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THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

OCTOBER 2013

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THE 2013 AD INNOVATORS

Who is breaking new ground today? *AD* shines a spotlight on ten forward-thinking talents—from digital trailblazers to design visionaries—who are casting aside convention and changing our understanding of what's possible



A cloudlike edifice of intersecting steel bars, the 2013 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London was designed by Tokyo architect Sou Fujimoto. The temporary structure remains up through October 20.

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A climbing garden in Bilbao, Spain.



islands that would rise with the sea and absorb, like marshland, onslaughts of water. Such inventive schemes are the stock-and-trade of Balmori, who founded the firm Balmori Associates in 1990.

International in scope, her work also seeks to weave green features throughout urban settings. In Sejong, a developing city in South Korea, she is devising a continuous park across the rooftops of several government buildings. In Bilbao, Spain, she created a group of outdoor spaces that have helped reenergize the waterfront, among them a garden that appears to climb a set of stairs.

Balmori will even tackle a backyard if it gives her a chance to experiment. She worked with architect Joel Sanders on a Bedford, New York, property whose stone deck twists like a Möbius strip into a retaining wall.

Whatever the scale of the project, Balmori's brilliance lies in merging the man-made and the natural—conceiving places that work like, and with, ecosystems. The bottom line, she says, is that “you can’t try to fix nature.” balmori.com —F.A.B.



Balmori at home in New York City.



From top: Alvarez with an assortment of his furniture. The thread-wrapping machine he invented and uses to produce his offbeat works. One of his chairs.



ANTON ALVAREZ

Age-old craft meets cutting-edge creativity in the Swedish-Chilean designer's extraordinary furniture

Before attending London's Royal College of Art (RCA), Anton Alvarez spent two years at a craft school in Sweden, mastering the techniques of traditional cabinetmaking. Yet it was only after the London- and Stockholm-based designer set aside those time-honored skills that he was able to start his career in earnest, inventing a new joinery method he calls “thread wrapping” for his RCA thesis—a project that made him a breakout design-world star and got his sculptural pieces into a London Design Museum show last fall, alongside works by Arik Levy and Maarten Baas.

To create his lamps, stools, and benches, Alvarez feeds components of various shapes and sizes through his proprietary thread-wrapping machine, a motorized ring of spools that, as it spins, binds whatever passes through it in a tight cocoon of glue-soaked string. “In cabinetmaking, if you want to add a brass handle, you need a screw, and if you want to add upholstery, you need nails,” the designer explains. “This incorporates everything at the same time.” It's a clever, idiosyncratic approach that borrows from traditional craft to produce unconventionally beautiful results.

“What's-of-the-moment about Anton's project is that instead of just making objects he has made the object that makes the objects,” says London gallerist Libby Sellers, who exhibited several of Alvarez's pieces at this summer's Design Miami/Basel fair and is planning a solo show of his work next year. “His only constraint is the size of the wheel,” she adds. Already Alvarez is thinking bigger. “My goal is to take this up to a more architectural scale,” he says. He believes his methods might someday prove useful to the construction industry. “For now,” he says, “I'm just letting the process lead me toward the future.” antonvalvarez.com —MONICA KHEMSUROV

