

A generalized confinement is a good time to be reminded that our homes are not only our shelters. As pointed by Gio Ponti in the first Domus editorial they are not a 'machine à habiter' designed to fulfill solely our basic needs and life's practicalities. Unlike a nest or a lair, our interiors aspire to something superior and to being in a way, the expression of our civilization. The cave man adorned the walls of his grottoes and since then elaborations on our surroundings have flourished. Indeed, many theories have been developed over the years as to what form the 'art de vivre' can take. I would like to explore some of them in this newsletter.

As an art advisor I believe that my work consists in presenting the most interesting intellectual and esthetic adventures, that one can follow to enrich its interior materially and spiritually, which I consider to be a form of art collection. A collection that should be elaborated like a painting composition following the collector's red thread spinning his interests, influences and sometimes obsessions.

I will not debate the theoretical implications of each design movements but I would like to present my take on some of their practical applications through selected designers pieces and projects.

The first axis that I would like to explore is the contemporary designers scene and more precisely the one imagining the various applications for tomorrow.

### **Design looks ahead**

Nature has always been a source of inspiration and a spur for innovation. This timeless admiration is now completed by an increasing concern to harmonize our cohabitation with nature and by the same token save ourselves in the long run. The experimentation on materials and techniques is not something new; Gio Ponti used aluminium, Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen polyester, etc.

However, the design discipline is undergoing drastic changes. Although it is difficult to identify a coherent and conceptualized movement for what is happening in the design world it seems that a few common threads can be put forward. They are the following:

A holistic approach of the design practice in which the designer integrates technology, architecture, biology and others to push boundaries. As a result there is an emphasis on collaboration with the consequence that designers are increasingly working in full autonomy as labs or practices. The focus is no longer the finished product but rather on the research process. This shift means that the concerns for the visual appearance of the form are no longer predominant and lead to new visual forms.

The results are therefore a tight balance between our contemporary needs, the mastery of what has been done combined with the one of new technologies to elaborate new visual forms. I have chosen to present a selection of designers through the pieces that compelled me the most amongst their production and have included links for you to explore their work further.

It would be interesting to discuss these matters and pieces further with you, please feel free to contact me

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Crystallisation process of the Venus chair by Tokujin Yoshioka

## Formafantasma:

The first time I encountered their work was at the Salon Design fair in New York where the gallery Giustini/ Stagetti was exhibiting a tall cabinet that attracted my attention with its unconventional and poetic aesthetic. The recycled computer parts were not hidden. On the contrary they participate to the geniality and lightness of the design. The cabinet is part of 'Ore Streams' Collection, a project investigating the recycling of electronic waste, developed over the course of three years (2017-2019) and commissioned by NGV Australia and Triennale Milano. From this study also emanated a splendid desk, that I saw later at another fair, a console and an entire cubicle.



Ore Streams Cabinet  
Clear glass, digital print on aluminum Computer cases, gold plated aluminum



Ore Streams Desk, 2019  
Clear glass, brass, aluminum, digital print



Exhibition of the Beazley design price at the Design Museum, London, 2019

Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin have organized their design practice around research which results in series of objects over the years.

Amongst their long list of realizations I was particularly interested by 'Ex Cinere' (from ashes) a collection of glossy volcanic glazed tiles that use lava from the Sicilian volcanoes Stromboli and Etna. Produced in collaboration with the avant garde manufacturer Dzek this project is the result of the duo's research 'De Natura Fossilium'. I discovered it at the London Design Museum where it was exhibited for the Beazley design award



Volcanic ash glazed porcelain tiles, 2019

'Delta' is a series of sculptural furniture objects that are inspired by the shapes of the Roman waterways. When the two designers explored them they found various waste material such as porcelain, marbles, metals, and wood which became the basis of this collection of lighting, tableware vessels, an oil lantern, a cabinet and a mirror.



Collection Delta, 2016  
Acquedotto I, II, III, porcelain  
Salt and pepper set, pink onyx, gilded brass

Their latest, 'Cambio', project commissioned and exhibited at the Serpentine gallery is conceived to raise awareness and a change in the exploitation of timber. As the exhibition was interrupted by the confinement measure the designers will host a series of talk on their Instagram account every Thursday during the closure of the Serpentine.

## Sebastian Errazuriz

Early 2019, the gallery R&Company organized Breaking the Box a solo exhibition of the stunning work of the New York based designer. His work playfully challenges our usual conceptions of design through the technique, functionality and visual aspect. I was particularly drawn to its 'kinetic' creations, cabinets and shelves that whirl and rotate in a psychedelic and elegant motion that you can see in motion here.



Piano Shelves, originally designed in 1997  
Mahogany

The Piano Shelf offers a flexible wooden wall that can be adapted to its user's needs. By lowering each individual section, a shelf surface is created and a rectangle of empty space appears in the wall, framing whatever is placed on the shelf. It has now become one of the iconic pieces of the designer.



Yobitsugi jar and lid, 2015  
Glass, silver and gold leaf

## Yukito Nishinaka

The Japanese artist work on glass defies our conventional vision of the material as a fragile work. Nishinaka uses the traditional YOBITSUGI (meaning rebirth) technique destined to restore ceramic tea bowls, to rejoin glass parts together and create new visual associations called KIMONO. Traditionally urushi lacquer was used as glue to join the damaged parts together and finished with gold leaf, thus acknowledging the new life of these broken part.



Enignum series, chair, console and shelf, 2014  
Olive Ash

## Joseph Walsh

'Joseph Walsh has developed a creative process which captures the fluidity and immediacy of a sketch – of the moment of inspiration – and in which the final form is only defined through its making.'



Enignum XV Shelf, 2014, bought by the Centre Pompidou  
Olive ash

The Irish designer's creations take the dreamy and surreal aspect of plumes of smoke. The shape of each piece is dictated by the existing qualities found in the wood grain around which the designer will begin his work. The final form becomes a collaboration between the natural divisions in the wood grain, and Walsh's re-configuration into functional items.

From the Latin words Enigma (mystery) and Lignum (wood), the Enignum series is the illustration of the designer fascination. Each Enignum composition is created by manipulating and reconstructing thin layers of ash or walnut, allowing the wood itself to reveal the form as each layer naturally follows the next.

## Joris Laarman

Probably the best known name in the contemporary design scene. Laarman's design practice, based in the Netherlands, was built on the analysis of nature's underlying codes and logic to transpose it to design creating a unique and unexpected esthetic.

The Dragon bench was designed in 2014 and is one of his early series which remains my favourite. To create this bench the Laarman lab developed his own 3D-printing robot (the MX3D), which draws molten metal lines in the air to create a form. The specially adapted robotic arm melts and welds the metal (which can be stainless steel, aluminum, copper, or bronze) regardless of orientation and without the need for support structures.

This design represents the beginning of Laarman's on-going explorations in fabrication through innovation in 3-D printing. Since then, various shapes of benches have been created to develop different flow and ergonomics and are now in the permanent collections of various museums.

When I first saw this design at the Centre Pompidou I was mostly intrigued by the futurist and unconventional esthetic of it. Like most of the creation born with technology they seem to challenge our conception of beauty.

Dragon bench, 2014  
3D-printed stainless steel



Bone Chair, designed and produced in 2006  
Aluminium  
Sold at Christie's London on the 6th of March 2019 for £ 707,250

A thought that continued to inhabit me when I encountered the now iconic Bone chair. The design of the eponymous serie was generated through a digital program, created by the Laarman lab, to simulate bones structure and their configuration; giving the digital tool specific requirements, such as seat surface and three points for releasing weight pressure on the floor, the formula develops its structure with optimal efficiency, resulting in a highly and unusual sophisticated organic shape.

The bone series includes an armchair, a chair, a rocking chair, a bridge table and a bookshelf. The series was named bones to refer to the constantly evolving structure of tissues. Joris Laarman noted: 'Where trees have the ability to add material where strength is needed, bones have the ability to also reduce material where it is not'.

## Nienke Hoogvliet Studio

The practice focuses on material research, experimental and conceptual design. The project 'Sea Me' (2017-ongoing) aims to raise awareness around the pollution of our seas and the resources we find in water ecosystems. Hoogvliet has developed a yarn made out of natural sea algae using sea weed pigment as dye. The seaweed grows more quickly and with less nutrition than any other traditional textile materials used in textile. The yard is combined with waste found in the sea such as fish nets, to create hand made rugs that I find would also work as wall tapestries.

I saw the rugs exhibited at the Cooper Hewitt museum for the Design Triennial around the theme 'Nature: Collaboration in Design'. Although I have not been able to touch it the colors and delicate esthetic formed by the unconventional association of material is of great visual effect.

Sea Me rug, 2017  
Sea algae yarn, fishing net



Front Design Collective (Anna Lindgren, Kajsa Sävström, Sofia Lagerkvist, Charlotte von der Lancken)

I discovered this incredible design studio at 'dna10', the 10 year anniversary exhibition of the Friedman Benda gallery. A film, that seemed surreal to me at the time, was showing the four members of Front sketching furniture in the air with a 3D digital pen. Next to the video was the result, a undefinable and unpenetrable material that appeared light as a stroke of smoke.

The Sketch Furniture collection represent the first creations from motion capture software. This technique allows an object to be created from a drawing sketched in space. The movements of the pencil are analysed by computer, then recorded by a motion capture software which digitises them in a 3D file. Finally this 3D image is materialized by a rapid prototyping system.

See the making of the sketch furniture in motion here.

The Front Collective design composing the sketch furniture

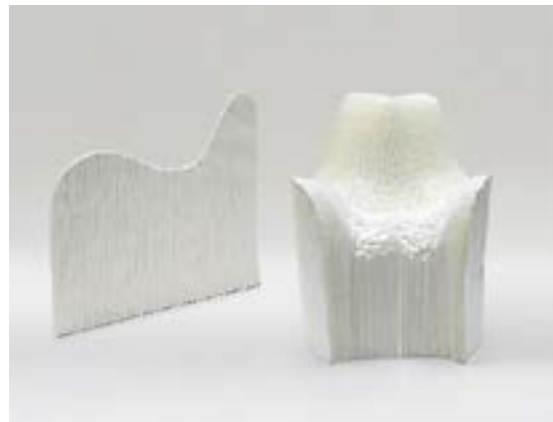


Sketch furniture collection, 2005  
Plastic, resin, video

The production of Front Collective is incredibly varied and they have created designs for Kartel, Mooie, Tom Dixon, Ikea, etc. The 'Hide out' chair was designed for Thonet and combines the traditional material, rattan and bentwood, used by the brand whilst evolving towards a new form. With its high wings, it creates a quiet space for the sitter, for working, relaxing or just hiding out.



Hide Out chair, 2018  
Rattan, bentwood and upholstery



Tokuji Yoshioka

I discovered the work of this polyvalent designer whilst working on the catalogue entry of a chair by Shiro Kuramata who was his mentor.

His work is always exploring the possibilities of transparency, light and nature. I find his creations to be each more moving than the



Venus chair, natural crystal, 2006  
Here shown at the Saga Prefectural Art Museum

From the watch designed for Issey Miyake, the glass tea house for the Venice biennale to large-scale installations, the artist never stops introducing mesmerizing and challenging works. For his first solo show in 2015 he created 'Tornado', an installation layering transparent straws spread over the exhibition rooms like the natural phenomenon. The straws spread all across the rooms of the Saga Prefectural Art Museum in Kyusyu, the South-East island in Japan and his hometown. Alongside the installations were exhibited some of his design pieces.

Amongst them, the extraordinary 'Venus' chair made from natural crystal. Inspired by a classic Japanese tale of a spider web the structure is of seven strings on which the crystal will 'grow' once immersed in a tank containing mineral solution. Yoshioka described it as a 'form born from nature has a beauty that exceeds our imagination'.

Also featured in the exhibition was the clever and elegant 'Honey-Pop' chair. This piece is made with sheets of glassine paper that were piled together and cut along specific lines so that it magically opens up into a honeycomb structure. The final form of the chair is set when in use, as it responds to the shape of the sitter's bottom.

Honey-Pop chair, 2011  
Glassine paper

## A few related exhibitions:

MOMA- Material Ecology presents the work of the bio-architect Neri Oxman

The future does not have to be technology or nature it can be a symbiosis of these two concerns. Neri Oxman is the head of the Mediated Matter group at MIT, with her team she works on pushing the boundaries of design by creating models enhancing strength already present in nature. Their work take natural phenomenon as starting point such as butterfly wings, the inside of a mushroom, silkworm and extracts the mathematical law that underlies the phenomenon, develop algorithms to replicate it, and calibrate new fabrication tools to construct it. It is enhancing nature's intelligence with the help of engineering, architecture and technology.

To explore further watch the documentary on Neri Oxman practice: Abstract: the art of design (Netflix)

Philadelphia Museum: Design for different futures

An Accelerated Culture at Friedman Benda (past exhibition) curated by Libby Sellers and Brent Dzekciorius. Using the generational grouping as a way into the varied views and expressions, An Accelerated Culture, highlights how the major cultural, economic and societal shifts that occurred during the decades before and after the turn of the millennium influenced and informed design practice today. An outstanding and eye-opening survey of 'X-Generation' of designers, conceptualized for the first time by the avant-garde gallery.

## Furthermore

You might have noticed that a large number of the designers presented in this newsletter were based in the Netherlands. Steve Elbe has produced an interesting documentary on the specificity of Dutch design – accessible through Vimeo for €5

The world of plasticiet: founded in 2018 by Marten van Middelkoop & Joost Dingemans. The two Rotterdam based designers, are passionate by sustainable material development and focus on the use of recycled plastic.

'The role of Design in times of anxiety' Paola Antonelli for Domus

'Who is Barje Ingel?' in Icon Magazine

Dyson has created a new portable respirator

## Past sales

As most of the design sales have been postponed, Sotheby's went ahead and transferred their annual New York spring sale online. They were gratified by strong and sometimes surprising results and the sale totalized \$4,027,500. "This result is an important indicator of the Design market's momentum and growth at a much needed time." said Jodi Pollack, co-worldwide head of Sotheby's 20th-century design department in a statement for Artnet.

Nearly half of the lots went for prices above their high estimates, and 82 percent of them sold (42 unsold lots on a total of 236). The estimates were conservative and bids reportedly came from 31 countries.

Amongst the highlights of the sale were the Untitled (Sonambient), a sculpture from American-Italian designer Harry Bertoia, which fetched \$300,000—six times over its high estimate—and a series of windows designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which brought in \$487,500 across multiple lots.



Harry Bertoia  
Untitled (Sonambient), circa 1970  
Inconel, Monel, brass



Vittorio Zecchin  
Rare Libellula vase, 1924-25  
iridized soffiato glass with applied details

On the 2nd of April, Wright held online another edition of their Important Italian Glass sale which totalized \$1,720,290 for 136 lots. Amongst the highlights an elegant Libellula vase by Vittorio Zecchin fetched \$52,500 (estimate \$20,000–30,000)

Last month the Italian house Cambi held a very interesting and successful sale online. Amongst the highlights: a sofa by Osvaldo Borsani sold for €25,000 for an estimate of €24,000. Perhaps because of the early date of the work.

## Upcoming sales of interest

### 12 May - Design loves Milano at Cambi Aste

'The fundraising online auction is a charity initiative spearheaded by creative agency Mr. Lawrence in collaboration with the auction house. The lots on sale feature contemporary design by an incredible roster of international designers and dealers to benefit Ospedale Luigi Sacco in Milan (...) The donation will help Ospedale Sacco with the purchase of equipment and services to sustain local research groups in the development of a vaccine to stop the spreading of Covid-19.'

### Christie's has postponed the annual Paris and New York sale to the end of June

26 June (TBC) - this year the design sale entitled Form and Focus will offer important design and photographs, more details to be announced.

30 June (TBC) - the promising Paris sale will present two historic Jean Royère commissions, never presented on the market and including iconic pieces such as the sought after 'Ours Polaire' suite sofa and armchairs but also scarce designs. The auction house has also announced a striking piece by Art Déco Master Eugène Printz, a rare selection of Maxime Old pieces and an important bed by Claude Lalanne.

### Phillips:

The London design sale date has been postponed but the lots are on view online

### Piasa:

1st of May (TBC) - Sale dedicated to Alvar Aalto