



GALLERY LIBBY SELLERS

'De Natura Fossilium' Studio Formafantasma

Studio Formafantasma and Gallery Libby Sellers are pleased to present 'De Natura Fossilium' – a new body of work that explores the culture of lava in Mount Etna and Stromboli, two of the last active volcanoes in Europe.

Through this, Studio Formafantasma investigates the cultures surrounding this particularly Sicilian experience to bring both the landscape and the forces of nature together as facilities for production. As in their previous projects *Autarchy* (2010) and *Moulding Tradition* (2009), Formafantasma question the link between tradition and local culture and the relationship between objects and the idea of cultural heritage. Historically craftsmen would mould molten lava erupting from small craters into celebrated and elaborate forms. This time-honoured craft has effectively been rendered worthless as now only inexpensive airport souvenirs are produced. *De Natura Fossilium* is a project that refuses to accept locality as touristic entertainment. Instead, the work of Formafantasma is a different expedition in which the landscape is not passively contemplated but restlessly sampled, melted, blown, woven, cast and milled. From the more familiar use of basalt stone and Lavic fibres, to their extreme experiments with lava in the production of glass, Formafantasma's explorations and the resulting objects challenge this situation to realise the full potential of the lava as a material for design.

In contrast to their previous collections, 'De Natura Fossilium' takes on a linear, even brutalist form. Geometric volumes have been carved from basalt and combined with brass structural elements to produce stools, coffee tables and a clock. Lavic glass, procured by remelting Etna's rocks, has been mouth-blown into unique vessels or cast into box-like structures that purposefully allude to the illegal dwellings and assorted buildings that have developed at the foot of the volcano. By returning the rocks to their original molten state Formafantasma are reversing the natural timeline of the material and forcing a dialogue between the natural and manmade. Formafantasma have also investigated the tensile properties of lavic fibre through two wall hangings. These pieces combine illustrative references to both the Greek mythological gods of Mount Etna and the microscopic views of lavic rock's geological strata as ascertained through the designers' collaboration with the Volcanologist Centre of Catania (INGV). As a sustainable alternative to carbon fibre, Formafantasma's use of lavic fibre has effectively reappropriated a conventionally high tech material for artisanal ends.

While the collection focuses on a specific Sicilian locality, the project has been developed with a number of international experts: from the CNC cutting of basalt in Sicily to the scientific analysis of lavic stones at the INGV of Catania, through the glass experiments with the Glass Museum in Leerdam and Berengo Studio in Murano, to the brass developments with Carl Aubock in Vienna and the textile works with the Textile Museum in Tilburg. The collection is also accompanied by a photographic series by long time collaborator Luisa Zanzani.

**Gallery Libby Sellers will present *De Natura Fossilium* from 29 April – 13 June 2014.
The works will continue to remain part of the gallery's inventory after the presentation.**

For further information, images or sales, please contact:

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