

Wallpaper*

AUGUST 2010

*DESIGNINTERIORSFASHIONARTLIFESTYLE

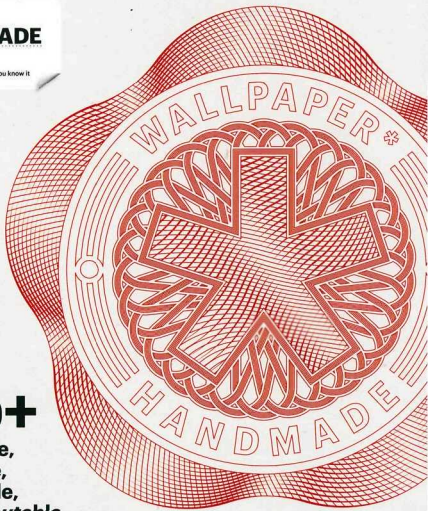
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THE HANDMADE ISSUE

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Hot seat

Boiled leather armchair, by Simon Hasan and Poltrona Frau





DOUBLE VISION
Above, the original 'Archibald' armchair (top) and Hasan's custom-built version (bottom), tagged 'Archibooled' by the designer

Left, the leather is first boiled in water in Hasan's custom-built tank, then quickly moulded while still pliable over the armchair's frame, and finally weighted down and left to dry. For the finished chair, and more details, see page 175



For the purpose of boiling leather, Simon Hasan has a custom-built stainless steel tank in his workshop that holds around a tonne of water and is heated by a propane burner. The actual boiling of the leather is the quickest part of the process, taking less than half an hour. In that time, the fat in the skin is displaced and salts and oils leach out. (The water in the tank, with its medieval soup of oils, salts and tannins, is replaced every two to three boilings.) The result is a steaming gelatinous mass that has to be worked with quickly while it remains pliable.

'The smell is not as unpleasant as you might think,' says Hasan. 'The day after boiling leather, the workshop has a scent

rather like a slightly leathery baker's shop. Although sometimes, after a day of working with tanned hides, you don't really fancy steak for dinner.'

For our project, Royal College of Art graduate Hasan took two 'Archibald' armchairs originally designed by Jean-Marie Massaud for Italian furniture manufacturer Poltrona Frau. He stripped one of the chairs back to the metal frame, which was then sanded and beeswaxed. The second chair remained upholstered and was to be used as the mould for the boiled leather. The upholstered chair was prepared with hooks, screws and other ingenious fixings that kept the leather in place while its

buckled form dried out, so that its final form would retain a dim echo of the original piece of furniture.

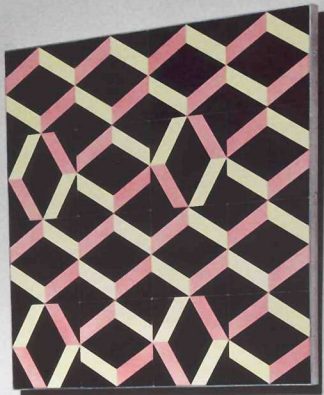
'Removing the leather from the water and screwing it onto the mould was the most stressful, intense part of the process,' says Hasan. 'It stiffens really quickly and if I force it I weaken the fibres, so I had about five minutes to get it onto the mould and another five minutes using a blowtorch and water spray to manipulate the edges. It's a very short, sharp burst of activity.'

His protection while working the hot leather was some thick gloves, but they prevent detailed working so he ended up with a pair of calloused hands instead. ✪

RAISING THE BAR

Opposite: HeartOak[®] flooring, £270 per sq m, by Dinesen, www.dinesen.com.
 On coffee bar, from left, recycled paper bowls, from \$190, by Domingos Titora, www.domingostitora.com.
 br. Goat's cheese and beetroot crisps, by John Campbell and Tyrrells, for Wallpaper* (see page 150).
 Wallpaper*: Press coffee blend, by Stumptown Coffee Roasters (see page 150).
 Linea Group 2[®] coffee machine, £7,400, by La Marzocco, www.lamarzocco.com.
 Ripple[®] cups, from £54 for 1,000, from London Bio Packaging, www.londonbiopackaging.com.

Tiles
 by Koo Jeong-A
 and Craven
 Dunnill Jackfield
 See page 146



Armchair
 by Simon Hasan
 and Poltrona Frau