

NEW

Anton Alvarez

The ingenious Thread Wrapping Machine is just one step in this Swedish-Chilean designer's endless journey to push the boundaries of craft

Evolution is a constant in the work of Anton Alvarez. No part of his practice exists in isolation, and his projects are rarely isolated from a larger body of work. Each development leads to another, in what he describes as a journey without end. Even his decade-long education reflects this approach – a fine arts degree, followed by cabinet-making, interior architecture and furniture design, and a Design Products MA at the Royal College of Arts, from which he graduated last year.

As part of his graduation project, Alvarez presented the Thread Wrapping Machine – a contraption he uses to construct the colourful furniture he is best known for. The machine is used to join various elements, mainly timber, but also metal, by wrapping them in colourful glue-coated threads.

The project, featured as part of Icon's graduate round-up (Icon 112), was presented alongside 120 x 120, a book of 120 objects created by Alvarez over 120 days. The objects, primarily abstract explorations of material and form, were a way for Alvarez to understand his practice. On reflection, he realised thread-wrapping was a recurring process throughout, and this led to the development of the machine.

"I invented my own tool," he says. "In the beginning the machine was controlling me; now I am the master of it. That is telling me to take the next step, to create uncertain ground again. I need to challenge this craft, and add something new to it. If I need something new, I make it." He is experimenting with a mechanism that allows him to wrap with other materials – thicker threads, ribbons and paper.

Alvarez established his studio – based in London and Stockholm – soon after graduating and most recently exhibited with Gallery Libby Sellers at Design Miami/ Basel. "That gave me the freedom to make quite a big structure," he says. "I like to look for opportunities to present a slightly evolved version of what I'm doing."

The pieces at Basel were a conscious move towards working at a larger scale – he is even thinking of adapting the technique for architecture. It was also the next step in Alvarez's move towards some undefined and probably unattainable end point.

"There is always going to be a new challenge," he says. "The Thread Wrapping Machine is not a project that will come to an end. I can never reach that place."

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Anton Alvarez
with his
wrapped
furniture