

Alchemy adds extra to the ordinary

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A new gallery features artists who turn the humble and unwanted into something precious, says **Corinne Julius**

TAIL-LAMPS FROM a lorry, redundant timber pallets and the remains of last year's Christmas tree might not seem promising material from which to construct elegant furniture and lighting, yet a visit to Libby Sellers' new permanent gallery shows that they can be.

In Granmateria II (a title that alludes to the mythologies of the Philosopher's Stone), Sellers aims to show how by working with humble materials, or using them out of their normal context, designers can perform a modern alchemy, not by turning base metal into gold but by making the ordinary, extraordinary. In the process the designers also question cultural assumptions and the materialism of consumer economics.

Sellers first used the title with her opening show in her pop-up gallery in 2007. To celebrate her new permanent location in Berners Street, W1, she has gone back to some of the original makers, such as **Stuart**



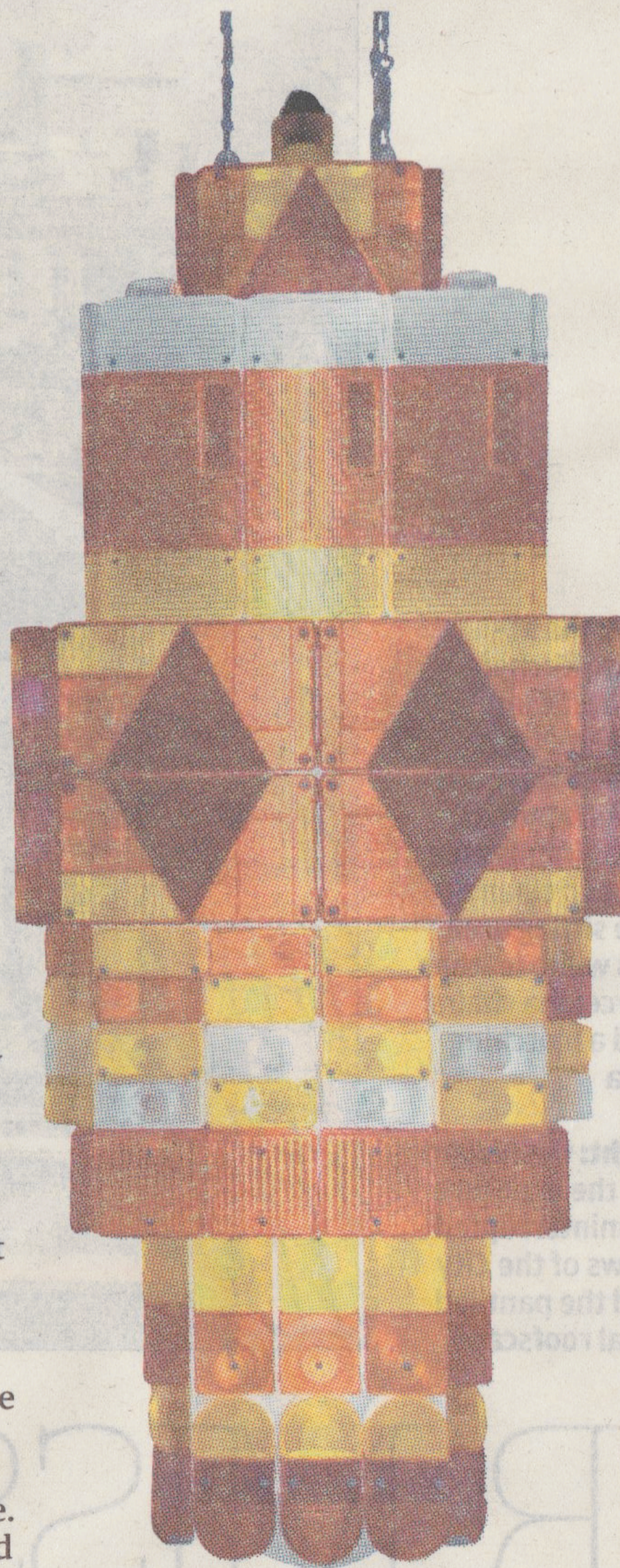
Haygarth. Haygarth specialises in using items that are unwanted, found or used out of context and transforming them into new objects of desire.

"My work revolves around everyday objects, collected in large quantities, categorised and presented so that they are given new meaning," he explains. Tail Light (2007) is a 57cm wide, 142cm tall light made from orange, red and white lorry, tractor and trailer rear lamps. As a cyclist he spends a great deal of time behind vehicles.

"I became intrigued by the lenses covering vehicle lights – their complexity and beauty," he says. The resulting light looks like a cross between a robot, an Art Deco light and an Eduardo Paolozzi sculpture.

Fabian Cappello's reuse of wood solves the problem of what to do with a redundant Christmas tree. Perplexed at the number of abandoned Christmas trees in his local area, he mapped them. In

Left: Simon Hasan's Geno (2011) chair, created from brass tubing, and leather made rigid by a boiling process once used to toughen medieval armour



Christmas Tree Stool (2010-2011) he joins several upturned bases together with "speech bubble" shaped joints, stripping down the trunks to make the legs. The resulting highly polished seats are surprisingly beautiful.

Cappello enjoys using regionally sourced materials and on a project in



Resourceful: Fabian Cappello used a brick he found in the street as the base for this hand-blown zingy-blue tumbler (far left), then last Christmas, appalled by the number of yuletide trees left abandoned where he lived, he used several to create his Christmas Tree Stools (above); as a cyclist Stuart Haygarth became all too familiar – and fascinated – with the reflective glass used in the rear lights of vehicles. His "dazzling" pendant Tail Light is made from a collection of old lorry, tractor and trailer rear lamps (left)

Venice created Brick Glass 2010 using a brick he found in the street as a base for a hand-blown glass vessel in zingy blues.

Rather than recycle, **Nicholas Le Moigne** uses Eternit, a cheap material made from a composite of cement and a pulped fibrous material. Normally used for roofing products or planters, it is often held in low regard. Based on research projects he did as a student at ECAL in Lausanne, Le Moigne developed Slip Lamp (2011) a modernist mushroom-like light. Made in a two-part mould, he deliberately leaves the "selvedge" edges unfilled. The lamps are most disconcerting; they look hard, but feel soft: seem fragile, yet are robust and appear industrial but are handmade.

This playing with materials is also evident in **Simon Hasan's** Geno (2011) stool and chairs made of boiled

leather, a process that Hasan investigated as a student at the RCA. Based on *cuir bouilli* a medieval process for making body armour, his boiled leather forms upset the normal perception of leather as soft and pliable; instead they become rigid. He combines the boiled leather with simple brass tubing.

Despite being made of waste or disregarded materials, none of the objects are cheap, but, says Sellers: "This is critical design. It's post-functional. The function is there, but the intellectual process behind it, the choice of materials, the fact that it is handmade and the narrative in each object make it special."

■ Granmateria II, Libby Sellers Gallery, 41-42 Berners Street, W1 (020 3384 8785; gallerylibbysellers.com). Until December 7, Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 6pm.