

## Comment



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## Make your mark

The new LA venture that is tackling the art/craft divide.

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I have a friend who makes art for artists. He's a trained engineer who crafts the creative visions sold on London's Cork Street. Yet over Sunday lunch, as his inbox buzzed with requests for everything from light sculptures to cantilevered steel constructions, I began to feel disillusioned. Shouldn't artists be making this stuff themselves?

Of course, this is nothing new. Artists have been ordering in work since László Moholy-Nagy called a local Weimar enamel factory about "Construction in Enamel" 2 and 3 in 1923. And where would Anish Kapoor be without his brilliant structural engineer Cecil Balmond?

Except Moholy-Nagy was making a point with his so-called telephone pictures: he wanted to show the artist as a creator but also venerate the enamel workshop down the street. At the time he was at the Bauhaus, where fine

art and craft were brought together. Rather like the Arts and Crafts movement that came before it, the Bauhaus sought to level the distinctions (and hierarchies) between art, craft and manufacturing. There, a teapot didn't hold any less value than a fine-art canvas. It was arguably the school's greatest achievement and yet all these years later, there is still a disconnect between the artists, craftsmen and industry.

LA-based David Wiseman has resisted creative pigeon holing throughout his career, creating sculptures alongside chandeliers and furniture. "Categorisation is fictitious," he says. "I look at a master of Japanese ceramics who's spent their life understanding how the glaze fits on the clay. How is that anything but the highest artistic achievement?"

The output of Wiseman's eponymous studio will be bolstered next year with the arrival of his brother Ari, until recently deputy director of the Solomon R Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. Drawing on Ari's art-world clout, the brothers will launch an integrated space in LA's Frogtown, which will be open to everyone. "The space is a site of production and presentation," says Ari. "You have a studio environment and a space for looking at finished work but you can go back and forth between the two."

The Wisemans' effort is a refreshing statement of transparency but also a move back to a guild system where art was inextricably linked to making. "I am in dialogue with the material," says David. "I want to share how empowering it is to use these age-old techniques. I'm so excited to share that idea with LA, with schools and with the world." It's a noble endeavour, whether he is making objects to use or to inspire.



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