

**Photography by
Sagel and Krzykowski**

Forma

PORTFOLIO

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**The world of
Formafantasma**

Forma

Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin of Studio Formafantasma are probably two of the most elegant revolutionaries you've ever seen. Italian natives who live and work in the Dutch town of Eindhoven, they are fashionably attired, soft-spoken, and articulate. Their website states that their work "explores such issues as the role of design in folk craft, the relationship between tradition and local culture, critical approaches to sustainability, and the significance of objects as cultural conduits." This makes them sound earnest and scholarly, like a pair of professors describing a seminar in a curriculum outline. And in many ways, they are — earnest in the sense that they are serious in their intentions, and scholarly in that they undertake in-depth research before starting the design phase of any project. What they are not, however, are defenders of the status quo.

The design world got its first glimpse of Trimarchi and Farresin's talents when they showed *Moulding Tradition* in 2009, as part of the annual exhibition of student work from the Design Academy Eindhoven that is shown at the Milan Furniture Fair. Their project, which offered a commentary on craft traditions as a reflection of cultural attitudes, was beautifully executed but clearly critical, substituting photographs of contemporary North African immigrants, who regularly risk their lives to enter Italy illegally for low-paid work, for the still-popular depictions of Moorish faces that are typical of Sicilian *testa di Moro* vases, which have their origins in the Moorish conquest of the region.

Formafantasma have kept right on going from there. The seductively beautiful execution of their projects is used to address often uncomfortable issues, like the fate of the environment, "luxury" versus "humble" materials, colonialism and its legacies, and the exotic or the foreign. They often present their projects in a historical context, because as Farresin explains, "looking back can give you a perspective on the future. We always look back at how it was in the beginning, instead of creating new forms. I just think we're interested in how things work." He and Trimarchi have no interest in the Modernist idea of design that improves the lives of the masses. As Farresin says, at least in developed countries, "everybody now owns a lot of things. It's an environmental and almost cultural problem. We're not willing to support throwaway culture. An industrial utopia doesn't exist anymore. I think we need a different reason to produce." So they will go on — presenting a new projects including one that is focused on the culture of lava in the Mount Etna region and on the idea that "a production process can be entirely dependent on the force of nature," as well as a collaboration with the Viennese crystal manufacturer Lobmeyr to produce crystal and copper vessels that use activated charcoal to purify water. Because for Formafantasma it's all about asking, in the most elegant way possible, the right questions — those that will rock the boat.

Pilar Viladas

Colony Blanket - Eritrea (2011); Mohair wool, cotton, linen, ceramic; 87 x 43 inches. First shown at Design Miami/Basel 2011 with Gallery Libby Sellers.

Raw (2013); Borosilicate glass; 2.75 x 2.75 x 12 inches. Prototype, to be released in June 2014 at Chamber New York.



De Natura Fossilium material samples for stools and tables (2014);
Lava and basalt stones from Mount Etna, Sicily; Various
dimensions. First shown in April 2014 at Palazzo Clerici, Milan,
with Gallery Libby Sellers.



Autarchy (2010); Sawdust, flour, vegetal dye, cotton; Various
dimensions. Studio Formafantasma for Rossana Orlandi.



Charcoal - Mountain (2012); Charcoal, borosilicate glass, copper;
16 x 16 x 14 inches. First shown as part of *Confrontations* at the Vitra
Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany.



Craftica jug (2012); Borosilicate glass mouth blown on cow bone;
10 x 8 x 11 inches. First shown at Design Miami/Basel 2012 for Fendi
with Gallery Libby Sellers.



Equilibrium - La Ballerina children's toy (2013); Plexiglass, wood, brass; 4 x 2 x 20 inches. Prototype for Magis.



Autarchy scale model of a flour mill (2010); Balsa wood; 3 x 3 x 18 inches. First shown at Salone Del Mobile 2010 for Galleria Rossana Orlandi.



*Turkish Red scarf (2013); Silk; 20 x 27.5 inches. First shown as part of the exhibition *Turkish Red* at the Textiel Museum in Tilburg, Netherlands.*



De Natura Fossilium material sample for vessels and boxes (2014); Lava and basalt stones from Mount Etna, Sicily; various dimensions. First shown at Salone Del Mobile 2014 at Palazzo Clerici with Gallery Libby Sellers.



Funnel Water Purifier (2012); Charcoal, borosilicate glass, copper;
12 x 8 x 8 inches. First shown at Design Miami/Basel 2012 for Vitra
Design Museum's exhibition *Confrontations*.

Equilibrium - Il Pescatore children's toy (2013); Plexiglas, wood, brass;
4 x 2 x 20 inches. Prototype for Magis.

