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Contemporary Design: On the Cutting Edge

TEN DEALERS REACHING NEW AUDIENCES AROUND THE WORLD

By BROOK S. MASON

CUTTING EDGE DESIGNERS are attracting attention like never before. Once seen as quirky and favored only by a small group of hipster urban collectors in New York, London, and Paris, contemporary design is drawing more and more collectors globally. MODERN Magazine surveyed the field and zeroed in on ten dealers in the United States, Europe, and Beirut who are focusing on designers who are taking on relatively new materials, such as carbon steel, as well as such commonplace ones as string, to create works that blur the boundaries between design and sculpture.

Why the field is suddenly booming is quite simple, observes Craig Robins, a Miami collector and developer who is co-owner of Design Miami. "The audience is expanding exponentially with Russians, Brazilians, Koreans, and those throughout Europe and other countries besides here taking on design."

Prototype Liquid Glacial Table designed by Zaha Hadid from 2012.

Tom Price uses various materials for his Meltdown Chair series, including Polypropylene rope for *Meltdown Chair: PP Rope Blue* of 2007.

David Gill pioneered the field when his gallery debuted in London's Chelsea twenty-six years ago. Now he has a gallery directly opposite Christie's in St. James's and a Vauxhall premises as well. At the St. James's location this past fall he featured Zaha Hadid's *Prototype Liquid Glacial Table* made of hand-milled and polished acrylic, the latest in a series that, when launched last year, was shortlisted as one of the "Best Designs of 2012" by the London Design Museum. Eight feet long and seating eight or ten, the

table looks like a crystal clear glacier—with the sensation that water is flowing down the legs. "The table epitomizes Zaha's vocabulary of fluidity," says Gill, who is a regular at PAD London.

Gill's collectors include Madonna, Elton John, and Mario Testino as well as interior designers Peter Marino, David Mlinaric, Kelly Hoppen, and others from "virtually every continent," he says, adding "David Mlinaric was the first client to ring my bell." Gill is seeing clients such as banker David Rothschild juxtaposing contemporary design with eighteenth-century English furniture. "More and more, collectors want design that is challenging," he says.

Alexis Ryngaert founded **Victor Hunt Designart** in Brussels exactly five years ago. Since then he's witnessed a rapidly expanding collector base. "Today, the majority of my clients hail from abroad," he says. To cultivate and nurture that audience, he participates in Design Miami, Design Days Dubai, and Design Miami Basel. Currently in his stable of designers is Tom Price who lives in London and whose *PP Tube Black Chair*, part of his Meltdown series, is made of plastic tubing melted onto a metal form. It's priced at $13,000 and comes in an edition of twelve. "Collectors see it as bordering on both sculpture and design," Ryngaert says.

Lighting is especially prominent at Victor Hunt. On view is the work of the Stockholm-based collective Humans Since 1982, led by Swede Per Emanuelsson and German designer Bastian Bischoff. The *Surveillance Chandelier*, composed of five security cameras, is priced at $7,400 in an edition of ten. Kwangho Lee's range of creative lighting includes his Knot-Beyond the Inevitable series made of woven electrical cords. "They're about reduction, in that he uses the basic components of lighting," says Ryngaert. Prices vary by size, with large installations running $74,000 or more.

VICTOR HUNT DESIGNART/CHRIS BOLTON PHOTO   DAVID GILL
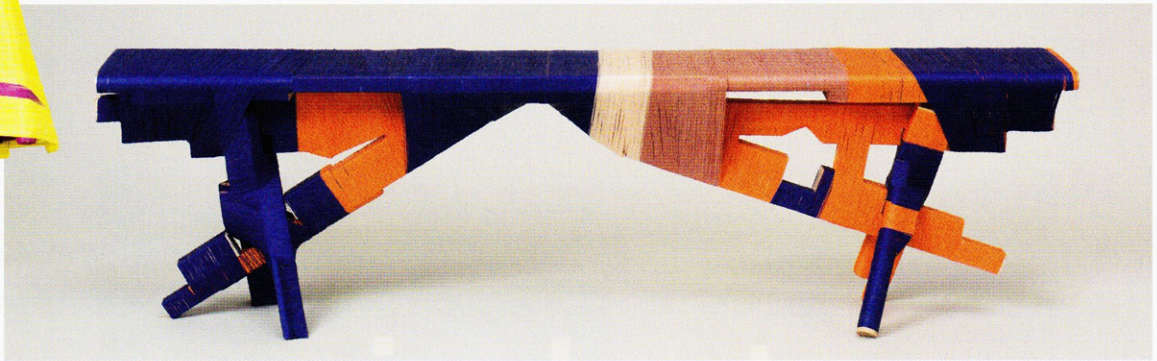
In the Fitzrovia section of London, **Libby Sellers**'s eponymous gallery commands center stage thanks in part to her prowess in the museum world—she served as senior curator of the London Design Museum from 2001 to 2007, where she staged the first British retrospective of Marc Newson's work in 2004. Her seven-year-old gallery is a regular stop for the Paris-born, New York–based architect and interior designer Robert Couturier, as well as others from Paris and London. Especially touted at September's London Design Festival was new work by partners Amy Hunting and Oscar Narud. Their Mirror series, referencing Norway's copper industry, is comprised of copper disks on steel poles planted on craggy stone bases (see MODERN, Fall 2013, p. 42). "Collectors are drawn to a new interpretation of the traditional mirror form," Sellers says. Most of the edition of eight sold quickly. A few remain, priced at $4,800 each.

Sellers also likes the work of Swedish-Chilean designer Anton Alvarez, whose Thread Wrapping Machine series demonstrates his distinctive method of joining different types of material using only glue-coated thread to bind the objects. By varying the types and colors of the threads, from brilliant blues to vibrant orange, Alvarez creates different patterns on lamps, chairs, stools, and benches. Prices are moderate for his work, which straddles the line between craft and design, with a simple stool beginning at $1,200.

At **Gallery FUMI**, also in London, Sam Pratt says he's seeing clients "going far beyond established designers such as Ron Arad and heading for the younger generation." Pratt and his partners Valerio Capo and Vanessa Pike mention recent sales of Faye Toogood's 2011 *Trapped Sphere Oil,* a resin cube encasing a sphere of crude oil in an edition of eight (plus two artist's proofs), each priced at $40,000. "It's pure sculpture, and three of the editioned examples have already sold," Pratt reports. Collectors are also gravitating to work by Glithero, the partnership of Tim Simpson and Sarah van Gameren, whose Les French series of tables and desks have bronze frames cast from bamboo shoots in a lost material process; the tops are of gummed paper. Prices range from $8,000 to $16,000.

Anton Alvarez creates his Thread Wrapping Machine series, including this lamp and bench from 2013, using glue-coated thread to bind and wrap the elements together while creating colorful designs.

Glithero's Rendez-Vous desk of 2012 is part of their Les French series, made of cast bronze with the top sections made of layers of gummed paper strips.