

# DESIGN MUSEUM

WWW.DESIGNMUSEUM.ORG

## DESIGN MART

At a time when advanced technologies are more accessible to designers than ever before, even young designers at the start of their careers can utilise sophisticated new materials and processes to create work which is more complex and emotionally expressive. An important part of the Design Museum's mission of nurturing new design talent, Design Mart is our annual survey of the work of some of the UK's most gifted young product designers.

The designers featured here are a selection of those who participated in the original guerrilla exhibitions of Design Mart over four days during the London Design Festival in 2004 and 2005. So many people asked to see their work again that we have brought it back to the Design Museum. Five designers from the 2004 show – Pascal Anson, Michael Cross and Julie Mathias, Julia Lohmann, Matthias Megyeri and Peter Traag – were each awarded a £10,000 bursary by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Their work was then exhibited by the Design Museum and British Council in Great Brits at the Milan Furniture Fair. They and the other participants in both exhibitions have since won numerous commissions from collectors, manufacturers and museums.

Each of these designers adopts a distinctive approach to design. Some work with the most advanced technologies, and others with discarded objects found in skips. Yet their common objective is to forge an emotional rapport with the people who use their work, as handcraftsmanship has traditionally done, by imbuing industrially-produced objects with individuality and greater meaning.

Graphic Design: Happily Ever After

The Design Museum wishes to thank the following for their help with this exhibition: Ron Arad; Tord Boontje; Emily Campbell and Sorrel Hershberg of the British Council; Tom Dixon; Michael Marriott; Jasper Morrison; Marc Newson; Paul Smith; and Gareth Williams of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Design Mart is generously supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.



## **PASCAL ANSON**

Every object in Pascal Anson's Reunification Project has a story to tell from the past, and is at the start of a new story. By assembling collections of orphaned objects that once belonged to sets – such as cutlery, tea cups and saucers, tables and chairs – and modifying their appearance, Anson imbues them with new purpose and meaning.

Born in London in 1973, Pascal Anson studied three dimensional design at Kingston University and design products at the Royal College of Art. He has since designed and developed his own products, as well as concepts commissioned by manufacturers such as Rosenthal and Memphis, and has taught at Middlesex University and Central Saint Martins in London.

When developing new objects and reinventing found ones in an exercise like the Reunification Project, Pascal Anson draws inspiration from unconscious design – doodles on paper, graffiti on walls and the whitewashing of shop windows. "I've always loved taking things apart, breaking them and making objects," he says, "to create work that is different, challenging and beautiful."

**[www.iampascal.com](http://www.iampascal.com)**

## **ROGER ARQUER**

When Roger Arquer was seven, his parents bought a new washing machine and gave him the old one to play with. "My father saw that I was interested in mechanics, machines and objects so he gave me the best present I ever got – a broken washing machine," he recalled. "I took it apart and enjoyed it so much that, after school, I couldn't wait to go home to work on it."

Born in Barcelona in 1975, Arquer studied product and furniture design at ESDI there before working as a product designer in New York. In 2003 he moved to London to join the design products course at the Royal College of Art. The students were set a project to design an object for use outdoors. Arquer chose the birdhouse. "I'd always thought it had a certain charm," he said, "but not much had been done with its design."

Arquer sketched "dozens of crazy variations" on the conventional rectangular birdhouse. He then produced thirty scale models, from which he reproduced ten fully fledged birdhouses. Dramatically different in shape and size, some are designed to interact with the weather and others with humans. Together they resemble a miniaturised housing estate for birds.

**[www.rogerarquer.com](http://www.rogerarquer.com)**

## **ASSA ASHUACH**

Looking like the complex curves spiralling across our computer screens, Assa Ashuach's surreal OMI.mgx lamp is the product of his experiments with selective laser sintering technology. Made from a single piece of nylon, it diffuses light so finely that, from a distance, it seems solid rather than an intricate sequence of ripples twisted into improbable shapes.

The OMI.mgx could not be made without the use of complex design software and production technologies; nor could Ashuach's furniture which, like all his work, is defined by the relationship between the visual and physical. He begins by calculating what is required to fulfil the designated function as comfortably as possible, then deploys stress analysis software to optimise the object's structural strength using minimal material sculpted into a seductive form.

Ashuach's love of making things stems from his childhood on a kibbutz in Israel, where he was born in 1969. After studying industrial design at the Betzalel Academy in Jerusalem, he enrolled at the Royal College of Art in London and experimented with digital modelling and rapid prototyping. Since graduating in 2003, he has continued those experiments. "We have to question design again and again," said Ashuach. "Design today is a strategy for challenging and modifying tradition."

**[www.assaashuach.com](http://www.assaashuach.com)**

## **COMMITTEE**

At first glance, the colourful assortment of pottery animals, vases, figurines, boxes and other bric-a-brac clinging to Committee's Kebab Lamps looks like a cheerful jumble of random objects. Gradually it becomes clear that the choice was painstakingly considered, and that Clare Page and Harry Richardson, co-founders of Committee, spend days finessing sequences of objects to explore a theme or to tell a story.

Most of the objects come from the junk stalls on Deptford Market, a short walk from their studio, and arrived there from the local tip. Born in Northampton and London respectively in 1975, Page and Richardson moved to Deptford in 1998 after graduating in fine art from Liverpool Art School. As designers they now apply "pragmatism and imagination" to exploring "the drama of the everyday".

Having transformed tip cast-offs into desirable objects in their Kebab Lamps, the pair collaged images of more junk salvaged from tips and on the streets into the Flytip wallpaper, commissioned by the British Council for the My World exhibition at Experimenta in Lisbon. "Looking at these objects, it isn't clear if they are beautiful and noble on their way up to the heavenly rubbish dump in the sky," they observed, "or a chintzy portrayal of excessive consumption."

**[www.gallop.co.uk](http://www.gallop.co.uk)**

## **MICHAEL CROSS + JULIE MATHIAS**

Even young children are warned not to mix electricity with water. Michael Cross and Julie Mathias defy this taboo in Flood by plunging electric light bulbs into water. Far from triggering an electric shock, Flood emits the gentle glow of a light from an eerily beautiful object, which seems all the more enticing for flirting with danger.

Flood is one of the collaborative projects made by Cross and Mathias after they met as students at the Royal College of Art in London. Born in the Hebrides in 1979, Cross studied industrial design at Sheffield Hallam University before enrolling at the RCA with Mathias, who was born in Lyon in 1978 and had previously studied at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Etienne. Since graduating in summer 2004, they have worked together as Wokmedia.

Cross and Mathias never intended to collaborate but found themselves working together on one project, then another and another. They approach each assignment by “taking an object we know and beginning again”. Their objective as designers is: “the radical re-evaluation of objects, rather than a refinement of what they already are. The question is not how to make them slightly better, but entirely something else.”

**[www.wokmedia.com](http://www.wokmedia.com)**

## **LEA DOHERTY**

When Lea Doherty designed the Doily table, she drove around nearby villages looking for lace and paper doilies in second-hand shops. Emerging with doilies from the early 1800s to the 1930s, she chose the patterns she liked best and replicated them in 1:3 scale aluminium models from which she produced full scale sketches. After refining the sketches, Doherty took them to a workshop which cut the lacy patterns by laser on to sheets of mild steel.

The Doily table and cake stand were part of Doherty’s degree show at the University of Northumbria, where she graduated in three-dimensional design in summer 2005. Born in Sunderland in 1980, she became interested in making things as a child by watching her confectioner father making elaborate spun sugar sweets. After school she trained as an opera singer and then worked as a rock session musician before studying design.

“I enjoy trying to capture a “blink”, a mood or moment that communicates meaning in the simplest way possible,” said Doherty. “It’s difficult to make furniture seem fresh and, for me, the most interesting thing is watching people stroke the table tops as if they were lace. Once they realise that it’s steel the fists come out and they rap their knuckles on the surface.”

**[lea\\_doherty@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lea_doherty@yahoo.co.uk)**

## **ULRIKA JARL**

From a distance Ulrika Jarl's Romanésco light looks like a constellation of delicate sea shells. Even close up it is so intricate that it is difficult to realise that the light is composed of over a hundred polyester resin casts made in silicone rubber moulds, each one of a different Romanésco cauliflower. "My influences come from patterns and structures of nature, the rhythm and repetition of related shapes," said Jarl. "Nature's designs often appear uncomplicated, but contain highly complex structural elements."

Jarl, who was born in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1977 and studied three-dimensional crafts at the University of Brighton, the city in which she now lives, explores her love of natural forms and structures throughout her work as a designer-maker. She is now developing the Romanésco for mass-production by Habitat.

Her Bone China light was inspired by micro-photographs of pollen. Jarl replicated the elaborate shapes by extruding bone china into thin coils which are pressed into a plaster mould then fired at a high temperature. "Bone china lends itself well to lighting with its strength, whiteness and translucence," she observed. "The light element transforms it into a sculptural object and the shadows cast are as important as the light."

**[www.ulrikajarl.com](http://www.ulrikajarl.com)**

## **JULIA LOHMANN**

From a distance, Julia Lohmann's lights look exquisite, if surreal – each a subtly different shape, colour and degree of translucence. As soon as you realise that they are made from tripe – a preserved sheep's stomach – they take on a different meaning. Like the cow benches that Lohmann moulds in the shape of a cow's back and upholsters in cow's hide, the lights are intended to "trigger feelings oscillating between attraction and disgust".

Born in Hildesheim, Germany in 1977, Lohmann became interested in design on childhood walks with her father when they collected abandoned objects to create strange creatures. After graduating in graphic design from the Surrey Institute, she studied design products at the Royal College of Art, London. Since Design Mart she has been commissioned by the French National Art Collection and droog® design group.

Lohmann began her investigation into the contradictions in our relationship to animals as sources of food and materials at the RCA. By working with offal, off-cuts of leather and other meat industry waste products, she probes those contradictions while "giving value to leftovers". Polemical though her work is, everything Lohmann designs is intended to be useful – "I would hate to design something useless".

**[www.julialohmann.co.uk](http://www.julialohmann.co.uk)**

## **MATTHIAS MEGYERI**

One of the things that struck Matthias Megyeri about Britain when he arrived here from Germany was the armoury of home security devices – the alarms, grilles, CCTV cameras, railings and chains. Then he noticed how the most threatening devices belonged to the houses or flats with the kitsch displays of garden gnomes, plastic flowers, ornamental animals and lacey net curtains.

Megyeri decided to embody this contradiction within a collection of security products, which would function as efficiently as conventional alarms or cameras while celebrating their owners' taste for the cute. Born in Stuttgart in 1973, he studied visual communication in Karlsruhe before enrolling on the design products course at the Royal College of Art in London.

Having begun his security experiments at the RCA, he has continued them since graduating in 2003 by developing products for his company Megyeri and Partners. Since he participated in Design Mart in 2004, Megyeri's Billy B Old English Padlock has been put into production by the lockmakers H.Y. Squires & Son, while his petal-framed burglar alarms and cartoon-headed railings have been exhibited in the Safe exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

**[www.sweetdreamssecurity.com](http://www.sweetdreamssecurity.com)**

## **CAROLINE NOORDIJK + FLORIAN ORTKRASS (rAndom International)**

After decades of globalisation, people long for a stronger sense of identity in the objects that fill their lives. A common objective for many contemporary designers is to create products that not only fulfil a practical function, but are more memorable and meaningful to the people that use them. One way of doing so is to design versatile objects that can be personalised by the user.

Caroline Noordijk and Florian Ortkrass have sought to achieve this by developing an infinitely adaptable version of one of the commonest but least loved forms of lighting – the fluorescent tube – in the split series. Noordijk, born in 1979 at Uithoorn in the Netherlands, and Ortkrass, born in 1975 at Lippstadt in Germany, developed the concept while sitting opposite each other as students on the design products course at the Royal College of Art in London.

“We saw a missed opportunity in fluorescent lighting and thought it could be brought to life in a warm, colourful way,” recalled Ortkrass. He and Noordijk devised a modular series of plastic clips that can be attached to the fluorescent tube to transform the light emitted. They then developed them in different materials, colours and thicknesses to diffuse the light in whichever way the user wishes.

**[www.caroline-noordijk.com](http://www.caroline-noordijk.com)**  
**[www.random-international.com](http://www.random-international.com)**

## **TIM PARSONS**

Intrigued by the images of cars and spaceships in his teenage computer games magazines, Tim Parsons decided to study graphic design. When he bought a Bodum cafetière for his parents, and watched the coffee being made through the glass, he decided to choose product design instead.

Born in Wiltshire in 1974, Parsons studied industrial design at the University of Teesside and then enrolled on the product design course at the Royal College of Art, where his tutors included Konstantin Grcic, Michael Marriott and Jasper Morrison. Since graduating, he has settled in Manchester where he teaches at Manchester Metropolitan University and develops new products, notably pewter pieces for A.R. Wentworth and brushes for the Berlin Institute for the Blind and Die Imaginare Manufaktur.

For Design Mart, Parsons has created a studio setting to exhibit a selection of the objects – including mugs, coat hangers and candles – that he has designed in the past five years. Like all of his work, these objects are intended to: “encourage people to think more about what they buy. My intention is to design objects that in some way improve things without drawing undue attention.”

**[www.timparsons.info](http://www.timparsons.info)**

## **CHRISTOPHER PEARSON**

When William Morris designed his hand-printed wallpapers in the late 1800s, he painted repetitive patterns of plants or trees, like the branches of his beloved willows in 1887's Willow Boughs, to be reproduced on hand-carved wooden blocks. Morris then watched the workers at his favourite wallpaper maker, Jeffrey & Co in Islington, as they laboriously printed sheets of paper.

The delicate foliage of Willow Boughs has now been animated by Christopher Pearson into digital wallpaper in which the branches blow with the wind and the leaves twirl around dizzily. Dubbing himself a “digital craftsman”, Pearson experiments with interface and motion graphics technology to create digital works that strike an emotional rapport with the user as handcraftsmanship has traditionally done. By reinterpreting a familiar piece like Morris's wallpaper, he enhances its impact by playing on the user's memories of the original.

Born in Hong Kong in 1977, Pearson studied graphic design at Camberwell College of Arts and then designed printed textiles, notably for the fashion designer Alexander McQueen, before taking an MA in communications design at the Royal College of Art. He is now experimenting with new ways to explore the relationship between his work and the user, and to bridge the gap between the tangible and the digital.

**[www.christopherpearson.com](http://www.christopherpearson.com)**

## **JESS SHAW**

“Clouds play an important part in our imagination, from memories of childhood summers to sailor’s forecasts,” observed Jess Shaw. “The Cloud light is my attempt to make something immediately recognisable, yet quiet and unobtrusive that invites closer inspection. The challenge was to make an object with no edges, in its limitless size and details, with each twist turning back on itself.”

Laboriously constructing woven nylon tubes by hand, Shaw has made a series of Cloud lights, each of which is particular to its setting. The twisting nylon structure looks dramatically different during the day and night, as the surrounding light changes. Like all her lighting designs, Cloud teases us by playing with the optical illusions created by light.

Born on the Welsh Borders in 1967, Jess Shaw studied sculpture at the Ruskin School of Fine Art, Oxford and has since worked in installation, performance, theatre design and, latterly, lighting. Often her work is inspired by historic lights. The Black Light replicates the repetitive reflections of chandeliers in mirrors at Musée Rodin in Paris; while the use of water in a lace maker’s light at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford prompted Shaw to plunge a chandelier into water, so that its distorted crystals seem to expand and contract.

**[www.jessshaw.com](http://www.jessshaw.com)**

## **PETER TRAAAG**

The defining element of design for Peter Traag is the production process, which he sees as a means not simply of realising his ideas, but of dictating the form of the finished object. His objective is to ensure that the end result is as unexpected to him as it will be to the user.

Typical is the Sponge chair, made by filling reinforced fluorocarbon polyester thread fabric with polyurethane foam that expands inside a mould during production by Edra in Italy. Each piece emerges creased into a distinctive shape determined by fabric’s response to the production process. For the Rubber Chair he assembles the frame from scraps of steel and wood found in skips, and dips it in a rubber bath. The chairs acquire character from the accidents that occur during lamination and from the wear-and-tear of daily use.

Born in Tegelen in the Netherlands in 1979, Peter Traag studied three dimensional design in Arnhem and design products at the Royal College of Art in London, where he now lives and works. Since graduating from the RCA in 2003, he has worked for the Mike Smith Studio, which makes artists’ installations, as well as on his own design projects.

**[www.petertraag.com](http://www.petertraag.com)**