Groundbreaking gadgets, shape-shifting architecture, visionary design, and tomorrow’s urban transport

INTELLIGENT DESIGN
Yves Behar on technology as a force for good

HOME ADVANTAGE
New namesake furniture by Pierre Yovanovitch

FULL BLOOM
Fantastic flowers and more from Copenhagen’s Tableau
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Los Angeles, 24th November 2020
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IRINA BOERSMA CÉSAR MACHADO  
**Photographer**
Copenhagen-based Boersma César Machado photographed our story on multidisciplinary local design studio Tableau (page 114), which took over the Faxe Kalkbrud limestone quarry in eastern Denmark with its floral installations. ‘It seemed like we had landed on another planet,’ says the photographer, who was particularly taken with the studio’s experimental approach: ‘They try out so many different things, it has been really fun and inspiring to work with them.’

YVES BEHAR  
**Designer**
Fuseproject founder and serial innovator Yves Behar occupies a unique place in the design industry, able to steer Silicon Valley while treading an independent path. His limited-edition cover for us shows him sketching his ‘Sayl’ chair, a now iconic design first revealed in Wallpaper® 11 years ago. His creative process, which he calls ‘a slow, winding road’, is the subject of a new monograph, *Designing Ideas*, previewed on page 070 in an interview with our transport and technology editor Jonathan Bell.

STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON  
**Photographer**
An art director turned photographer, Johnson primarily shoots interiors and food. This month, we asked the New Yorker to turn his lens on the new Spiral (x,y,z) hair salon in Tribeca, designed by Kazem Naderi (page 086). ‘Kazem’s vertical wood motif is mesmerising,’ says Johnson, ‘and it was really inspiring to see it implemented so beautifully.’ Johnson is currently working on various book projects with Billy Cotton, Shawn Henderson and Steven Volpe.

UMIT SAVACI  
**Photographer**
We asked Savaci, a London-based fashion photographer known for his dreamy, textured portraits, to shoot our womenswear story (page 122) and newstand cover. An unlikely mix of high fashion and retro game consoles, it’s a far cry from Savaci’s idyllic childhood in rural Turkey, where he grew up among farmers and beekeepers. ‘It was amazing to discover a new field in my creative process,’ says Savaci of the shoot. ‘The creative freedom was the best part – and I’m excited to get my first cover image.’

NICOLAS POLLI  
**Photographer**
When we asked Switzerland-based Polli to shoot our artist’s recipe (page 138), we didn’t think getting hold of a red snapper would be such a challenge. But when it finally turned up, it was quite the catch: ‘I ordered a 3kg fish, and instead received an enormous 10kg snapper,’ says Polli. ‘We needed to rethink the shoot completely, and then had a grilled fish feast in the evening.’ Polli is the founder of Ciao Press and has just published *When Strawberries Will Grow on Trees, I Will Kiss U.*

YOKO CHOI  
**Wallpaper® China Editor**
Due to the pandemic, it’s been months since Choy – usually based between Hong Kong and Amsterdam – has been in China. But the writer is spending more time than ever with her Chinese associates – ‘we’re all eager to keep connected’. This month, she talks to designer Mario Tsai (page 062). ‘I appreciate how Tsai is trying to reinvent the design industry into a sustainable ecosystem,’ says Choy, who first met him in 2019 and visited his Hangzhou studio soon after: ‘His work is sober but poetic, much like the city itself.’
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Argo sofa designed by Paola Navone, captured in Puglia with PJ Natuzzi.
New wave

Welcome to the Innovation Issue, a celebration of fresh perspectives and bold ideas. I am delighted to have Yves Behar, pioneer of experiential design and transformative technology, as our headliner. Ahead of the launch of his forthcoming book, Designing Ideas (released in July), he has created our limited-edition subscribers’ cover (as well as animated versions on Wallpaper.com), and talks in depth with Wallpaper’s transport and technology editor Jonathan Bell about how he believes design and technology can combine to tackle key challenges of the 21st century – sustainability, accessibility and diversity.

We feature Mario Tsai, who is leading the way for independent Chinese designers hoping to break into the international furniture industry; and Julius Værnes Iversen, whose Copenhagen-based studio Tableau has revolutionised the art of flower arranging and made a splash with its avant garde design collaborations. We also call on Wallpaper’s 2019 Designer of the Year, Pierre Yovanovitch, to discuss his new namesake brand, which brings his delightfully exquisite furniture to a wider audience while maintaining his long-cherished principles of elevating craftsmanship and making to last.

The transformative role of technology is just as evident in our preview of the next generation of urban transport, as well as in our look into the future with Hyundai Motor Company, which is investing ambitiously in electric vehicles, hydrogen technology, robotics and personal air vehicles. Returning to the here and now, we commissioned Copenhagen-based CGI studio Seen to compile the best in cutting-edge consumer tech, from the likes of Apple, Bang & Olufsen and LG, as well as niche favourite Teenage Engineering, and Kickstarter success story Transparent.

In terms of inventive architecture, we have a climate centre by Denmark’s 3XN that makes a striking visual statement despite a modest budget and environmental footprint; a multigenerational family home designed by India’s Matharoo Associates, with moveable walls that accommodate its inhabitants’ changing preferences; and the first new-build by the UK’s Remi Connolly-Taylor, cleverly inserted into an infill site in east London.

Innovation can take many forms, so we also showcase beauty products inspired by rehabilitative care for burn victims and the reproductive biology of black widow spiders; a diffuser from Poltrona Frau and Acqua di Parma that dispenses fragrance at the intensity best suited to each scent; and the Masuku One face mask, which offers bio-based air filtration made possible by a newly developed electrospinning process.

Finally, it feels fitting to revisit Formafantasma and Dzek’s ‘ExCinere’ tiles, glazed with volcanic ash from Sicily’s Mount Etna and first revealed in the pages of Wallpaper* two years ago (W*242). This groundbreaking architectural material has now become the central feature of the new Blue Bottle Coffee in Jinnan, Tokyo, designed by Keiji Ashizawa, and even inspired the café’s matching crème brulée cheesecake. A delicious testament to the power of innovation.

Sarah Douglas, Editor-in-Chief
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Wallpaper’s hot pick of the latest global goings-on

The brands working their magic in the world of high-performance outerwear

Technical wizards

Jacket, £600; gilet (worn underneath), £600, both by Stone Island
For stockists throughout, see page 137
Over the past 12 months, we’ve swaddled ourselves indoors in soft folds of fabric, but now, as we start to re-emerge into the outside world, many of us are still seeking clothing that provides ample protection. Luckily, a host of men’s performance brands are ticking all our technical boxes, with outerwear in innovative fabrications that will shield against the elements, whether you happen to be camping out in remote wilds, or simply striding the city streets.

For a stylish take on safeguarding, we recommend layering up your protective pieces, from global collective Affix’s jackets and Japanese label Snow Peak’s vests to Italian brand Herno’s parkas and Dutch label Byborre’s tracksuit trousers. These designs are constructed from a variety of boundary-pushing fabrications, including Herno’s ultra-light nylon and Snow Peak’s Kanecaron, a fire-resistant fabrication. Byborre even blends materials of varying weights, which are mapped for ample comfort across the body, including its signature breathable knitted panels.

For those that geek out on garment dyeing, Stone Island’s triple layer, hooded jacket emphasises the label’s innovations in colour. Elsewhere, for those that look for pieces that are more smarts than sports, US brand Woolrich has developed a technical cotton car coat for spring. Designed to cocoon you on the commute, its wind- and water-resistant qualities will protect you well, should you wander off route.
This page, clockwise from above, jacket, £435, by Woolrich. Vest, £380; trousers, £419, both by Snow Peak. Shirt, £240; gilet, £495; trousers, £350, all by Arnar Mar Jonsson. Gloves, £35, by The North Face. Jacket, £550; vest, £190, both by Affix. Hat, £130, by And Wander.

Opposite, left, jacket, £550, by Herno. Shorts, £120, by Klättermusen. Trousers (worn underneath), £199, by Snow Peak. Necklace, €2,750, by Saskia Diez. Right, jacket, €1,298; trousers, €598, both by Byborre.
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Beauty and science have long been intertwined. Most beauty products are created in laboratories by researchers well-versed in the combination of chemicals used in skincare or the molecules that make up perfumes. However, a select group of scientists are currently using their unique insight to transform the beauty industry.

Professor Augustinus Bader is one such innovator. A stem cell and biomedical scientist at Leipzig University, Bader stumbled into the world of skincare after developing a revolutionary topical cream that could heal burn injuries to an extent previously only possible through skin grafts. The stem cell science behind that cream forms the basis of his eponymous skincare line, and will soon to be followed by a haircare range.

Meanwhile, Wendy Ouriel was studying extracellular matrix biology before pivoting to skincare. Her investigations into the reproductive biology of black widow spiders piqued her interest in the science of anti-ageing. Her findings were so contrary to what most other skincare brands were doing that she decided to start a line of her own. The result is Oumere, a tight edit of serums designed to eradicate signs of ageing.

To create Hermès’ first men’s perfume in 15 years, H24, the brand’s in-house perfumer Christine Nagel used her degree in organic chemistry, as well as her knowledge of the science behind scent, to develop the fragrance’s signature molecule. This unique, synthetic ‘molecule of the future’, tagged sclarene, was inspired by the aroma of hot irons on fabric that Nagel encountered in Hermès workshops. It gives H24 a singular, metallic edge that sets it apart from other male fragrances. With a logo and packaging by Paris-based design studio Yorgo & Co, it also looks as good as it smells. hermes.com; oumere.com; augustinusbader.com
Japanese watch brand Grand Seiko epitomises clean design, a concept it formalised in 1967 with the launch of its understated ‘44GS’ wristwatch. Balancing form and function, the watch knitted together the elegant technical accomplishments that underpin a Grand Seiko watch, defining for the first time its nine cornerstones of design. These include multi-faceted markers, a flat dial, a curved profile and a highly polished bezel, foundations upon which all subsequent watches have since been built.

Dials may be flat, but textured patterns create an illusion of depth, containing a subtle spectrum of hues that nod to the Japanese custom of expressing the gradations between light and shadow, rather than the stark monochrome of black and white.

The ‘Hi-Beat Birch Forest’ watch, part of the ‘Series 9’ collection, plays on these tones in shadow, translating this feeling of light and movement into a subtle tribute to the brand’s heritage.

‘This watch captures the dynamism of the white birch tree forests near the studio in Shizukuishi where all Grand Seiko mechanical watches are crafted,’ explains a Grand Seiko spokesperson. The birch bark pattern on the dial has been created with a varying depth of surface, which allows for an elegant interplay of light refracted from the dial. We particularly like feeling the call of the wild whenever we look at the time.

seikoboutique.co.uk
REIMAGINING THE CLASSICS

Ilse Crawford interprets Hans J. Wegner’s first five masterpieces for Carl Hansen & Son in an exclusive color palette inspired by Nordic art and nature. The iconic chairs from 1949 – CH22, CH23, CH24, CH25 and CH26 – are offered in oak and finished with a water-based lacquer.

The limited-edition chairs are only available in 2021.

See more at carlhansen.com or visit your nearest Flagship Store.
Born in 1949. Thousands of new configurations yet to be discovered.
Home has taken on a new meaning in the past year, as many of us have transformed the place where we live into the place where we also do just about everything we would have once done elsewhere. Although the tides are turning, creating a comforting home environment remains ever pertinent, and scent offers a fast-track way to breathe new life into a stifling space.

A new home diffuser from Poltrona Frau and Acqua di Parma couldn’t come at a better time, then. Launching this September, it’s the first collaboration between the two iconic Italian brands, and has been designed by GamFratesi, who have channelled the signature aspects of both heritage brands into a single object.

The diffuser’s hand-sewn circular covering is made from one of Poltrona Frau’s Pelle Frau leathers, available in four different colours, or in Cuoio Saddle Extra leather. Underneath this elegant exterior is a home fragrance diffuser of unparalleled technological advancement. The device can hold up to three of Acqua di Parma’s signature fragrances at once. The brand is famed for its scents that capture the essence of the Italian spirit, scents such as Buongiorno (lemon, mint, rosemary and jasmine) and Luce di Colonia (orange, lemon, neroli and vetiver).

The home diffuser can be activated directly or remotely operated via an app that allows users to programme the device to expel a different fragrance any time or day of the week. The diffuser automatically releases the fragrance at an intensity best suited to that specific scent. A car diffuser, also available in the same round leather casing, can be attached to a car’s ventilation grille to provide you with delicious olfactory accompaniments to your journey. poltronafrau.com; acquadiparma.com; gamfratesi.com
A cultural incubator’s new Brooklyn campus encourages community engagement

Centre of attraction

‘There are a range of art residencies in the world, in various forms, but very few build a full campus from the ground up,’ says Florian Idenburg, co-founder of New York architecture studio SO-IL. Its latest completion is for Amant, a young international private arts organisation positioned as a flexible research and artistic platform, with campuses in Brooklyn and Tuscany. The US outpost is about to complete the first phase in an extensive construction project that encompasses spaces for an international artist residency programme, including areas for producing and performing arts. Located in an industrial neighbourhood of East Williamsburg and connected to it via a visual palette that includes brick, concrete and steel, the new Amant campus was conceived as an ‘oasis in this industrial zone’. Providing enough space for artists to concentrate and develop work was crucial, but the complex will also operate a programme of open events. ‘Normally, the public is invited only into the area closest to the street, but here we flipped that,’ says Idenburg. ‘The performance space and bookshop/cafe can only be reached via an alleyway and courtyard, passing by the studios and offices.’

so-il.org; amant.org

Top and above, the Amant art campus, which is spread across three blocks in north Brooklyn, is built from cast-in-situ concrete, bricks and galvanised steel, materials that are intended to render the campus’ four buildings partly anonymous within its industrial landscape.
This page, €415, by Lindberg
Opposite, first row, £354, by Prada. £295, by Gucci. £310, by Bottega Veneta
Second row, £365, by Sportmax. £605, by Louis Vuitton
Third row, £310, by Celine by Hedi Slimane. £265, by Fendi
Fourth row, £300, by Serengeti. £195, by Salvatore Ferragamo

Eyecatching eyewear in a rainbow of seductive shades

Jelly vision
ife has been a little devoid of colour of late, which is why, for spring, we’re setting our sights on sunglasses in a seductive spectrum of shades. We suggest investing in some transparent frames in vivid jewel tones that will gleam in the sun like a precious stone, from Bottega Veneta’s retro futuristic lilac cat-eye frames to Gucci’s oversized 1970s styles in cerulean. For someone keen to reflect an entire prism of colours, a clear silhouette is most striking. Lindberg, Louis Vuitton and Prada are all offering eye-catching options in geometric and wraparound styles. It looks to us like life just got a little brighter.
SUPPORTING CREATIVE VISIONARY TALENT

Established by Lee Alexander McQueen, who left the majority of his estate to support the most visionary talent, Sarabande provides scholarships and heavily subsidised studio spaces for creatives as well as a pioneering public programme of talks and events.

To learn more about us, our House of Bandits online shop, upcoming events or to donate, please head to our website sarabandefoundation.org or Instagram @sarabandefoundation.
We’ve always been partial to keeping things pure and simple, so we were thrilled to encounter OAX Original, a new, artist-driven line of small-batch, limited-edition mezcales produced in Oaxaca, Mexico. OAX’s mezcales are so refined and pure, they are best sipped neat. The three batches – Tepeztate (intense citric aromas and a wet earth taste), Tobalá (sweet floral and herbal hints) and Arroqueño (buttery with hints of sweet coffee and almonds) – are crafted using wild, single-origin, foraged agave ranging from 12-25 years old to give a clean, complex taste and a sensual bouquet, and each mezcal is housed in a striking, matte ceramic bottle by Brooklyn design studio Bardo Industries, inspired by vernacular Mexican architecture. We paired these monolithic marvels with a couple of other sculptural beauties – Baccarat’s eye-catching ‘Louxor’ tumbler, and the new ‘Scarpa’ coffee table by London-based Kuwaiti designer Ziad Alonaizy. Paying homage to the work of iconic Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, the table forms part of a collection that includes coffee, console, side and martini tables, and a bench. The coffee table’s solid marble top is available in an array of distinctive finishes, including arabesca oro bicolor, invisible grey gold and black forest, and it boasts an angular orthogonal steel base. All are clear winners in our book.

Tobalá mezcal, $140 for 750ml; Arroqueño mezcal, $190 for 750ml; Tepeztate mezcal, $120 for 750ml, all by OAX Original

'Scarpa' coffee table, £4,158, by Ziad Alonaizy. 'Louxor' tumbler, £370 for set of two, by Thomas Bastide, for Baccarat. 'Eye' vase, £1,690, by Baccarat. 'Elektra' velvet in 036, £138 per m, by Dedar

A host of sculptural beauties are keeping our spirits up

Hot shots
Quality maniac Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why

THINGS TO TRY

Icaros machine An exercise machine, used in conjunction with a VR headset, that is designed to increase core strength, balance and coordination. It’s the most fun you can have in a gym or clinic.

Spiroergometry This examines your heart, lungs, and vascular and metabolic systems, via a heart monitor band and mouthpiece, as you exercise, usually on a treadmill or exercise bike.

Cryotherapy A form of treatment that uses freezing or near-freezing temperatures to treat the likes of rheumatic inflammatory diseases and skin conditions.

Breathwrk app This app is designed to alleviate stress and anxiety, aid sleep, and increase energy, guiding you through many powerful breathing exercises with pleasing graphics and soothing sounds.

Keeping sane, fit and healthy has never felt so important. The global news media has been bombarding us daily with data on disease and death for more than a year now. That has led many to take stock of their priorities and place a higher value on optimising health. I am a maniac when it comes to preventive medicine, which is why, once a year for the past 15, I have spent ten days or so at the Viva Mayr clinic in Austria getting a part-cleanse and check-up with regenerative rest. I check out with a boosted immune system, helpful for fighting viruses. If I had the time (and funds), I would check in every six months rather than 12.

I think I may have an unnatural attraction to specialists, possibly since I am the one who pays and am therefore the centre of attention. I could happily fill my days with visits to osteopaths, physios, acupuncturists, podiatrists and the like. I must crave praise for doing well at tests – during my stay at the Matteo Thun-designed Waldhotel Bürgenstock, above Lake Lucerne, I see all manner of specialists in their state-of-the-art diagnostic centre, which includes spiroergometry, echocardiography and a DEXA body composition scan, and I enjoy leaving knowing what’s working and what can be improved.

For obsessives like me, the Ultimate membership package at London’s Lanserhof at the Arts Club is quite tempting. Pre-Covid, I thought the cost was inordinate, but now it seems better value for money. For £18,000 a year, you get six doctor appointments, an MRI scan, 12 physiotherapy appointments, up to 50 vitamin infusions, two spine or movement lab analysis sessions, and six 3D body scans (perfect if you are vain), plus unlimited personal training sessions, cryotherapy, beauty treatments and studio classes.

If I really allowed my maniacal tendencies loose, I would hire someone to keep an eye on what I consume, tut if I overdo the lactose, ensure I run my 5k four times a week, double up as a personal trainer and boss me into using the foam roller or Theragun once a day to counteract desk time and phone use. Ideally, they would also be connected to a clinic to keep all the stats up to date.

Fantasy aside, one thing that anyone can do to make a huge difference to their health is read (or listen to) James Nestor’s Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art, which discusses how losing our ability to breathe well has led to a variety of health issues, including snoring, sleep apnoea, autoimmune diseases, asthma and even allergies. It’s the shallow mouth breathing that needs replacing with much more beneficial nose breathing. I taught myself to change to the latter when running, and it was really tough for the first couple of months. But who wouldn’t want stronger, healthier lungs if you could have them? Especially now. Yours for less than 20 pounds/euro/dollars.
Kartell by LAUFEN
DON'T SAY BADEZIMMER. SAY YEAH, YEAH, YEAH!
HAPPY GLAZE

Blue Bottle Coffee’s new Tokyo outpost serves up delicious tiles and matching cakes

PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN RICHARDS  WRITER: JENS H JENSEN

When the opportunity presented itself to take over the better part of a park in the quiet, trendy Jinnan area of Tokyo’s Shibuya district, Blue Bottle Coffee was quick to make the move. ‘We’ve wanted to open in Shibuya for a long time, but were waiting for the right location,’ says chief brand officer Saki Igawa. The Californian brand has a strong foothold in Japan, and seeks out less-obvious locations. The first local store, opened in 2015, did a lot to put the Kiyosumi area in east Tokyo on the coffee map; the chain has also successfully transformed traditional townhouses in Kyoto into trendy hotspots for the caffeine-hungry.

Schemata Architects, led by Jo Nagasaka, has been the practice of choice for the brand, designing almost 20 stores in Japan alone, as well as a few in South Korea, and one in Los Angeles. The Jinnan store, however, is designed by Tokyo-based Keiji Ashizawa. It’s the architect’s second Blue Bottle location, following the Minatomirai store in Yokohama that opened in September 2020.

Ashizawa used wood as his key material in Yokohama, but, in Jinnan, Formafantasma’s ‘ExCinere’ tile, glazed with the ash of a Sicilian volcano for architectural materials company Dzek (W*242), takes centre stage. It clads the large counter on the ground floor, and a full-length wall and a custom-built table upstairs. ‘I’ve known Brent Dzekciourius from Dzek for a long time and he’d sent me a sample of the tile,’ says Ashizawa. ‘When Blue Bottle approached me about the Jinnan store, I thought this would work well. A rectangular cheesecake with a crème brûlée top matching the colours of the Formafantasma tile has even been added to the menu.’

Ashizawa enlisted Norm Architects to design furniture for the Yokohama store, but he took on the challenge himself at Jinnan. Outside, a special stacking bench made by Ishinomaki Laboratory (W*217), which he helped found after the Tohoku earthquake in 2011, provides casual seating that can easily be moved around and kept within the store at night. Inside, furniture made by Japanese brands Karimoku and Ariake provides a range of seating. Asked if the latest two stores by Ashizawa signal the end of Blue Bottle’s long-standing collaboration with Schemata Architects, Igawa insists, ‘We are still working with Schemata, but we like to keep the design fresh so it doesn’t become a cookie-cutter environment.’ Judging by the excitement of both Igawa and Ashizawa, bland corporate roll-out is the last thing on their minds.

Jinnan 1-7-3, Shibuya, Tokyo, bluebottlecoffee.com; keiji-design.com
Designer Pierre Yovanovitch photographed in Paris in March 2021 with a ‘Clam’ chair, ‘Flare’ lamp and ‘Asymmetry’ sofa, all part of the Pierre Yovanovitch Mobilier launch collection.
HOME STRETCH

Pierre Yovanovitch launches his long-awaited first furniture label

PHOTOGRAPHY: FLORENT TANET  WRITER: TF CHAN
Pierre Yovanovitch’s furniture provokes all kinds of positive reactions. There’s awe, at his ability to create evocative forms with humour and understatement; admiration, for his insistence on sharing the spotlight with the craftspeople he works with; fascination, with the vividly imagined characters who have inspired its creation; and immense envy, of anyone fortunate enough to own a piece. This furniture is widely coveted but famously hard to come by: until Yovanovitch started to work with design gallery R & Company in 2017 (W*223), the only way to acquire one of his pieces was to commission him for an interior design project. Which is why the news that he is launching his first-ever furniture brand this May is a cause for celebration.

The launch, which aligns with the 20th anniversary of Yovanovitch’s design practice, is the realisation of a lifelong dream. ‘It takes the quality and uncompromised attention to detail out of the context of a private residence or limited-edition gallery model, and makes it available to a wider, global audience,’ he explains. The inaugural collection comprises 45 pieces, including seating, lighting, tables and accessories.

Adaptations of iconic designs include a sofa version of the wonderfully off-kilter ‘Asymmetry’ armchair, and the ‘Oopsy’, which sees armrests added to Yovanovitch’s subtly anthropomorphic ‘Mr & Mrs Oops’ chairs. Original pieces are just as distinctive. Take for example the Alice in Wonderland-inspired ‘Clam’ chair, which is an abstract representation of an open seashell. ‘To realise this shape out of a solid oak base took years,’ recalls Yovanovitch. ‘You wouldn’t realise by looking at the work, but that’s the beauty of well-crafted design. It’s aesthetically and functionally an effortless appeal, but a labour of love for all involved in its production.’

As with his bespoke and gallery offerings, Yovanovitch has worked with some of the finest craftspeople in France and Switzerland: among them ceramicist Armelle Benoit, woodworker Pierre-Eloi Bris, upholstery studio Jouffre, and metalworkers at Fonderie Fusions. Some of these partnerships go back to Yovanovitch’s early days, and the craftspeople remain very much involved in his creative process: ‘They help bring my designs to life, and we work together to help perfect their techniques with an ongoing dialogue about each work until it’s perfect,’ he says. Their input ensures the exceptional quality and precision of the pieces, but also imbues them with a level of character that industrial furniture workshops would
struggle to achieve. This is evident in the new ‘Quinn’ coffee table’s curvy glass top: ‘The glass is incredibly thick, with slight colour differentiation due to the production process. We like to think of these imperfections as a badge of authenticity.’

Loyalty to his collaborators is part of Yovanovitch’s commitment to sustainability: supporting artisanal production helps ensure that generations-old savoir-faire does not fade away in the age of automation. Material sustainability is equally front of mind; the new brand uses local woods from eco-certified forests, natural fibres and organic solvents. Finally, the pieces are sustainable in that they are made to last. Materials such as polished bronze, gypsum and patinated metals have been chosen for their longevity; adhesives and finishes are kept to a minimum, and the rigorous forms inspire confidence that they will endure. ‘It’s crucial to the integrity of my work to offer long-lasting, timeless pieces to cut through the noise of cheaply made designs which are quick to end up in a landfill,’ Yovanovitch insists.

The majority of the new offerings are made to order, so they come with a wealth of options for customisation: a choice between a wood or metal frame for a chair, upholstery colours and styles for a sofa. Colour options range from more neutral to vivid hues (such as an explosive pink that makes the ‘Hopper’ chair a true standout), to ensure a perfect fit for clients of all personalities.

The launch of Pierre Yovanovitch Mobiler is made more impressive by the designer’s insistence on handling all worldwide sales in-house. This means tooling up his website to take orders, but also significant investment in a physical presence. First up is a pop-up installation at the historic Académie d’Architecture in Paris, whose layout will be inspired by the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs and the work of Hiroshi Sugimoto. ‘I want to showcase the works as if they were styled within one’s home, so the viewer can imagine themselves existing with the new pieces,’ says Yovanovitch. A permanent showroom will follow in the summer, within an 18th-century hôtel particulier in the 2nd arrondissement, where Yovanovitch also has his HQ. There are plans for other cities too, with New York on the near horizon.

‘With so many spending more time than ever at home,’ reflects the designer, ‘I feel there is a renewed appreciation for our own furniture and lighting. I hope this means that more people will see the value in opting for high-quality design works.’

pierreyovanovitch.com
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Illustration by Timorous Beasties
Korea’s Hyundai Motor Company stands a good chance of becoming the first truly modern mobility corporation of the post-automobile era. Over the past two decades, a combination of industrial muscle, superior design chops and a will to innovate have seen the brand become a global player. In addition to the eponymous car brand, Hyundai also owns a substantial chunk of Kia Motors, along with its luxury division Genesis, and newly announced IONIQ and HTWO sub-brands for electric and hydrogen vehicles respectively. Even with a pandemic raging, in 2020, the company sold 3.7 million Hyundai vehicles, and 2.6 million Kia vehicles, putting it high up the list of major players.

Hyundai is also a towering example of Korea’s family-orientated business culture. The current chairman, Euisun Chung, is the grandson of Juyung Chung, who founded the Hyundai Group in 1946. The car company was founded in 1967 and owed its early success to a team of former British Leyland employees. They oversaw the very first Korean car, the 1975 Pony, styled by no less a talent than the master Italian automotive designer Giorgetto Giugiaro.

Although Hyundai Motor is one of many businesses to have offed from the original company over the years, it still benefits from the latter’s halo effect. The Hyundai name is attached to all forms of construction, as well as shipbuilding, shipping, electronics, finance and tourism, while also being active in philanthropy and global relations. Under Juyung Chung, Hyundai became an engine of Korea’s economic revolution and helped make the country one of Asia’s four ‘Tiger Economies’. The Hyundai name remains a source of national pride. So far it has avoided the unease and suspicion that now surrounds FAANG and other tech titans.

All that might change, for the automobile is on the cusp of a revolution, one that will see it edge closer in spirit to the device in your pocket rather than the machine parked outside your house. Up until the turn of the last decade, Hyundai Motor focused on value-orientated products with tried and tested reliability. This ensured its swift rise to ubiquity, but brand recognition still eluded it. The company ultimately found its brand mojo through its long association with German designer Peter Schreyer, formerly head of design at Audi, then Volkswagen. In 2006, Schreyer was hired first by Kia, before being appointed president of the company’s various global design centres. Today he is the group’s head of design management. Schreyer has an uncanny ability to distil automotive identity down to a few signature elements. He was one of the drivers behind the VW Group’s sophisticated brand management, which used key designs – Audi’s TT, the revived Volkswagen Beetle, the Bentley Continental GT – to steer its various wards towards strong individual identities despite increasingly shared components.

Initially, Kia and Hyundai Motor offered Schreyer a larger canvas but a more limited palette. He set his teams painstakingly to create a new family of distinctive cars, from small to large, modest to lavish. Both brands became bolder, creating products for Asia’s fast-growing youth market and America’s heartland consumers, most notably a series of compact SUVs and crossovers. These cars – including the Kia Soul and Sportage, and the Hyundai Tucson and Santa Fe – continue to sell well around the globe, bolstering corporate confidence for a brave next step.

Like all heavy industries, car makers work many years in advance. Hyundai Motor’s gears have been grinding in the background, for it entered 2021 with such a raft of new products and announcements that at times it was hard to keep up. Last year, Wallpaper* bestowed a coveted Design Award on the 45 Concept (see W*153), a sleek mainstream electric car that proudly bore the influence of Giugiaro’s 1974 Pony Coupé concept – the precursor to the company’s first production car. Schreyer has long admired the Italian master and the 45 paid homage without being slavishly retro. Instead, it made an emotional connection to the technology of tomorrow – the electric car – and the unencumbered optimism of the past. For the first time, a Hyundai expressed the emotional pull of design, that indefinable cocktail of form, function, innovation, even nostalgia.

The 45 has now reached production as the IONIQ 5, the first in a series of IONIQ-branded vehicles spearheading Hyundai Motor’s push for full electrification. Next »
year it will be joined by the IONIQ 6, a saloon previewed by the swooping Hyundai Prophecy, a little-seen concept. Both cars share a platform but have very different body styles. Variation has always been a big selling point of a flexible EV platform, but Hyundai Motor is practically alone in its willingness to explore this. SangYup Lee, the brand’s senior vice president and head of Hyundai’s Global Design Center, used the Prophecy to make the point that the company is moving away from the decades-old ‘Russian Doll’ approach to car design, still exemplified by BMW and Mercedes-Benz. Instead, every model will be an outlier. Even Hyundai Motor’s newest minivan, the Staria, shakes up this most conservative of sectors with a monolithically minimal approach to exterior design. As hire purchase gives way to subscription services, brands with design diversity are far more attractive to customers who choose their vehicle according to ever-changing needs.

Although EVs are the fastest road to a diverse product portfolio, Hyundai Motor is hedging its bets with a $6.7bn investment in hydrogen technology. The world’s first mass-produced hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle (FCEV) was the Hyundai iX35. The company currently sells the bespoke Nexo FCEV and is pushing for trucks, buses and cargo ships to pivot to hydrogen in the next two decades. Simultaneously, Kia is being transformed, with a new design language, corporate identity and brand manifesto. The thrust of the latter is that Kia will ‘move beyond being a traditional car manufacturer to [become] a mobility brand’. This push is led by the new EV6, an elegant yet practical EV that marks a distinct break from preceding Kia models.

Hyundai Motor is also committed to far-reaching projects like urban air mobility, developing a mock-up of a personal air vehicle with Uber. Designed to connect with a network of landing hubs and shuttles that get passengers to their final destination, the company expects to be swooping over cities such as LA and Seoul by the end of this decade. With a background in engineering, Hyundai Motor is better placed than most manufacturers to predict the investment and infrastructure required for such a project. And in yet another sign that it is thinking far, far ahead, last year it acquired a majority stake in robotics firm Boston Dynamics, the world’s most adept builder of androids.

In the space of 15 years, Hyundai Motor has transformed itself into a brand with a truly credible sci-fi pedigree. While we can expect a few more years of SUV dominance (there’s no chance of an asteroid that’ll decimate those dinosaurs overnight), the company is well positioned to benefit from mobility’s transition from a product into a service. What’s more, its scale suggest it can go it alone. The combination of design, desire and an ability to effect global change means Hyundai Motor is a name to watch. *hyundai.com; kia.com*
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ONE FINE MESH

Natalia Vodianova and Pentatonic unveil their new high-tech, sustainable mask design

PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT WRITTLE  WRITER: ROSA BERTOLI
Design firm Pentatonic and entrepreneur and philanthropist Natalia Vodianova have launched Masuku, a new brand offering an innovative and sustainable mask concept. Named after the Japanese word for ‘mask’, Masuku nods to the importance of the face mask in Asian cultures, where it is commonly worn as a sign of respect for the community’s health. Its initial goal to create an anti-pollution mask has acquired new urgency in this pandemic; and its inaugural product, Masuku One, combines cutting-edge technological innovation and a sleek design.

Vodianova began to search for a sustainable alternative to everyday masks in 2016, which led her to connect with Pentatonic, a design and technology innovator whose projects have material research at their core. The studio has created objects from recycled smartphone glass, cigarette filters and e-waste, also working on objects and furniture designs with the likes of Snarkitecture and Pharrell Williams.

‘Natalia and I first met in 2018; at that point she and her team had already scoped the mask market for sustainable suppliers,’ recalls Johann Boedecker, CEO and co-founder of Pentatonic. ‘But there was simply nothing out there that lived up to Natalia’s vision of a truly well-designed and absolutely environmental mask.’ The pair joined forces with the aim of reinventing the category ‘from the ground up’, and after two years of development, Masuku was born.

‘As living beings, we need air even more than water or shelter but, due to a rise of allergies, air pollution and increased risk of pandemics, it is quickly becoming a risk factor too,’ continues Boedecker. The team’s focus was to create masks that become an effortless essential in our lives, much like sunscreen and filtered water.

The Masuku One features a ‘spacer mesh’ fabric cover, made from 100 per cent recycled performance polymer and optimised for airflow. The material is heat-pressed into a shell-like shape and equipped with soft guard fabric on the side in contact with the skin. The ear-loops are also made from recycled materials, and feature four 360-degree joints for a personalised fit. Every material is either bio-based or recyclable at the end of its life, and every manufacturing aspect was calibrated to achieve maximum comfort and carefully considered with sustainability in mind. ‘When I started the project, I knew that developing a highly sophisticated air filtration system was pointless if not fully sustainable at the core,’ explains Vodianova. ‘Today our masks offer a truly safe and comfortable breathing experience, with no impact on the planet.’

Boedecker notes that readily available recyclable filters did not offer an adequate performance, but ‘with our high-end compostable polymer filtration membrane we finally struck gold. We built the daily range and the Masuku One filter around that innovation: compostable filtration using over 100 times less filtration material by weight than common mask filters.’ To produce the masks’ nano-fibre filtration material, the company set up a state-of-the-art AirLab in Yorkshire, with further nearby locations dedicated to assembly and production of Masuku products.

‘Between the fit and comfort, filtration and breathability, we created a mask that you can wear for many hours a day without undue inconvenience,’ he continues. ‘We also invested a lot of time in creating very complex tooling to have three-dimensionally curved surfaces without creases or folds. So the outer fabric is beautifully contoured and sharp.’

Concludes Vodianova: ‘The air we breathe affects every organ and cell in our bodies. I sincerely hope, in the future, masks will not be needed. Until then, we want Masuku to be the most technological, sustainable option to breathe clean air, while respecting it.’

Masuku One, £49 (£22 for monthly subscription), masuku.com
This page, designer Mario Tsai with a special acrylic edition of his 'Grid' bench at his Hangzhou studio, in a former factory complex near the city's picturesque West Lake. Opposite, the 'Grid' bench, with Tsai's dog BoJack in the background. Made using strips of 5mm-thick plywood, the bench was inspired by the processing of pixels in the formation of digital images.
When Mario Tsai is not on the road for fairs or factory visits, he spends most of his time in his studio in a suburb of Hangzhou, just a two-hour drive south-west of Shanghai. ‘I found space and serenity here to do my work, while maintaining reasonable proximity to the city,’ he says. Tsai was born in Hubei, central China, and there was not much in his early years to suggest that he might become one of the country’s most promising designers. ‘I had a very simple countryside childhood,’ he recalls, ‘but I remember a scene on television of an architect walking down the road holding rolled blueprints; I was mesmerised.’

In the early 2010s, he says, the concept of ‘independent designers’ was virtually unknown in China, yet ‘there were a lot of furniture companies’...
‘My time spent working at factories taught me how to execute ideas with the least amount of material to achieve maximal results’

in Shenzhen and Dongguan serving the overheated real-estate market, and there was a great demand for novelty.’ His first job, after graduating from Beijing Forestry University’s College of Materials Science and Technology, was at one of those enormous enterprises churning out furniture for the mass property market; but instead of designing, he was tasked with engineering the products and their corresponding manufacturing processes, and with producing technical drawings so detailed and lucid that all factory workers, trained or not, could make sense of them. He did not appreciate quite how formative this experience would be to his future career until he set up his own studio in 2014. It didn’t take Tsai long to carve out his niche. In 2015, he brought the studio’s first collection (including a prototype ‘Flying’ shelf, a metal shelf that played with basic shapes and the idea of balance) to Ambiente in Frankfurt, and the following year to Greenhouse, the emerging talents section at Stockholm Furniture & Light Fair, where he landed his first European clients. He has since worked with the likes of Shang Xia, Northern, Woud and Cedit. His best-known work, the 2018 ‘Insert’ table for Ferm Living, comprises a slender oval top supported by intersecting geometric forms (a coffee table option launched last autumn). To date, Tsai is still one of a select few Chinese designers who receive commissions from global furniture brands.

Like most Chinese design studios in China, Tsai manages his own label and runs a direct-to-consumer business in the country’s burgeoning home decoration and furniture market (worth $740bn according to a 2018 study by Chinese financial news service Yicai). Last year, he joined forces with Shenzhen Furniture Association, the organiser of Shenzhen Creative Week, to launch Designew, an initiative established to help local designers, what we create reflects different aspects of modern China – be it the technological advancement or social landscape,’ says Tsai. ‘My experience defines me, and my identity comes through in my design.’

His ‘Mazha’ lighting system was derived from the eponymous cross-legged folding stool (first recorded in the 1st century) that still adorns street corners today. The stool’s simple folding mechanism became the system’s backbone. Tsai wanted precisely three components in the equation – LED lighting tubes, metal poles and wire – to constitute an infinitely modular system. ‘My time spent at factories taught me how to execute ideas with the least amount of material and energy consumption to achieve maximal results,’ he says. His belief in stripping off anything unnecessary in a design led to him being identified as a minimalist. ‘I would not label myself as such, but this final touch makes almost all of my work look clean and intuitive,’ he explains. Clear structure also means longevity and low maintenance – components of the intricate system can be replaced individually and reconfigured easily – which contributes to its sustainable qualities.

The starting point for most of Tsai’s work is research into the nuances of materials and technology, and how they can be adapted to more efficient production methods. This approach is apparent in the ‘Press’ and ‘Gongzheng’ tables, respectively constructed by bending sheets of steel and interlocking aluminium panels that can be extended indefinitely. His ‘Grid’ bench mimics image pixellation with 5mm-thick plywood sheets, while ‘Electricity Light’, which was to be launched at Milan Design Week last year, creates an optical illusion of an electric current flowing mid-air. It uses new ultra-thin COB LED strips, which Tsai believes will stimulate new thinking in lighting design.

Yet for one of his latest projects, Tsai has turned away from modern technology to explore the most primitive means of production, using only fire and an axe to create the ‘Origin’ collection. Imperfect wood, reclaimed from factories, was carved into approximate shapes before being set on fire. The resulting designs are unpredictable, with any mistakes in the process eventually adding to the uniqueness of each piece. With international travel still largely stalled or impractical at the moment, Tsai has been looking closer to home for opportunities to present his work. ‘I am thinking of taking the team to the Gobi Desert,’ the designer says, ‘to make a short film or even a virtual exhibition, to experience and seek inspiration from its extreme austerity and primeval simplicity.’ We look forward to the results.∗

* mariotsai.studio

Opposite, clockwise from top left, cut by axe then burnt, Tsai’s ‘Origin’ bench is part of a collection for Designew, conceived as a reflection on primitive tools; an aluminium desk tray/paperweight from Tsai’s 2017 ‘Components’ series sits atop the ‘Rong’ shelf, also for Designew; various components for the ‘Mazha 3.0’ lighting system; a pen rest from the ‘Components’ series is displayed on a ‘Grid’ bench.
A new wave-shaped climate change centre in western Denmark is pushing the boat out to tackle environmental issues.
The town of Lemvig, on Denmark’s west coast, may be small and far away from the capital, but it aspires to play a vital role in the nation’s efforts to fight climate change. Aggressive storms and rising sea levels have heightened the risk of flooding, prompting the town to redevelop an old industrial area on its waterfront: adding a flood wall, installing a new promenade, spaces for new businesses, and most importantly, an international climate centre, Klimatorium, to offer a meeting point for residents and tourists, educate the public about the climate emergency, and support Denmark’s role as an exporter of climate solutions.

Commissioned by the town council to create this centrepiece, architects 3XN devised a two-storey building that makes a visual statement while keeping to a limited budget and environmental footprint. The landmark feature is a wave-shaped wooden pocket, caving into the southern façade of the building and facing a skate park by the Copenhagen-based studio Effeckt, completed in 2013. Clad in local pine, the wave is smoothly contoured for the most part, but tiered at the base to provide seating. As Jan Ammundsen, senior partner and head of design at 3XN explains, the initial intention was simple: to create a sheltered spot that...
When you build an international climate office on the outskirts of Denmark, you must create something quite unique and iconic

would be available to both the building’s users and passers-by, bathed in sunlight but protected from westerly winds across the water. ‘We are hoping to create a small possibility for them to sit, enjoy the moment, and speak to each other,’ says Ammundsen. ‘It’s a way for the building to give a little bit back to the town.’

Inspired by their design of Stockholm’s Odenplan metro station, the architects decided that, rather than erecting a standalone pavilion, they could push this rest spot into the building for greater visual impact. A wave form made sense given the waterfront location and Lemvig’s maritime heritage, and also serves as a sharp geometric contrast with the otherwise rectilinear architecture. The rest of the building is modest and pragmatic. The lower level, which accommodates a reception area, café and a space for temporary exhibitions (currently ‘Climate Without Borders’, with an emphasis on local solutions such as Lemvig’s flood wall), is wrapped in floor-to-ceiling glass. This transparency has dual benefits: it puts the Klimatorium’s activities on display; and it offers unobstructed views of the surrounding landscape and water. The upper level, where the workspaces are located, is cloaked in a lamella skin, while blackened pine panels sit perpendicular to the generously proportioned windows, focusing attention on the warmer natural tones of the wave structure. ‘We didn’t want it to be an all-glass building,’ recalls Ammundsen. ‘Practically, we don’t want it to overheat, but the other reason for using wood is that we wanted the building to have a certain mass and robustness.’ This part of Denmark is known for a down-to-earth approach to construction, with unpretentious buildings made from functional materials, so it was important for 3XN to do the same.

The use of timber continues into the building’s interior. The back of the wooden wave structure – which, in a fitting nod to Lemvig’s shipyards, resembles the look of a ship’s hull – is left exposed to add visual intrigue. A wide staircase is in light wood, as are the slatted ceiling panels. The architects initially hoped for a full timber structure,
but that proved unrealistic due to cost and water issues. Instead they settled on a concrete core (which is easy to produce and maintain), while also minimising the amount of aluminium and steel in order to reduce carbon emissions. 'It’s a way to push for a sustainable solution within a building that is all about climate change,' says Ammundsen.

Despite limited public access during the pandemic, 3XN’s building is already gaining recognition, including being named building of the year for 2020 in Denmark’s Årets Byggeri awards. ‘It’s a project that fulfilled all our wishes,’ says Lars Holmegaard, the Klimatorium’s CEO. ‘It’s a building that’s close to nature – even when you’re inside, you feel the interaction with nature and the ocean. The wave structure has been even more valuable than we could imagine. People have really embraced it as a place to sit and relax. When you build an international climate office on the outskirts of Denmark, you must create something quite unique, something iconic. This building is great for a small town like Lemvig.’

Asked if there are any elements of the Klimatorium that have influenced upcoming 3XN projects, Ammundsen says, ‘You can make a big impact by doing something basic and giving it a bit of a twist. It’s a good thing to have some constraints and use them properly. It can make things simpler, and maybe even nicer if you’re lucky.’

*klimatorium.dk; 3xn.com*
Yves Behar founded Fuseproject in San Francisco 22 years ago. The Swiss designer has been closely associated with rapidly evolving tech products and services ever since. His journey from Swiss punk to design guru effectively mirrored Silicon Valley’s own evolution from a chaotic, DIY-infused alt-cultural ecosystem into the engine room of the world economy. On the way, Fuseproject has had triumphs and missteps, dead ends and diversions, but every project is infused with the utopian ethos that technology – done correctly – is a powerful force for good.

A new monograph, *Yves Behar: Designing Ideas*, charts the process behind his work, and is replete with images of prototypes and concept sketches. ‘Designing Ideas is not about a marketing solution – the final glossy picture – but showing the slow, winding road, the journey of design,’ says Behar. Rather than present Fuseproject’s output in chronological fashion, the book groups it into six sections: Reducing, Sensing, Transforming, Giving, Humanizing and Scaling. Each section captures Behar’s peerless ability to shape and direct how a product or service can best be streamlined for our new era of digitally driven, algorithmically guided consumption.

‘The strength of Fuseproject comes out of the original concept: to fuse disciplines together in the service of an idea,’ Behar says. ‘Being multidisciplinary is what creates these fully fledged solutions. The other thing that has always defined the studio is how we marry this approach to the world of start-ups, where everything has to be created from scratch.’

Although the turn of the century was a fertile time for start-up culture, vast numbers of ‘visionary’ ideas were never translated into physical form. ‘Design has had a tremendous evolution over the last 30 years,’ says Behar. ‘I came to Silicon Valley in the mid-1990s and design was not on the radar. Having studied in the European modern design tradition, I was interested in the opportunity to show how much value design could add to what were mostly engineered products. Design was seen as a decorative last-minute coat of paint.’

So what changed? The bursting of the first dotcom bubble was about the over-supply...
and over-valuation of services and platforms, rather than tangible, physical things. Ultimately, it would be studios like Behar’s that gave shape to the emerging genre of smart devices. ‘Design in the larger sense really became central to the success of a lot of companies,’ he says. ‘We experienced how it went from being an option to being an integral part of building a business.’

As the book’s sections imply, Behar believes strongly in design’s transformative power. ‘There are critical 21st-century ideas like sustainability, accessibility, and diversity, all of which can be accelerated by design,’ he says. As a designer, ‘you are in a position to influence new ideas and new behaviours. I believe design is about speeding up the adoption of new ideas.’ Some of Fuseproject’s highest profile works have addressed these issues. The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project, which ran from 2005 to 2014, aimed to create hundreds of millions of learning machines for children in the developing world, at $100 per piece (W*107). It was fuelled by optimism: ‘That project showed design reaching out to people who weren’t being addressed by the industry,’ says Behar, calling the challenge ‘a true design adventure of the highest order’ in the book. Although the scheme didn’t have the global impact OLPC first predicted, 3.5 million devices were built. ‘I think it demonstrated that education and the digital divide is still a world-changing issue,’ Behar reflects. ‘The actual device was a cascade of decisions towards simplicity.’

Other projects have similar pioneering components. The ‘Sayl’ chair for Herman Miller (W*139) showed that low-carbon-footprint design can have a global audience, Behar notes, and the book’s ‘Reducing’ chapter chronicles many different approaches to packaging, production and presentation, and the ways in which design can help less be more. ‘Design is not a linear path. You have to let the ideas and insights and discoveries inform the original premise,’ says Behar.

Over the decades, the designer has also turned entrepreneur, not just shaping products but creating whole companies, such as August, a maker of home security systems that he co-founded with Jason Johnson in 2012 (W*178). Advances in manufacturing and distribution have helped form this new ecosystem of smaller makers. ‘As a designer, to have your concept globally accepted is an amazing thing,’ he acknowledges.

Fuseproject has flourished during an era when the dumb physical object has been transcended by app-driven ‘smart’ devices, a product universe of tangentially related ‘things’. Behar is unperturbed about the transition, while insisting this is in the service of user experience. ‘I’ve always believed that tech should simply disappear. The experience should be only what someone sees and not what’s behind it,’ he says.
Newer products, like the ‘Snoo’ responsive baby cot, embody this belief in technology as a facilitator. ‘It’s wonderful to see how design can intersect with key life moments,’ Behar enthuses. ‘The cot shows how technology can address the needs of parents and babies. Although Snoo wasn’t designed to be a robot that looks after your baby, I’d use this image as a provocative idea, because ultimately our design is the opposite – it just looks like a beautiful object. The tech isn’t obvious.’

From 2015 to 2019, Fuseproject was a partner on the Spring technology accelerator programme, which supported entrepreneurs across East Africa and South Asia seeking to improve the lives of adolescent girls, and was developed with the Nike Foundation and the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. Behar explains how the ethos of social enterprise is about reversing the traditional aid model in favour of funding and seeding local ideas. In Spring’s case, designing these support systems mattered far more than the physical appearance of objects. That said, the object – however discreet, elegant, elaborate or connected – is here to stay. ‘The idea that software will kill the physicality of things has been around for quite a while. The truth is that it just hasn’t been the case,’ Behar says. ‘Software is in everything – even in [something as apparently simple as] our “Leaf” lamp for Herman Miller (2006). I see the technology and software as an ingredient, a tool, not the be-all and end-all. Sure, there are certain things that we are less and less inclined to physically own. But we will always be really excited about new form factors. I want to be a designer who puts the human connection at the very centre of people’s lives – that belief has always animated my work.’

Yves Behar: Designing Ideas, $85, published by Thames & Hudson, available from 20 July, thamesandhudsonusa.com; fuseproject.com
Parcel force

The delivery networks of the future are on the right track

Moving stuff around cities is becoming an even more intractable problem than moving people. While personal travel plummeted during the pandemic, urban traffic remained remarkably constant as deliveries took up the slack. Even in pre-pandemic times, Transport for London predicted that the city’s light commercial traffic would increase by 22 per cent between 2011 and 2031, and this was before the flourishing of digital infrastructure that enabled takeaways and one-hour deliveries at the swipe of a screen.

The key issue now is reducing the impact of all that at-home retail therapy. And the uptake of kinder, smarter commercial vehicles. The next few years will see several pure electric delivery vehicles come to the market. While the most familiar four-wheeled beasts of burden are slowly switching over to electric power, a new generation of purpose-built commercial EVs is threatening to disrupt their comfortable ubiquity. An all-electric Ford Transit, a mainstay of light delivery in Europe since 1965, won’t be with us until 2023. Thanks to a link-up with VW, it will be built alongside the electric evolution of the iconic 1950 Volkswagen Type 2. The Ford-Volkswagen collaboration demonstrates the sheer scale of investment needed to get these vehicles out of the concept stage and into the hands of consumers. Volkswagen’s commercial vehicle arm is seeking to make its new machine a fully autonomous vehicle, using tech from the American company Argo AI (owned in part by Ford and Volkswagen).

The major players can also afford to build innovation sandpits, where new ideas can be tried out before being released into the wild. Volkswagen is using the Dodecanese island of Astypalea as an autonomous playground, in collaboration with the Greek government. Maik Stephan, head of business development at Volkswagen and Astypalea’s project manager, describes it as an ‘e-mobility lab and a lighthouse project for sustainable mobility’, a place to ‘show and test how networked, climate-friendly and electrified mobility already works today’.

This low-key initiative could end up radically changing the whole mobility ecosystem. Volkswagen will bring its entire EV range to the island – from the ID.3 and ID.4 cars to electric scooters by its Spanish subsidiary Seat. ‘In total, some 1,000 electric vehicles will replace about 1,500 vehicles with combustion engines,’ says Stephan. ‘Our charging company Elli will install the infrastructure and we’ll also bring in ride- and vehicle-sharing.’ Stephan says they will soon be working on 12 city partnerships, including arrangements with Hanover, Barcelona and Hefei.

While Volkswagen and Ford fervently hope that the small businesses and delivery networks of tomorrow will simply swap their vans for EV equivalents, more...
and more challengers are entering the arena. British start-up Arrival has ambitious plans for zero-emission vehicles, from buses to vans. ‘We’re developing vehicles as well as micro-factories in the UK and America,’ says Jeremy Offer, the company’s chief design officer. ‘The whole premise is that we can manufacture wherever the demand is. This is a market ripe for disruption.’ Arrival believes that even innovative companies like Tesla still have a very traditional manufacturing approach. Arrival is being nothing if not bold, committing to manufacturing and designing every single component that goes into each vehicle, as well as building the factories that supply them.

Offer describes Arrival’s two products as having ‘more in common with a piece of architecture than transport’. The ground-up approach is facilitated by a flat-floor modular platform. Need a bigger bus? Simply add a module. Acknowledging there are different cultural approaches to bus travel in London, Mumbai and São Paulo, Arrival can adapt its vehicle interiors to suit local needs. ‘We can scale the vehicle up or down, add or remove seats,’ says Offer. Thus far, Arrival’s biggest contract is with UPS, which has ordered 10,000 vans, a deal reported to be worth around £340m. Even when resplendent in UPS brown, the Arrival van is a cut above a conventional vehicle. With almost infinite customisation possibilities, it is utilitarian in a true, no-nonsense kind of way.

Arrival is not the sole disruptor on the block. Californian start-up Canoo is ramping up interest in its proposed multi-purpose delivery vehicle. There’s also the Zero from Sweden’s Volta Trucks, a large commercial vehicle with a low-set driver’s cab to improve awareness of cyclists and pedestrians. The Chinese-owned British manufacturer LEVC is offering the VN5, essentially a London cab without windows, while there are smaller players seeking to monetise the ‘last mile’ transport puzzle, where a light footprint is far more important than bulk. As part of our Re-Made project (W*256), Wallpaper* helped assemble an elite team – including designer Konstantin Grcic, electric bike maker Cake, Norwegian aluminium company Hydro, and EV brand Polestar – to build the Re:Move prototype. Grcic’s vision of a one-person electric transporter is minimal in appearance but maximal in scope, a lightweight way of shifting 275kg of goods with zero emissions.

Autonomy is the other elephant in the room. Ambitious plans for ‘smart cities’ have been put on the perpetual backburner. The environments best suited to automation are smooth-flowing highways and the uniform predictability of the American suburbs. As complexity increases, practicality plummets; expect quiet campuses to be the first place where autonomy takes hold. Stop-start delivery traffic might be guided by computer, but the final act of delivery will remain a resolutely human activity for a while longer.

It’s tempting to imagine a future where traffic noise has evaporated and anything larger than a bicycle has become a robotised servant to our logistical whims. But it’ll be a long haul to change the shape of urban logistics. For example, America still has a bottomless hunger for pick-up trucks; around three-quarters of a million Ford F150s alone are sold every year. Yet within a few years, there will finally be some credible electric alternatives, including GM’s Hummer EV, the Tesla Cybertruck and the Rivian R1T. None of these vehicles will do much for urban commerce and congestion, but they’ll help hasten the universal acceptance of EVs.

The other perennial question – and one which car makers are unsurprisingly loathe to address – is whether cities even need quite so many vehicles. Across Europe, the lockdowns resulted in an initial reduction in private car use, and many governments seized the chance to make these changes permanent. Paris is planning to turn the Champs-Élysées into a mile long garden by 2030, and cities including London, Milan and Dublin are implementing increasingly stringent car-reduction schemes. Copenhagen and Oslo are well ahead of the pack, while Hamburg announced its intention to eventually go car-free way back in 2014. The petrol engine is unlikely to have a future in Western cities after the end of this decade.

That won’t necessarily do much for traffic. In the time it took to write this article, the doorbell rang countless times, announcing delivery after delivery, dumped on the doorstep by a number of competing companies, while a diesel van idled away in the street. These are now as vital a part of the city’s infrastructure as water mains or broadband connection. Cities have spent well over a century being bent out of shape by the motor car; now it is time for urbanism to fight back and dictate the form of the vehicles deemed calm and considerate enough to deserve a place within them. ★

‘We can manufacture wherever the demand is. This is a market ripe for disruption’
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This page, Connolly Taylor's latest project, Maryland House, features a bespoke staircase in red steel plate that seems to hover between the three floors.

Opposite, located a stone's throw from the commercial and transport hub of Stratford, the new house sits at the end of a row of Victorian terraces.
TIGHT SPOT

Set in an unassuming corner of east London, Remi Connolly-Taylor’s bijou first build is a perfect fit

PHOTOGRAPHY: JAMES RETIEF  PORTRAIT: TINO CHIWARIRO  WRITER: ELLIE STATHAKI
Tucked away on an unassuming street, within a quiet residential pocket off the beaten track in east London, Remi Connolly-Taylor’s first new build cuts a distinctly contemporary figure. Marking the end of a residential terrace, the bold structure feels at once modern and respectful to the low Victorian housing it sits next to. Maryland House, named after its namesake neighbourhood in Stratford, is a highly tailored live/work space, designed precisely for the needs of its dynamic creator and her young business.

The site presented a number of opportunities to the architect. ‘We were attracted to the location, particularly being close to the well-connected and developing hub of Stratford,’ says Connolly-Taylor. Its small footprint (a mere 76.5 sq m) meant ‘we knew the house had no choice but to be different and unique. We were excited by the possibilities of how far we could push the envelope (both physical and theoretical) to accommodate modern lifestyles that weren’t currently being reflected in the borough.’

According to Connolly-Taylor, infill sites offer exciting development opportunities for architects, a view that is shared by many studios in the capital, who seek land for housing projects and increasingly end up building in neglected, awkward-sized plots, back gardens and redeveloped garage sites. The Maryland House site used to be a small, empty lot filled with rubbish and debris from surrounding construction. Now, it holds a two-level home with a studio on top, and is clad in London stock brick that mirrors the surrounding materials and colour tones of the neighbourhood’s mix of Victorian and post-war housing. With only 100 sq m of internal space, size played a key role in design decisions. ‘Maryland House was designed around what we could and couldn’t do,’ says Connolly-Taylor. Working with local manufacturers and craftsmen, the project developed into a jewel box of a home, ticking all the boxes for efficiency, functionality, spaciousness and a clean, fairly minimalist aesthetic.

The ground floor contains the master bedroom suite and a guest room, while the residence’s main living space unfolds beneath, in a majestic lower level that makes you forget you are partially underground. Tall ceilings (following a 4m dig) and polished concrete floors lend a sense of grandeur to the open-plan kitchen, dining and living room within. These spill out into a small but carefully curated courtyard that also acts as a light well. A utility room and bathroom are slotted in off the bespoke kitchen that is still to come. The descent to the lower level is via a slim, red, custom-fitted, 4mm steel plate staircase, made without any stringers and seemingly hovering weightlessly between floors. The minimalist feature is one of several bespoke fittings, designed with the unusually compact interiors in mind.

Connolly-Taylor’s home office on the first floor is bijou but functional and filled with light. A rear terrace connects it to the outdoors and offers framed views onto foliage and the Stratford Hotel. This workspace was, in fact, key to the whole project’s development, explains the architect: ‘It was about coming up with a new solution for workspace within the home. It needed to feel like an inspiring space to want to go to, and that allowed for flexibility. Positioning it on the first floor allowed it to be this sort of light box, but doing so also turned the traditional
‘We knew the house had no choice but to be different and unique. We were excited by how far we could push the envelope’

“hierarchy” of a home upside down. I spend a lot of time working from home (pre-Covid and especially now), so it was important that this space be inspiring and transformable. It was also important for it to feel like you’re entering into a new space within the home, to have that mental separation of work and home life for wellbeing.’ Her favourite space? ‘It’s a toss-up between the studio space and the basement,’ she says.

Connolly-Taylor’s practice, Remi.C.T Studio, was founded in 2017. With a main base in Hackney Wick’s Here East, she and her small, six-strong team have applied their cross-disciplinary expertise to commercial fit-outs, placemaking projects, and artist studios. In the pipeline are a series of infill houses around London, a historical house restoration and extension in Reading, and a series of international schemes that span commercial and hospitality. ‘We also have an ongoing research project we’re hoping to turn into an exhibition once Covid is over,’ adds Connolly-Taylor, who can now add an original, thoughtfully appointed home to her budding portfolio.
This page, a view of the spa from the front reception deck, with a bench by Adam Birch, who spent seven months on site and carved more than 150 timber sculptures for Xigera.

Opposite, the Fire Lounge, with a ‘Lily’ fireplace by Bronze Age Studio; candleholders by Trevor Potter & Southern Guild; ‘Imbizo’ side tables by Chuma Maweni; Halio Archeopetro panels by Stanislaw Trzebinski; and a IsiNqolamthi ceramic sculpture by Madoda Fani.
Delta force

An exceptional Okavango safari lodge is a lush showcase for the best of African design

WRITER: ROSA BERTOLI

Newly unveiled in Botswana’s Okavango River Delta, Xigera Safari Lodge is as much ‘a living gallery of African talent’ as a celebration of the natural landscape. Created by the Tollman family, of the Red Carnation hotel group, together with architect Anton De Kock and architectural designer Philip Fourie, the lodge boasts a remarkable collection of contemporary African art, design and craft, curated by Toni Tollman (the group’s director of design and projects), in collaboration with South African design gallery Southern Guild.

‘Xigera Safari Lodge is our love letter to the magic of the African bush, the culmination of a lifelong dream,’ says Tollman. ‘We know our guests will leave utterly transformed by Africa’s life-enhancing beauty.’

Two years in the making, the project features one of the most ambitious collections of contemporary African design, with furniture, site-specific installations, objects and artworks by Porky Hefer, Atang Tshikare, Zizipho Poswa, Dokter and Misses, and many more. Joining the work of elite furniture makers, including Mabeo, are pieces by local social enterprises such as Woza Moya, a project of the Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust that creates traditional beadwork pieces with a contemporary twist, and Coral & Hive, a South African female-powered weaving collective.

De Kock designed the Xigera lodge as a series of pavilions on stilts, with undulating canopied roofs inspired by the wings of birds in flight. The buildings, 95 per cent solar-powered, are immersed in nature, surrounded by a maze of waterways, floodplains, riverine forests, tawny grasslands and verdant papyrus wetlands – all of which can be enjoyed from the property’s numerous outdoor decks.

Further design elements that help connect the property with the outdoors include a baobab-shaped tree house, a custom water feature in Corten steel by De Kock, a totemic fire-pit sculpture by artist-blacksmith Conrad Hicks, and Porky Hefer-designed woven ‘nests’.

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Communal areas and the 12 guest suites all showcase contemporary African creativity, both in terms of the artworks on display and the functional elements of the guests’ stay, such as the mouth-blown glassware, made by South Africa’s Ngwenya craft team and featuring recycled glass, or the place mats by Gone Rural, an Eswatini textile enterprise offering employment to local women while promoting cultural heritage.

The bar features a colourful sunken lounge anchored by a copper sculpture, designed by Toni Tollman and made by South African foundry Bronze Age Studio in the shape of a lily, Xigera’s logo and a recurrent motif throughout the site. Another highlight are the expressive terracotta seats from Andile Dyalvane’s ‘Idladla’ collection, which are placed around Pretoria-based Philippe Bousquet’s modernist chess set on one of the decks, reflecting Xigera’s eclectic mix of styles and craft techniques.

‘There are so many spectacular artworks at Xigera, but what stands out is the considered attention to every detail, and the craftsmanship in each and every item,’ says Southern Guild’s co-founder Trevyn McGowan. ‘Almost every surface, every object has been handcrafted to celebrate the geography and ecology of the Delta.’

xigera.com; southernguild.co.za
On a busy stretch of West Broadway, in New York’s well-heeled Tribeca neighbourhood, a slatted wood oasis surreptitiously stands behind the historic façade of one of the area’s many cast-iron buildings. Inside, a fundamental mix of materials (wood, painted brick, and echoes of the cast-iron façade and industrial steel elements that have been intentionally left exposed) create a tranquil environment — certainly not what you would expect from a typical hair salon.

This elegant milieu is, in fact, home to Spiral (x,y,z), a hair salon founded by beauty entrepreneur and innovator Lorraine Massey, who most notably founded the cult salon Devachan and its DevaCurl product line, specifically catering to curly hair. Designed by architect Kazem Naderi, of New York firm Nad Projects, the Spiral (x,y,z) space mirrors its founder’s vision and sense of individuality to a tee.

‘This was a traditional old loft space. When Lorraine took it over, there were a lot of functions that she wanted to go in, even though the space was a nice size,’ recalls the Iranian-born Naderi, who worked for a number of practices before setting up on his own in 2000. ‘The ceilings are about 15ft high, with amazing natural light, so if I had put up walls to accommodate all the needs, it would have ended up being like cubicles and feeling claustrophobic. Light and air are very important to me, so I came up with this idea that all the walls would be formed using a semi-transparent slatted wood system.’

In Naderi’s hands, the ground floor space has been transformed into an alluringly tranquil oasis, equipped with four hair-cutting stations, three hair-washing beds and four hair-drying stations. The beds, a concept that Massey pioneered at Devachan, have been taken to the next level here by Naderi and reimagined with clean lines, accompanied by custom-designed Corian washbasins with rounded corners that prevent water from accumulating. At each hair-cutting station, a statuesque mirror, fabricated from stainless steel, hangs on hinges so that it can easily be manoeuvred, while an integrated storage drawer allows styling tools to be neatly concealed from view when not in use.

Most distinctive of all are the four hair-drying pods that have been specially developed for the space. ‘This is Lorraine’s brainchild,’ says Naderi. ‘It’s inspired by’
Lorraine’s whole philosophy is derived from nature, so the idea that the structure naturally changes really appealed to her. Her experience of being in the basement of her house and having warm air blow on top of her hair. I had my mechanical engineer design the system and I designed the physical layout to accommodate it. The heat is at a very comfortable temperature. It’s very soft, gentle warm air that doesn’t dry out the hair.

With all the various functions establishing the rhythm of the space, Naderi’s use of slatted wood couldn’t be more appropriate. Composed of 1.5in-wide oak pieces, which are installed 1.5in apart, the interior structure was assembled, piece by piece, entirely on site. ‘Lorraine’s whole philosophy is derived from nature,’ he explains. ‘I decided to use oak, which is strong enough to accommodate everything, and I wasn’t going to finish it. Oak ages and darkens a little bit over time, so the idea that the structure naturally changes really appealed to her.’

Although predominantly see-through, the slatted structure features solid panels at specific heights to preserve clients’ privacy without feeling overly enclosed. Naderi says, ‘I wanted the clients to enjoy a feeling of the outside when they were seated in the chair, but I also didn’t want them to feel exposed. The height and placements of these solid walls means that no one can look at you nor can you see anybody else. The panels are then taller where the beds are.’

Pulled away from the space’s original brick walls, which Naderi recovered by removing layers of existing sheet rock, and built around its original cast-iron Corinthian columns, the wooden structure creates a dynamic visual dialogue that respectfully nods to the location’s past. ‘I wanted it to have the human hand and personal touch in it as much as possible,’ says Naderi. ‘And I think that, in that way, it has succeeded.’

spiralxyz.com; kazemnaderi.com
CLOSE QUARTERS

A new home in India is a machine for multigenerational living, offering spaces to both meet and retreat

PHOTOGRAPHY: EDMUND SUMNER  WRITER: SHAWN ADAMS
Behind the main entrance to the Plain Ties house, in Surat, Gujarat, is a circular volume, housing a modular ground floor lounge and a sheltered roof terrace.
Inside the typical Indian home, you can usually find grandparents scurrying behind their grandchildren while business meetings happen in private quarters. In this part of the world, three—sometimes even four—generations often live under one roof, creating a complex interplay of daily lives. While cultural attitudes towards multigenerational living are gradually shifting, and families now often choose to set up independent units, Matharoo Associates, an award-winning practice based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, has retained this traditional living arrangement in its latest project, Plain Ties.

Set in Surat, a Gujarati port city known for its diamond-cutting workshops, Plain Ties is a sophisticated 9,130 sq ft residence that bridges modernity, tradition and a sense of experimentation. This is a house that places innovation at its core, quite literally. Gurjit Singh Matharoo, who founded Matharoo Associates in 1991, is known for his expertise beyond the world of architecture, designing motorcycles, cars and even mobile blood banks (W125), which enabled the firm to create a circular central lounge with moveable concrete walls that skillfully divide and unify the rooms. This raw, minimalist space, delicately illuminated by an adjoining skylight, is the heart of the home. 'This is the default space, where everyone comes together and feels connected,' explains Komal Matharoo, the principal architect on the project and Gurjit’s wife. 'The walls become space-making elements and act as an origin point for the horizontal and vertical axes of the building,’ she says. Around this zone are a kitchen, dining area, living room, verandas, and bedrooms for the grandparents, which all look out onto the garden.

The multigeneration dwelling is situated in a quiet neighbourhood that is free of compound walls. ‘The project's name has a dual meaning as it speaks to the rhythmic horizontal bands on the concrete surfaces, and the deep sense of kinship that permeates the building,’ says Gurjit. The scheme is a masterful array of freestanding concrete
Architecture
planes gracefully tied together by slender weather shades, creating a welcoming home that belongs to everyone. Komal aimed for each member of the household – a couple, their parents and two sons – to feel connected while simultaneously having areas to ‘retreat’.

The home is oriented towards an expansive public garden to the south, away from the towering apartments to the east and lofty compounds to the north. ‘We intended to design a structure that would turn its back to the built context and open up towards the rich landscape,’ says Komal. As you walk along the tree-lined main road to reach the house, it achieves a scale that is both human and inviting.

The site’s unstable black cotton soil meant the scheme required deep foundations. This allowed Matharoo Associates to create a meditation space, temple, gym, storage and staff areas, and a small private medical practice for one of the grandparents, all below ground. Streaks of light filter down as naked concrete walls playfully come alive through calculated sunken courts.

Inside, the slender concrete steps of the main staircase lead to a small light-filled library overlooking the open central space and main gathering point. Here, crisp Burma teak panels complement the robust black Cuddapah stone flooring. ‘From this space, there is a strong diagonal connection to the heart of the building,’ says Komal. Upstairs, the elegant curving stairs strategically tie together several bedrooms and eliminate the need for space-guzzling corridors. This produces opportunities for ‘communal collision’ as family members meander through the dwelling. By teaming up with structural design firm Rushabh Consultants, Matharoo Associates achieved clean column-and-beam-free rooms that create a strong open feel. This sense of fluidity is reinforced by Plain Ties’ lack of doors and meticulous use of daylight. As you travel up towards the apex of home, you are greeted by a spacious roof terrace that provides impressive views of the surrounding foliage. Acting as a private haven from the bustle of the lower levels.

A contemporary interpretation of the traditional Indian home, Plain Ties strikes an intricate balance between seclusion and interdependence. Through its refined central space, cleverly shifting walls and flowing interiors, it provides moments of togetherness while achieving pockets of privacy. At a time when multigenerational living is slowly fading in popularity, Matharoo Associates has successfully created a strong, contemporary house that preserves close-knit family ties.★

matharooassociates.com
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For more information about the awards and how to enter, visit: www.futureevents.uk/smartspaceawards
Hermès hits hyperdrive with a one-off design for McLaren’s futuristic Speedtail
The bespoke car's interiors and matching fitted luggage all feature soft fawn leather, signature saddle stitching and seam detailing.
The association between the automobile and fine leatherwork is long and distinguished, but it’s not always been about luxury. Many of the earliest high-end automobiles used leather for the exposed chauffeur’s seat, with the enclosed passenger compartment featuring a more precious – but not so weather-friendly – fabric finish. Hermès understands a thing or two about weatherproofing. The grand exterior luggage for cars and carriages, first created by Émile-Maurice Hermès at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the company’s experience in the nautical world, demanded leather of the highest grade and strength, as well as quality tanning and finishing skills. Those elements combined were the foundations of the company’s definition of luxury.

In recent years, Hermès has increased the focus and profile of its bespoke services. Under the directorship of the designer Axel de Beaufort, who joined the brand’s Bespoke and Special Projects Department in 2012, the sky is literally the limit, as the company has transferred its unique skills to practically any object you desire, whether it’s static, wheeled or winged. De Beaufort’s experience in naval architecture instilled in him an exceptional attention to detail, a skill he brings to the wide variety of Hermès’ special projects. ‘Every bespoke order comes through us, from interiors to aircraft to cars,’ he says from the workshop just outside Paris. ‘Other manufacturers don’t necessarily know that we have the experience to work on their products, but as soon as they visit, they understand.’

The latest project to cross the atelier’s threshold is this spectacular transformation of a McLaren Speedtail. There’s nothing remotely off-the-shelf about the Speedtail, the current flagship of McLaren’s Ultimate Series of hypercars. McLaren has decades of experience of handcrafting the fiendishly complex and advanced components that go into a Formula 1 car; its Ultimate Series translates that know-how into a machine for the road. Following on from the first Ultimate Series car, the Senna, the Speedtail is a limited-edition, hand-built, hybrid-powered three-seater, with just 106 units going into the garages of well-established collectors around the world. Hewn from carbon fibre and with a list price of £2.1m, the car doesn’t come with any optional extras – McLaren simply assumed that every customer would want to add their own personal touch.

Hermès’ treatment adds another dimension to what is already intriguingly rare and distinctive. ‘We’ve always worked on cars here at Hermès Bespoke and we’re increasingly working at the very high end of the market,’ says de Beaufort. ‘A client told us that he’d ordered a Speedtail from McLaren and that we could have a look. It’s a dreamlike sports car that looks as if it has just emerged from a science-fiction movie, so of course we were interested.’

Above, the Speedtail comes with a teardrop-shaped cabin, a dramatically elongated tail and a pair of dihedral doors. Opposite, the soft fawn leather is paired with hints of the blue and orange that have become McLaren’s signature colours.
‘Back in the 19th century, the Hermès family was known for being very high-tech, making extremely light harnesses for carriages’

De Beaufort and his team visited McLaren’s Technology Centre in Woking, UK, the Foster-designed HQ and factory where it designs and builds all its cars for road and track. ‘I loved the heritage of the brand,’ the designer says, emphasising that although on the surface this might look like a marriage of old and new, Hermès has always been at the cutting edge of its craft. ‘We also have a very strong heritage,’ he acknowledges, ‘but back in the 19th century, the Hermès family was known for being very high-tech, making extremely light harnesses for carriages. Hermès has a strong link to innovation – we are not just adding our leather to every single object, there is a process of research and reflection behind it. We have engineers on our team, for example.’

That said, the Speedtail project was still immensely complicated. ‘Usually we go to a manufacturer, look at the design, create a scheme and once the vehicle is in build, we are sent the pieces to finish in our workshop. Then they are returned for final assembly,’ says de Beaufort. ‘With Speedtail, McLaren sent the car here and it was in the workshop for several months. It was quite complicated for them because, once it returned to their factory, all the certification had to be redone. But they were amazing,’ he says. ‘Normally, only vintage cars come into the workshop. Having a car here means we can push things a bit further with the designers and craftsmen – it gives you more ideas about details.’

The three-seat interior of the Speedtail is finished in a luscious, rich and inviting Hermès leather. ‘I wanted to make this fully carbon-fibre machine feel warmer and more welcoming by putting fabric and leather elements where they wouldn’t normally be found,’ explains de Beaufort. ‘We can produce very thin leather, working with tenths of millimetres. We had to look at things like the ventilation grille – many small details that had to be very carefully considered so as to not affect the performance of the car.

‘Our leather will get better and softer over time. It is difficult to get this kind of leather in a contemporary car,’ he continues. ‘Manufacturers usually want a totally consistent colour. Of course, we have extremely high expectations of our leather, but very slight imperfections are part of its charm. This is what is so interesting with McLaren – they are on the edge of industry and craft.’

Hermès tans and processes its own hides. ‘We’re constantly learning and trying to perfect the process. Every single bespoke project has its own leather – nothing is off the shelf.’ De Beaufort is adamant that such collaborations are in keeping with the spirit of Hermès. ‘This kind of project takes us a step ahead,’ he says. ‘It shows that our craftsmen can build up great relationships with very high-tech manufacturers, which is really exciting. Maybe one day Hermès will be involved in the creation of rockets, at the forefront of new technology, just as it was over a century ago with bridles and carriages.’

hermes.com; mclaren.com
Van Den Weghe

SETTING THE TONE IN STONE

Penthouse Toyomas-Aracha
Architecture by Glenn Vandelaer

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JUNE IS ALL ABOUT...
FUTURE-FACING FANCIES AND MARVELS OF THE MOMENT

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SMART SET
Discreet home tech, from chicer speakers to leaner screens

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Copenhagen studio Tableau’s blossoming design collection

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Fashion-forward looks for retro gamers

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FRESH TAKE
Gabriel Rico’s red snapper ceviche
CHILL FACTOR

Play it cool with the chicest, sleekest high-spec tech

Artwork SEEN  Interiors OLLY MASON
From left, ‘Denon Home 550’ sound bar, £599, by Denon Audio.
‘Airpods Max’ headphones, £549, by Apple. ‘SL 40-30/6-3’ loudspeakers, £1,780 each, by Artcoustic. ‘ZH8 8K Bravia’ TV, from £5,499, by Sony.
This page, from left, ‘Phantom II’ 98dB speaker, £1,290, by Devialet. ‘65OLED935/12’ TV with Bowers & Wilkins speakers and Kvadrat fabric, £2,699, by Philips.

In The Market For...

From left, 'Mu5' earphones, £199, by Ross Lovegrove, for KEF. 'LE03' radio, €379, by Braun Audio. 'Surface Duo' smartphone, from £1,349, by Microsoft Surface. 'Ottava SC-C70MK2' all-in-one music system, £799, by Technics.
In The Market For...

This page, from left, 'Galaxy S21 5G' smartphone, from £769, by Samsung. 'Beosound Level' speaker with Kvadrat fabric, £1,099, by Bang & Olufsen. ‘Q2 Monochrom’ camera, £4,995, by Leica.

Opposite, from left, ‘Addon C3’ multiroom speaker, £250, by Audio Pro. ‘DeCon’ speaker system, €2,190, by Geneva Lab.
In The Market For...
From left, ‘LG OLED Z1’ TV, £25,000, by LG Signature. ‘Bartók’ DAC with headphone amplifier, £14,499, by dCS. ‘OB-4’ radio and speaker, £599, by Teenage Engineering. ‘OnePlus 9 Pro’ smartphone with Hasselblad camera, from £829, by OnePlus
For stockists, see page 137
An untitled installation by Tableau at Faxe Kalkbrud, in Denmark, comprising asparagus fern, gerberas and fritillarias, framed by scaffolding and plastic.
Once home to prehistoric sharks, crocodiles and an expansive coral reef, the Faxe Kalkbrud limestone quarry, in eastern Denmark, is today distinguished by its pristine pools, unclouded by plankton and mirroring the hues of the chalk cliffs and skies above. Floral designer Julius Værnes Iversen chose the quarry as the backdrop for the shoot on these pages, playing off his vivid blooms and avant garde design pieces against the quarry’s primordial, earthy features.

Iversen is the founder of Tableau, a Copenhagen-based multidisciplinary design studio that uses flowers as its primary medium and thrives on material contrasts. His concept store, in a 19th-century building on the upscale Store Kongensgade, was designed by local architect David Thulstrup and defies every stereotype of a luxury florist. The ceiling and walls are stripped back to reveal weathered concrete, podiums are made from architectural materials such as terrazzo, glass bricks and perforated metal, and there’s a vinyl floor underfoot, in an electric, almost Yves Klein blue that has become Tableau’s signature. The floral arrangements are equally eccentric: soon after its establishment, the studio found viral success with a series of monumental gypsophila clouds; other installations have featured bundles of exotic blooms interspersed with humbler varieties such as reindeer moss and asparagus fern, often in bright block colours, and arranged on scaffolding. ‘I love scaffolding, because it’s an unselfish structure that exists to maintain the...”
Above, gerberas displayed
in an ‘Object V’ vase,
in brushed steel and tiles,
DKK3,800 (€511), by
Ikon x Tableau

Right, a pair of ‘Sit on It’
stools, one in stained oak,
one in mink, on brushed
steel, both price on request,
by Poul Høilund x Tableau
This picture, ‘Limus’ vessels in resin, from DKK6,544 (€880), by Laurids Gallée x Tableau

Below, vessels from the ‘Cornucopia’ series, made from handtufted wool sleeves, brushed steel pipes, horsehair and pearls, from DKK4,000 (€600), by Röd Studio x Tableau
‘I love scaffolding, because it’s an unselfish structure that exists to maintain the beauty of something else’

beauty of something else,’ muses Iversen. Bouquets are an exuberant juxtaposition of natural and dyed flowers.
Considering Tableau’s innovative spirit, it may come as a surprise that Iversen’s background in flowers is as traditional as it gets. He joined his family’s more conventional chain of flower shops, Blomster Bjarne, two decades ago, at the age of 12. He later became its accountant, before taking over the reins alongside his brother Magnus in 2015, following the death of their father. But Iversen yearned for an additional creative outlet, a platform that would allow him to reconcile his passion for art and design with his floral expertise. Already he was gaining recognition for ‘odd-looking flower installations’ created under his own name for Danish fashion houses. With Tableau, he could push the boundaries of what can be done with flowers.

The opening of the store presented the opportunity to launch a series of product collaborations, bringing together floral inspiration and an alluringly industrial aesthetic. First came a team-up with local interiors brand Ikon for a series of rectilinear vessels made from square ceramic tiles, with a removable water container to ensure functionality. With the Carrara-based Bloc Studios, Tableau transformed marble offcuts into floral displays: the marble is roughly cut on the outside to preserve its raw beauty, while cylindrical cavities allow the insertion of brushed steel pipes sealed on one end – the original collaboration in 2019 put Tableau on the international design map, a second series was released earlier this year, and the two studios now have plans for a full collection of tableware.

With time and recognition has come more room to experiment. A new collection of 12 vases with textile designs Röd Studio, titled ‘Cornucopia’, sees brushed steel pipes contrasted with handtufted wool sleeves featuring unusual colour combinations and outlandish details, including horseshoe skirts and threads sprouting from artificial pearls. The concept may sound garish, but in practice the collection is inviting to the touch and has an idiosyncratic elegance, accentuated by a campaign shoot at Denmark’s oldest patisserie, Conditori La Glace, whose sweet treats inspired the titles of the individual pieces.

Iversen’s daring design approach, alongside high-profile installations commissioned by the likes of Normann Copenhagen, Christian Louboutin and Georg Jensen, as well as a 2020 Wallpaper* Design Award, have meant a surge in requests for collaboration. Most recently, he has worked with Laurids Gallée, an Austrian graduate of Design Academy Eindhoven, on a collection of resin pots, and there’s also been a series of wall hangings with textile brand Arne Aksel – one features a close-up shot of hydrangeas overlaid with bubble wrap that is printed on sateen and inserted into a ready-made stainless steel frame, putting a strikingly contemporary spin on a flower species that Danes often associate with their grandmothers. Up next and previewed exclusively in this shoot is the ‘Sit on It’ stool, by architect Poul Høilund, with a seat in Tableau’s electric blue (available either in oak, patinated by joinery workshop Brdr Krüger, or mink, courtesy of furrier Mikkel Schou) and supported by a trio of brushed stainless steel cylinders, as well as a rug, in collaboration with Stockholm’s Nordic Knots.

Iversen is proud of the enthusiastic reception that Tableau has found among an elite clientele, and rightly so. But he’s equally keen on democratising its output. Rotating art and design exhibitions at the store, which are free to enter and continued throughout lockdown because of Tableau’s categorisation as a flower shop, offered much-needed creative nourishment for Copenhageners denied trips to galleries. Recent headliners include whimsically shaped wooden shelves and podiums by furniture designer Anne Brandhøj, and ceramics by Norwegian-Danish duo Pettersen & Hein, inspired by a superbloom, a rare desert botanical phenomenon in which long-dormant wildflowers germinate and blossom simultaneously. Iversen personally curates the programme and devises all floral elements at the store to become part of each exhibition. ‘The idea is that someone who might not be able to purchase an artwork can always take a part of the exhibition home by buying some flowers,’ he explains. Also in the pipeline are set designs for album covers and music videos by local musicians, and a print section on Tableau’s website, launching later this year offering fine art prints and posters alike. Iversen is sending flowers to 15-20 artists and designers around the world, who will use them to create images that are exclusive to Tableau – an early submission from Frederikke Nørgård superimposes photographs of the same bouquet taken over 27 days, a poignant testament to the passage of time. Its title, Vemødalen, is an invented word from The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows that describes ‘the fear that everything has already been done’. It’s an experience shared by many creatives, but one that Iversen has certainly overcome with his groundbreaking work in floral design and beyond. *tableau-cph.com
Left, an untitled installation by Tableau, featuring fritillarias, scaffolding and plastic.

Below, vessels featuring brushed steel pipes and pedestals in Nero Marquina marble, Botticino beige marble, white marble, Egyptian yellow marble and grey stone, from DKK5,053 (€677), by Bloc Studios x Tableau.

Opposite, an untitled installation of gerberas by Tableau at Faxe Kalkbrud.

Photography assistant: Kasper Harup Hansen
With thanks to Tableau: Julius Værnes Iversen
Magnus Værnes Iversen
Katrine Morel
Jonas Pejstrup
Josephine Jein
Marie Arnette.
GAME CHANGERS

Metropolitan meanderings in minimalist monochrome

Photography UMİT SAVACİ  Fashion JASON HUGHES
This page, jacket, £2,640, by Alexander McQueen. Shoes, £715, by Prada. Tights, £16, by Falke.

Opposite, jumpsuit skirt, £7,500; bodysuit, £1,800; trousers, £1,100, all by Hermès. Shoes, £715, by Prada.

‘Tulip’ chair (throughout), £1,452, by Eero Saarinen, for Knoll, from Twentytwentyone.

‘Oculus Quest’ VR headset (throughout), set designer’s own.
This page, jacket, £1,480; top, £1,390; trousers, £920, all by Prada
Opposite, top, £545; trousers, £730, both by Salvatore Ferragamo. Shoes, £715, by Prada
This page, jacket, £1,190; top, £450; trousers, £650; earrings, £320; bracelet, £1,090, all by Givenchy. Shoes, £715, by Prada

'TI-99/4A' home computer, 1981, by Texas Instruments, courtesy of the National Videogame Museum, Sheffield

Opposite, jacket, £4,300; belt, £615, both by Louis Vuitton. Tights, £16, by Falke
This page, jacket, £1,314, by Petar Petrov. Earrings, £4,625, by Tiffany & Co
Opposite, jacket, £1,850; top, £2,950; trousers, £690, all by Celine by Hedi Slimane
This page, dress, £2,840, by Akris
Opposite, top, £180; top (worn underneath), £225; skirt, £330, all by Sportmax. Shoes, £715, by Prada. Tights, £16, by Falke
This page, jacket; jacket (worn underneath); top; dress; bodysuit, all price on request, by **Burberry**. Shoes, £75, by **Prada**. Tights, £16, by **Falke**

Opposite, dress, £645, by **Pleats Please Issey Miyake**
This page, jacket, £690, by *Numeroventuno by Alessandro Dell’Acqua*. Dress, £235, by RUS

‘Odyssey’ video game console, 1972, by Magnavox, courtesy of the National Videogame Museum, Sheffield

Opposite, dress, £2,290; top, £1,350, both by Fendi
Fashion

This page, jacket, £5,500; top, £3,500; trousers, £1,400, all by Louis Vuitton

A
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affix-works.com
Akris
akris.com
Alexander McQueen
alexandermcqueen.com
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Z
Ziad Alonaizy
alonaizy.com

Earrings, £4,625,
by Tiffany & Co.
See page 122
Mexican conceptualist Gabriel Rico’s poetic assemblages bring together found objects with crafted pieces, encouraging the viewer to engage with big issues, such as the relationship between humans and nature. ‘Art acts like a bridge and is a language all of us understand,’ he says. Inspired by his Excessive Butter series (taxidermied deer heads with balls between their antlers), we created this interpretation of his favourite ceviche, using ingredients for which his adopted hometown of Guadalajara is known. ‘It’s mixed with products from the north of the country, like chiltepin peppers,’ he says. ‘The decision to use pomegranate is a personal touch.’

Gabriel Rico is at Perrotin New York until 5 June, perrotin.com. For his recipe, see Wallpaper.com 

#121

GABRIEL RICO’S
Red snapper ceviche
marset outdoor
Gentle light by night
INTERIORS FROM SPAIN
WHAT MAKES A MASTERPIECE?

Some would stop at a vision. But rare are those who have the drive to bring a visionary idea to life. It takes countless technicians, engineers and craftspeople to achieve it. Each of them dedicated to a precise, expert task. Each of them a crucial part of a complex mechanism which can ultimately elicit a singular emotion. But a masterpiece is more, still. Through the changes time brings to our perception, a masterpiece remains ever relevant. Ever poignant. It owes as much to art as it does to science. Yet there is no precise set of rules to secure the result. Save one: to keep pushing further. And that will always make it worth celebrating.

#Perpetual