

THE NEW REVIEW

Angel delight

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Antony Gormley

...and his amazing dancing dummy

Bright young things

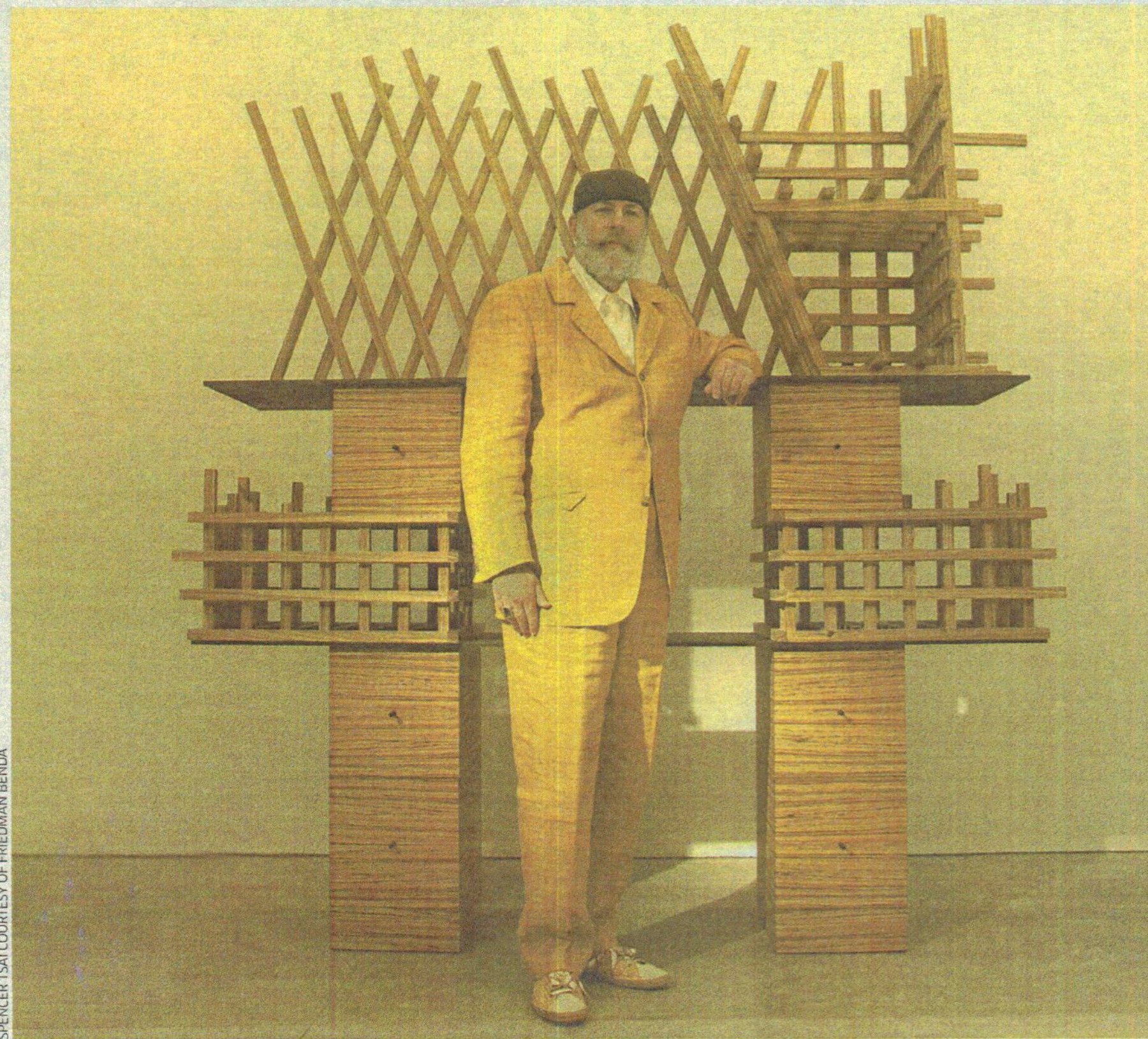
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SPENCER TSAI COURTESY OF FRIEDMAN BENDA

The dealer Barry Friedman

When New York gallerist Friedman gave a solo show to the designer Ron Arad in 2004, it appeared that design had, for the first time, entered the holy arena occupied by contemporary art. "Design art" has since taken off. Last year, an aluminium divan by Marc Newsom sold for \$968,000 at Sotheby's in New York, a record for a piece of furniture made by a living designer. The Gagosian gallery gave Newsom an exhibition earlier this year, and Design Miami and Basel have also brought design into the art-fair whirl.

Friedman gets the credit as midwife to this phenomenon, but the 64-year-old dealer, who has had a 40-year career, is not fussed. "Whether it's an oil painting or a chair, I see it as the same," he says. "And Arad's work is phenomenal. It makes me emotional just thinking about it. He deserves to be exhibited alongside the major contemporary sculptors."

Friedman has always collected design, even when it was less fashionable to do so. When he started in 1969, he recalls trying to sell the work of the French designer Jean Prouvé. "I had a hard time," he says. "I was just too early." He went on to have a successful dealership that

sold paintings, Art Deco, contemporary glass and early Modernist pieces from designers including Gerrit Rietveld, a member of the Dutch de Stijl group.

Now he has turned his attentions to contemporary design. "It's a bit like it was in the early 20th century with Rietveld, Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer," he says. "Now we have designers such as Newsom, Arad, Marcel Wanders. Of course collectors are interested. It's great work."

Which is why Friedman (with partner Marc Benda) has just launched a new gallery, Friedman Benda. It might be argued that design-art is growing as an alternative to the

stratospheric contemporary art market. "You can still buy great design works for comparatively less," says Friedman, who adds that much of the canonical visual art has already been collected.

So it's about availability and price – but also a new sensibility that accepts design as culturally important and, perhaps, a good investment.

Friedman Benda's first show is by the 90-year-old Italian architect Ettore Sottsass (whose "Cabinet no. 79" is pictured above). "It really makes your heart beat," says Friedman. "That's the point. All I'm doing is looking for great artists. I don't care for categories." **OB**

The recycler Stuart Haygarth

Haygarth has a magpie's eye. Whether it is driftwood, spectacles or vintage glassware, he is an inveterate collector of what many might think mundane. He even collected used party poppers during the millennium celebrations.

"Lots of everyday objects that people don't really look at are beautiful in their own right," he says. "I like giving objects that have no intrinsic value a new life."

Haygarth worked as a photographer, then a photographic illustrator, before reinventing himself as a product designer two years ago. "I always sourced objects for my work in photography and it seemed a natural progression to move toward a more sculptural process," he says.

His first product, the Aladdin tables, were an immediate hit on their launch in September last year. Their individual style – colour-sorted glassware encased in illuminated glass boxes – struck a chord with an audience grown weary of slick, modernist design.

Art exhibitions provide much of his inspiration, but Haygarth has no shortage of ideas himself.

For his latest project, he has created a series of lights made from the reclaimed tail-lights of industrial vehicles, including the example pictured right. Their strict geometry and bold colours are arranged to beautiful effect to create pieces reminiscent of Ettore Sottsass – colourful, humorous and, with their hand-worked aesthetic, a real contrast to much of what is going on in the rest of the design world.

Trish Lorenz

KALPESH LATHIGRA

With wealthy patrons happy to indulge them, many designers have abandoned their traditional role as servants of industry – for whom they would devise new products capable of being mass-produced – and are instead returning to the pre-industrial model of individual craftspeople designing and making luxurious pieces themselves or in small ateliers.

This design-art phenomenon has divided the design world, with many believing it is undermining the notion that design should strive to improve life for everyone, and is instead providing status symbols for the rich. Fears that this is leading to a new type of vulgarity – with designers competing to create the biggest, flashiest and most expensive objects they can – seem to be borne out by the number of giant

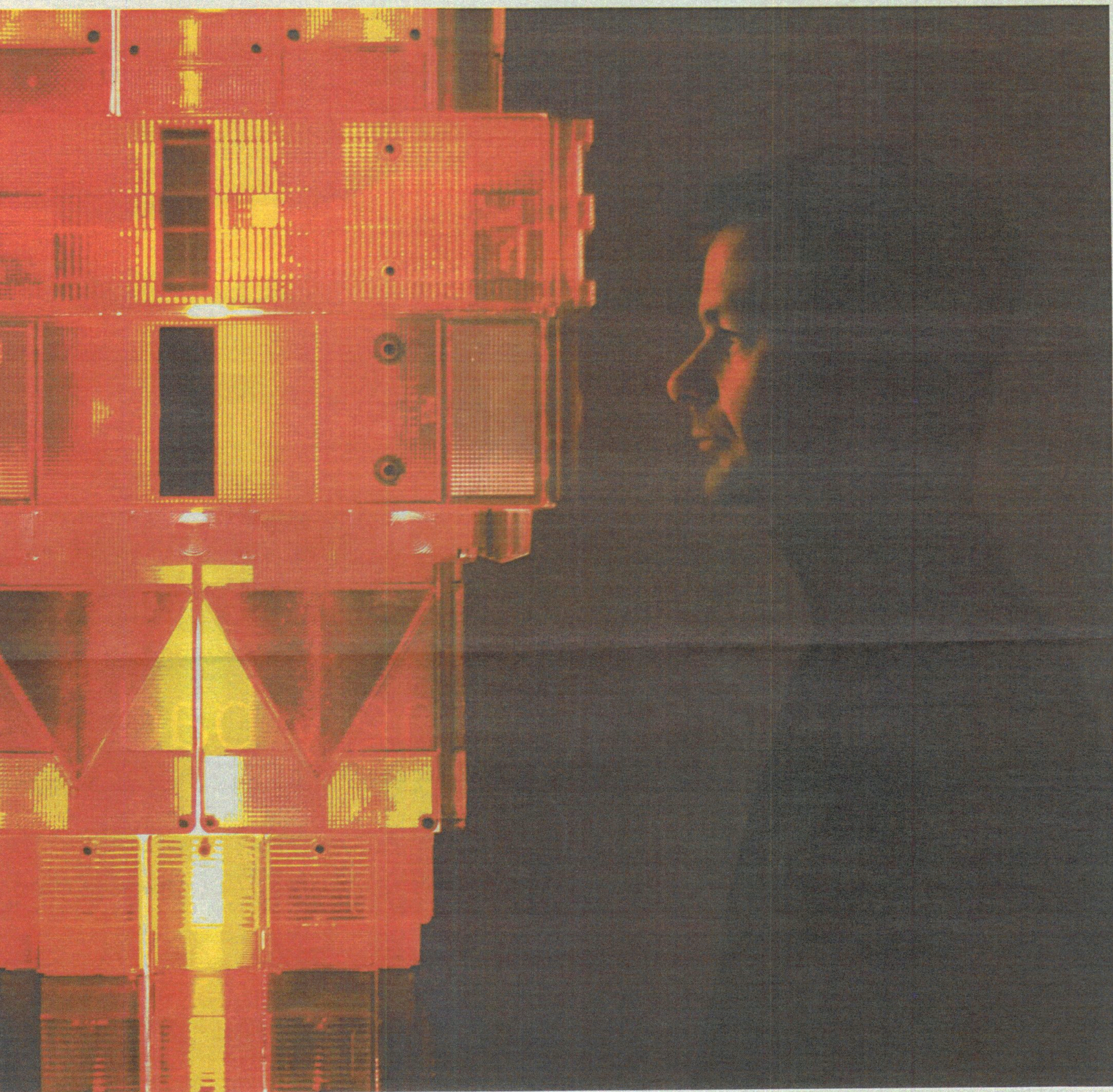
kitschy objects – such as eight-foot high plastic bells, giant bronze coffee pots and even a huge mosaic Pinocchio at this year's Milan Furniture Fair – the key design event.

Some people pinpoint the birth of the design-art phenomenon to New York art dealer Barry Friedman, who just a few years ago took what was the then risky decision to hold an exhibition dedicated not to an artist but to London-based designer Ron Arad, whose chairs, lights and other creations have always been expressively sculptural (sometimes to the point of being almost unusable).

The sell-out show encouraged other gallerists to pay more attention to design – including the biggest of them all, Larry Gagosian, who earlier this year dedicated a solo show to

Australian designer Marc Newson. Prices have been rising exponentially ever since, significantly aided by Design Miami, a collectors' fair initiated in 2005 by Ambra Medda, a twenty-something visionary who realised that the millionaire collectors who descended on her adopted home town of Miami for the annual Miami Art Basel fair might also be interested in buying state-of-the-art furniture while in town.

Closer to home, former *Wallpaper** magazine publisher Alasdair Willis took the equally brave decision three years ago to launch an upmarket furniture brand employing a stable of only British designers and – more rashly, it seemed at the time – using only British manufacturers. That company, Established & Sons, swims against the prevailing wis-



dom that says industrial production is migrating to low-cost eastern economies such as China and that British factories are no longer capable of producing quality goods. Yet Established & Sons appears to be thriving, producing an expand-

Almost against his wishes, Haygarth is a poster boy for the green movement

ing range of affordable items, such as lights and clocks, and big-ticket limited-edition pieces for the design-art market.

This merging of art and design is giving both designers and artists the freedom to operate in each others' territories, resulting in bodies of work that defy description. The first superstar to emerge out of this clash of disciplines looks likely to be Arne Quinze, a Belgian who started out as an artist, then launched his own furniture company and is now producing epic, surreal works on a giant scale.

Last summer, Quinze built a giant timber structure at the Burning Man festival in Nevada, which he then personally set fire to, and he has just completed an enormous exhibition in Verona featuring models of flying cars, stilt houses

made of orange and pink timbers and walking lighthouses. Unrestrained by the traditional limits of design, Quinze is busily creating his own fantastical vision of the future, just as artists, filmmakers or writers have always done.

Another designer whose work crosses disciplines is Sarah van Gameren, who only graduated from the Royal College of Art this summer but is already making waves with her Big Dipper – a Heath Robinson contraption that makes candelabra by dipping knotted wick into molten wax. Another project, Burn Burn Burn, involves decorating party venues with flammable paint, and then setting fire to them. This is design meeting performance art, with the act of creation becoming a spectacle rather than being hidden away in a factory. →



KALPESH LATHIGRA/COURTESY OF GALLERY LIBBY SELLERS

The whiz-kid Moritz Waldemeyer

Humorous and inventive, Waldemeyer is an electronics boffin with a playful, aesthetic sensibility. His high-backed, elegant chairs, collectively named By Royal Appointment, above, for example, "read" the colour of the last sitter's clothes, then make a response in light - "almost as if the person has left a print," says the 33-year-old.

Waldemeyer grew up in East Germany, and recalls an early education filled with Communist propaganda. Yet his mathematical and technical education laid a foundation, and after excelling in the sciences, he came to the UK to study

business administration, before going to King's College, London, to study mechatronics: a mixture of mechanics and electronics. "Everybody loves that word," laughs Waldemeyer. "But from cars to a microwave, it's important. There's no pure mechanical engineering any more. Electronics and computers are totally linked."

Waldemeyer then worked at Philips, and designed a TV remote control with a joystick. "It wasn't produced but has since been made by other manufacturers." Bored, he approached the designer Ron Arad, who invited him to work on an interactive chandelier for Swarovski that enabled viewers' text messages to appear on it; six were made. He then worked with Zaha

Hadid on a kitchen project that involved embedding technology in Corian tops.

Three seasons of mechanical dresses full of tiny pulleys, cables and LEDs for Hussein Chalayan have also raised his profile. "One had 3,500 little lights on it and we had four weeks to make it. Crazy."

Impressively, he can do much of the technical side himself. "If I went to an engineering firm, I'd pay £5,000 to £10,000 for them to do the electrics for, say, the Corian table." Instead, he goes to his studio with a £600 laptop and a "really good soldering station". It's a method that has resulted in great demand of his skills, which he appreciates. "Technology has become a design medium in itself, and it's exciting." **OB**

The idealist Henrik Marstrand

Marstrand, the founder of the Danish homewares brand Mater, which launches its first collection, below, later this year, is positively evangelical about corporate social responsibility.

The code of conduct Marstrand has developed for his company enshrines human rights, good labour conditions, protecting the environment and anti-corruption practices.

He also asks every supplier Mater works with to sign up to the same code. Given that Mater is a small start-up, rather than an established, high-volume customer, this is a big ask, particularly with suppliers in China, Vietnam and India, where these issues are less commonly addressed.

"The aim of the code is not to terminate business, but to help suppliers improve social and environmental standards," says Marstrand.

"It's very challenging to get factories to commit to these kinds of principles, but we talked to all of them to

convince them that improving conditions and reducing their impact on the environment will actually mean more profitable factories."

Marstrand recognised that talking alone is not enough, so Mater demonstrates its commitment by feeding back a share of its profits to its suppliers.

"We give grants to implement projects, such as air conditioning for ceramic makers that work near the hot kilns," he explains. "Our target is to get factories to compliance within three to five years."

To help it on its way to this target, Mater is launching a limited-edition collection, with designers working alongside local craftspeople to create locally inspired pieces. All the profits from the sale of these pieces go directly to the factory involved.

"It's a luxury to start a brand from scratch in 2007," says Marstrand. "But doing so allows us to incorporate social and environmental principles from day one as a core part of our business." **TL**



THOMAS IBSEN



SCOTT WINTROW/GETTY IMAGES

The designer with a conscience Yves Béhar

For such a young designer, Béhar has already had a remarkable career strewn with prestigious awards. Now this San Francisco-based industrial designer, who has worked with high-tech clients such as Apple and Hewlett-Packard, is finally realising his dream of building a greener world.

Two years ago, he announced he wanted to design for Unesco, saying that the planet needed more environmentally friendly products. Now Béhar, born in Switzerland in 1967, is working on the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project to create a \$100 computer to be given away in the developing world.

The computer will have rabbit ear-like antennae and a high-contrast screen that can be read in the sun. It will also be double up as a writing pad to help children learn the alphabet.

Béhar has also worked with Nike, Hussein Chalayan and Birkenstock, revamping the latter's waterproof garden clog.

The designer's passion for sustainability has expanded into all areas of his work. "Today, we are working on large corporate efforts where sustainability is central," he says. "I often say that if it is not ethical, then it cannot be beautiful."

KW-S

world the opportunity to benefit from technology taken for granted in the West. OLPC aims to supply millions of laptops funded by donations.

Other designers are responding to environmental issues in different ways. A whole "recycling" movement has grown up with a raft of product designers taking unwanted materials and turning them into beautiful objects.

One of the most celebrated of these is Stuart Haygarth, a London-based designer who takes plastic items found on beaches, as well as used spectacle lenses and other unexpected objects, to create exquisite chandeliers. Haygarth does not see himself as an eco-designer, his stated aim is to challenge accepted notions of taste,

proving that things that people throw away or regard as worthless can possess an extraordinary beauty. Thus, almost against his wishes, Haygarth is becoming the poster boy of the green design movement.

The chairs 'read' the colour of a person's clothes, and respond in coloured light

Perhaps the most environmentally friendly designer object so far produced, however, is Tomáš Gabzdil Libertiny's Honeycomb Vase. The vase was actually built by bees - Libertiny made a simple vase shape out of beeswax and set it inside a hive. Then, 40,000 bees spent a week adding a honeycomb structure around the vase. This extraordinary object is in many ways a metaphor for the way that design will have to innovate if it is to have any chance of helping the world out of its current crisis: by harnessing natural processes to create objects that are beautiful, useful and intelligent. ■

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