



Gallery Libby Sellers  
presents

# FORMAFANTASMA

Gallery Libby Sellers presents the work of Italian designers Simone Farresin and Andrea Trimarchi, who together are Formafantasma. Directly translated into English, Formafantasma means 'ghost shapes'. For Farresin and Trimarchi the name reflects the conceptual approach and critical ideologies (the metaphorical) that they bring to their designs (the physical).

Formafantasma identify their role as the bridge between craft, industry, object and end-user and seek to stimulate a critical design dialogue through these connections. One such dialogue, as relayed through the acclaimed ceramic series, Moulding Tradition (2009), and a new textile series, Colony (2011), centres on the geo-political (and pertinent) issues of immigration, assimilation and the historical cross-flow of cultural currents between North Africa and Italy.

Moulding Tradition was informed by the ongoing Sicilian ceramic tradition of 'teste di moro', copies of 17th century vases from the Caltagirone region of Sicily that portray a grotesque Moorish face. The tradition refers to an earlier era in Sicily's history when the Moorish invasion of the area introduced majolica to Europe. Over ten centuries later the same people that once occupied Sicily, bringing their cultural heritage that helped make Caltagirone famous, are returning, not as conquerors but as immigrants. Contemporary public opinion polls have claimed that 65% of Italians believe that the immigrants are "a danger for our culture". Through Moulding Tradition Formafantasma document these contradictions while questioning attitudes towards immigration, national identity and the custom of craft to mindlessly perpetuate the past.

Each object speaks to some aspect of the immigrant experience – wine bottles recall the fruit in Sicily harvested by migrants and bowls represent the boats conveying refugees across the Mediterranean. The result is a collection of refined ceramic vessels garlanded with portraits of an émigré, buoy-like discs engraved with the percentage of refugees who immigrate per year and ribbons printed with news reports on illegal immigration published during the project's production period.

Colony is a series of mohair and mixed media blankets that celebrate the narrative potential of textiles. Each of the blankets, akin to oversized postcards, refers to a major colony (Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia) that Italy held until the mid 1940s. The series is a prescient account of the impact of Italian imperialism on the urban infrastructure of these former colonies and the complex relationship these countries now have with Italy.

Futurist architectural landmarks and cartographies of migration flows are woven together with iconic symbols and historical texts, including the (now threatened) 2009 Italy-Libya friendship treaty. As in *Moulding Tradition*, Formafantasma use the collated data as both the physical material with which they layer their blanket designs as well as a theoretical compass to chart changing perceptions of production techniques, artistic heritage and the "notion of tradition in a globalised context." *Colony* is exclusive to Gallery Libby Sellers and made in collaboration with the Audax Textielmuseum, in Tilburg.

The collaboration between Farresin (1980) and Trimarchi (1983) began during a BA degree in communication design at ISIA in Florence. Their interest in product design was realised while students at the Design Academy Eindhoven, from which they graduated in 2009 with a shared MA thesis and portfolio. Their work has been represented at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile and Dutch Design Week as well exhibitions at Sotheby's London, Droog New York, Moss New York and Spazio Rossana Orlandi Milan. Recently, Alice Rawsthorn, design critic *International Herald Tribune*, and Paola Antonelli, senior design curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, listed Formafantasma as one of twenty studios that will influence design in the next decade.

Gallery Libby Sellers launched in 2007 with the remit to support critical and progressive designs. Since then Sellers has established her eponymous gallery as a serious contributor to the design world and the careers of the designers in her stable. Her gallery presentations are frequently listed as 'must see' and 'highlights' in the art, design and lifestyle press, while the commissioned works are sought after by international museums and collectors alike. Other gallery designers include Simon Hasan, Stuart Haygarth, Simon Heijdens, Max Lamb, Julia Lohmann, Peter Marigold and Nicolas le Moigne.

For further information please contact:

[galler@libbysellers.com](mailto:galler@libbysellers.com)

+44 (0) 7774 113 813

[www.libbysellers.com](http://www.libbysellers.com)