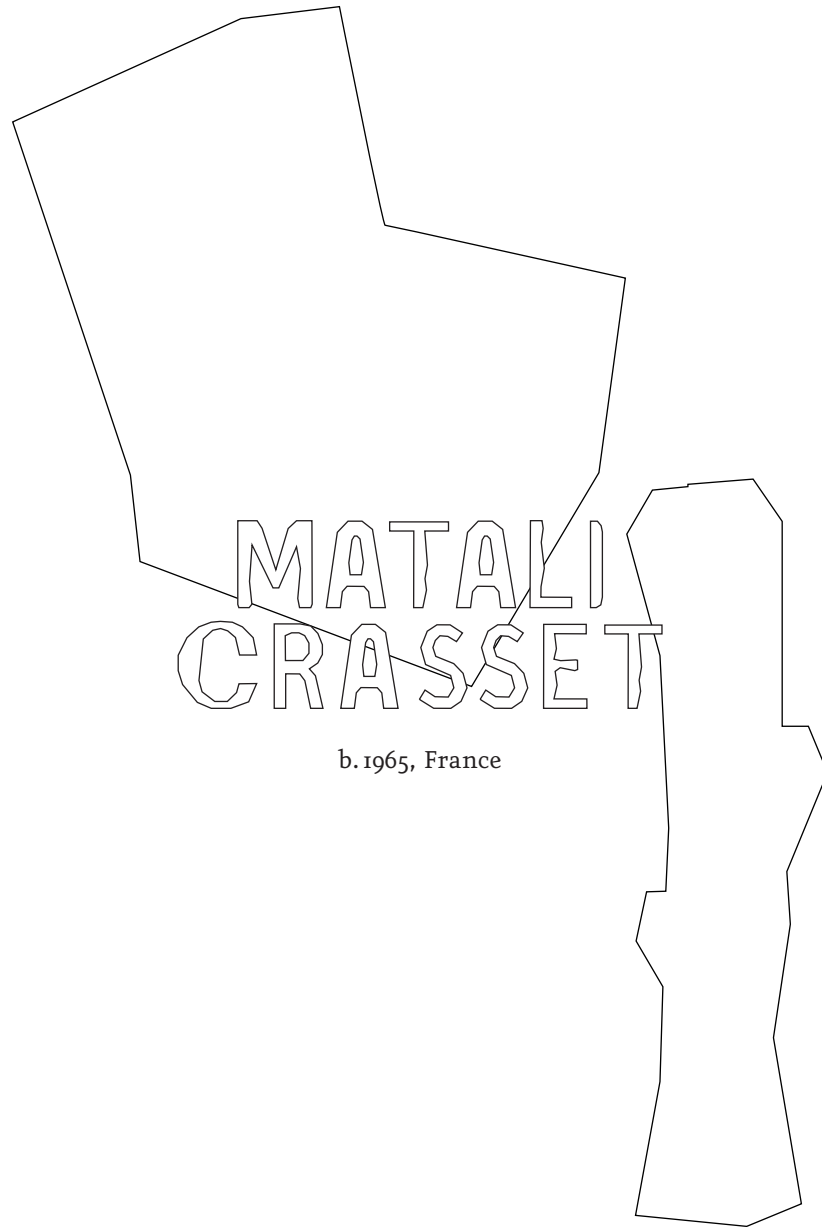
Rolled steel

Equally adept at working with found objects and high precision materials, Paul Cocksedge takes an alchemical approach – searching for the hidden values and properties in order to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. Styrene, one of his earliest design successes, came from a student brief to grow a product. Characteristically, Cocksedge turned the brief on its head by shrinking the ubiquitous polystyrene coffee cup in his home oven, then presenting a film of the process in reverse. The results yielded an accidental, organic beauty that would be impossible to contrive yet its magic has driven his design philosophy ever since.

Like so many of his generation, Cocksedge benefitted from the opportunities and connections made through his postgraduate education. As a student of Ron Arad's at London's Royal College of Art, Cocksedge was introduced to both Issey Miyake and the German lighting designer Ingo Maurer, both of whom supported the young designer with exhibitions of his work. This vital encouragement and high-profile exposure afforded Cocksedge the freedom to establish his own studio with partner Joana Pinho, and work on commercial and self-initiated projects that explore his obsessions with electricity, gravity and mass.

Like Styrene, Poised grew from humble origins. Inspired by the amenability of a piece of paper, Cocksedge set about exploring the limits of balance. After a year of intensive calculations, a single sheet of twenty-millimeter steel plate was rolled under intense force into the finished shape, just like a folded paper sheet.



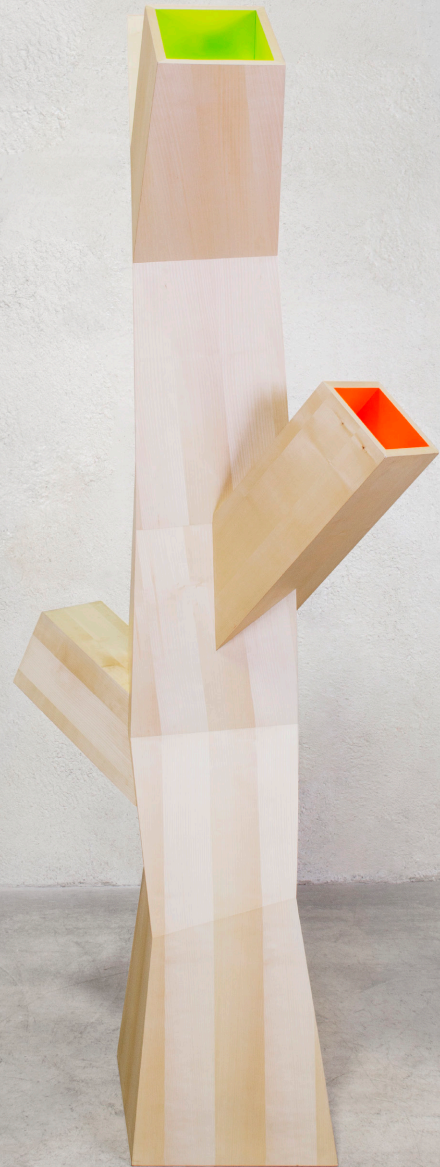


Nature morte à habiter, 2007

Mixed media, birch, polyurethane varnish, lacquered paint

As a protégé of French design maverick Philippe Starck, Matali Crasset's work followed a similar critical trajectory to subvert the minimalist aesthetic of the 1990s with humanity, humor and social consciousness. Though unlike Starck, Crasset's objects and spaces are never an end unto themselves; rather they offer the possibility of an object or a platform open to interpretation and engagement. As Crasset says, "It's becoming less about creating material and aesthetic forms than about teasing out and bringing into high relief the common interests and shared values of society, as well as responding to the movements in these vast networks of exchange."

The sloping geometries of her Nature morte à habiter series, created for a collaborative exhibition with artist Peter Halley for Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery, intentionally conjure images of hollowed boughs, trunks, and trees. The full series includes an illuminated totem, chairs and a bench, each with a glowing, pop-inspired interior. As suggestions of a utopic fireside conversation pit or wooded arena, they offer a space where all can meet, all can share and all can plan. The quality of the experience, springing from Crasset's respect for how her objects are received by the end user. Crasset's design methodology explores the customs and rituals in daily life, observing these practices and the organizing principles that govern them. As a result, she often creates a single form, or 'metaform', from which variations of scale and combinations flow.





Claire, 2019

Repurposed found chair, beech & ash woods

Andy, 2019

Repurposed easel, American maple, ash and plywood

Dag, 2019

Repurposed found plastic chair, aluminum, snooker balls

Regularly staging food happenings in which he creates everything from the chairs to the cutlery, glassware and food – Martino Gamper’s practice is often best experienced in everyday habitats rather than a gallery’s white box neutrality. His time at the Royal College of Art, first as a student then tutor for the likes of Max Lamb, positioned Gamper at the heart of a fertile community of designers who now regularly engage in such collaborative projects and events.

Gamper’s product designs are characterized by an intuitive and ad-hoc spontaneity that could be mistaken for unrefined naïveté but in fact are brimming with experience and confidence. He is equally adept at working with salvage as he is with high precision manufacturing techniques for furniture brands including Moroso and Magis. For his seminal ‘100 Chairs in 100 Days’ project of 2007, Gamper made a new chair a day over the course of one hundred days by collaging together bits of chairs scavenged from the street or found in friends’ homes. The chairs were put together with a minimum of analysis, like a subconscious act of appropriation. Yet the total project raises formal and functional questions merged with sociological and semiological ones. As Gamper says, “What happens to the status and potential of a plastic garden chair when it is upholstered with luxurious yellow suede?” Gamper considers these poetic and humorous hybrids as a “three-dimensional sketchbook” or “a collection of possibilities” and has reprised the approach for An Accelerated Culture.



Sultan, 2010
Carrara marble

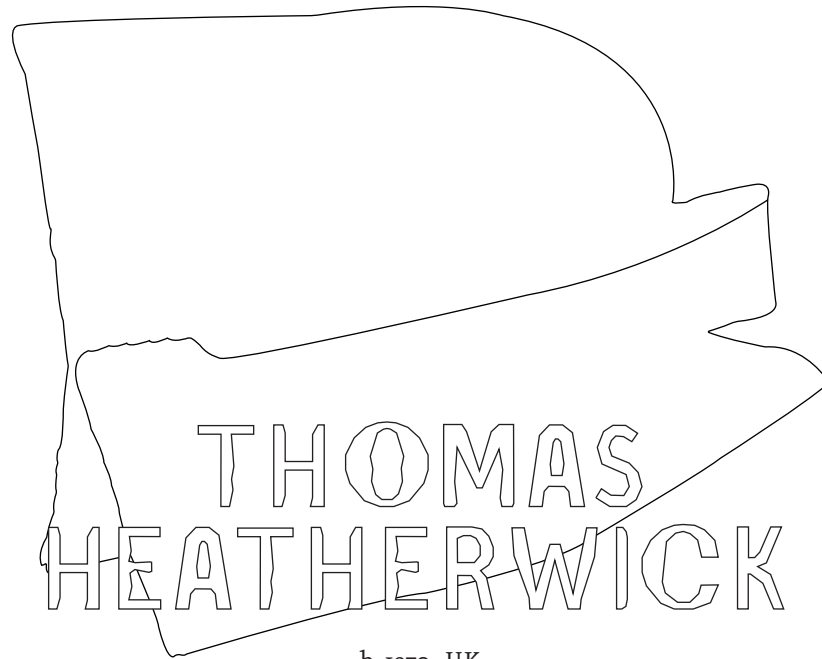


Although only in his early fifties, Konstantin Grcic is the elder-statesman of An Accelerated Culture. Appropriately, his designs straddle both the restrained aesthetic of the early-1990s and the poetic complexity afforded by the advances he has witnessed in material technologies and computer-controlled production processes. Grcic, who trained under designer Jasper Morrison, established his own practice in Germany in 1991, and has since developed furniture, products and lighting for most of the leading design companies, including Flos, Magis, Vitra, Krups and Muji. Uniting all these disparate projects is Grcic's design approach of construction and augmentation rather than reduction, removal or extraction: "I don't think of a block (of wood, plastic, stone) from which to remove material to reach a form. I think of a structure that grows, from scratch. ... I take one piece, then another, and I build something." Most designers sketch their initial ideas for objects or create digital renderings of them by computer, but Grcic develops his by building and rebuilding rough-hewn paper models by hand. His philosophy stems as much from his craft-based apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker as it does from his quest to find the essence of each designed object. "Looking back at my old work, I realize there was a beauty in its simplicity and immediacy. I've rediscovered that the greatest challenge is to make the simplest things – the most essential and pure."









b. 1970, UK

Billet 7, Extrusion I, 2009
Mirror polished aluminum

Carved from stone, chiseled from wood or molded from plastic – the desire to craft one object from a single component material has driven makers, engineers and designers for centuries. For Thomas Heatherwick, it has been a constant pursuit since his early-1990s coursework at London’s Royal College of Art; the 2009 Extrusion series representing the pinnacle of his efforts. Produced by the world’s largest extrusion machine, billets of aluminum are forced through a large die, and then cut into unique, unrepeatable sections. Melded and finessed by 10,000 tons of pressure and over 300 man-hours of laborious hand polishing, it is the purest form of sculptural seating.

Through his London-based interdisciplinary studio (established 1994) the limits of furniture, architecture, vehicle and landscape design are relentlessly pushed and pulled across countless international projects. His explorations into material tolerances and extreme production processes have expanded exponentially with both the possibilities afforded to him through his career achievements, and the capacity for contemporary technology to keep up with Heatherwick’s ambitions.

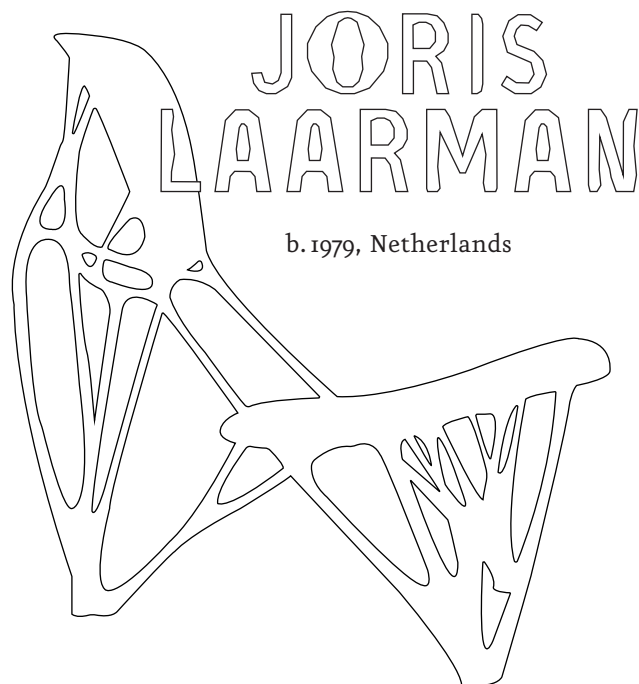
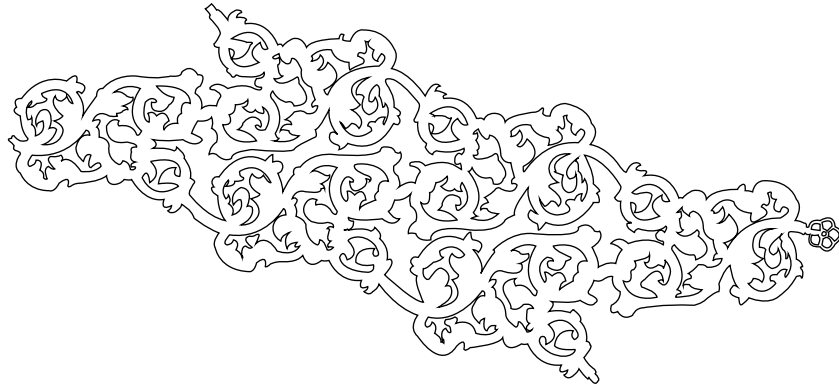


Heatwave radiator, 2003

Fiber-reinforced concrete, steel, plumbing elements

Bone chair, 2006

Aluminum

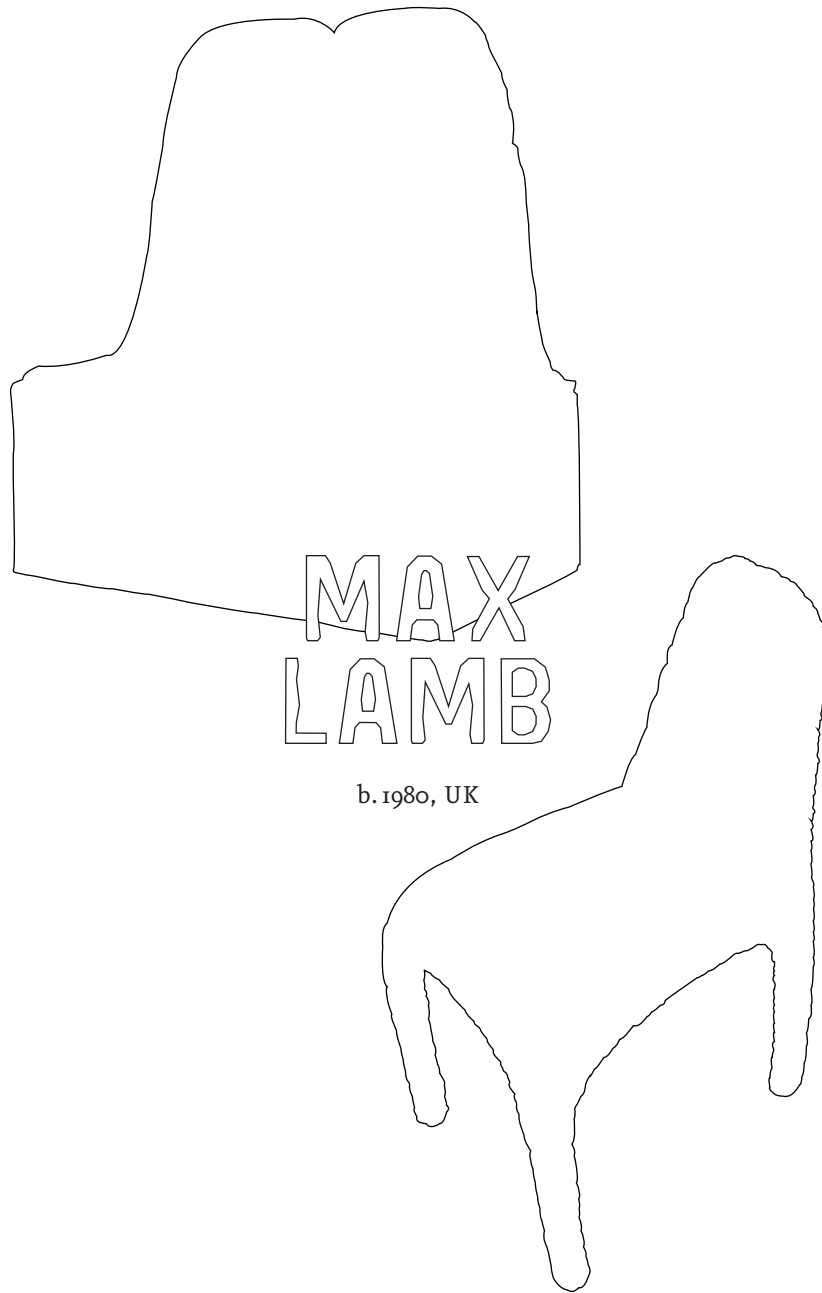


Originally titled ‘Reinventing Functionality’, Joris Laarman’s graduation project from the Design Academy Eindhoven perfectly encapsulates the spirit of his generation. Now known as the iconic Heatwave radiator, the project sought a complete reevaluation of design’s purpose as achieved through rigorous analysis and the added value of meaningful narrative.

Often misinterpreted as an exercise in styling, the radiator is actually an extreme example of fit for purpose design. Concrete conducts heat better than metal and the ornate, rococo curves produce more surface area from which the heat can radiate. But the ornamental motif is also loaded with critical and historical resonance intended to challenge modernist ideals of sober functionality, and to imbue rationality with poetry.

This early appropriation of nature’s underlying codes and logical forms set Laarman on a course of biomimicry discovery. Paola Antonelli, senior curator of architecture and design at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, described Laarman as belonging to a “breed of restless designers that long to be infected by science.” Accordingly, his highly sculptural Bone chairs are based on an algorithm originally developed by the German scientist Claus Mattheck to reveal the regenerative capacity of human bone and tree growth. Just as the human body produces extra bone structure in places where strength is required and reduces weight where not needed, so too does Laarman’s chair offer load-bearing structures or voids as necessary. As he concludes, “I want to create an evolution of my own. Sometimes it seems like science fiction.”





The Vermiculated Ashlar, 2010

Hand-carved plaster

Commissioned by the London Design Festival and HSBC Private Bank

White Bronze Poly Chair, 2007

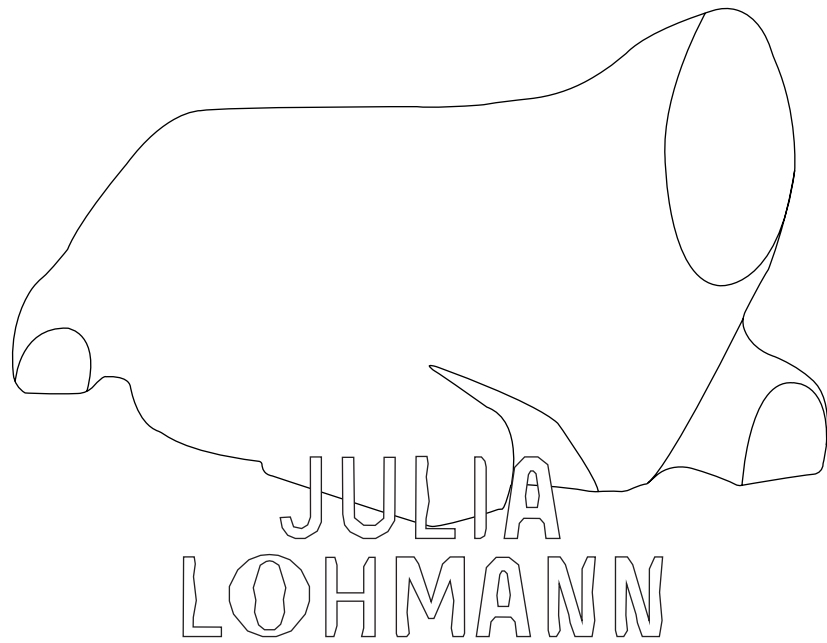
Lost foam cast silicone bronze, patina

Max Lamb is equally comfortable sand casting one-off pewter objects on the beaches of his native Cornwall, as he is designing industrially made products or custom interiors for fashion brands. His versatility is indicative of his passionate appreciation for materials combined with a restless curiosity for making and manufacturing.

In 2007 Lamb combined the sand casting technique from his pewter series with the claw-hammer and hand carving work employed in his Poly furnishings to make his first bronze pieces in a lost foam process. White Bronze Poly Chair is an early example of a process he has since regularly returned to for his bronze work. Each piece in the series is original because the melt burns out the carved foam and a new master needs to be made every time.

The Vermiculated Ashlar was commissioned by HSBC Private Bank for their design collection and part of the 2010 London Design Festival. Like much of Lamb's work, especially in the context of private commissions, The Vermiculated Ashlar tells a story specific to the time and locale of its intended home. His intention was to make a seat that incorporated the ashlar pattern from the facade of the bank's headquarters on St James's Street, London. This plaster monolith was hammer and chisel carved by the designer in his wilful, muscular manner.





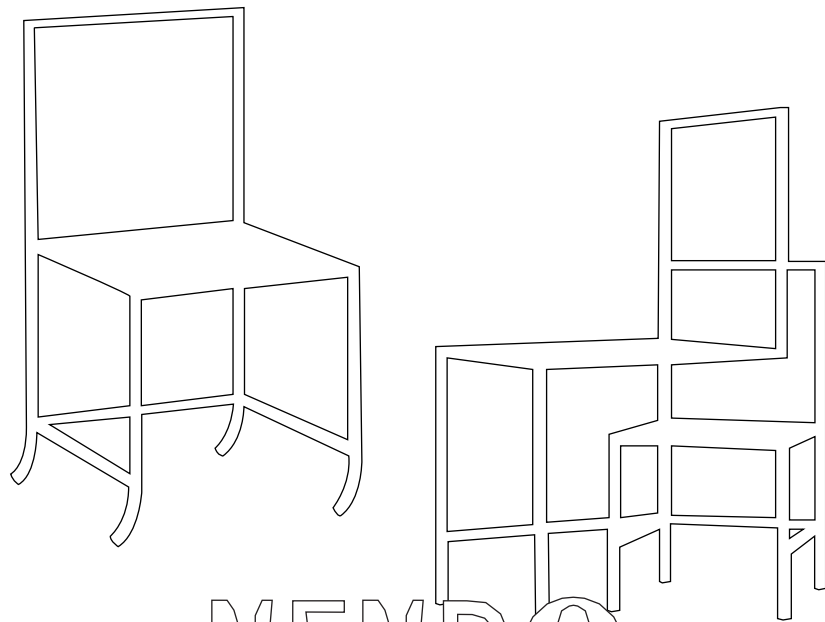
b. 1977, Germany

Sigga Cow bench, 2005

Leather, wood, foam

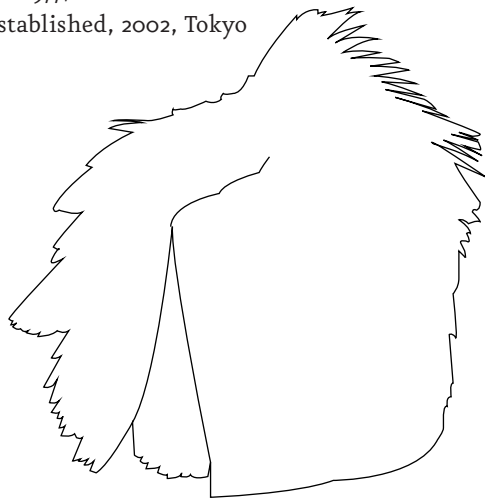
For her 2004 Design Products graduation project at London's Royal College of Art, Julia Lohmann presented the first of an ongoing series of inanimate cows, or "bovine memento mori," as she describes them. The fully-functional benches draw attention to the hypocrisies and contradictions evident in our relationship between livestock and the materials within our domestic environment. One hide was removed from a cow and placed straight back onto a 'cow.' Simple, yet arresting, the series established Lohmann as a pioneer of highly politicized, materials-based design studies. Ever since, she has utilized her various academic posts – from London's Victoria & Albert Museum to, now, Professor of Contemporary Design at Aalto University, Finland – to further her transformations of nature into artifice. From maggots and intestines, to seaweed and kelp her investigations into the liminal space between design, science, art and craft probe our attitudes towards the world that sustains us.





NENDO

Oki Sato
b. 1977, Canada
Studio established, 2002, Tokyo



Cabbage Chair (White), 2008
Nonwoven fabric

Manga Chairs (22 and 27), 2015
Stainless steel

Spearheaded by founder Oki Sato, nendo is a multidisciplinary studio spanning, architecture, interior, product and furniture design. Their work effortlessly blends traditional Japanese arts and crafts, folklore and legacy with extreme material and technological innovation. This malleability of typology, reference, material and form is perfectly encapsulated by the studio's name: nendo being the Japanese word for clay.

The Cabbage Chair was a response to a challenge from fashion designer Issey Miyake to create an application for the piles of waste paper produced during the fabric-pleating process used in Miyake's Pleats Please designs. Taking a thick roll of this resin coated paper, Sato began hulling the individual layers back one after another, until a seat form was revealed. As he says, "We didn't really design it – we found it. We had a roll and we started peeling." It was the kind of 'aha' moment of discovery that Sato seeks in all their projects. Later versions, made in nonwoven fabric, followed the same process of shedding layers. With no internal structure, nails or screws, minimal production or distribution costs it is, according to nendo, a "primitive design [that] responds gently to environmental concerns, the kinds of issues that face our 21st century selves."

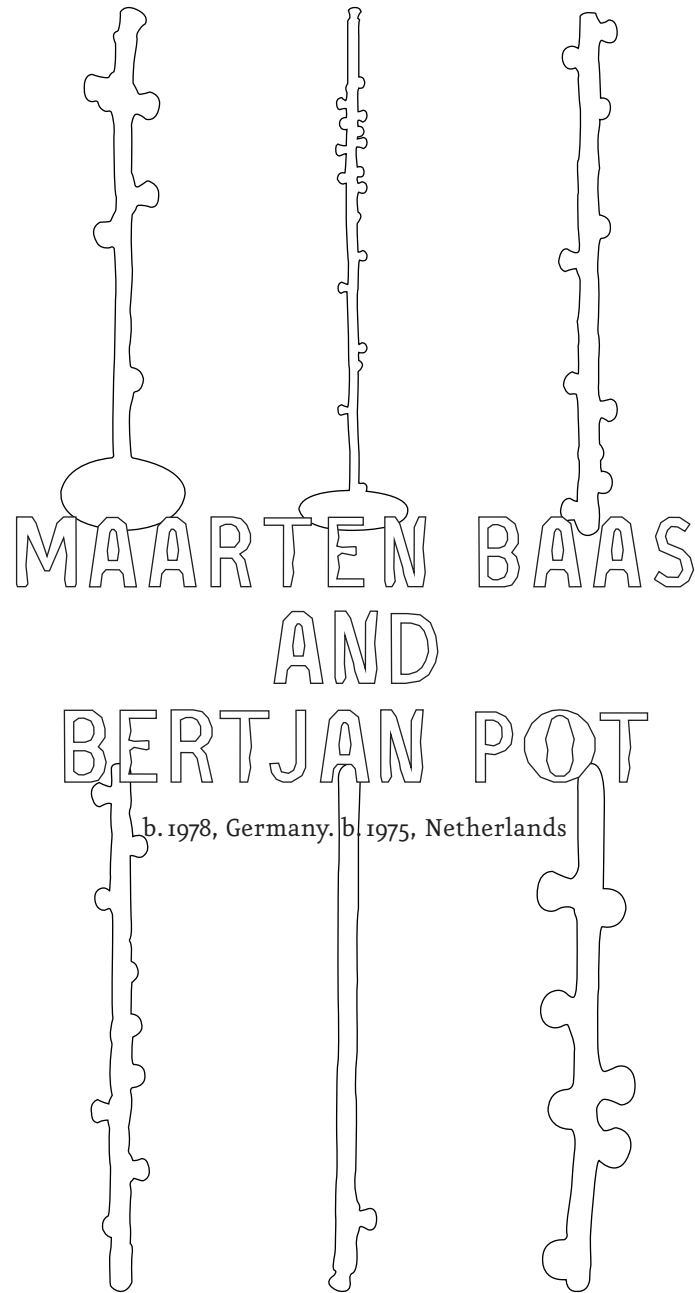
The Manga series of fifty chairs draws obvious inspiration from the manga comic: graphic novels that are deeply rooted in Japanese culture and traceable back to Ukiyoe prints developed during the Edo period (1603–1868 A.D). Taking a manga illustration's exaggerated flatness and abstraction as formal instruction, nendo captures a sense of cartoonish humor in each chair. Sato says of the mirrored finish, it "generates new spatial layers as the mirror surface reflects the real world, just like manga does."



LEDs Clay floor lights, 2015

Epoxy clay, LEDs

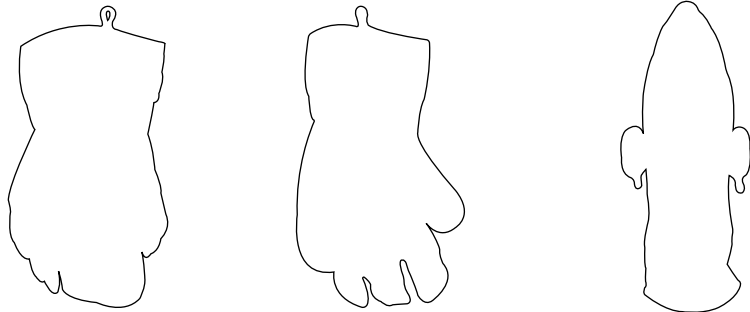
In 2006 Maarten Baas launched a series of colorful, cartoon-like and naïve furnishings known as Clay. Around the same time, his friend and fellow Eindhoven graduate, Bertjan Pot, was experimenting with gaudy, funhouse LED lights. Ten years later, the two combined their respective works to create LEDs Clay; a collaborative series that purposefully exaggerate their perceived signature aesthetics.





Masks, Gloves, 2016–19

Polypropylene rope, polyester yarn

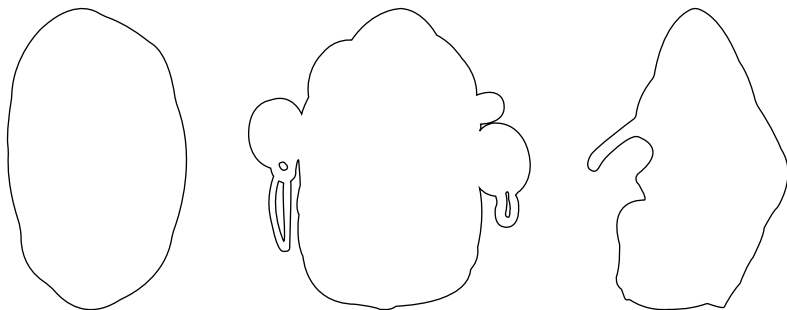


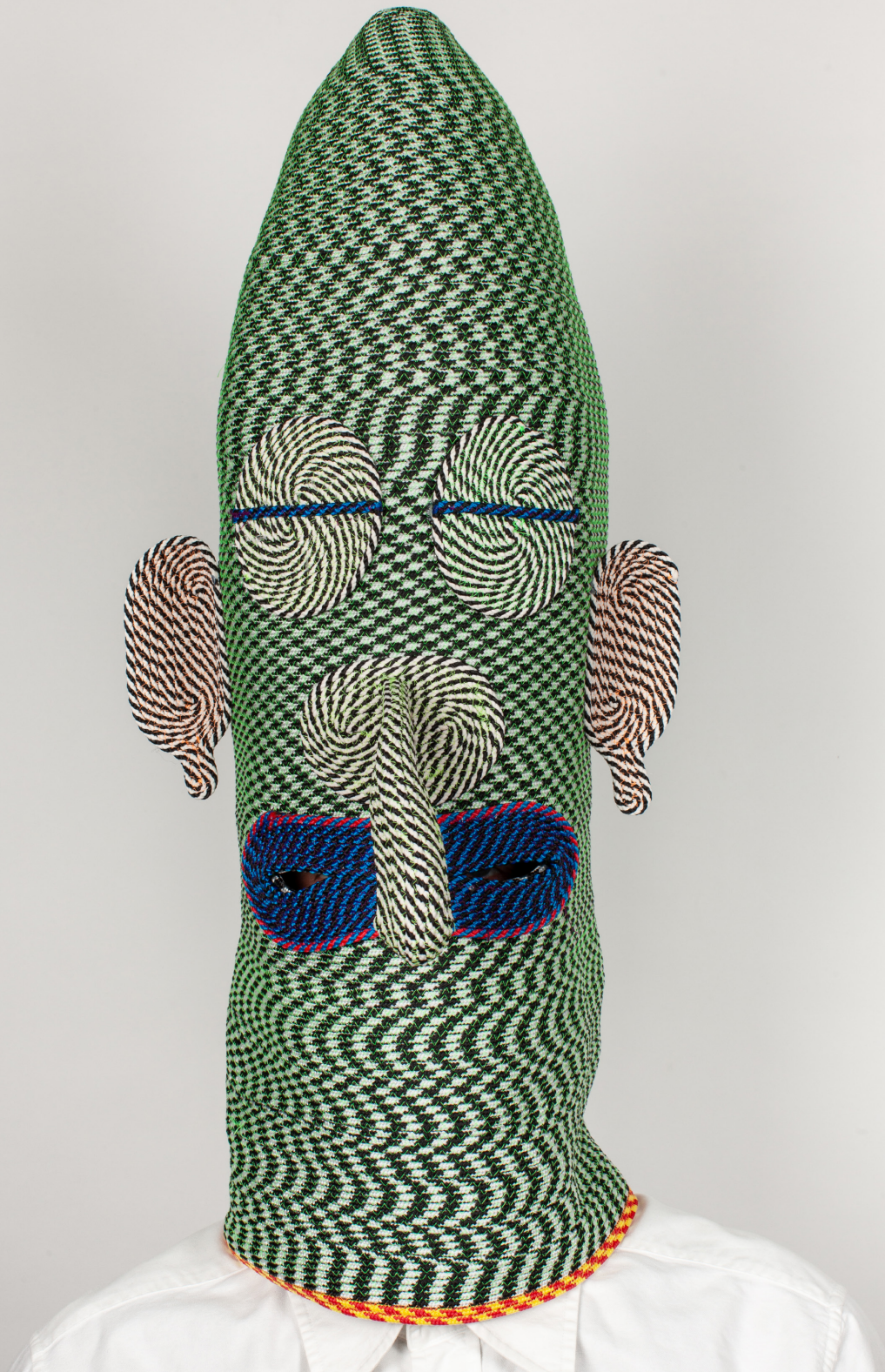
Bertjan Pot is best known for his mass-manufactured Random light, a resin drained glass-fiber yarn sparsely coiled around a balloon to form a lampshade. What began as a straight-forward material study became one of the most commercially successful lighting designs in recent history. However, it is his love of textiles and weaving, rather than product design per se, that drives Pot's practice forward.

All of his projects begin as intuitive, hands-on material research that explore complex structures, patterns and color. He favors spontaneity over specificity, and revels in the happy accidents that emerge through the process. Pot began making masks in 2010 as an unintended evolution of a series of coiled and stitched rope rugs. When some of the rug sections began to "get curvy" he worked them into a series of three-dimensional masks and (later) gloves. They have since become a necessary creative outlet; fulfilling his need to be constantly making and offering a satisfying immediacy that industrial production could never achieve.



b. 1975, Netherlands

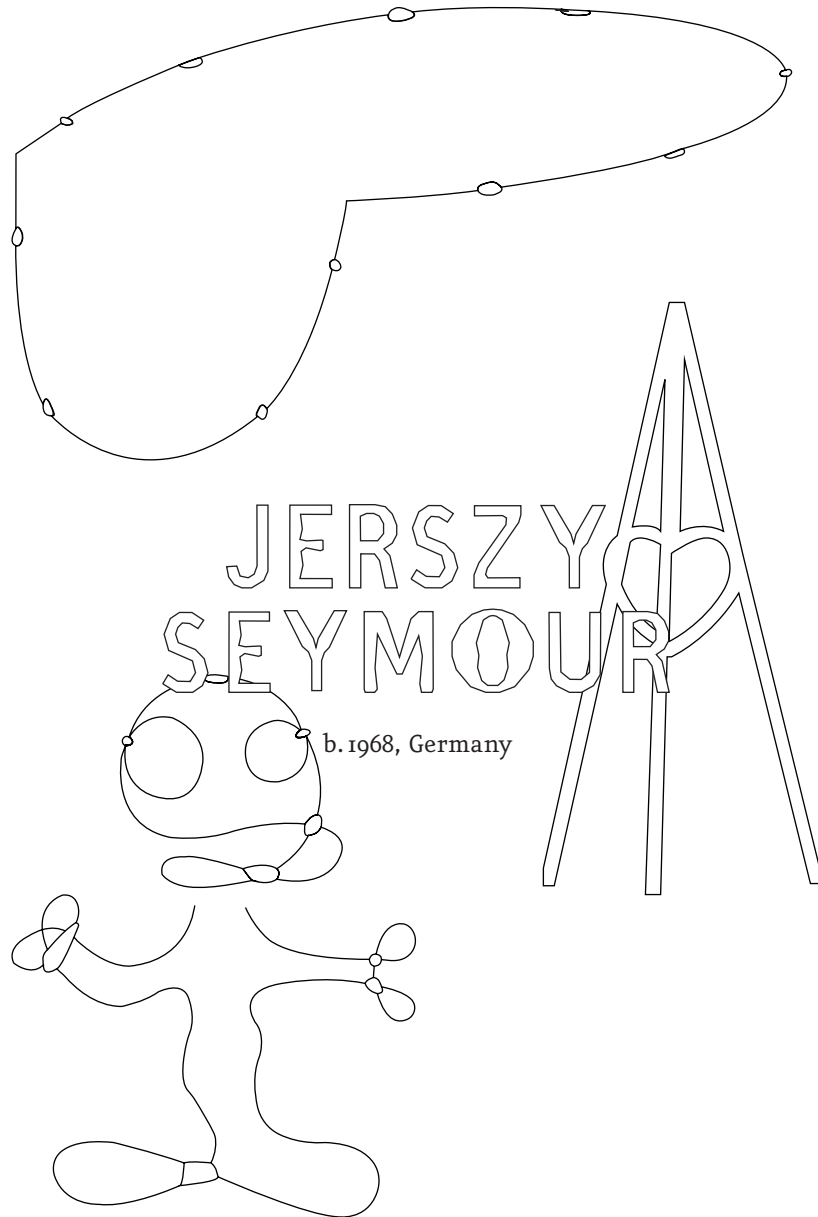




Amateur Workshop #8

Love is the Drug, 2019

Polycaprolactone wax, neon



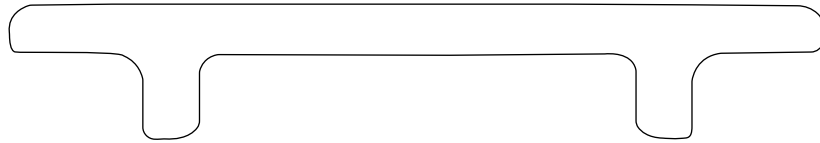
Jerszy Seymour sees design as the creation of relationships – with the built environment, with nature, with other people and ourselves. For him, it is as much about the habitation of the planet as it is the inhabitation of the mind. Accordingly, his practice hovers between physical product and radical interventions as experienced through workshops, performances, film, music, writing, and even his Dirty Art Department – the educational platform he established for Amsterdam’s Sandberg Institute/Rietveld Academy.

Seymour grew up amidst multicultural London’s hip-hop, dub and ska scene in the 1980s, creating flyers and DJing for underground clubs. In 1991 he was awarded a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, and later established his own studio designing products and strategies for companies including Magis, Vitra and Alessi. Parallel with his work for industry, Seymour began exploring the ‘post-industrial position’ – questioning design’s role in the capitalist structure – yet always with characteristic wit and humor.

His work is a relentless interrogation of perceived realities and draws from an eclectic range of sources including mystic philosophies, post-structuralism and historical interpretations of utopia. The lighting sculptures of Workshop #8, born from his Amateur Workshops that look to polycaprolactone wax as both a connector material and metaphor for connections between people and ideas, represents three stages of the human condition: figurative, functional and abstract. Influenced by Georges Bataille’s writings on the origins of mortal consciousness, Seymour relates the wax to our “changeable, transformable desires, oozing from the primordial ether;” the forms shining with eternal light, “because the one decision we have to accept is that the light got switched on.”



Endgrain bench, 2015
Pigmented wood block



RAW EDGES

Shay Alkalay, Yael Mer
b. 1976, Israel
Studio established, 2007, London

'Raw Edges' serves as both moniker and manifesto for the design partnership established by Shay Alkalay and Yael Mer. They insist that a work should never be so finessed or premeditated that it loses its original spirit. For them it is more about the journey and discovery than precise outcomes. As Mer suggests, "If we know from the beginning what this is going to be then we aren't going to fully enjoy it." Their impulse to subvert perceived norms through humor and surprise has become a touchstone of Raw Edges' practice. In their hands, soft materials become rigid and structural while hard materials can morph into fluid forms. As their Endgrain series illustrates, colours, patternmaking and movement form a large part of their DNA. For the series, the duo used a wood dyeing technique inspired by xylem, a compound tissue in vascular plants and trees that transports water and nutrients from the roots. By dyeing, then joining and computer-controlled carving a series of blocks, unexpected patterns were revealed throughout the sculptural form.

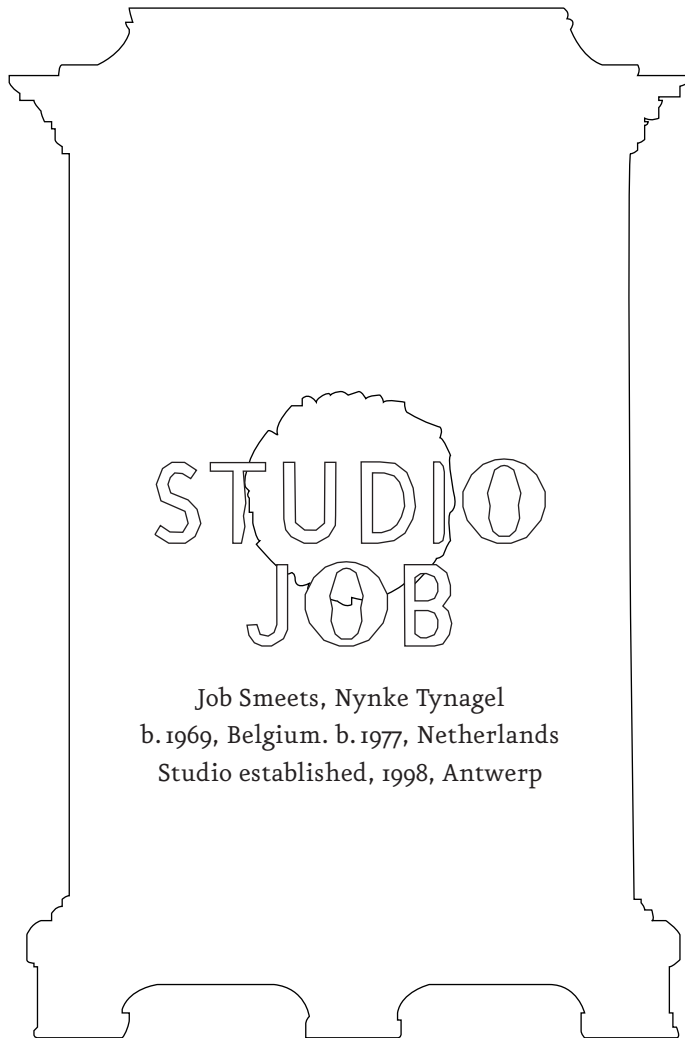
Having first studied at The Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem, they both completed their master's degrees in design under the tutelage of fellow Israeli Ron Arad at London's Royal College of Art. The experience led to the formation of their partnership and also a design collective with fellow graduates. Titled Okay Studio, the group of nine individual practices pool their resources and initiate group projects to supplement the sometimes-lack of opportunity offered by industry.

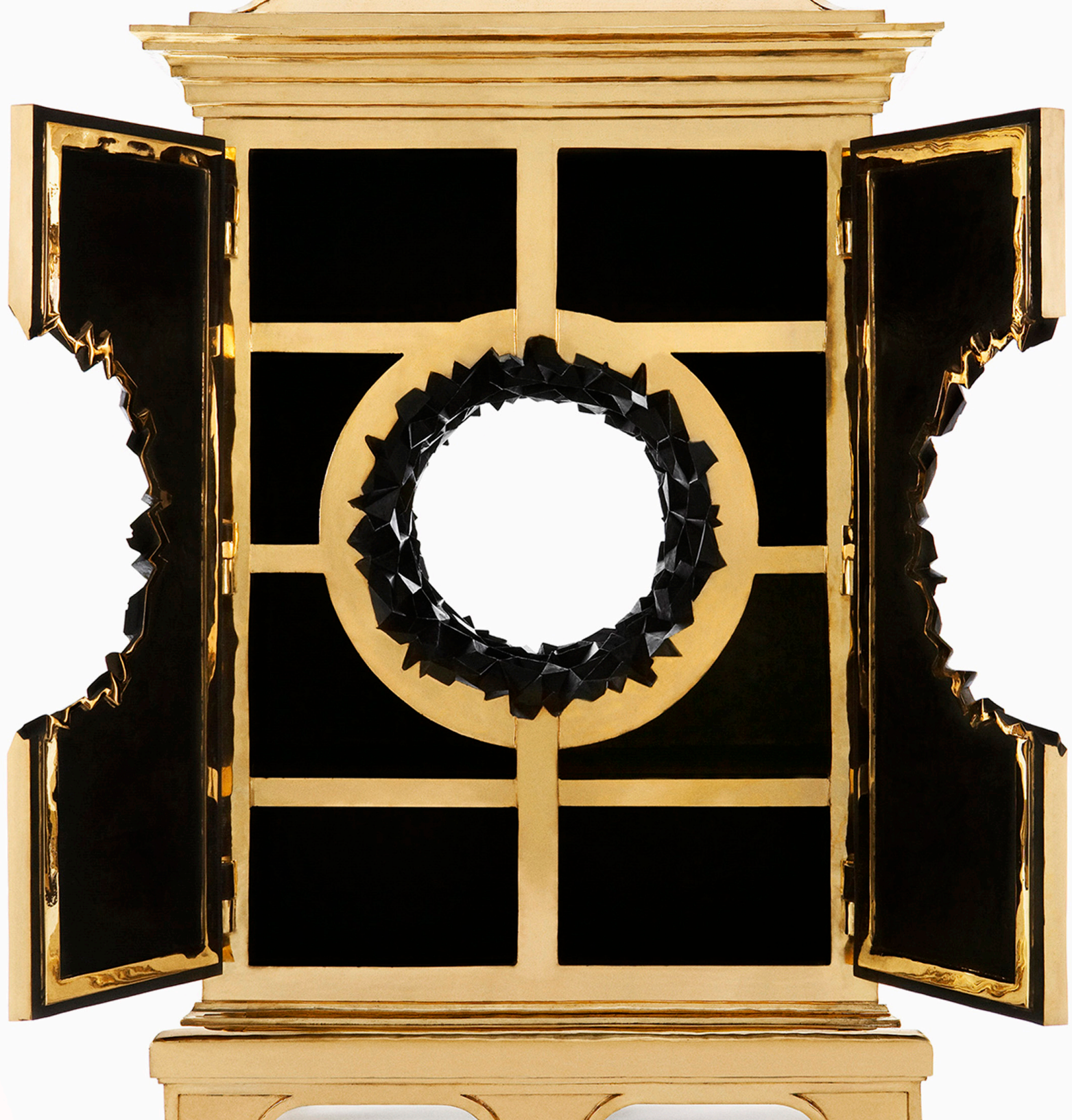


Robber Baron cabinet, 2007
Polished patinated bronze, 24k gilding

For over twenty years, Job Smeets and Nynke Tynagel have been working together as Studio Job, a partnership that sits comfortably at the intersection of art and design, creating one-off and editioned works inspired by the melding of disciplines during the renaissance period. The studio uses artisanal bronze casting, gilding and patination techniques as well as immaculately constructed marquetry and stained glass to great effect.

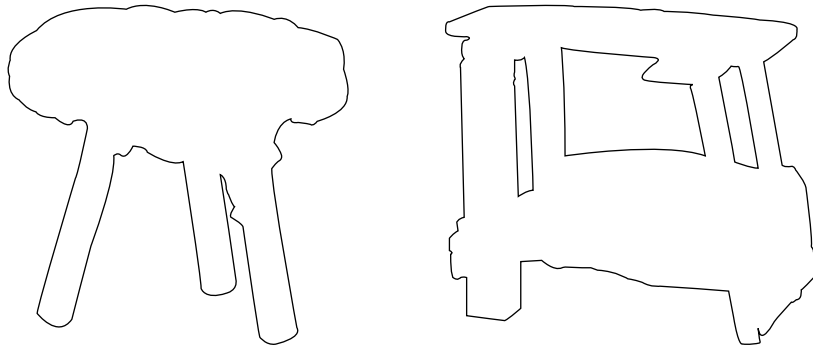
Studio Job work in monumental scales that enable them to treat their furniture as a canvas. They employ expressive iconography that illustrates the balance of beauty and darkness in everyday life; a tension of extremes that largely contributes to their successes. The Robber Baron series is typical of their dogmatic perfectionism. Polished bronze with black patinated 'bomb crater' and gilded motif reliefs that recall the extravagance, power and corruption of the 19th century's great industrial tycoons, after whom the series is named.



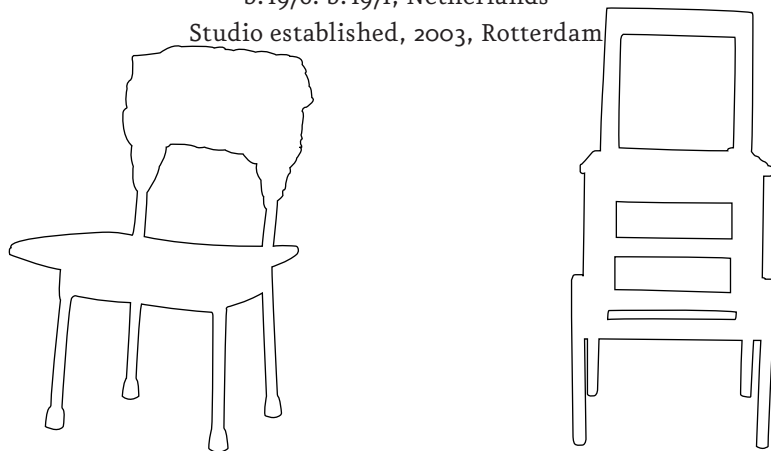


Chinese Stools – Made in China Copied by Dutch, 2007

Cast, coated aluminum



Wieki Somers, Dylan van den Berg
b. 1976. b. 1971, Netherlands
Studio established, 2003, Rotterdam



Since establishing their studio in 2003, Wieki Somers and Dylan van den Berg have developed a body of work that amplifies the emotive beauty of everyday objects and rituals. As Somers says, they “make the common uncommon” as an antidote to society’s “increasingly superficial relation to the objects we surround ourselves with.”

Like many of their generation, Studio Wieki Somers interpret this emotional connection between object and user as an added function or value and one which, ultimately, encourages user to cherish their objects. As a design ideology, it represents an increasing anxiety over the homogenization and globalization of most industrially produced goods and the overwhelming concern for the environmental damage caused by obsolescence and disposability.

Chinese Stools - Made in China Copied by Dutch offers a dual extrapolation on this theory. Inspired by a residency in Beijing, the series responds to the rapidly expanding metropolis, in which “temporality and obsolescence seem to menace each and every object.” It also inverted the stereotype of China’s infamous copying culture by creating replicas of the ad-hoc seats used by local Chinese workers. “We were fascinated by these primitive seats, the way the various materials and parts were connected and the relationship to their respective makers.” By casting the original seats, Studio Wieki Somers sought to preserve the trace elements, redolent of their origins and multi-layered histories.





FRIEDMAN BENDA

Factory
Channel Tunnel
Wong Kar-wai
Sarajevo Siege
Maastricht Treaty
Windows 95
Open Brothers
Mini Disk
Amazon
Famine in Sudan
The Matrix
Nintendo
le Web
kyo Sarin Attack
da
Good Friday Agreement
JERSZY
EYMOUR
on
Adbusters

ESIADES
N.W.A.
Rodney King
Michael Jordan
Gulf War
Chuck Palahniuk
Quake
Raye

JORIS LAARMAN
ROMAN ANDERWAN
BOUROULLEC
Massive Attack
Sex and the City
Loaded
Eminem
Okiahoma City Bombing
Harry Potter
Jean-Paul Gaultier
Twin Peaks
SMS Text
Destiny's Child
George W. Bush
Palm Pilot
Marc Jacobs
Daft Punk
G.T.A.
The Antwerp 6
Cool Britannia
Madchester
O.J. Simpson
AOL
Big Brother
Photoshop
Lara Croft
Tagging

MAARTEN BAAS
TORD BOONTJE
MENDO
JULIA LOHMANN
Katharine Hamnett
Zadie Smith
Tomogatchi
John Major
Beck



STUDIO FRITH

Frith Kerr, b. 1973, UK
Studio established, 2009, London

Accepting the challenge to create an identity for An Accelerated Culture, Studio Frith have devised a bespoke typeface and an infographic that locates the exhibition within its socio-political and cultural climate. The handcrafted typeface (based on type's awkward transition from analogue to digital) echoes the trajectory of the generation. The cloud-like infographic draws from world events, technological advances, culture and society from the generation's professionally formative decades either side of the millennium. Like most complex data visualizations, it offers an overview from a particular perspective, one which Kerr is well-placed to present. Immediately after her studies at Camberwell College of Arts and London's Royal College of Art, she co-founded and ran the design agency Kerr|Noble for eleven years before establishing Studio Frith in 2009. Producing graphic collateral for international cultural institutions, brands, art fairs, films, fashion designers and artists, Studio Frith take a playful approach to their work yet one that is steeped in historical reference and in-depth analysis. As Kerr concludes, "Our design work is always based on the truths we find. These 'truths' enable us to establish a strategic base on which to build."