



Design Beyond Things

The object as an agent
of transformation

Exhibition
Expo Osaka 2025
EU Pavilion & Baltics Pavilion
31 August to 15 September 2025

Talks
Belgian Pavilion
4 September 2025

Curated by
Patrizia Catalano and Miriam Giordano

Produced by
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Ambassadors text

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Foreword

Jean-Eric Paquet

Ambassador of the European Union to Japan and
Commissioner-General for the EU at
Expo 2025 Osaka

It is with great pleasure that I reflect on “Design Beyond Things: The Object as an Agent of Transformation”, the European Union’s inaugural exhibition on European design, which captivated audiences at Expo 2025 Osaka last September. Curated by Patrizia Catalano and Miriam Giordano, this landmark exhibition brought together over 30 visionary projects from 17 EU countries, offering a compelling exploration of contemporary design’s role in addressing social and environmental challenges.

Presented in the EU Pavilion and extended to the Baltic Pavilion, the exhibition—enriched by Steve Piccolo’s evocative video installation—challenged visitors to reconsider the language of design through themes of permission, prohibition, and transformation. From circular economies to the reassertion of local and global identities, the works on display embodied the principles of the New European Bauhaus while advancing the UN 2030 Agenda. Their power lay not only in their aesthetic innovation but in their ability to inspire hope for a more sustainable future.

Two exceptional pieces—the Aura Lamp by Raffaella Mangiarotti and the XD Chair by Klemens Schillinger—now reside permanently in the EU Delegation to Japan, ensuring that the

project’s legacy endures long after Expo 2025. This commitment to sustainability reflects the exhibition’s core ethos: that design must not only inspire but also leave a lasting, meaningful impact. This catalogue ensures that the conversation sparked in Osaka continues to resonate, offering readers an opportunity to revisit the ideas, dialogues, and creative brilliance that defined the exhibition.

I remain deeply grateful to the Belgian and Baltic Pavilions, our European and Japanese partners, and all who contributed to this remarkable Team Europe effort. My heartfelt thanks go to our curators, the talented designers from across the continent, and Steve Piccolo for his artistic vision. Most importantly, I honour the participating artists—from all over the European Union—whose ingenuity made this exhibition not just possible, but truly unforgettable.

As you explore these pages, I hope you will be as inspired as the visitors who experienced the exhibition firsthand. May this catalogue serve as both a record of a pivotal moment in European design and a catalyst for future collaborations, reinforcing the bonds between our cultures and the shared values that unite us.

Design Beyond Things

The Object as an Agent of Transformation

**The First Exhibition on European Design
Organized by The European Union
Lands in Expo 2025 Osaka**

Gaia Danese

Main curator and coordinator of the
EU Cultural Programme at Expo Osaka 2025

Patrizia Catalano and Miriam Giordano

Co-curators Design Beyond Things

The exhibition “Design Beyond Things. The Object as an Agent of Transformation” stems from a series of conversations held over the past few years regarding the need to restore significance and value to contemporary European design, as well as from the idea of organizing an exhibition commissioned by the European Union for the European Pavilion in Expo Osaka 2025.

European design, which has had its moments of connection, particularly between the late 19th and early 20th centuries and, subsequently, in the first decades of the 20th century, through exchanges, convergences, design movements, and—why not—utopian visions, during which artists, architects, and designers focused on a true “modernization” of Europe.

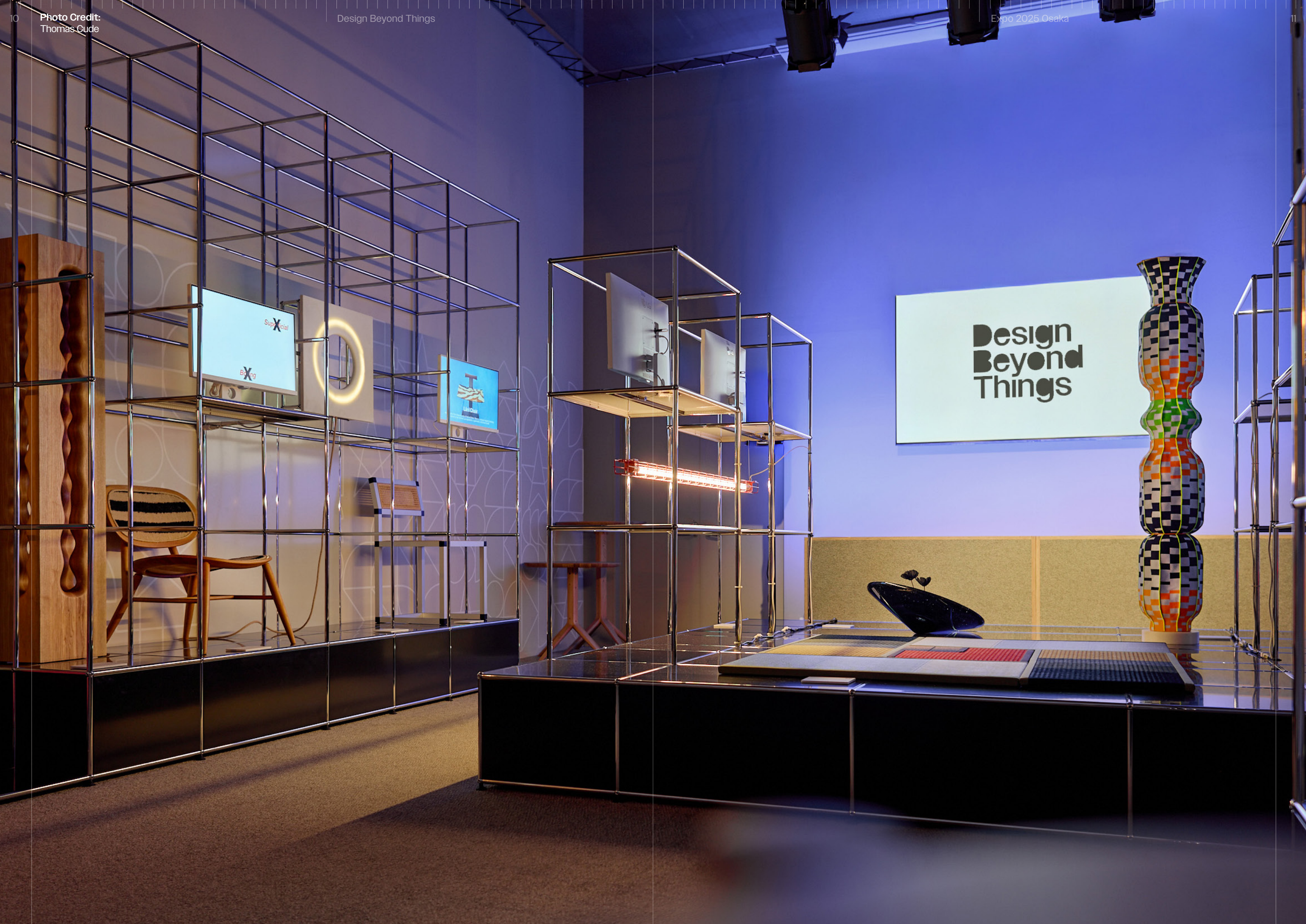
Often, the uniformity of styles and ideas stemmed from specific technological innovations. Consider, for example, how the steam-bending of beech wood, designed by the Viennese Michael Thonet, led to a major modernization of European taste: from home interiors to cafés across half of Europe, the famous bentwood chairs with woven straw seats gave rise to a style, Art Nouveau, defined as the last authentic European style before the stylistic fragmentation caused by subsequent avant-garde movements.

The same thing happened when the Hungarian Marcel Breuer, a young and talented professor at the Bauhaus in Weimar and an avid cyclist, pursued his own research on metal tubing, choosing the type used for bicycle handlebars (which is particularly flexible and lightweight), to create the legendary Model B3 chair, renamed Wassily in homage to his artist friend Wassily Kandinsky, which remains an icon of design and the forerunner of all 20th-century bent-metal furniture.

And finally, moving to France, in Paris in 1925, Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand worked on the potential of mass-produced and modular furniture, creating the famous Casiers Standard series, modular furniture adaptable to the most diverse needs.

Industrial innovation remained a central feature of European design even in the postwar period, with modular systems for wardrobes, kitchens, and office furniture. That is, until 1968, when the design world discovered its ironic, playful, and creative side through the pioneers of Radical Design, a term coined by the critic Germano Celant. These were unique, limited-edition pieces with organic forms drawn more from the world of Pop Art than from industrial production.

These two strands—radical and serial—have coexisted to this day.



The Exhibition

The focus of “Design Beyond Things. The Object as an Agent of Transformation” was to explore what has been assimilated by current generations of designers and architects working in the Member States, and whether the design languages developed in various countries can find a common purpose to what we might call a European Movement.

Inspired by the principles of the New European Bauhaus – “Beautiful, sustainable, inclusive” – the exhibition aimed to invite visitors to reflect on the vocabulary of contemporary European design at a time of profound social change and an urgent need for new hope for the future of both people and the planet. Through 17 selected works on display – representing the entire body of work, many of which were unique creations made specifically for the exhibition – and a video installation by artist Steve Piccolo, which presented all 34 design works exploring the themes of permission, prohibition and the evolving language of design. The exhibition highlighted the transformative power of design: from the adoption of circular life cycles and sustainable production to the reclamation of both local and global identities.

The 34 works on display embodied a wide range of voices and approaches, ranging from chairs, lamps, vases, tapestries, and tatami mats, created using techniques such as glasswork, woodworking, 3D printing, textile work, welding, marble carving, and weaving. While deeply rooted in European traditions, the projects are the result of an ever-expanding cultural dialogue, shaped by collaborations with manufacturers whose technical expertise and local know-how have been essential in turning ideas into reality.

The exhibition highlighted a number of similarities among the various projects, suggesting broader themes capable of connecting the diverse practices of European design, including:

Dialogues with the legacy of European design: **Klemens Schillinger** revisited Josef Hoffmann’s Fledermaus Chair with his XD Chair, while **Maria Jeglińska**’s Portable Wall payed a tribute to Sándor Mikó’s 1969 armchair. **Jan Plecháč**’s Magnus vase transformed Brutalist architecture into crystal glass and **Elena Salmistraro**’s Primates ceramic vases offered a contemporary reinterpretation of ancient Roman pottery.

Celebrations of local and social identities: **Anna Zimmermann**’s Ornamental Vases honored Austria’s welding tradition, while **Studio Æ**’s Broom Chair payed an homage to Berlin’s brush-making craft. **Atelier Ad Hoc** showcased Co-Liza, a community activation kit and **Álvaro Catalán de Ocón** presented Gurunsi Oval, part of the PET Lamp Gurunsi project, developed in collaboration with artisans from Bolgatanga, Ghana. **Filipe Alarcão**’s Shūgaeri seat reflected Portugal’s cork heritage in collaboration with Amorim Cork, while **Claesson Koivisto Rune**’s Black Hole Vase continued Sweden’s glassmaking legacy with Orrefors. Finally, **Inma Bermúdez**’s Suricata is a contemporary wooden desk for 21st-century students and reflected Inma’s Mediterranean essence through a local collaboration with **Sanca**, Spain’s oldest wood company, and **Finsa**, innovators in design.

Explorations in wood, one of Europe’s most symbolic materials: **Anne Brandhøj**’s Chamber sculpted trees sourced from Copenhagen; **UND. Studio**’s Requiem for a Tree created stools referencing Germany’s endangered spruce, beech, and birch, while **Akiko and Ken**’s Bold experimented with steam-bent ashed to create flexible seating. **Maria Bruun**’s Barrel Chair #1 showcased the organic expression of burl birch, while **Antrei Hartikainen**’s UURRE mirror revived Finnish linden carving traditions. **Lilána Mészáros** of **VUUV Works** presented Lāni Chair, crafted in maple walnut veneer.

Innovation through new techniques and sustainable material practices: **Gaspard Fleury-Dugy** presented Soft Objects, a totem of 3D-printed knitted vessels and **Budde**’s Zenit lamp demonstrated the potential of sand 3D printing. **Wendy Andreu**’s Dragon Half an Armchair employed Regen textile skin with organic patterns that blur the chair’s volumes, and **Raffaella Mangiarotti**’s Aura wall lamp transformed natural stone into a source of light. The lamp was made from pieces of marble “discarded” by the Spanish company Nerinea. **Thomas Waidhofer**’s The Houndstooth seat has been made from recycled T-shirts, and **Paulineplusluis**’s Neon lamp, crafted from industrial cable trays.

Cross-cultural encounters: **BCXSY**’s Knit Knot tapestry employed Japanese mizuhiki techniques with washi cords, while **Mae Engelgeer Studio**’s A Moment to Pause collaborated with tatami maker **Mitsuru Yokoyama**. **Andreu Carulla**’s Convento Lounge connected Catalan and Japanese cultures through design, **Carmelo Zappulla**’s Sigillo offered a luminous Mediterranean “gift of light” to Japan, while **Kiki van Eijk**’s Reconnecting the Earth’s Roots tapestry reflected the Netherlands’ historic role as a hub of exchange. **GamFratesi**’s Miao Chair blended Danish craftsmanship with Japanese sensibility, continuing this dialogue of cultures.

Extended in the **Baltic Pavilion**, the exhibition has counted with the collaboration of the **Latvian Design Centre**, showcasing designers from Latvia and Lithuania whose projects are deeply engaged with the natural landscapes of the region. **Studio Sarmīte** presented PineSkins, a pouf crafted from pine inner bark, **Gateris Works** showcased the Freckled Chair, made from naturally branched wood and **Dace Sūna** introduced Sky-Set Light, a luminous sculpture in opalite glass deepening light created by pollution. From Lithuania, **Austėja Platūkyte**’s Invasive Vases were created with the locally invasive plant *solidago gigantea* *Alton*,

while **Mantas Lesauskas**’s Peripheria is an oneiric candlestick combining minerals, aromatic resin and latex. Together, these works reflect the Latvia and Lithuania’s ongoing dialogue between material experimentation and a profound engagement with nature.

Rooted in the values of the New European Bauhaus and aligned with the UN 2030 Agenda and Expo’s central theme, *Design Beyond Things* was complemented by a programme of **talks** and **international exchanges**. Together, they turned the EU Pavilion, the Baltic Pavilion and the Belgian Pavilion into a space of **ongoing dialogue** about the role of design in **transforming** and **improving** our **living environment**.

The opening event took place on the 4th of September at Expo 2025 Osaka. **Thomas Gnocchi**, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Japan, represented the European Union and gave a speech, together with the Commissioner General of Lithuania **Ms. Lina Antanaviciene**, the Commissioner General of Latvia **Ms. Lasma Lidaka** and the presence of **Concha Fernández de la Puente**, EU Deputy Commissioner-General. Moderated by the curators, the preview hosted two rounds of talks with a total of ten participating designers: **Maria Daria Oancea** and **George Marinescu** (Adhoc Arhitectura), **Pauline Capdo and Luis Bellenger** (Paulineplusluis), **Dace Sūna, Raffaella Mangiarotti, Carmelo Zappulla** (External Reference), **Mae Engelgeer, Inma Bermúdez, Reinis Leo Miķelsons** (Gateris Works) and the video artist **Steve Piccolo**.

The exhibition has been made possible thanks to the technical partnership of **USM Modular Furniture**, who have supported the set-up of the exhibition in the EU Pavilion with their iconic modular system.



Contributors



Juli Capella
Setsu Ito
Francesco Zurlo

European Design no Longer Exists

Juli Capella

Architect and Designer,
Barcelona

Design was born in Europe and led the discipline with a rich variety: Nordic design with its beauty and natural materials; German design taming machines; and Italy offering a perfect combination of style and manufacture, a magical interweaving of creator and producer. In the mid-20th century, design expanded to the United States, where it transformed into styling, a mere ally of consumer capitalism.

Europe functioned as an atomized and highly diverse continent until 1957, when economic—and only later political—unification was proposed among its members. It seemed that the evolution of their respective national styles was a path to be developed. But in the 1980s, postmodernism burst onto the scene, a stylistic phenomenon that was no longer Eurocentric but simultaneous throughout the world. Globalization had begun.

In 1991, the Centre Georges Pompidou programmed the exhibition European Capitals of New Design, Barcelona, Milan, Paris, Düsseldorf. He no longer mentioned countries but cities. Vattimo reflected on whether aesthetics and democracy had any relationship, noting that postmodernity was dragging us toward a weaker, more open way of thinking. Branzi warned: “The new design favors spontaneous urban expressions, wild metropolitan dialects, opposing uniformity, the homogeneity engendered by the mass communication and consumption system.”

Shortly after, in 1996, Copenhagen, European Capital of Culture, organized Design and Identity: Aspects of European Design. The statement left no doubt: they wanted to investigate whether Europe was still recognizable and whether its members were distinct. Significantly, the call for proposals focused on regions. Lombardy certainly had more in common with Catalonia than Catalonia had with Andalusia.

In 2000, the European Union launched the slogan “Unity in Diversity.” A constant contradiction between wanting to differentiate themselves while simultaneously projecting a common image. Glocalism triumphed as an ambiguous catch-all. But the global digital revolution brought an end to territorial diversity.

When the euro was launched in 2002, European design barely retained its regional idiosyncrasies. Anything could happen anywhere. Looking at a chair, it was impossible to tell where it came from. It could have been designed in Baden-Württemberg, produced in Friuli, and manufactured in the Czech Republic. All sense of “locality” was crumbling. The key was no longer recognizing the style of each region, but rather where circular design was practiced, where graphene was used, or where 3D digital manufacturing was employed. It was the strategies, the innovation, that mattered, not where it was executed. The characteristics were not geographical, but rather a matter of elective affinity, to paraphrase Goethe.

Stone And Paper Design Culture

Setsu Ito

Designer and Founder Studio Setsu and Shinobu Ito Design, Milano, The University Tsukuba Art&Design Professor, The University of Tokyo Project Professor.

The “Design Beyond Things” exhibition symbolized the diversity and collaborative nature of contemporary European design culture, comprised of various countries. Holding it at the Osaka World Expo in Japan provided us with an opportunity to compare the cultural backgrounds of Western and Japanese design.

A striking contrast lies between Western “material culture” and Japanese “spiritual culture.” Stone symbolizes the West: a semi-permanent material that has defined the creation of structures and artifacts for thousands of years. Historical buildings such as temples and churches stand as enduring examples. Paper, by contrast, symbolizes Japan: derived from plants, it deteriorates over time and is not permanent. Japanese culture compensates for this impermanence by preserving traditions spiritually, through storytelling and ritual rebuilding. The shoji screens of the Katsura Imperial Villa require replacement every few years, and the Ise Grand Shrine, the head shrine of Shinto, is entirely reconstructed every 20 years.

Although stone and paper exist worldwide, what truly characterizes each culture is the way people interact with these materials. Stone is naturally three-dimensional and is artificially cut into two-dimensional sheets for buildings and furniture, or even broken into one-dimensional mosaics as in ancient Rome — a process moving from 3D to 1D. Paper, conversely, begins as a one-dimensional plant fiber, is processed into flat two-dimensional

sheets, and can then be constructed three-dimensionally. Origami is the cultural art form that most eloquently symbolizes this 1D-to-3D trajectory.

These contrasting manufacturing processes extend beyond stone and paper into broader craftsmanship traditions. In the West, the whole structure is assembled first and details are refined afterward. In Japan, each individual component is perfected before the whole is assembled — a principle evident in traditional woodworking and industrial production alike.

Such deep-rooted cultural differences shape recognizable and opposing design traits: Western design tends toward “symmetry”, “solidity”, “density”, “three-dimensionality”, “rigor”, and “realism”, while Japanese design favors “asymmetry”, “lightness”, “sparseness”, “two-dimensionality”, “flexibility”, and “emotionality”.

The exhibition of the works of young designers remains compelling because it resists broad categorization as simply “Western.” It reflects a multicultural fusion and a renewed, tangible embrace of materiality that pushes back against the digital age. The incorporation of Japanese design language by several designers adds a further layer of rich cross-cultural dialogue.

Trajectories of European Design: Notes on an Exhibition

Francesco Zurlo

Dean of the School of Design of Politecnico di Milano and Professor of Industrial Design, Politecnico di Milano.

Reflecting on European design means engaging with a complex ecosystem in which different approaches coexist – sometimes diverging, sometimes converging. Only recently have European institutions explicitly recognised the strategic role of design in innovation and competitiveness, promoting dedicated research programmes. However, in the main policy documents for Europe’s revitalisation, design often remains marginal or implicit. Even where the focus is on advanced technologies – from artificial intelligence to quantum computing – there is a tendency to overlook an essential element: every technology is mediated by a human interface, and therefore requires design.

In this scenario, three main strands emerge. The first concerns the promotion of local contexts: not as an expression of insular identity, but as a recognition of skills and knowledge rooted in local areas. The second revolves around a shared global and European sensibility, capable of creating interdependencies between local cultures and international visions. The third, more controversial strand is linked to the spread of a standardised aesthetic for everyday products, promoted by large corporations and geared towards an increasingly homogeneous global taste.

The common thread running through these dynamics reflects certain distinctive features of European identity. In particular, a strong focus on welfare, the environment and social inequalities emerges.

Design thus becomes a tool for promoting inclusion, relationships and collective well-being. From Finland, where certain projects highlight social rituals capable of generating shared happiness, to Spain, where initiatives led by local academic institutions transform urban commons into tools for fostering relationships. In cities such as Copenhagen, designers focused on the future participate directly in public decision-making processes, whilst in Bologna, co-design practices involve citizens in the care of public assets. At the same time, there is a growing commitment to environmental sustainability, through the reuse of materials and the development of bio-manufacturing processes.

Alongside these aspects, the connection to the local is also expressed in the rediscovery of artisanal skills. These are forms of knowledge at risk of disappearing, often marginalised by a culture that favours intellectual work over craftsmanship. Yet, it is precisely from this that a growing phenomenon is emerging: that of ‘collectibles’, unique objects that combine design and master craftsmanship. These products suggest a possible path towards sustainability, based not on quantity but on quality, on an emotional connection with objects and on their durability. In this sense, European design seems to point in a direction: cultivating more conscious desires and, therefore, more sustainable and inclusive ones.

Designers and Projects

Anna Zimmermann
Klemens Shillinger
Thomas Waidhofer
Paulinepluslouis
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Akiko Kuwahata and Ken Winther
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Andreu Carulla
Inma Bermúdez Studio
Claesson Koivisto Rune

Anna Zimmermann



Anna Zimmermann is a designer based in Vienna. Straddling between object design and sculpture, her practice explores the relationship between material culture and craftsmanship. Her work is material-driven, and the objects are either made by Anna or in close collaboration with artisans. Her practice is versatile, often incorporating elements of imperfection, balance, and play. In 2024, she founded the Feminist Welding Club. Anna earned her BA from Design Academy Eindhoven and holds an MA from the Royal College of Art in London.

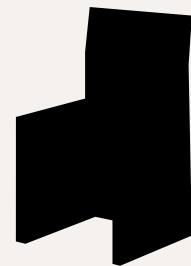




Ornamental Welding

The series reinterprets welding as more than just a functional technique for joining metal. In these aluminum vases, the welds themselves become decorative elements—hundreds of precisely placed welds create an almost excessive surface texture, shifting the process from pure utility to ornamentation. The Ornamental Vases are made entirely of aluminum, with some parts consisting of recycled aluminum. The material itself is fully recyclable. Each piece is welded by hand, highlighting the possibilities of working with aluminum in a more detailed and ornamental way. In terms of identity, the project engages with Austria's strong metalworking tradition, which has historically been a male-dominated field. By welding the object myself as a woman, I challenge traditional perceptions of craftsmanship and bring a new perspective into this practice. The work merges established techniques with contemporary approaches, questioning conventional narratives within the field.

Klemens Shillinger



Klemens Schillinger is a product and furniture designer based in Vienna, Austria. Since graduating from the Royal College of Art in London, he has been working as a freelance designer for various design studios while continuing his own work. He has worked on projects for international brands as well as smaller local businesses in Vienna. His goal is to develop simple yet well-thought-out products, design methods, and ‘Do It Yourself’ recipes. This can result in almost self-evident product solutions with a sparse charm, minimal use of materials, and a poetic accent.

Country:
Austria

Photo Credit:
Lea Sonderegger

Expo 2025 Osaka

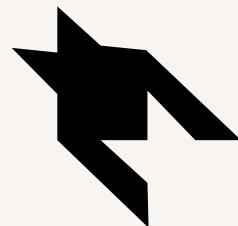




XD Chair

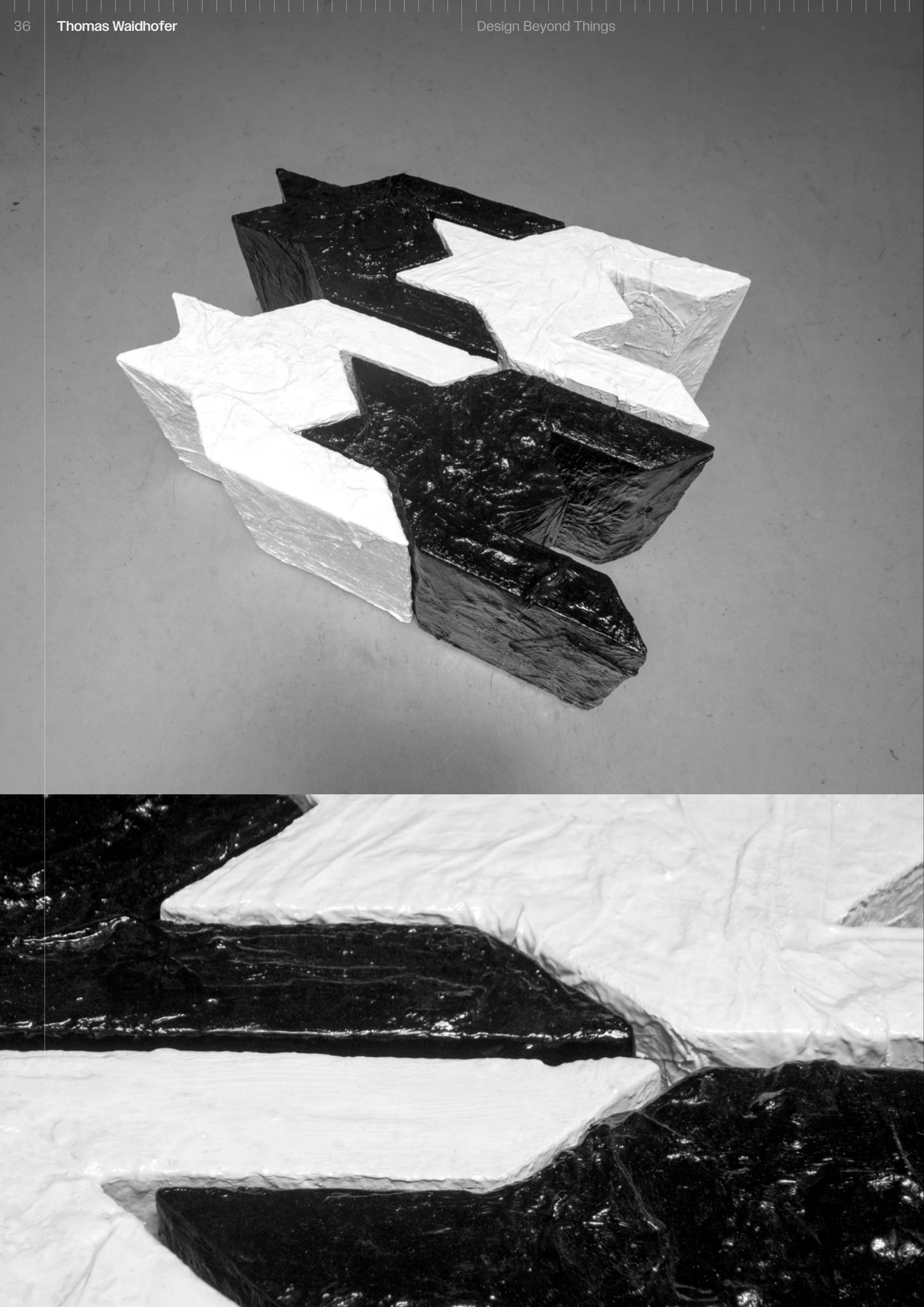
XD Chair, is inspired by the widely available XD tube connectors found in hardware stores. However, the development team at The Form Follows has engineered special, high-strength connectors optimized for use in furniture. Aesthetically, the chair has a almost hyper generic but striking presence. It also pays homage to the iconic Fledermaus Chair by the renowned Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann. In terms of sustainability, the upholstery is not permanently fixed to the frame. It can be easily detached and replaced, allowing for quick repairs or material changes. Additionally, materials can be separated by type, enabling efficient sorting into homogeneous categories for recycling.

Thomas Waidhofer



Thomas Waidhofer is a Viennese artist and designer. After his apprenticeship as a high voltage electrician he studied digital art at the university of applied arts. Since 2015 he works on objects, spaces and installations, in which he always tries to give narratives to conventional furnishings. In some cases, old furniture and lamps serve as a medium, while new objects are often constructed using all the tools of technology and craftsmanship. His work mostly revolves around imperfectionism or even the destruction of something considered perfect. Thomas counts recognizing the beauty of flaws as one of his most important skills.





Typology:
Stools

Material:
Recycled T-shirts and
polymer plaster

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Kohlmaier

Houndstooth

“The Houndstooth” is a modular seating object made from old T-shirts and polymer plaster that transforms the classic houndstooth pattern into a three-dimensional form. It critically reflects on resource waste in fashion and design, while playfully inviting interaction within space.

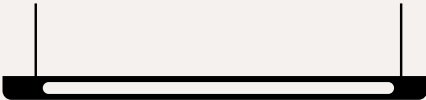
The project challenges the excessive waste in the fashion and furniture industries. By intentionally repurposing production offcuts, it takes a stand against mass resource consumption. Each element tells a story of reuse and mindful design without compromising aesthetics or functionality.

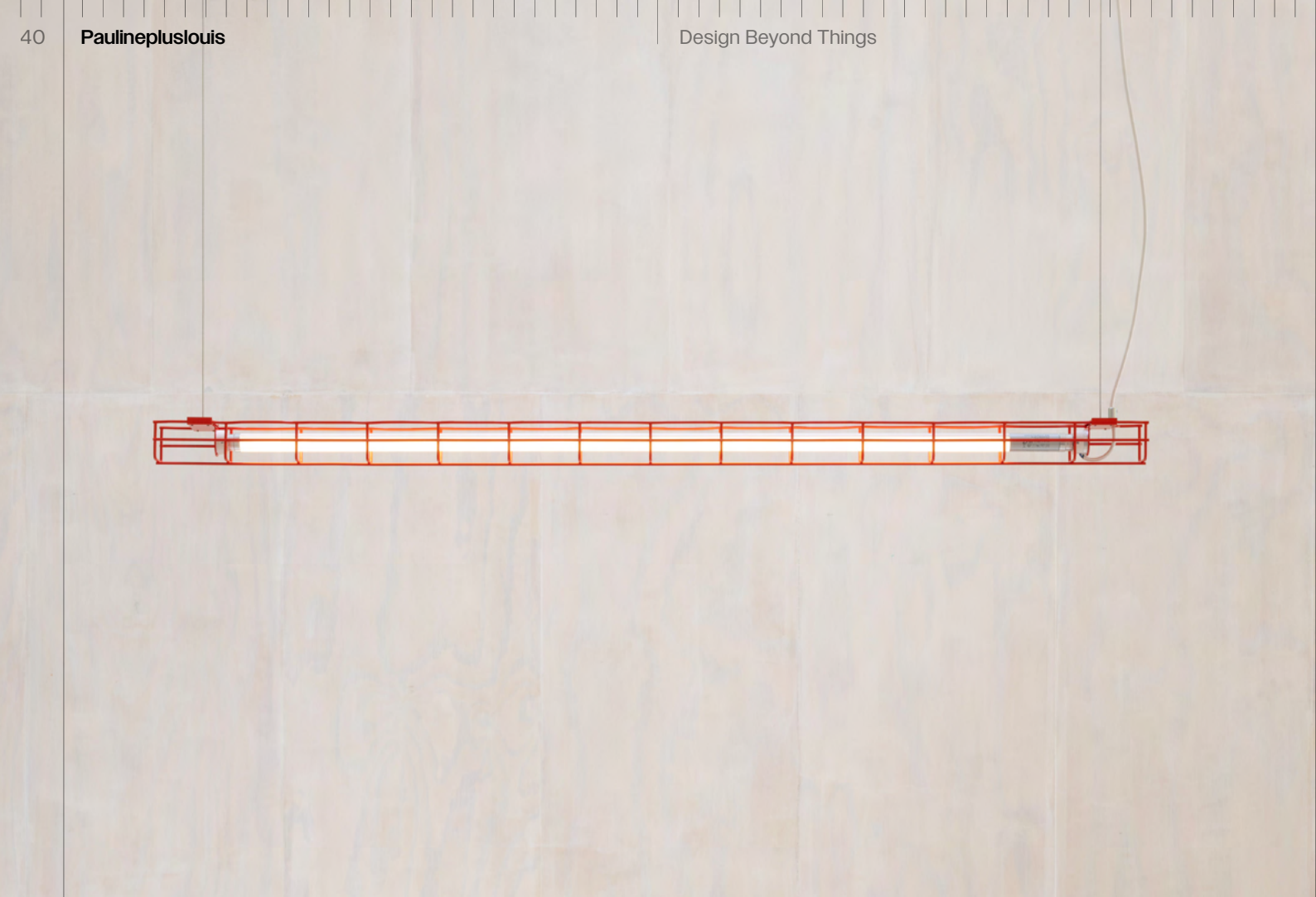
The objects are crafted in Vienna and in collaboration with Kohlmaier, a renowned upholstery manufacturer based since 1884.

Paulinepluslouis

After studying applied arts and cabinetmaking in France, Pauline Capdo and Luis Bellenger reunited in Belgium to complete their industrial design studies.

In 2017, they founded paulineplusluis, a Brussels-based studio focused on furniture and lighting design. They favor humble, often repurposed materials, used in unexpected ways. Balancing craftsmanship and industry, their creations are efficient, poetic and thoughtfully produced. In 2024, paulineplusluis were named Designer of the Year by levifweekend / knackweekend.





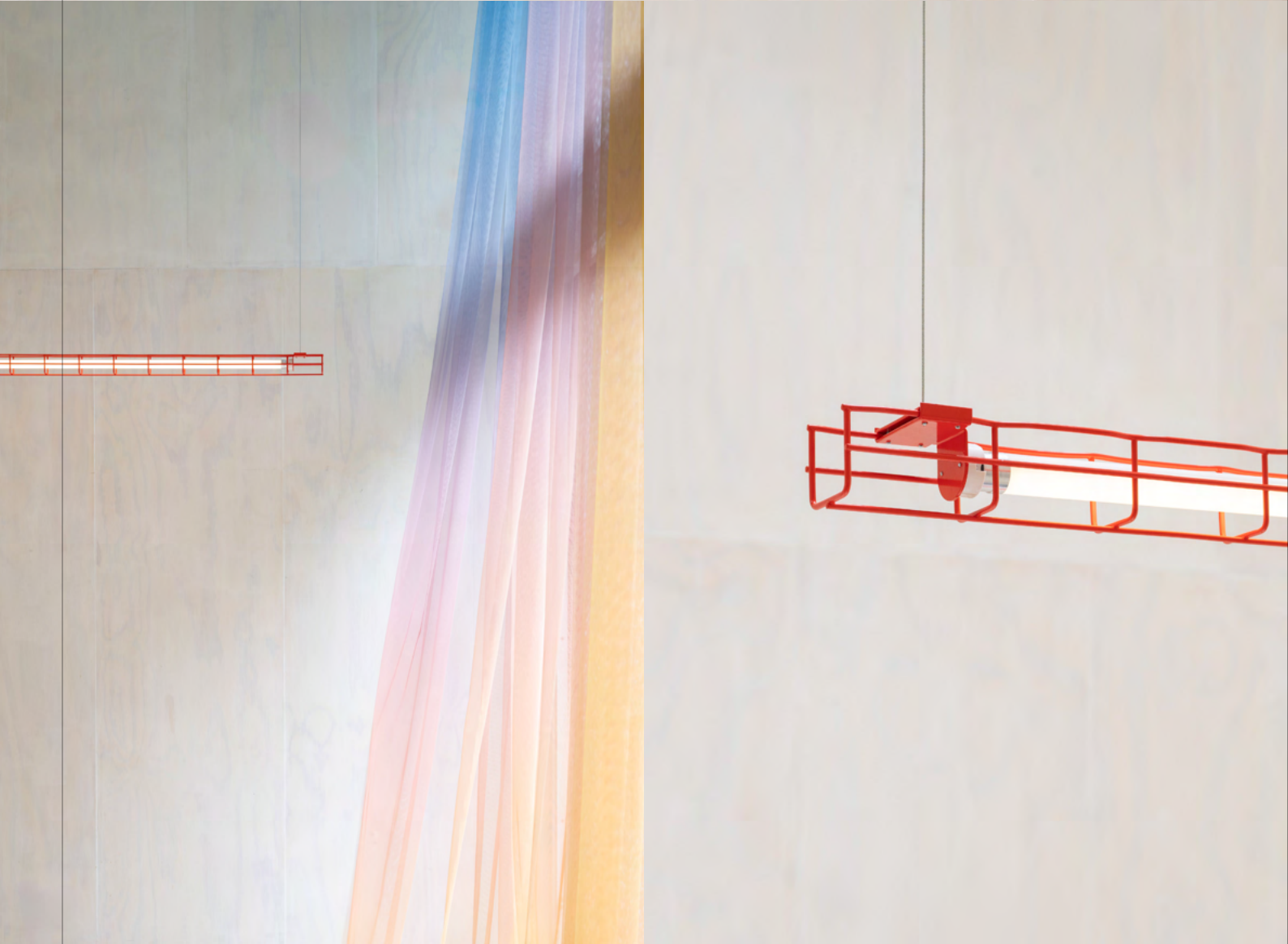
Typology:
Lamp

Material:
Powder coated steel,
aluminium, LED tube

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Wallonie-Bruxelles
International

Neon



Neon is a lighting collection built on cable trays, originally employed to arrange electrical cables in buildings. Diverted from their original purpose, they are used as a raw material for their aesthetic and technical qualities. Pieces made of laser-cut and bent aluminium sheets allow to jo in the cable tray with the led tube and the electrical components. The lamps are declined invarious lengths, determined by the standard sizes of the led tubes, to which the cable trays are adapted. By using industrial standard components, already produced in large quantities, the collection minimizes the need for new production methods and enhances efficiency, allowing us to handle production in-house. The approach supports local and low-tech methods, while ensuring parts can be easily replaced and recycled, making the design both durable and sustainable.

Jan Plecháč



Jan Plecháč studied architecture at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague, uniting architecture with design. And precisely his architectural feel and knowledge are reflected in the Magnus vase.

He is a renowned designer and the Art Director of the Moser glassworks. Alongside the three-time victory at the 2023 Czech Grand Design Awards (Designer of the Year, Producer of the Year, and the overall Grand Designer winner), Moser also received the Grand Prix award for its installation at Designblok 2024, designed by its Art Director.

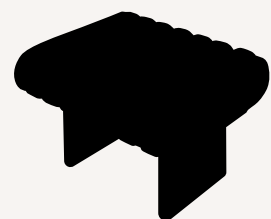




Magnus Vase

The Magnus vase was inspired by brutalism—a style that distinctly underscores the creator’s signature and has experienced a new wave of interest in recent years. Magnus is a confident solitaire, clearly defined in relation to space. The unique colour then highlights its direct, brutalist design. The Magnus vase is handmade using the technique of injected underlaying. This injection method gradually dissipates as the honey-brown topaz combined with blue creates yet a third colour: yellow-green. Thus, a play of magical hues is born out of the mutually overlapping tones. And this makes every vase completely unique. The glassmakers blow the Magnus vase into handmade pearwood moulds. This requires great dexterity and experience as they precisely apply the molten glass, estimating the desired thickness of the walls and height of the massive bottom piece, known as the “ice”. The vase is then brought to perfection by the masterful cutters.

Akiko Kuwahata and Ken Winther



Akiko Kuwahata and Ken Winther are a team, and are both skilled cabinetmakers, working together or on their own craft projects.

Akiko is of Japanese origin and has gained degrees in Living Space Design at Nihon University, then worked for years as a cabinetmaker in Japan, and later adding studies at the Aarhus School of Architecture in Denmark. Over the years, she has continuously worked to refine techniques and design of wooden objects, to explore and use the potential and abilities of natural wood.

Ken's interest in woodwork has come naturally as his parents were in furniture manufacturing business. He has furthered his craftsmanship at PP Møbler – a high quality workshop where many of Hans J Wegner furniture is made. Taking a perfectionist approach, he has studied further on lengthy training periods at Japanese carpenter masters. They live in their villa some ways to the north of Copenhagen — with a cabinetmakers workshop built in, of course —.





Bold

Bold is the seating component contains an innate sense of decoration through the repetitive nature of its construction

A series of steam-bent ash “ribs” woven over and under each other to form a seat that flexibly allowing subtle movement when you sit on the stool. Placed on a simple base structure in solid ash allows the top element to float.

Anne Brandhøj

Anne Brandhøj (b. 1984) graduated from KADK in 2017. She is working within aesthetic and environmental sustainability. A part of it is to create furniture with an aesthetic expression that is durable over time. For example, using materials that, as they are being used, will become more beautiful, and through that achieve a higher aesthetic value. Anne’s attempt is to create furniture, which through strong and long-term relationships with its users, goes against a throw-away mentality because the user ultimately will consume less.





Typology:
Wooden sculpture

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

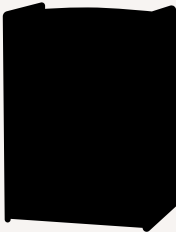
Technical sponsor:
Danish Arts Foundation

Chamber



This sculpture is a tribute to the hidden depths within everything - the inner chambers of our beliefs and emotions, the raw beauty of natural materials, and the very core of the challenges our world faces. Change begins when we dare to look within. From the outside, the form is structured and square, yet inside, it transforms - soft, flowing, shaped by waves and slopes. Step closer, and the intricate details of the wood emerge - its grain, the rhythm of its year rings, and the interplay of light and shadow revealing its soul. An invitation to explore, reflect, and rediscover the essence of what lies beneath the surface.

Maria Bruun



Maria Bruun (b. 1984) is a trained furniture designer from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Design School, based in Copenhagen. She works with furniture, interiors and exhibitions at the junction between the artistic and commercial. With sincere respect for classic Danish furniture design, Maria builds on this foundation in an innovative approach, and creates her designs in close dialogue with skilled craftsmen. In May 2022 Bruun was awarded the Wegner Prize, for her collaborative methods and approach to design.





Typology:
Chair

Material:
Burl Birch, Wool

Expo 2025 Osaka

Barrel Chair #1

Barrel Chair #1 serves as an embodiment of my ethos and process of creation—emerging from the continuous dialogue between artistic object and functional furniture. In defiance of the familiar softness and curvature expected of a classic lounge chair, this piece asserts itself with structured geometry and tactile richness.

Handcrafted from burl birch, this chair emphasizes not only material precision but also the wild, organic expression unique to this rare wood. Burl birch carries a visual complexity that seems almost unruly—its grain rippling and swirling in unpredictable, intricate patterns. This gives each piece of furniture a singular identity, where no two surfaces are alike. The wood’s naturally glossy, almost velvety finish invites both the hand and the eye to linger. Its warmth and variation evoke a sensory response that shifts with light and proximity—sometimes smooth and calming, at other times visually chaotic and raw.

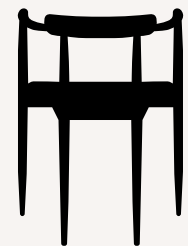


Gam Fratesi

Stine Gam, Danish architect with a master in furniture design. Enrico Fratesi Italian architect graduated with a master in industrial design. Gam and Fratesi gained experience as architects in several architecture studio in Japan and Scandinavia before establishing their own design studio. The studio is based in Copenhagen.

GamFratesi's design takes its creative drive from a fusion of tradition and renewal and in an experimental approach to their chosen materials and techniques. With their dual traditional background, Stine Gam and Enrico Fratesi draw on the classic Danish furniture and craft tradition as well as the classic Italian intellectual and conceptual approach. Understanding a tradition and addressing it actively in the workshop makes it possible to expand on it. From this cross-cultural substrate they create furniture that respectfully reflects tradition while also featuring unique embedded stories, symbols and associations, often expressed in a minimalist idiom.

GamFratesi have received significant awards including Elle Decoration International design award (EDIDA) as International Designer of the Year 2020, "AD100" 100 most creative 2023 and 2022, Architectural Digest, Elle Decoration International design award (EDIDA) as International Young Designer of the Year 2013, Finn Juhl Prize 2015, Bruno Mathsson prize 2018, Invited as Guest of Honor 2014 at the Stockholm Furniture Fair 2014, Best Designer from Elle Decoration Japan 2017, final selection Compasso D'Oro, IF award and Good Design Award.





Typology:
Armchair

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Japanese Koyori

Miaou Armchair

Miau Armchair combines high precision of wood bending and wood carving techniques. The armrests and the backrest are made of a single bentwood, allowing the wood grain to become more uniform and beautiful, as well as more durable than if it had been constructed from separate pieces connected together. To ensure maximum sitting comfort, the wooden seat and backrest are curved three-dimensionally, whereas the upholstered cushion uses molded plywood curved and combined precisely with the seat pad. The armchair is manufactured by the Japanese company Koyori.

Antrei Hartikainen



Antrei Hartikainen (b. 1991) is a Finnish master cabinet maker and designer who lives in the village of Fiskars in southern Finland. The award-winning pieces, including functional products, sculptures and installations, constantly strive to challenge and blur the traditional categorizations of functional objects and different fine arts. The sculptural approach brings out the inspiration from the materials and the works highlight the importance of sensuality, elegance and craftsmanship. Antrei Hartikainen has shown his works in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world. He was selected Young Designer of the Year 2018 in Finland, followed by being shortlisted for the Dezeen Awards Emerging Designer of the Year in 2019 and most recently the Rising Star of the Year 2023 award at the Scandinavian Design Awards, the Rising Talent Awards 2024 at Maison&Objet in Paris and the Pro Arte Award 2025 by the Didrichsen Art Museum.





Typology:
Mirror

Material:
Burl Birch, Wool

Uurre

The carved shapes and grooves of the Uurre mirror frames have a clear direction and either run away from the center of the mirror or are on their way there, at the same time focusing the viewer on the mirror as the center of everything.

In the shapes, there are references to the grooves created on the surface of the rock over thousands of years, the terrain bordering the pond that doubles as a calm water surface, the organic cross-section of the tree and the deep furrows in the base of the tree, which change radically as you progress from the root system upwards.

Gaspar Fluery-Dugy



Gaspar Fleury-Dugy (born 1999) is a designer and artist. His work is inspired by textile techniques and the graphic vocabulary they engender. He gets immense pleasure from working with simple shapes and colours. His work oscillates between object design, interior decoration, the development of woven structures and patterns for textiles editors, and an artistic practice combining painting, drawing and textile art. He is also a trapeze artist, and likes to think of his design work as a series of soft and colourful pirouettes. In 2023, he was the winner of the Sisley young creators grant, highlighting the promising nature of his work. Since 2022, he has exhibited his work at several design weeks, including Milan, Eindhoven, Stockholm and Paris. He lives and works in Paris.





Typology:
Textile sculptures
totem

Material:
Textile

Expo 2025 Osaka

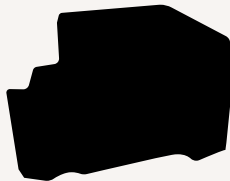
Technical sponsor:
Self-production

Soft Objects

Soft Objects is a project of one-of-a kind, collectible and experimental knitted objects. In 2024 Gaspard Fleury-Dugy launched the first collection, exploring the world of vases. The second collection, exploring the language of totems has been started for Osaka World Expo. A basket allows us to gather things we like or need, it is therefore a container for what is part of us. Each element of the column acts like baskets to collect and assemble our diverse identities, cultures and languages together.

From a formal point of view, it's the aesthetics of the amphorae that are referenced. Then it's the curve, found in Oscar Niemeyer's architecture, that serves as the starting point for some of the shapes. Visually, there is a dialogue between two temporalities: on the one hand, the basketry structures and weaving patterns, and on the other, a more contemporary aesthetic inherited from the rhythm of the pixels on our screens and the sportswear aesthetic.

Wendy Andreu



Wendy Andreu is a craft designer who aims to communicate through the materials she is using. By experimenting with them, she finds surprising outcomes that can be translated into functional design proposals. She is able to execute any idea that comes to her mind in order to check the potential of it. She likes to think of the bridges between matter, people and space in an open way. In her research, the context has as much importance as the concept, without forgetting the quality of the making and the aesthetic of the pieces.

Wendy Andreu won the Public Prize of the Accessory competition at the Villa Noailles in Hyères (2017) and won the Dorothy Waxman Textile Prize in New-York City (2017). In 2018, she got a grant from the Stimulerings Fund (NL) in order to develop her project Regen. In 2020, she was one of the Rising Talent France during Maison et Objet January edition. From 2022 - 2024, she was a résident at Cirva Marseille. In 2024 she was granted with the Revelation Design Prize of the City of Paris. She is currently working in Pantin, where she is developing experimental work as well as commissioned projects for public and private clients; mainly interior architects and fashion brands.





Typology:
Sillón

Material:
Cotton, silicone, foam, zip

Expo 2025 Osaka

Dragon Half an Armchair



Dragon Half an Armchair is part of the Dragon Chairs series, this is the very first to be covered with a colored Regen textile skin with organic patterns that seek to blur the volumes of the chair. This version is a meridian, an invitation to psychedelic strolls. The collection draws on the tradition of radical European design and is a clear nod to designers who have steered furniture design in a more artistic and creative direction, including Gaetano Pesce and Ettore Sottsass.

Budde Studio

Budde is a German design studio, founded in 2020 and led by Architect Johannes Budde and Meike Papenfuss. While Johannes is the creative mind behind Budde, Meike connects the dots between design and business.

Arising from the field of architecture, the studio’s work stretches across typologies such as furniture, interior objects and lighting – combining exclusive collectible designs as well as scalable designs intended for the commercial market.

Driven by a courageous spirit, Budde seeks to introduce meaningful objects that provide a new take on a quotidian object. The studio’s practice is characterized by eliminating excess and relying on essential forms. Purposeful details and intuitive functionality are paired with a commitment to outstanding quality and longevity.

Since 2024, Budde is growing beyond object design and steps into holistic interior design, leveraging Johannes’s past experiences as an architect. Budde is based in Cologne and Milan.





Typology:
Lamp

Material:
Aluminum, Recycled aluminum

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Sandhelden

Zenit



Zenit is a sculptural table lamp inspired by architectural lines and the dynamic interplay of light and shadow. This 3D-printed lamp is available in two sizes: the small version, ideal for placing in the centre of a table, and the larger version, for illuminating corners of the living area or for placing on a bedside table in the bedroom.

OE Studio



Founded by Lisa Ertel and Anne-Sophie Oberkrome, Studio OE is a Berlin-based design practice. Both studied product design at HfG Karlsruhe. Their work spans from self-initiated projects in furniture and object design to multidisciplinary collaborations and industrial design commissions for international companies. Guided by a fascination for the inherent qualities of materials and everyday phenomena, the duo creates works that tell unconventional stories about the spatial and social contexts in which their projects evolve.

Country:
Germany

Photo Credit:
Peter Oliver Wolff

Expo 2025 Osaka





Typology:
Chair

Material:
Natural bristles, wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Their participation has been made possible through a close collaboration with Berlin brush and braiding manufactory of USE Union Sozialer Einrichtungen gemeinnützige GmbH

Broom Chair

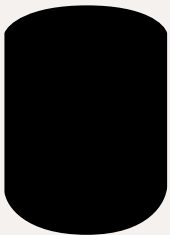
The production of brushes has deep roots in Berlin’s social history, particularly as a craft practiced by the blind. OE Studio decided to revive this historic tradition by collaborating with a local workshop to create a sustainable armchair using natural bristles instead of polyurethane foam.

Unlike conventional PU foam, which is increasingly considered obsolete due to its environmental impact (fossil-based, energy-intensive, and difficult to recycle), OE Studio has adopted a more sustainable approach, creating an “experimental armchair”—an invitation to shift perspectives—by transforming both its use and its production into a mindful, tactile experience that connects us to natural, renewable materials.

Inspired by the classic scout chair, the design celebrates simplicity, community spirit, and resource efficiency: a tangible tribute to the principle of “doing more with less.”



Und.Studio



Und.Studio is a culmination of designers, architects, artists and craftsmen working and collaborating together in Berlin, Germany. Creations span from playful creatures to colorful furniture to polished stainless steel products. We are a collective of friends who share a passion for design and realization. Sebastian Schwindt, Sonny Neigut and Till Ronacher represent 3/9th of Und.Studio collective for the Design Beyond Things exhibition.





Typology:
Stool

Material:
Linoleum

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Faust Linoleum

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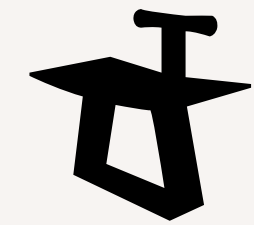
Requiem For a Tree

The project Requiem For a Tree engages with the three most endangered tree species in Germany: spruce, beech and birch. Reminiscent of tree trunks, the stools are designed in three different heights to visualise the degree of endangerment of each species. The project thus combines design with environmental awareness and demonstrates how the traditional inlay technique with linoleum can be used for sustainable and detailed furniture.

At the heart of the design concept is the use of inlays with the natural material linoleum – a technique that enables a filigree surface design. Different colored pieces of linoleum are meticulously and precisely assembled by hand to reproduce the patterns of tree bark in an abstract form. The patterns were designed using a combination of analog drawings and digital post-processing to create the required cutting patterns for production.

The design and concept were created by Sonny Neigut, Till Ronacher and Sebastian Schwindt, who are part of Und.studio.

Liliána Mészáros (VUUV Works)



VUUV Works promotes Central European craftsmanship’s beauty and relevance. Harmonising innovation with timeless techniques to create fresh aesthetics. Making handcrafted furniture and accessories, partnering closely with skilled artists and craftsmen. VUUV shares a commitment to sustainability and ethical collaboration. Designer Liliána Mészáros officially joined the VUUV team in 2024. Her passion for nature and mountaineering shapes her vision for simple minimalism, believing that timeless aesthetics and sustainability are at the intersection of natural materials and handmade products that help to create a connection with our environment.





Typology:
Chair

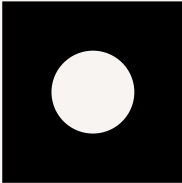
Material:
Metal, wood

Lani Chair

The object combines the coldness and solidity of metal with the inviting warmth and lighter texture of wood. The pattern of the surface is an enlarged code, reminiscent of the unique beauty of nature’s lines. Here is a singular organic drawing, formed by the moment, as opposed to a geometric, structured world. The focus is on the playful contrast of materials and shapes and the harmonious union of these elements.

The brand’s traditionalist motivation to respect materials and creation also plays a role: quality craftsmanship and quality materials together offer the possibility of timelessness.

Raffaella Mangiarotti



Raffaella Mangiarotti is an architect and designer. Her practice is grounded in a deep sense of care and gentleness—towards objects, the people who use them, and the environment we live in. She designs products that combine functional rigor with poetic sensitivity, aiming to create essential and emotional forms. Some of her works are included in major international museum collections.





Typology:
Lamp

Material:
Marble

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Nerinea

Aura



Light as a symbiosis of matter and life.

a circle of light as a mirror to look deep inside.

Light veiled by stone, the essence of the earth: stone and light.

The material sensitivity of light that transcends time through the static, inert rock. Symbiosis of matter and life.

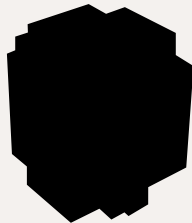
A lamp composed by a circular light hole inside a natural stone, a vision through a window to open up imagination, to perceive other dimensions of human horizons, other perspectives of the new spaces we inhabit.

These are some of the reflections that led to the creation of Aura, a lamp consisting of a circular hole within a natural stone—a vision through a window to open the imagination, to perceive other dimensions of human horizons, other perspectives on the new spaces we inhabit.

Carmelo Zappulla

Carmelo Zappulla, Italian architect with a PhD from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, is the founder and director of External Reference, an international studio based in Barcelona dedicated to transforming spaces into emotional experiences through a multidisciplinary approach.

At his helm, the studio has stood out for its innovative projects combining cradle-to-cradle design, digital fabrication, and material research. His work spans over 15 years and has been exhibited at the Biennale di Venezia, MAXXI Museum and Milano Design Week. Notable projects include Nova Bocana, the Spain Pavilion at Expo 2020, WOW in Madrid and the award-winning Pure Plants. He directs the Master’s in Experiential Interior Design at LCI Barcelona, teaches at IAAC, and his work has earned international awards and features in major publications.



Country:
Italy

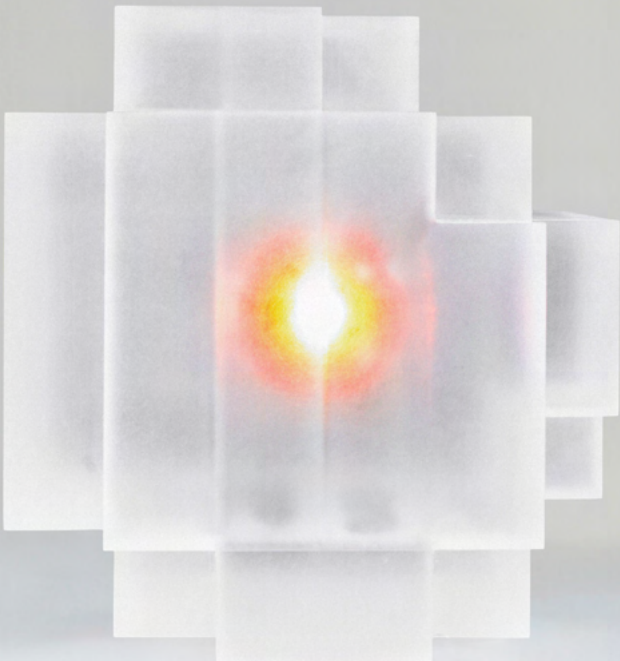
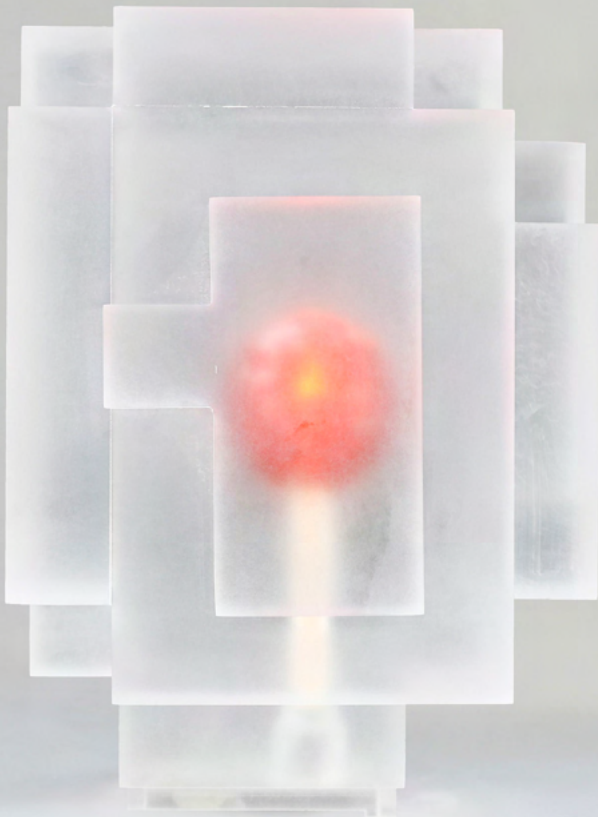
Photo Credit:
Carlo Gerli

Expo 2025 Osaka





Sigillo



Sigillo is conceived as a luminous seal of memory and culture: a translucent crystalline block enclosing a radiant red core, inspired by both the Mediterranean sun and the Japanese hinomaru. Through the tension between warm light and austere geometry, the work reflects on preservation, cultural memory and the dialogue between emotion and structure.

Created using regenerated PMMA, the sculpture also questions contemporary systems of production and consumption. Rather than rejecting plastic, it reclaims the material as something precious when used consciously, locally and with intention. The crystalline form acts as both container and revelation, preserving a fragment of light for the future.

Conceived as a bridge between cultures, *Sigillo* becomes a meditation on permanence, transformation and the responsibility of design to create fewer, more meaningful objects.

Elena Salmistraro



Elena Salmistraro is an Italian product designer and artist. She graduated in Fashion Design and Industrial Design from the Politecnico di Milano, and in 2009, she founded her design studio, focusing on design, art, fashion, and illustration.

Her style, characterized by rich textures and vibrant colors, centers around the harmony of forms, pursued in the expressiveness of objects, animism, and the poetry of the stories they tell. For Elena, emotion is an essential function of the object itself.

In 2023, Forbes Italy included her among the 100 successful women of the year, and in the same year she was named designer of the year for the Frankfurt Ambiente Fair.



Primates



“This collection of ceramic vases reinterprets ancient Roman terracotta, awakening their spirit and their story. Once, objects were not inert but living presences, guardians of profound meanings.

The Primates are born from this spirit: forms that converse with nature and with art, that weave memories, layer meanings, and spread culture.

It is in this continuous intertwining, in this silent dialogue between matter, form, and symbol, that the truest sense of my design practice is revealed.

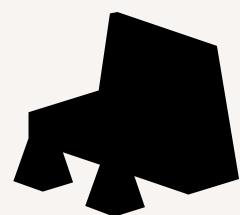
The only real prohibition, for me, is the certainty of knowledge.

Design is never a definitive answer, but a journey of research and discovery, an open ground where doubt becomes possibility.”

Gateris Works

Gateris Works is design studio based in Riga, Latvia exploring Latvian visual code and translating it into objects of everyday use. Through research of vernacular carpentry in rural areas GW questions the form language of contemporary furniture and how it encapsulates local naiveté and clumsiness.

Their participation has been made possible through a close collaboration with the Baltic Pavillion & Latvian Design Centre and with the support from VKKF (Valsts Kultūrkapitāla fonds).





Typology:
Chair

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Baltic Pavillion & Latvian
Design Centre and with the
support from VKKF (Valsts
Kultūrkapitāla fonds).

Freckled

Freckled chair is a tribute to all branched, discolored, knotted wood that has been classed as lower grade for furniture industry. Taking inspiration from the beauty industry, where individuality has become the main driving force, Freckled chair is an invitation to acknowledge our inconsistencies regarding inclusivity and sustainability standards across industries. Even though wood is sustainable material on its own, what we are used to seeing is sterile wood material, and the rest is being considered lower grade and often destined to plywood or milling processes. Only a small fraction of wood is without any color fluctuations, branch knots, worm pitches and traces of other environmental processes during a tree’s growth cycle. Freckled chair emphasizes the ornamental nature of a spotted wood plank and invites to consider the the amount of ugly wood we disqualify from being appreciated.

Studio Sarmīte



Studio Sarmīte is a material design and research studio. Led by Latvian designer Sarmīte Poļakova, the studio focuses on transforming industry waste and various by-products into new closed-loop concepts. Material and product lifecycles take a central role within the designer’s work resulting in unique concepts that emphasize circularity over plain longevity. The studio’s design practice consists of hands-on experimental research with the manipulation of existing designing and production methods.





Typology:
Sculpture

Material:
Inner bark of pine trees

Expo 2025 Osaka

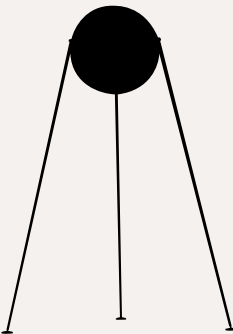
Technical sponsor:
Baltic Pavillion & Latvian
Design Centre.

PineSkins



Have forests become factories of timber? Pine trees are the world’s main source of timber, with over 600 million felled annually in Europe alone. Yet, nearly half of each tree-its bark, needles, and thin branches - discarded as waste. While the global demand for wood surges, we urgently need to create alternative production paradigms for the tree-cutting industry that place less emphasis on timber production. PineSkins is a leather-like material made from the inner bark of pine trees, a by-product of the wood-cutting industry. By changing the focus within the tree cutting practice from efficiency to diversity, a single tree could offer up to 10 sq. m. of this versatile material.

Dace Sūna

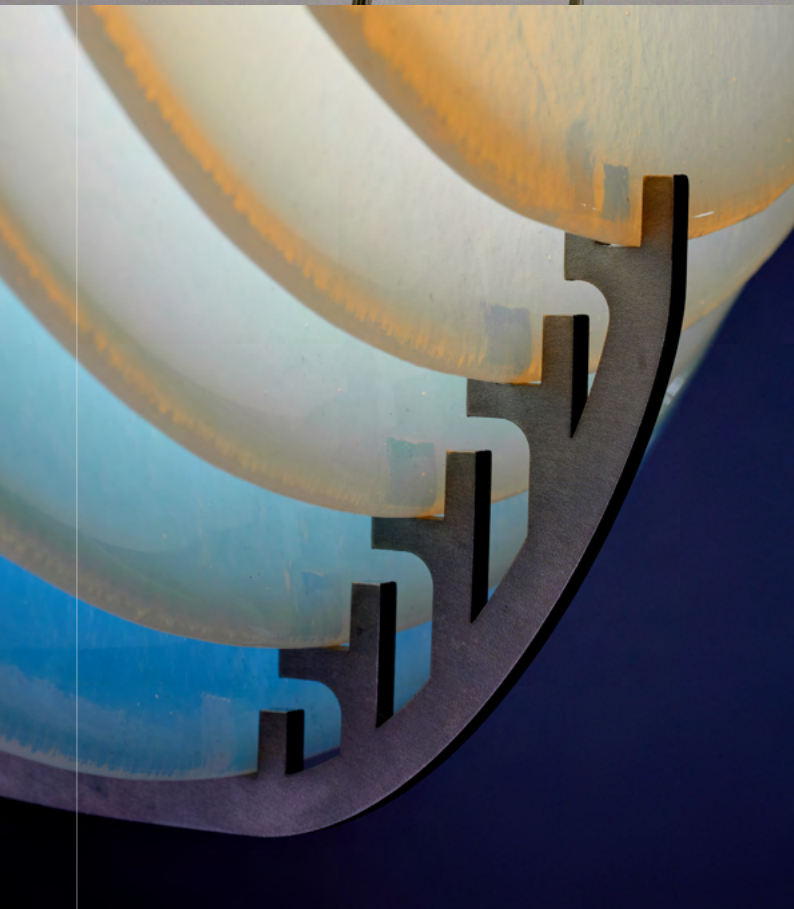


Dace Sūna is specializing in the interplay of space and light. Her background deeply inspires her creations in spatial design, a profound connection to nature, and a fascination with the elemental forces of GAS, FIRE, WATER, EARTH, and PLASMA. Dace recently completed her MA in Contextual Design at the Design Academy Eindhoven and a BFA in Interior Design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, which she completed in 2015. Over the years, Dace has mastered a wide range of materials and techniques. For Dace, design is a journey that unites nature and science, resulting in timeless, light-infused environments that celebrate the magic of the universe.

Country:
Latvia

Expo 2025 Osaka





Typology:
Lamp

Material:
Glass

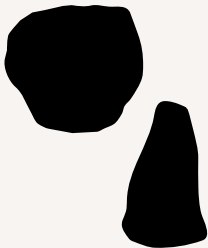
Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Baltic Pavillion & Latvian
Design Centre and with the
support from VKKF (Valsts
Kultūrkapitāla fonds).

Sky-Set Light

The Sky-Set Light is an opalite glass lamp that captures the shifting colors of the sky—from the cool blues of day to the warm reds and oranges of sunset. This color transition, influenced by Rayleigh scattering, reflects both the delicate balance of light in our atmosphere and our perception of it. The light's base takes inspiration from the Sky-Set installation, blending pine wood, atmospheric layers, and the concept of orbital time. Its round shape evokes dendrochronology, the study of climate history through tree rings, which grow vertically to mark the passage of time and environmental changes. Just as trees record time, the Sky-Set light reflects our evolving relationship with the Earth. With its soft glow and shifting colors, the Sky-Set Light symbolizes both the wonder of our atmosphere and the need to preserve it, bridging time, nature, and the space we share.

Austėja Platūkytė



Austėja Platūkytė is a creative researcher working in between the disciplines of material design and science, technology and crafts. She is a doctoral candidate in design (PhD in Arts) and a lecturer in Biomaterials Design at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. Austėja is a pioneer of material design and the Zero Waste philosophy in Lithuania. She is the founder and materials curator of the Biomaterials Library – the first and only collection of sustainable materials in the Baltic States.





Typology:
Vase

Material:
Beeswax, pine tree resin and
invasive *Solidago gigantea* Aiton
plants

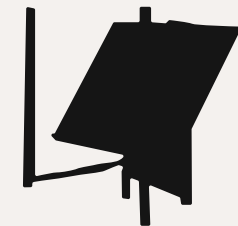
Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Baltic Pavilions EXPO
Osaka 2025

Invasive Vases’

Invasive Vases represents an ongoing material design research aimed to examine the synergy between beeswax & pine tree resin, using invasive Lithuanian plants as a main ingredient. The materials are combined into a homogeneous hybrid, characterized by structural strength, but still thermoplastic when shaping the material, thus expanding the object’s functional capabilities. The use of invasive plant species for design objects encourages the recycling of easily renewable local resources, which in this case are recommended to be collected or mass destroyed and provides an opportunity to rethink the traditional crafts using natural beeswax material. The reuse of organic waste can reduce the need to use raw materials such as wood or plastic, thus helping to conserve natural resources and reduce the environmental impact of their extraction. Due to its thermoplasticity, Invasive Vases can be re-melted and transformed into similar vases or shaped into any kind of design objects, thus continuing the material lifecycle, just like in nature. Made from beeswax, pine tree resin and invasive *Solidago gigantea* Aiton plants.

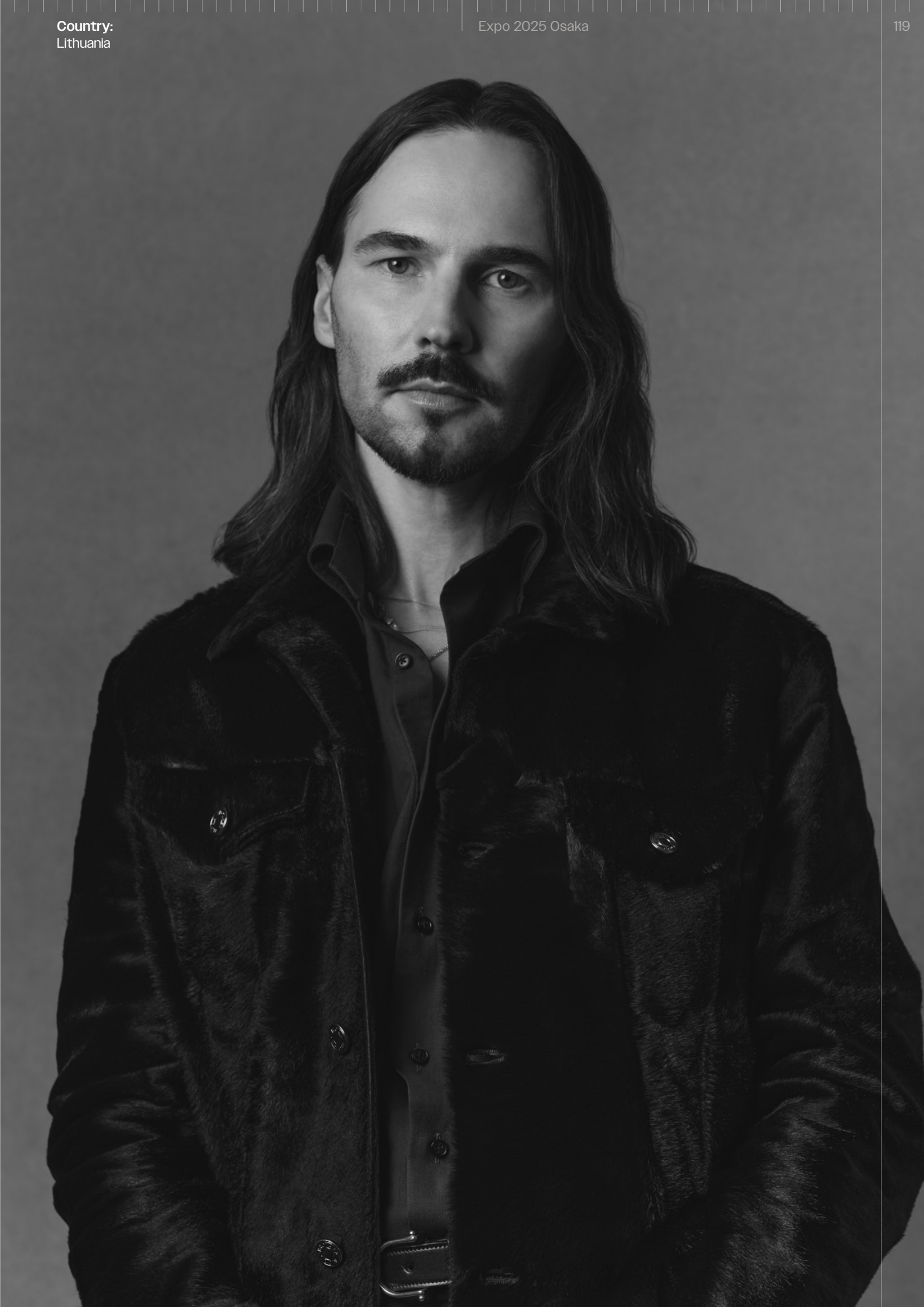
Mantas Lesauskas



Mantas Lesauskas is a designer and researcher renowned for his limited-edition furniture and sculptural design pieces that blur the lines between art and design.

Known for his tactile approach, Lesauskas experiments with techniques and long-lasting natural materials to explore archetypes and rituals. His work is driven by a fascination with the narratives evoked by objects, aiming to create pieces that challenge and engage, much like art

pieces do. He is also an associate professor at the Design Department at Vilnius Academy of Arts.





Typology:
Sculpture

Material:
Aluminum, aromatic resins,
minerals, and naturally
harvested latex

Expo 2025 Osaka

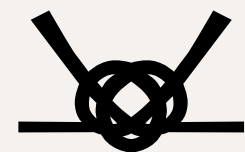
Technical sponsor:
Baltic Pavilions EXPO
Osaka 2025

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Pheripheria

Aluminum, aromatic resins, minerals, and naturally harvested latex. Do resources simply subject themselves to the whims of their extractors and users? Are objects merely a backdrop to human existence – created and waiting to be filled with the foreign will to act, be valuable, or to be unnecessary? Designer and researcher Mantas Lesauskas offers different, unexpected answers to these questions. Engaging in a dialogue with amber, Lesauskas employs the method of interrogation in dealing with this material. In the field of design, it facilitates breaking away from stereotypes, revealing new perspectives on materials, and finding a basis for deeper creative reflection and artistic exploration that transcends the limits of superficial attitudes.

BCXSY



BCXSY is an Amsterdam-based interdisciplinary design studio, founded in 2007 by Boaz Cohen and Sayaka Yamamoto. Renowned for their concept-driven approach, BCXSY’s work bridges cultures and moments in time, weaving together observation and reflection to uncover the subtle qualities of materials and techniques. Their collaborative process results in visual narratives that are both harmonious and immersive, inviting audiences to pause, connect, and interact.

Their participation has been made possible through a close collaboration with textile innovation company BYBORRE, who are redesigning the logic of textile production for a more transparent, responsible future.





Knit Knot

For a long time, BCXSY has been intrigued by Mizuhiki – the Japanese traditional technique of ornamental knot-tying, made of fine cords of washi paper. Deeply rooted in Japanese culture, Mizuhiki is most often associated with gift-giving, where it symbolizes anticipation, celebration, and the bonds between giver and receiver

When invited by BYBORRE to explore the Create platform, they were fascinated by the assortment of available stitches, patterns, and colors this advanced tool offers.

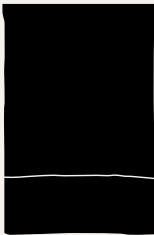
Mizuhiki seemed like the perfect motif to visualize and exemplify this diversity.

The result is Knit Knot: a throw that features a decorative Mizuhiki knot, rendered through a sophisticated interplay of fine knitted stitches and textures. This design not only captures the delicacy and complexity of the traditional technique but also allows users to envelop themselves in the warmth and meaning of a centuries-old cultural practice, reimagined for today. Knit Knot embodies BCXSY's signature blend of cultural dialogue, material sensitivity, and narrative design.

Kiki van Eijk

Kiki van Eijk grew up in the Netherlands where she spent her youth immersed in nature daydreaming and drawing. She is now one of the most accomplished names in the world of Dutch design. Her interest in product design developed at the Design Academy of Eindhoven where she met her future partner, designer Joost van Bleiswijk. Her wide range of work extends from installations to furniture, from lighting to textiles, ceramics or glassware. Inspired by the smallest details of the everyday and by a childlike sense of wonder, Kiki's world is whimsical and colorful, lyrical and personal, yet refined by a rigorous attention to the process and skillful craftsmanship.

Their participation has been made possible through a close collaboration with textile innovation company BYBORRE, who are redesigning the logic of textile production for a more transparent, responsible future.



Country:
Netherlands

Photo Credit:
Roos Pierson

Expo 2025 Osaka





Reconnecting the Earth's Roots

Kiki asks herself: What if we saw the continents as ginger bulbs?

Firmly rooted in the earth, always seeking the path of least resistance.

What if we flipped our perspective—saw the world upside down, with roots reaching into the sky?

So that we can give each other some air to breathe again.

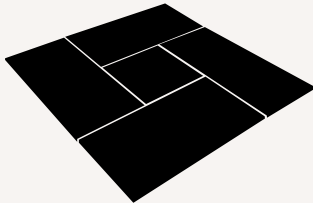
Our roots could reconnect, boost our collective immune system, and offer us hope for the future.

From a historical and geographical perspective, the Netherlands has always been a country of connection and collaboration.

From here, we connect with the world around us. Empathy is everything.

In partnership with BYBORRE, a pioneering Dutch textile company, Kiki explores new ways to unite craft and industry, poetry and politics.

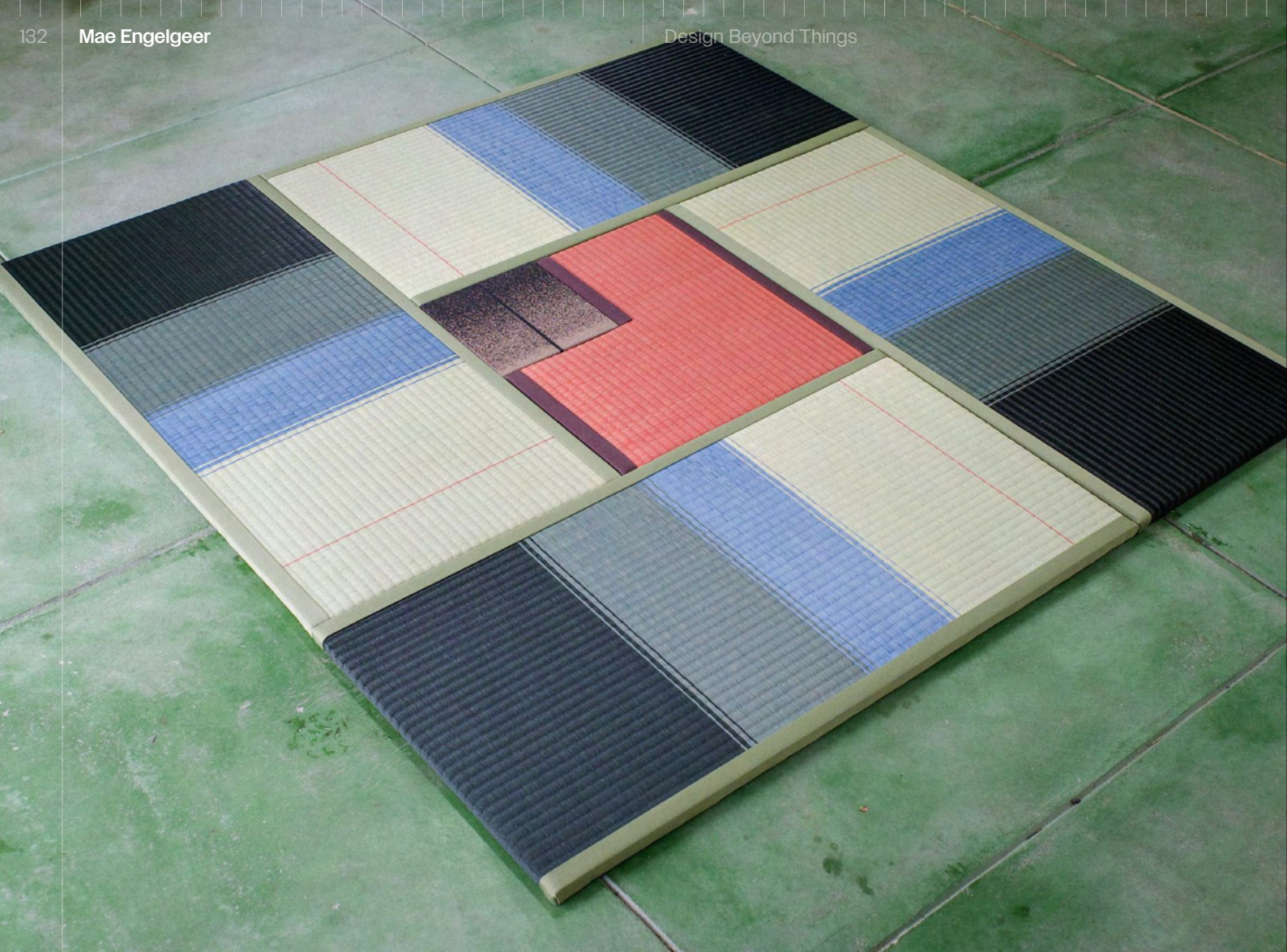
Mae Engelgeer



Textile design has always been at the heart of Dutch designer Mae Engelgeer’s work. Since opening her own studio in 2013, she has nurtured her curiosity for the craft, experimenting within the existing boundaries of textile production to elevate old techniques to a modern stage.

Mae Engelgeer’s work embraces subtle colour palettes, patterns and linear elements. Complex compositions merge with perfection to establish harmony. Creative explorations into the contrasting of materials and textures result in works that luxurious in their tactility and dimensionality.





Typology:
Single Person Tatami
Tea Room

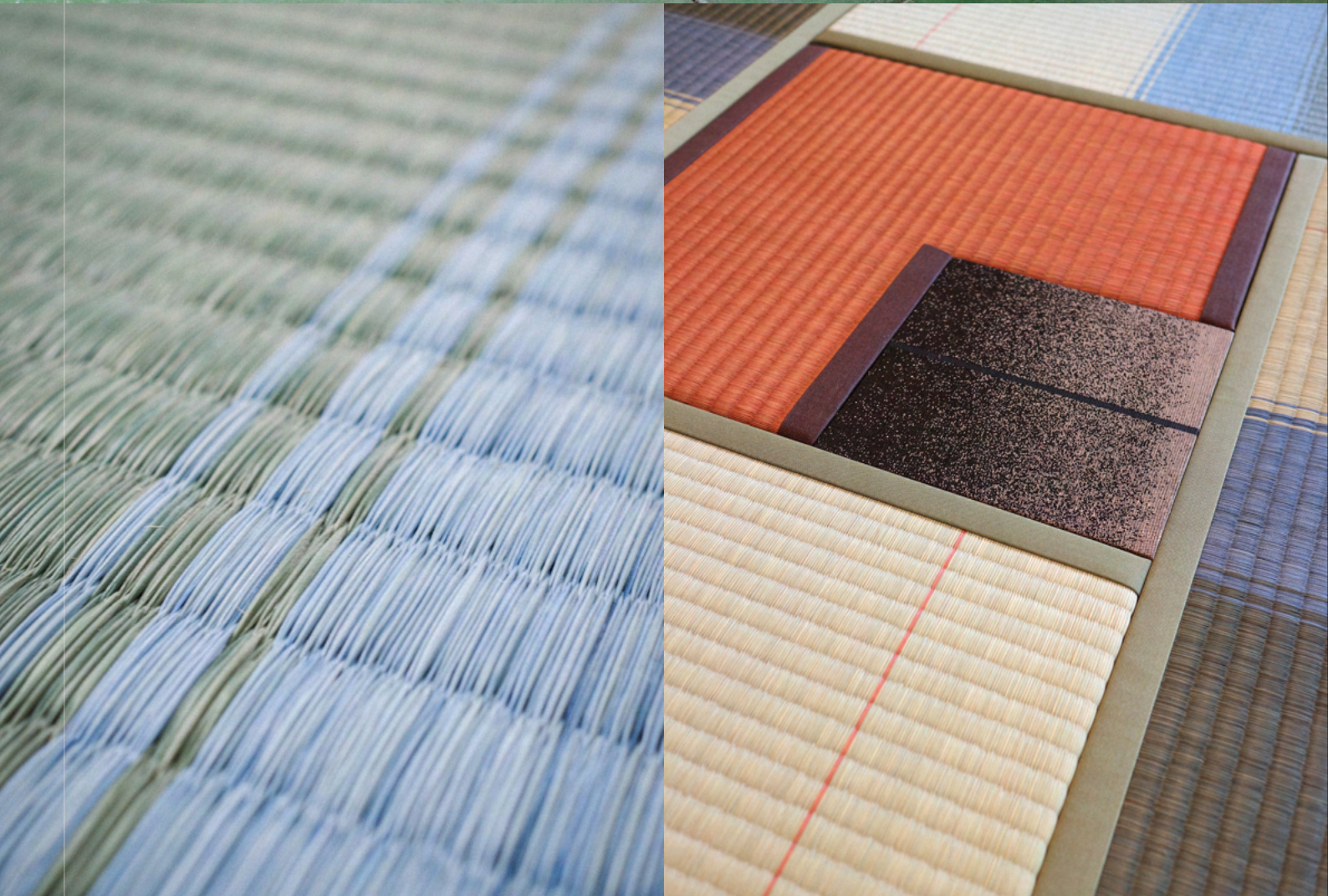
Material:
Straw, wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Netherlands pavilion
Expo Osaka 2025, Mitsuru
Yokoyama

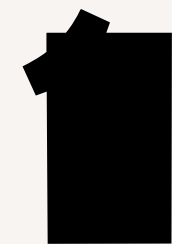
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A Moment to Pause



“A Moment of Pause” is a tea room born from a collaboration between textile artist Mae Engelgeer and Kyoto-based tatami maker Mitsuru Yokoyama. The space reinterprets the traditional tea room through an atmosphere that reflects Mae Engelgeer’s distinctive aesthetic, using color palettes unusual for tatami to create a serene and inspiring environment, ideal for contemplation and creative flow.

Maria Jeglinska-Adamczewska



Maria Jeglinska-Adamczewska founded her Office for Design & Research in 2012. She graduated from ECAL's industrial design course in 2007 and was awarded a scholarship from the IKEA foundation that led her to work for Galerie kreio (Paris), Konstantin Grcic (Munich) and Alexander Taylor (London). Her practice spans industrial and exhibition design, as well as research-driven projects. She believes design research can spark new answers and offers.



Portable Walls

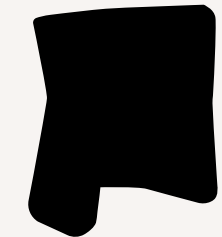
The Portable Walls collection is inspired by the architectural characteristics of Sándor Mikó’s armchair – reduced to a sign that can be read as either a 2d form or a 3d shape. The armchair’s style is extremely succinct – it functions as a symbol, a pictogram of an armchair while serving the primary function of supporting the sitter’s body.

Studies on walls that support us when traveling in space. Portable Walls are objects which serve to create a context for other items. After all, it is the context that defines a designed object’s value and importance: their original purpose is to co-function with other items in specific spaces and to accompany us in our daily lives.

The collection includes four “walls” which create a landscape of free-standing vertical or horizontal surfaces. They are abstract forms which do not point to a specific function, but rather offer freedom in choosing the way they are used and arranged. While different items may be displayed on the Portable Walls, they are also objects in themselves. They can be used to partition spaces or, with their assigned functionality removed (the piece of furniture and its content), be situated in another space. Portable Walls can function as some combination of museum display plinths, walls, pieces of furniture, theater props, and backdrops that support us in the activities which constitute our day. Motion is part of their form.



Filipe Alarcão



Filipe Alarcão has a graduation in Design by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Lisbon and Master Degree in Industrial Design at Domus Academy in Milan, Italy. Recipient of the National Design Prize promoted by the Portuguese Design Centre, he lives and works in Lisbon, in his own practice Filipe Alarcão Designstudio developing projects of industrial and furniture design, urban design, lighting, ceramics and glass.

Between 1995 and 1997, he worked in Milan with architect Michele de Lucchi. More recently, he extended the scope of his work to fields related to interior and exhibition design as well as art director for several design projects with such as Project 01 for the Portuguese Vista Alegre/Atlantis, Amorim Cork, Temahome. He teaches at ESAD-CR, Caldas da Rainha Design School, in Portugal.





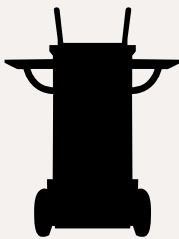
Chugaeri

Shugaeri is the Japanese word for cambalhota, the Portuguese word for somersault.

This chair is entirely made in machine-milled cork composite and can be turned upside down to became a lower lounge chair. It is made in two parts which are firmly joined together due to cork’s capability to contract and expand itself, therefore with no need to use any glue or other type of mechanical connection. Developed with the support of Amorim Cork Solutions, the world biggest cork company, the Shugaeri chair merges this unique natural material and advanced technology to create a very playful and useful piece of furniture.



Atelier Ad Hoc



Atelier Ad Hoc is a Bucharest-based architecture practice focused on the relation between public space, informality and living conditions manifested in different situations around the city.

Founded by Maria Daria Oancea and George Marinescu as a dual practice consisting of a design studio and an NGO, Atelier Ad Hoc engages with situations associated with #social and #spatial vulnerability. They develop support structures and spatial prototypes that extend resources available to communities, testing alternative visions for an inclusive city.





Typology:
Modular furniture

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Romanian Cultural Institute

co-LIZA

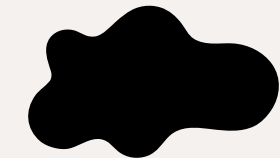
The project aims to help civic groups that are active in the neighborhood to organize cultural and social events for the community with the help of a resource-object that is co-managed between different organizations.

The object is intended as a community activation kit in the form of mobile equipment, easy to transport over relatively short distances in the neighbourhood and can be assembled in different instances suitable for various community activities carried out by organizations.

This version of Co-LIZA is equipped with a vertical element that works as a mast with a height of over three meters. Different elements can be attached to this and hold cables to support various activities on a wider perimeter in public or communal spaces (from badminton and volleyball games to exhibitions and signal objects).

co-LIZA 2.0 is a community activation tool that helps organizations and neighbours to co-produce civic scenarios of (re)imagining and (re)engaging with neighbourhood spaces and practices. The collective activities, which are often invisible and informal, have the role of mobilizing the community and showing the hidden value of collaboration and neighbourhood solidarity. This can inspire new roles for architecture, art and activist practices and can reorient the discussions related to abandoned or under-development spaces in relation to the needs and aspirations of a community.

Álvaro Catalán de Ocón



Alvaro Catalán de Ocón is a Spanish designer recognized for his dedication to the field of #design with a focus on protest-related projects, aesthetic expressiveness and practicality in his creations. Alvaro’s innovative approach involves combining traditional crafts with industrial manufacturing processes to create functional and contemporary objects that address social and ecological issues. He’s a leading figure among a new generation of Spanish designers who emphasize personal vision, social responsibility, and sustainability in their work, shaping the present and future of design

Country:
Spain

Photo Credit:
Verónica Cámara

Expo 2025 Osaka





Gurunsi Oval

Gurunsi is a region in northern Ghana that is known for its enduring traditions of basketry. Alvaro Catalán de Ocón first traveled to Bolgatanga, the capital of Gurunsi, in 2019 after discovering its remarkable craftsmanship at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, dedicated to displaying art from non-Western civilizations. Alongside Enrique Romero de la Llana and Sebastián Betanzo, he connected with Baba Tree, which quickly converted into a local partner and collaborator. In the inaugural PET Lamp Bolgatanga collection, Baba Tree artisans blended traditional Indian techniques with local textile traditions. After the pandemic, the studio aimed to deepen its relationship with the West African project through anthropological research. They aspired to go beyond the first collection by developing a large-format lamp model with multiple cores to be a vehicle of expression of an aspect of their culture, the adobe traditional family compounds they inhabit. Previously, a similar experience occurred with the PET Lamp team in Australia. Working with the Aboriginal community led to the creation of the PET Lamp Ramingining, which articulated the kinship relationship between the weavers involved in the project through interconnected circles.



Andreu Carulla



Andreu Carulla is one of the leading names in industrial design in Spain and on the international scene, known for his broad, cross-disciplinary approach to the field. With a background in high-level competitive sports and a philosophy of “setting a course and going all in,” he bases his work on four key pillars: an empowered vision of craftsmanship; sustainability applied to every stage of development; innovative solutions for industry; and design that values cultural heritage and the historical legacy of his country.





Typology:
Chair

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
IDÉE TOKYO

Convento

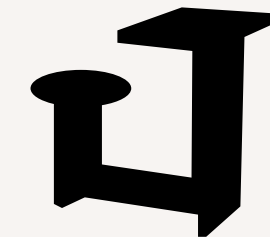
The Convento chair draws inspiration from an earlier collection designed by the Spanish designer Les Bernardes, created specifically for the former Les Bernardes monastery in Catalonia when it was converted into a cultural center and art gallery.

Convento pays homage to the history of the monastic space with a design that evokes austerity, solemnity, and timelessness, utilizing traditional craftsmanship techniques such as wicker weaving.

The chair’s style also aligns with the culture of the Japanese company IDÉE, which produced it: rigor, clean lines, and simplicity that allow it to adapt to any interior style.

Unlike conventional chairs, the backrest is not attached to the seat but directly to the rear legs. The components have been thoroughly tested and meticulously designed, which increases their durability.

Inma Bermúdez Studio



Inma Bermúdez Studio was founded in 2007. With a track record of over 15 years, it is recognised worldwide with numerous national and international design awards, including the prestigious prize “Premio Nacional de Diseño” awarded in 2022 by the Spanish Ministry of Innovation and Design, making Inma the third and youngest woman to receive this honor in the history of the awards.

The studio engages in projects, ranging from mass-produced items to unique pieces, from high-end to low-price options, and from traditional craftsmanship to pure industrial design. Each commission is equally significant to them; they dedicate the same enthusiasm, love, and know-how to each of them.





Typology:
Desk

Material:
Wood

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Finsa and Sancal

Suricata

Suricata (Meerkat) is a seat with a table designed by Inma Bermúdez Studio for the company Sancal. Guided by the brand’s bold and playful personality, they found the perfect inspiration in the animal world to bring Suricata to life, a desk that uniquely combines functionality and character.

Meerkats, with their light brown fur, watchful stance, and social nature, captivated them with their balance and collaborative spirit. Their unique layered structure invites users to sit and adopt the meerkats’ alert posture. Designed to meet the evolving needs of 21st-century students, the desk incorporates sustainable materials and an ergonomic design while maintaining versatility and lightness. This ensures easy mobility and flexible use, both in classrooms and other non-academic environments.

The suricata desks, with their durable and resistant surfaces, go beyond the educational field, seamlessly adapting to the needs of diverse sectors such as hospitality and office spaces. Suricata takes over spaces in packs, filling them with life, energy, and joy.



Claesson Koivisto Rune

Claesson Koivisto Rune, the Swedish architecture studio, was founded in 1995 by Mårten Claesson, Eero Koivisto and Ola Rune. Today, it is an internationally renowned practice, working with both architecture and design. The first Swedish firm to exhibit in the international section of the Venice Architecture Biennale (2004), Claesson Koivisto Rune has received an array of international awards. In 2021, King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf presented Mårten Claesson, Eero Koivisto and Ola Rune with The Prince Eugen Medal for outstanding artistic achievement in architecture (2020).





Typology:
Vase

Material:
Glass

Expo 2025 Osaka

Technical sponsor:
Orrefors

Black Hole

Together with Orrefors*, Sweden’s most renowned glass works, we are pushing the boundaries of what is possible to craft with a unique vase specifically developed for the Osaka Expo 2025.

Geometrical, pure and solid, it challenges the notion of what a vase should be. Large (60cm diameter) and heavy – it rests firmly, yet appears floating. Dark, black, but still with some transparency to make its inner reservoir visible. The flowers are not only kept watered and held up, but are also enhanced by their reflection in the flat surround.

The process is coloured, sand-cast, ground and polished glass. The challenge being the volume and tapered solidity, making time critical: Both the limited timespan allowed for pouring the cast, and the very long and slow timespan needed for cooling.

Inspired by the latest scientific discoveries from the edge of the universe that we now can see – where the illusive black holes have just recently been able to be visualised – and rooted in long traditions of handmade glass manufacturing, the Black Hole Osaka vase ties the history of human cultural development with future endeavors.

Video Installation



Steve Piccolo

On the international scene since the mid-1970s, during his career Steve Piccolo has worked on music (co-founder of the Lounge Lizards), theater, performance art, sound installations, film soundtracks and fiction. He has shown works and/or done performances in many museums, galleries and international art events. He has contributed curated sound projects at ArtVerona in 2008, and for the exhibition “Club 21” during Frieze 2010 in London. He presently works with the project agency Art Apart of Zurich, creating productions of artists’ apps and books (including BLKNSM for the city of Venice during the 55th Biennale, and BLKNSM St. Petersburg as a collateral event of Manifesta 10). His theoretical and fictional writings have appeared in many magazines and journals, including four years of a monthly column for the magazine InSound. Other projects include a week-long sound workshop at the Vienna Secession on the theme of Utopia, a performance at MAXXI Rome, two performances for the pavilions of

Belgium and Greece at the 56th Venice Art Biennale. For Expo 2015 Milano he created an app for the Russian pavilion (Milangrad), and a workshop and video with Fondazione Feltrinelli. In 2016 he composed the sounds for a virtual reality project inside the Arnaldo Pomodoro retrospective at Palazzo Reale in Milan. In 2020, with the association Città Sonora, he took part in the production of a large multimedia exhibition in Bolzano on the relationship between sound and environment. Piccolo has taken part in most of the exhibition-events of HOPERAPERTA over the last five years. The sounds he created many years ago for Alessi kitchen timers designed by George Sowden have been featured in the 23rd Milan Triennale 2022, in the exhibition “The Tradition of the New.” Many recent releases of albums of music with Sergio Armaroli, Elliott Sharp, Andrea Centazzo and other renowned musicians, including CDs for prestigious labels such as Hat Hut and Gruenrekorder (DE), can be seen at his website.



Permission, Prohibition and the Language of Design

With the aim of bringing together all the objects selected for Design Beyond Things, Patrizia Catalano and Miriam Giordano invited artist Steve Piccolo to create a video installation—exhibited at Expo 2025 in Osaka—that explored the themes of permission, prohibition and the evolving language of design.

In collaboration with Gregory Piccolo, they created 34 videos for each designer. Each video contained: 1 portrait of the designer, 2 images of the design works, a description of the project written in the original language with English subtitles, a recording of the pronunciation in the native and a sound based on the type of materials used for the designer’s projects.

Concept

The historical avant-gardes violated rules as a way of fostering novelty, energy and surprise. Modernism and Rationalism then came along to make lots of new rules, which were seldom conceived to be broken. In our contemporary world these attitudes are balanced in a paradoxical contradiction or dichotomy.

Today’s context is marked by a complex interplay between constraint and permissiveness: social, political and cultural. From climate urgency to digital surveillance, public health to identity politics, prohibitions have multiplied—often as a response to real global pressures. At the same time, a broader permissiveness

around language, image and expression has expanded, challenging what is considered acceptable or possible.

In design practice, these tensions are deeply felt. The recent New York Times report on the Trump administration’s efforts to ban terms like “diversity” and “inclusion” in federal agencies reminds us how even language becomes a space of control, reminding us how powerfully prohibition can shape creative environments.

Therefore, in this context, design is not only a practice of making, but also one of redefining the lexicon of contemporary culture. It can question inherited norms, resist imposed silences, and propose new vocabularies—visual, spatial, and verbal—that reflect the complexity of our time.

In this climate, design becomes a way of reading and rewriting permissions. It works within limits, but also tests boundaries. As the social body evolves and new urgencies emerge, design has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to redefine the lexicon of contemporary culture. Beyond aesthetics or function, objects can become instruments of transformation: carrying meaning, expressing values, and restoring hope, while questioning inherited norms, resist imposed silences and propose new vocabularies—visual, spatial and verbal—that reflect the complexity of our time.

In doing so, design continues its role as a humanist force, shaping both the present and the future.

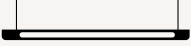
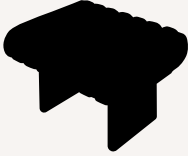
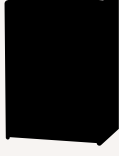
Questions for the designers

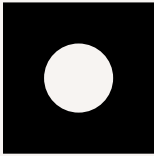
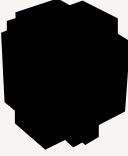
Today, creative practices are often defined in terms of what to DO or NOT DO, the prohibitions they strive to obey. At the same time, works propagate permissive images and expressions, attempting to provoke or surprise the viewer/user.

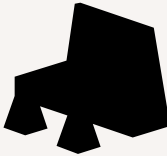
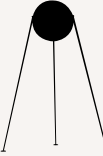
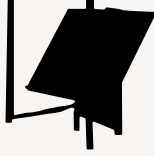
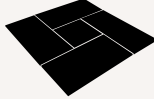
Questions to be answered:

- “In your work, is there a prohibition in particular you feel is fundamental?”
- “Please tell us a term you hope you will never hear utilized to describe your work”

Please respond to one or both questions with a maximum of 3 words.

	Anna Zimmermann <i>Oberflächlich / Superficial</i> <i>Langweilig / Boring</i>	P. 28
	Klemens Shillinger <i>Fantasielos / Uninspired</i> <i>Nutzlos / Useless</i>	P. 32
	Thomas Waidhofer <i>Bastel / Handicraft</i> <i>Kitsch / Kitsch</i> <i>Upcycling / Upcycling</i>	P. 36
	Paulinepluslouis <i>Néfaste / Detrimental</i> <i>Inutile / Useless</i>	P. 40
	Jan Plecháč <i>Zákaz svobody slova</i> Prohibition of Freedom of Speech	P. 44
	Akiko Kuwahata and Ken Winther <i>Umuligt / Impossible</i> <i>Ubrugelgt / Useless</i>	P. 48
	Anne Brandhoj <i>Knaster / Knots</i> <i>Svindrevner / Shrinkage Cracks</i> <i>Svampeangreb / Fungal Attack</i>	P. 52
	Maria Bruun <i>Eksperiment / Experimentation</i> <i>Uinteressant / Uninteresting</i>	P. 56
	Gam Fratesi <i>Overfladiskhed / Superficiality</i>	P. 60

	Antrei Hartikainen <i>Ikääntyminen / Aging</i> <i>Luottamus / Reliance</i>	P. 64
	Gaspard Fluery <i>Terne / Dull</i>	P. 68
	Wendy Andreu <i>Ennuyeux / Boring</i> <i>À la mode / Trendy</i> <i>Superficiel / Shallow</i>	P. 72
	Budde Studio <i>Überdimensioniert / Overdesigned</i> <i>Redundant / Redundant</i> <i>Stagnierend / Stagnating</i>	P. 76
	OE Studio <i>Feminin / Feminine</i> <i>Modern / Modern</i> <i>Dekorativ / Decorative</i>	P. 80
	Und.Studio <i>Eintönig / Monotonous</i> <i>Überflüssig / Superfluous</i> <i>Schädlich / Harmful</i>	P. 84
	Liliána Mészáros <i>Duplikálás / Duplication</i> <i>Tiszteletlenség / Disrespect</i> <i>Kényszer / Constraint (Must)</i>	P. 88
	Raffaella Mangiarotti <i>Ridondanza / Redundancy,</i> <i>Autoreferenzialità / Self-Referentiality</i> <i>Decorativo / Decorative</i> <i>Femminile / Feminine</i>	P. 92
	Carmello Zappulla <i>Arroganza / Arrogance</i> <i>Idiozia / Idiocy</i> <i>Senza passione / Lack of Passion</i>	P. 96

	Elena Salmistrato <i>Certezza / Certainty</i> <i>Dubbio / Doubt</i> <i>Possibilità / Possibility</i>	P. 100
	Gateris Works <i>Iekļaušana / Inclusivity</i> <i>Identitāte / Identity</i> <i>Kultūras / Cultural</i> <i>Mantojums / Heritage</i>	P. 104
	Studio Sarmite <i>Ignorēt / Ignore</i> <i>Nevienlīdzība / Disparity</i>	P. 106
	Dace Sūna <i>Piesārņojums / Pollution</i> <i>Klimata Zinātne / Climate Science</i>	P. 112
	Austėja Platūkytė <i>Piesārņojums / Pollution</i> <i>Klimata Zinātne / Climate Science</i> <i>Izslēgšana / Exclusion</i> <i>Barjera / Barrier</i> <i>Netaisnība / Injustice</i>	P. 116
	Mantas Lesauskas <i>Neutralus / Neutral</i> <i>Prašmatnus / Fancy</i> <i>Puošnus / Chic</i>	P. 120
	BCXSY <i>Gentagelse / Repetition</i> <i>Ubegrundet / Groundless</i> <i>Uinspirerende / Unethical</i> <i>Uetisk / Uninspiring</i> <i>Sjusket / Vulgar</i>	P. 124
	Kiki Van Eijk <i>Artistieke / Artistic</i> <i>Vrijheid / Freedom</i> <i>Expressie / Expression</i>	P. 128
	Mae Engelger <i>Luid Spectakel / Loud Spectacle</i> <i>Zoet / Sugary</i>	P. 132

	Maria Jeglinska-Adamczewska <i>Symbol / Symbol</i> <i>Pictogram / Piktogram</i> <i>Nošnik / Nošnik</i>	P. 136
	Filipe Alarcão <i>Dupla função / Dual Function</i> <i>Interpretação / Interpretation</i>	P. 140
	Atelier Ad Hoc <i>Marginalizare / Marginalisation</i> <i>Invizibilizare / Invisibilization</i> <i>Birocrație / Bureaucracy</i>	P. 144
	Álvaro Catalán de Ocón <i>Respeto / Respect</i> <i>Honestidad / Honesty</i> <i>Colaboración / Collaboration</i>	P. 148
	Andreu Carulla <i>Superficial / Superficial</i> <i>Injustificado / Unjustified</i>	P. 152
	Imma Bermudez Studio <i>Inútil / Useless</i> <i>Copia / Copy</i>	P. 156
	Koivisto Rune <i>Universell / Universal</i> <i>Utmanande / Challenging</i>	P. 160

Set up



Space as a Framework for Dialogue

Antonio La Gioia

Architect

The exhibition design for “Design Beyond Things: The Object as an Agent of Transformation” at Expo 2025 Osaka emerged from the need to respond to a complex set of boundary conditions, and it finds its own language in the technical response itself.

The space assigned within the European Union Pavilion had specific characteristics: walls with their own colors and graphics, exposed technical systems on the ceiling, fixed and non-removable furnishings, and the impossibility of drilling holes in the walls. The exhibition would run for fourteen days, with limited time for installation and dismantling, and featured a selection of works that varied in shape, size, and display requirements. The project was also developed in Europe, without the possibility of physically visiting the site, and in a different cultural and linguistic context.

The first priority, therefore, was to find a technical solution that addressed all of these conditions, even before considering the design.

The choice of USM’s Haller system proved decisive. Haller functions as a universal language, exactly reproducible at any distance and without risk of misinterpretation. Its flexibility and modularity made it possible to adapt to the differing characteristics of the works on display, and its self-supporting nature allowed us to work without affecting the surfaces of the host space. In terms of visual language, its neutral and regular design allowed the exhibited works to take their rightful place as the focus.

Once we had selected the tool to work with, we moved on to the configuration and organization of the space, in close collaboration with the curatorial team. The open hall was articulated using two configurations: tall structures along the perimeter and a central island. The island at the center forms a broad display surface and generates a circular path: visitors move, find a natural rhythm, and

approach the works from different angles. The perimeter contains; the center guides. The eleven screens projecting Steve Piccolo’s videos—an integral part of the exhibition—punctuate this path, creating moments of pause within a rhythm in which the physical works (still and silent) alternate and engage in dialogue with the audiovisual ones (shifting and resonant).

The seventeen physical works—from Mae Engelgeer’s tatami, displayed lying flat, to the tapestries by BCXSY and Kiki van Eijk, hung vertically, to Raffaella Mangiarotti’s marble lamp, set into a dedicated structure—each find their own placement within the same system.

To ensure visual coherence between modules that were not physically connected to one another, a common pattern was adopted across all of the structures: a solid base, closed with black panels as the first module, and open upper modules. A recurring visual grammar runs throughout the entire installation, lending continuity to the whole without sacrificing the necessary adaptability.

Lighting played a fundamental role. The existing blue lighting system was used, adjusting its intensity and switching off all other light sources. A few accent lights were introduced, with their sources concealed behind some of the works. The works that featured their own illumination, together with the monitors, completed the definition of the atmosphere. The deep blue removed the surfaces of the host space from view and helped to build a visual unity in which USM’s chrome structures appeared almost dematerialized, allowing the works themselves to emerge.

Ultimately, the installation placed itself in service of what it displayed, returning the spotlight to the designers’ projects and creating the physical support through which they could engage in dialogue with one another.

Design Beyond Time

Hiroshi Kawaguchi

President of USM Japan

We were delighted to have the opportunity to collaborate on this exciting exhibition.

USM is a Swiss furniture brand with more than 60 years of experience in creating timeless, high-quality modular furniture systems. USM Haller furnishes homes, offices, public facilities and commercial spaces worldwide. Recognised as a design classic, it officially became part of the permanent design collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), confirming the artistic and cultural value of the product. Created from just a few basic elements, USM furniture offers tailored solutions that can be expanded or reconfigured according to changing needs. Each piece embodies versatility, creativity and long-term adaptability. To encourage lasting use, all USM product lines are manufactured with high-quality materials, ensuring durability and resistance over time.

Furthermore, from a sustainability perspective, we are increasingly collaborating to create high-quality spatial designs for temporary events and

exhibitions. For “Design Beyond Things: The Object as an Agent of Transformation”, we reused elements from previous events and exhibitions, highlighting the enduring value of USM furniture and its ability to be continually reconfigured. Thanks to its refined finish and intelligent modular design, all components can be exchanged, adapted or reconfigured at any time without difficulty. This results in limitless creative freedom, greater individuality in design, and almost infinite cycles of use.

We are proud that this furniture system, originally launched in 1965, is being used in this exhibition to showcase the work of forward-looking designers, thanks to its timeless design and flexibility. While our role in this exhibition is to support and enhance the presentation of the featured design elements, USM Haller goes beyond the conventional idea of furniture. We are therefore pleased that visitors to “Design Beyond Things: The Object as an Agent of Transformation” also experienced the spatial environment created by architect Antonio La Gioia with USM Haller.

Patrizia Catalano

Architect and journalist, Patrizia Catalano coordinated the design section of **IO Donna (Corriere della Sera)** and has written for leading publications such as **AD France, The World of Interiors and Marie Claire Netherland**. Since 2005, she has been working with **INTERNI magazine**, coordinating its annual edition and international events in New York, London and Paris.

Author of several books of interiors published for Electa, Damiani Arte, Mondadori Arte, Rizzoli Italia, Rizzoli New York, she founded **HoperAperta** in 2019, curating exhibitions for Milan Design Week and collaborating with institutions like Municipality of Milan, Fondazione Giovanni Segantini, Fondazione Paolo Grassi and the

Co-curator

Venice Architecture Biennale 2025.

In 2023, she was **Ambassador of Italian Design Day in Bern** and presented as moderator the **Italian Design Day 2023 at the Farnesina**, headquarters of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She has been co-curator for «Design Beyond Things», the first European design exhibition promoted by the **European Union** and presented at the **EU Pavilion in Osaka**, Japan. She promoted and conceived an event for GENS **La Biennale Architecture** in Venice and is currently collaborating with HoperAperta and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** on a theme related to sustainability.

She lives and works in Milan, Italy.



Miriam Giordano

Co-curator

Graduated cum laude in Communication Sciences from the University of Alma Mater in Bologna and holding a Master in Business Administration (MBA) from EAE Business School, she is the **founder** and **director** of **Labóh**, a curator and communication and public relations agency specialized in the **promotion of architecture and design**, based in Barcelona (Spain). She works internationally with prestigious public institutions, private companies, and professionals in the **creative** and **cultural** sectors linked to **design**. She is a member of the **Industrial Design Association (ADI-FAD)**, editorial coordinator, and regional director for Spain and Italy of the international platform **World-Architects**. Among her professional roles, she has been responsible for communication and press for various events at the **Venice**

Architecture Biennale, as well as at **Milan Design Week**, **Madrid Design Festival**, and **Barcelona Design Week**. Since 2014, she has collaborated with the **Fundació Mies van der Rohe** and with the **European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Awards**, co-funded by the European Commission (Creative Europe program). Since 2018, she has been curator of the biennial event **European Conference on Architecture and the Media**. For the **European Union Pavilion at Expo Osaka 2025**, she co-curated the first European Union exhibition dedicated to design and is currently serving as head of communication and press office for the **UIA World Congress of Architects 2026 Barcelona**.



Team

Martina Barberis Casagrande

Exhibition Coordinator

She graduated in **aesthetic philosophy**, with a master’s degree in ***Made in Italy, brand management in design, fashion and luxury***, deepening also applied arts.

Among the first experiences in **communication** and **event production**, there are Karla Otto in London, the fashion brand Aspesi and the **Ministry of Culture** (Photography Section). She worked four years in **ADI (Industrial Design Association)** and its **Design Museum**, as head of the Italian and then international press office, experience she decided to end to deepen **sustainability** in relationship to design and architecture. She has finished a second master’s degree, coordinated by Stefano Mancuso,

Nicole Rambla Bedwell

Exhibition Coordinator

Barcelona-based creative communicator working across **design and architecture journalism, cultural communication, and curating**. She holds a degree with honours in **Interior Design** from Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, and has built her practice across editorial and brand contexts, contributing to media outlets including **Dezeen** and **Leibal**, and working with the design publisher **Santa & Cole**.

She is currently press and communications assistant at **Labóh**, a transdisciplinary consultancy dedicated to design and architecture, where she coordinates communications for institutions such as the **Fundació Mies van der Rohe**, and served as exhibition coordinator of **Design Beyond**

focused on the environment, architecture and design, with a final research on **landscape** and **architecture** at the **Zegna Foundation**.

She collaborates with **HoperAperta** and various institutions in production, communication and management. She worked as **exhibition coordinator** to the sustainable design exposition promoted by the **European Union** at EXPO Osaka and for an event at GENS **La Biennale Architecture** in Venice. She is co-curator of an exhibition promoted by the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** on agri-food waste materials and art-design items.

Things, the first design exhibition organised by the **European Union**, presented at **Expo 2025 Osaka**, Japan. She is the founder of **Do Not Sit Here**, a digital archive exploring the cultural significance of seating and a board member of **ADI-FAD (the Spanish Industrial Design Association)**. Most recently, she co-curated **Dos Mil Quatre-Cents Setanta Grams**, the exhibition presented at **Milan Design Week 2026** bringing together the new generation of Catalan designers.

Anotonio La Gioia

Exhibition Design

Architect. Bachelor’s degree in **Civil Engineering/Architecture** from the School of Engineering at the Università degli Studi di Roma **La Sapienza**, with a grade *cum laude*. **Master’s degree in Digital Architecture – Designer of Sustainable Architecture**.

After graduating, he worked at the construction company Edilgamma in Rome as a project manager and later at the architecture firm Studio Suber as a project architect.

Valentina Pulian

Graphic Designer

Graphic designer focused on **editorial design** and **exhibition design** for **cultural spaces**. She holds a degree in **Visual Communication and Design** from the National University of Lanús (Buenos Aires). In 2017, she moved to Barcelona, where she completed a postgraduate degree in **Editorial Design and Photography** at EINA.

Since 2018, she has collaborated with the **Fundació Mies van der Rohe** and the **European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture (EUmies Awards)**, co-funded by the European Commission through its Creative Europe program. This work includes developing publications and exhibition projects.

In 2009, he founded Studio41N in Barcelona, where he develops projects primarily in interior design for the residential and restaurant sectors. Since 2016, he has been collaborating with **Labóh**, where he is responsible for the **leading brand in the lighting design sector Davide Groppi**. He is also an **editor at World-Architects**, handling the management of web content for the Catalan/Spanish/Italian-Architects platforms.

Following experience within creative agency environments, she now works independently, collaborating with **Labóh** and various institutions in editorial design, exhibition design, and visual communication, working across formats ranging from **publications** and **catalogues** to **spatial and large-scale graphic systems**.

Her recent work includes the exhibition and catalogue **Design Beyond Things**, exploring the role of objects as agents of transformation within contemporary European design, as well as editorial projects that engage with contemporary architectural discourse.

Credits

Curators
Patrizia Catalano, Miriam Giordano

Exhibition Coordinators
Martina Barberis Casagrande,
Nicole Rambla

Video and sound installation
Steve Piccolo, Gregory Piccolo

Exhibition design
Antonio La Gioia

Graphic design
Valentina Pulian

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Wisse Trooster, Dita Danosa, Biruta Zimnicka,
Ilaria Ventriglia Burke and Eri Sasaki

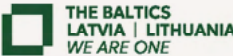
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