

DESIGNSCENE

DESIGNSCENE.NET
ISSUE 24 02/2026

**GEORGIA
FOWLER**

in **BALENCIAGA**
by **GARY LUPTON**

**DESIGN
UNDER PRESSURE**



HUGO

RED MEANS GO

**GALERIJA, BULEVAR VUDROA VILSONA, BELGRADE
UŠĆE SC, BULEVAR MIHAJLA PUPINA, BELGRADE
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MADE BY ASTRONAUTS

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NM3

YANI SHI

GEORGIA FOWLER

FILARRI

COCO MONTES

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Artwork



COVER 2
BETHANY ANTONIA
in CHRISTIAN DIOR
Photography
ELLA ROSE PECK



COVER 3
FILARRI in HUGO
Photography
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COVER 6
GEORGIA FOWLER IN BALENCIAGA
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IN TRANSIT

Georgia Fowler by Gary Lupton



EDITOR'S LETTER

DESIGN UNDER PRESSURE

For years, DSCENE Magazine has returned to design as a core language, not just as an aesthetic, but as a way we understand culture, ambition, and the world we move through. For this new issue, that conversation sharpened into something more urgent. Together with DSCENE's Katarina Doric and the team we kept thinking about the pressure talent works under today, the pace, the scrutiny, the expectations, the economics, the constant demand to produce, evolve, and stay visible. That is where this issue begins, and why we titled it DESIGN UNDER PRESSURE. It is a statement, but also a question. What does pressure do to craft, to integrity, to imagination, and what does it reveal about the people who keep showing up for the work anyway.

We were thrilled to create two major shoots in locations where design is not a backdrop, it is the point of view. At the *TWA Hotel* at *JFK Airport*, design lives in every corner, honoring the original architecture and furniture by Eero Saarinen, whose work shaped some of the most iconic terminals in the United States. Being there, inside a space that treats modernism with respect and care, made the present feel even more complicated. We are watching another of Saarinen's terminal designs face the threat of destruction, a reminder that preservation is never guaranteed, and that cultural memory can be fragile when it meets development and politics. In that setting, our cover story comes to life with Georgia Fowler, beautifully photographed by Gary Lupton, with styling by Daniel Jacinto, a story that carries both glamour and clarity, and understands that fashion and design are often at their strongest when they hold tension rather than escape it.



Our second cover story features breakthrough star Meredith Mickelson, shot at the headquarters of *Villa Albertine*, the *Payne Whitney Mansion* on Fifth Avenue. The mansion's presence is unmistakable, and the experience of working there felt like stepping into a living archive of New York's cultural history. *Villa Albertine* will also celebrate this issue with us during *Oui Design Days* as part of *NYC x DESIGN*, a week that continues to prove how much energy, experimentation, and dialogue this city can hold when design is given room to lead. DSCENE Magazine is proud to be a media partner of *NYC x DESIGN*, and proud to be in conversation with the people and institutions shaping what comes next. The shoot itself leans into a more whimsical register, photographed by Mylena Saza with styling by Amanda Gaio, a reminder that play is not the opposite of seriousness, it is often where the most precise ideas begin.

Beyond our cover stories, this issue is built around a wide spectrum of designers and creatives who are committed to their craft, even as the industry asks more from them than ever. You will find work from London-based designer Saul Nash, Made by Astronauts, New York-based Aisling Camps, Finepiana, Maria Koshenkova, Emilie Luc-Duc, Kilian Vos, So Koizumi, Mexico City-based Atra, New York-based fashion designer Pipenco, Christine Kalia, NM3, Yani Shi, Coco Montes, Teo Abihdana, Atelier Biagetti, and Dirk Schönberger. Each brings a distinct approach, but what connects them is discipline, and the decision to keep making work that holds its shape under real-world conditions.

We also feature designer Salehe Bembury, responsible for some of the most memorable sneaker design in recent years, who created a special cover story for DSCENE. Elsewhere, actress on the rise Bethany Antonia appears in a portrait series captured in London, a quieter counterpoint that still carries intensity, the kind that does not need volume to land. And from Southeast Europe, breakthrough star Filarri takes us back to Belgrade in a striking story photographed by Luka Stepanovic with styling by Manda Javorina, a reminder that geography does not limit ambition, and that some of the most compelling images come from scenes that are building their own momentum.

Design comes in many forms, and it shapes our daily lives more than we often admit. Pressure is here, and it is not going away. What matters is what we choose to do with it, how we translate it into our next steps, and how we protect the beauty, the craft, and the human side of the work while we move forward. This issue is our way of acknowledging the weight, and celebrating the people who still insist on making something meaningful inside it.

TWA Hotel, Photo by Gary Lupton

Zarko Davinic

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ASTRONAUTS
SHAPE FORM
THROUGH
PRESSURE

Photo by Yiorgos Kaplanidis



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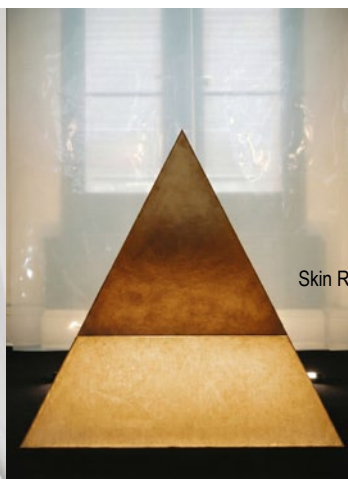
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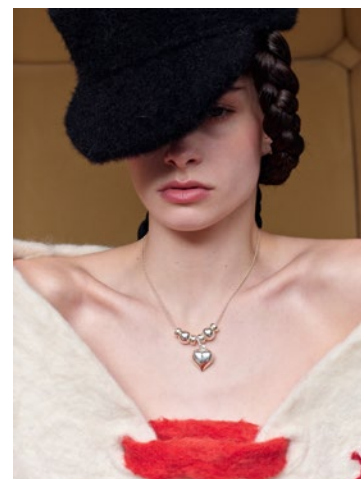
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PRESSURE



DESIGN UNDER PRESSURE

PRESSURE SHAPES, IT DISTORTS, FOCUSES, REVEALS,
IN THE TIGHT SPACES BETWEEN DEADLINES, BUDGETS, EXPECTATIONS AND DOUBT,
DESIGN EITHER COLLAPSES OR EVOLVES

WE CHOOSE EVOLUTION.

NOT AS A ROMANTIC IDEA, BUT AS A PRACTICE
TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE IS TO WORK WITH THE REALITY OF NOW.
SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL,
THE WORLD DOESN'T WAIT FOR PERFECT CONDITIONS,
NEITHER DO WE.

PRESSURE FORCES CLARITY,
IT STRIPS AWAY THE NONESSENTIAL
AND EXPOSES WHAT MATTERS.
IT CHALLENGES US TO DESIGN WITH INTENTION,
TO MAKE BEAUTY FUNCTION,
TO MAKE IDEAS USEFUL,
TO MAKE FUTURES POSSIBLE

WE DESIGN TO RESPOND, TO QUESTION, TO PROVOKE,
TO OPEN DOORS, SHIFT PERSPECTIVES, DISRUPT ROUTINES,
WE DESIGN FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR ALGORITHMS.
FOR CULTURE NOT FOR COMMODITY,
FOR IMPACT THAT LASTS LONGER THAN TRENDS.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT SURVIVAL.
IT'S ABOUT DISCIPLINE, CURIOSITY AND COURAGE.
PRESSURE IS NOT THE ENEMY.
IT'S OUR MATERIAL,
WE DON'T CRACK UNDER IT.
WE CREATE THROUGH IT.

SAUL

NASH IN MOTION

On movement, identity, and building a label shaped through
performance and control

By Zarko Davinic





Saul Nash builds his work through movement, using the body as both starting point and testing ground. Raised in North East London, he draws from a layered cultural background and early experience in dance to shape a design language that moves between performance and technical menswear. Since launching his label in 2018, Nash has focused on garments that respond to motion, resisting fixed ideas of sportswear while opening space for fluid expression and identity.

In this conversation for DSCENE, Editor-in-Chief Zarko Davinic speaks with Nash about the relationship between movement and construction, the role of personal narrative in shaping a brand, and the pressures of building an independent label today. The discussion moves through his education at Central Saint Martins and the Royal College of Art, his approach to performance as presentation, and the balance between creative control and growth in a system that demands constant output.

You were raised in North East London, with a multicultural background that includes Guyanese, Barbadian, Indo-Mauritian, and English heritage. What parts of that upbringing still sit inside the brand today, visually, emotionally, and culturally?

I think all of that has really shaped me, and my work reflects the experience of navigating these identities within Europe. My work has always been linked to identity, looking at my own experiences while also expanding outward to others who resonate with what we create. I can only tell my story, and the brand has provided a space for me to do that.

Before fashion, movement came first. When did you realise dance was not just an influence, but the actual design logic behind your clothes?

It stemmed from my own interest in clothing and how I wanted to feel when wearing it. I have always been interested in clothes and how they move, but venturing into design gave me the space to explore this deeper through cut and fabrication.

You studied at Central Saint Martins and then completed an MA in Menswear at the Royal College of Art. What did each institution give you, and what did you have to unlearn to build a label that feels this personal?

I think I have always been someone who overthinks everything. Central Saint Martins taught me the concepts of world building and storytelling, while the Royal College of Art gave me the space to authentically be myself, and to explore how that could manifest through design and craftsmanship. Because RCA was a Master's, I began with the rationale of bringing together fashion and performance, but it was through that time of exploration that I truly understood what that meant for me.

The brand launched in 2018 and quickly became known for technical menswear that refuses traditional athleisure codes. What was the earliest piece or collection where you felt, this is the language, this is Saul Nash?

I would say it was during Fashion East. My early work with zips was really about creating space for liberation within clothing. The hours of investigation, trial and testing that went into those earlier collections really set the blueprint for what our collections are today.



“SOMETIMES THE MOST RADICAL THING IS TO SHOW OURSELVES IN PLEASURE, IN SOFTNESS, IN POWER—EVEN IF THE WORLD TELLS US NOT TO.”

Your work often sits between sportswear and tailoring, with garments engineered for real movement. When you are designing, what comes first, the function, the silhouette, or the story you want the body to tell?

I would say it is a combination of all of those things. Being clear on what I want to say has to come first. That then stimulates the ideas that follow, and becomes a vehicle through which movement and function can be expressed. I also think material is everything. The haptic feel of fabric really helps me visualise how I want a garment to move.

You have consistently made space for queer expression in your work, and your Milan Spring Summer 2026 show felt especially focused on the relationship between gay men, the stereotypes placed on them, and that specific feeling of loneliness that can exist underneath visibility. What did you want the audience to understand in that moment, and how did you translate that emotional tension into clothes and movement?

I think my work has always provided a spectrum within which the people who wear it can find themselves. As a queer man, I have always wanted to create work that encourages all forms of expression. In Spring 2026, the collection really looked at the tensions and ambiguity within embrace, the tension between the platonic and the romantic.

Just like at the Milan show, your presentations frequently use performance and choreography rather than a conventional catwalk. What does performance allow you to communicate that a standard runway format cannot?

The clothing is designed and created for movement, and I think it is important to reflect that in how the work is communicated. Performance becomes essential in showing the way the clothing is envisioned to be worn.



You have received major recognition, including the International Woolmark Prize and the Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design. How did that level of visibility change your day to day life as a designer and as a person?

I think I am learning the importance of celebrating every victory. The great thing about those prizes was that they provided a platform and the space for me to further develop my practice, which was incredible for me. In terms of pressure, I have always thought it important not to let it get the best of me, because I think it is important to stay authentic in my work and make the best decisions without feeling pressure to do things for others.

Shifting to the business side, you are building an independent UK label in a market that can be unforgiving. Where does the pressure show up most: financing, production, retail demands, or the constant need to deliver something “new”?

I think business is constantly evolving. As old opportunities close, new ones begin to form, so I really believe that to run a business you have to be adaptable. Business is all about trial and testing, some things work and others do not. I have found that the way we have adapted to that has enabled us to keep moving forward. I am super grateful to be doing something I want to do with my life.

When pressure peaks through deadlines, budgets, expectations, and public scrutiny, what are your non negotiables, creatively and ethically, and what have you learned about protecting them while continuing to grow the brand?

It is important to stay calm. It sounds easier said than done, but for me my peace is non negotiable, so I encourage myself and my team to stay calm and methodically work through things instead of panicking, because fashion is hard enough without added stress. I also have to be able to go out and be inspired, so I try to carve out time for that. Without inspiration and experience, our work means nothing.

Made by Astronauts

Shape Form

Through Pressure

Danae Dasyra and Joe Bradford discuss Hydromorph, process-driven design, and material-led experimentation.

By Jana Kostic

Athens-based studio Made by Astronauts operates at the intersection of material force and instinctive response. Founded in 2023 by Danae Dasyra and Joe Bradford, the practice brings together two distinct backgrounds into a shared direction rooted in making. Their work begins with process, where hydroforming, pressure, and resistance shape the outcome, and design follows as a direct reaction rather than a fixed intention.

Working primarily in-house, the studio treats fabrication as an active, evolving stage rather than a final step. Metal expands, folds, and shifts under force, producing forms that resist predictability and carry traces of their own formation. The resulting objects sit between function and sculpture, defined by tension, surface, and an ongoing negotiation with material limits.

Editor Jana Kostic speaks with Made by Astronauts about Hydromorph, their debut body of work, and the role of pressure across both process and thought.

Your debut body of work, Hydromorph, centers on hydroforming and extreme force. At what point did pressure shift from being a technical condition to becoming your core design language?

I think this happened when Joe came across the hydroforming technique on YouTube and decided it was a great idea to try and replicate it within the restrictions of our workshop equipment. From that point onwards, pressurised water kind of became our ghost codesigner in the studio.

The theme of this issue is Design Under Pressure. How do you translate physical pressure into a broader reflection on creative or cultural pressure?

I would say that for us, practising design in the way we do is very much a form of escapism. The world we intentionally imagine,

aim to create, and share is one of optimism, one that accepts and normalises difference, while also challenging preconceptions and stagnant ideas of how things should be.

That approach leads us to a sense of conceptual freedom. Within our industry, this translates into what we choose to make, how we approach form, or even scale at times.

We are aware that this positions us within a niche, and there is pressure to become more palatable; however, for now, that same pressure seems to provoke an anarchic reaction.

You describe design as a response to material and process. In Hydromorph, does the metal ultimately “win,” or do you?

The metal definitely wins, we would be delusional to think otherwise. But it's more like a dance rather than a battle. (Danae) I like salsa, and you know, depending on how good you and your partner are, you can dance more fluently. If one of you slips, the other can cover, and it all looks good in the end.

So, to speak again about design and making, what we mean by design being the response is that our expectations never set impossible tasks for the material, our making know-how, or our workshop facilities. Instead, design becomes a tool to navigate problems intelligently while moving towards our creative vision.

Hydro-bulging involves surrendering form to internal force. How much control do you actually retain during inflation?

Some is the answer. I don't think we can say we have control, in fact, we enjoy the lack of it. We cannot accurately predict how vessels of different shapes will behave during inflation.

But over time, we have built a personalised library of shapes, starting from simple geometries that have now evolved into more complex forms directly connected to our studio's visual language.



We often use these as references and collage them into larger compositions. So, while we can't fully control the outcome, we can now make quite informed guesses.

The folds and creases evoke fabric or plastic, yet the material is steel. Are you interested in destabilising how we read material identity?

We are interested in destabilising materiality, as well as people's expectations of how domestic objects should look. We find it fascinating and exciting to exist within a world full of surprises, whether one expects to touch something warm that ends up being cold, or whether a chair looks like a gigantic claw yet is comfortable to sit on.

We enjoy finding beauty in the atypical, in a search for freedom, we suppose.

Your pieces resemble alien microorganisms or extraterrestrial forms. Does this aesthetic emerge naturally from the process, or is it a deliberate narrative direction?

Our work does have a consistent visual thread that emerges from the process of hydroforming. However, as it has evolved, we have also introduced a number of visual references from Art Nouveau, alongside decisions made to support the narratives we wish to tell through the work.

For example, in our latest body of works currently on show at Nina Johnson Gallery, we presented a floor lamp called Eros (Greek for Cupid). The overall form of the piece echoes a bow and arrow, with an illuminated hand-blown glass element symbolising love that is about to strike.

Intersecting parts lock together through swelling during inflation. How important is unpredictability to your practice?

Enabled by our proximity to the work, we are able to familiarise



“THERE IS PRESSURE TO BECOME MORE PALATABLE; HOWEVER, FOR NOW, THAT SAME PRESSURE SEEMS TO PROVOKE AN ANARCHIC REACTION.”

ourselves with all the stages the metal goes through, from a flat sheet to a 3D hydroformed piece. Because we were fascinated by the process and committed to expressing it through our design, we created a collection of works assembled from parts that undergo the same process at different moments in time.

You keep most fabrication in-house. What does hands-on production allow you that outsourcing would compromise?

Made by Astronauts is a collective built around the act of making. When outsourcing, especially in industries where the designer is kept outside the workshop and involved only up to the point of producing technical drawings, there is often a fixed, immovable image of the final object from the outset.

The way we work is much more fluid. We have a direction, but we remain open to shifting and redirecting if it feels right. This keeps us engaged and curious, leading to moments of learning and surprise throughout the process.

We have also discovered many “happy accidents”, mistakes we would never have been able to select or develop if we hadn't been present at every step.







SPYROS RENNT
Kate in red, 2021
Image courtesy of the artist



**“WE FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT TO TELL THE STORY OF MAKING...
REVEALING THE RAW REALITY OF THE MATERIAL, SCRATCHES,
SURFACE IMPERFECTIONS, AND WELDS.”**



The translucent powder coat preserves heat blemishes from welding. Why was it important to reveal those marks instead of concealing them?

We feel it is important to tell the story of making, as this was the first narrative of our work. This includes revealing the raw reality of the material, scratches, surface imperfections, and welds, encapsulated within a “vitrine-like” finish that facilitates its repositioning within the context of collectible design. As our work progresses, we remain open to experimenting with different finishes, exploring interesting ways of working with accessible products from the metal industry.

Made by ASTRONAUTS suggests exploration and risk. Do you see your studio as operating more like a laboratory, a workshop, or a testing ground for material limits?

We are two very different people, so we have slightly different views on this.

Danae: I see the studio as a sculptural practice that creates magical, surrealist worlds for people to experience, applied within Joe’s fabrication workshop, which is very much a testing ground for materials, processes, and his own abilities. Our roles in the studio are quite distinct, and that difference brings a unique richness to the work. But certainly not a laboratory, we are a metal shop.

Photography by
Yiorgos Kaplanidis



AISLING CAMPS BUILDS KNITWEAR THROUGH STRUCTURE AND PRECISION

Aisling Camps on process, production, and sustaining a focused design practice

Interview by Zarko Davinic

Aisling Camps builds her work through structure, discipline, and a clear understanding of material. After graduating from Columbia University, she began her career in mechanical engineering with a focus on sustainability before shifting to fashion at Fashion Institute of Technology. That foundation remains visible in her approach to knitwear, where construction and process guide each decision. Based in Brooklyn, she develops collections through a dual system that combines in-house production with a family-run factory in Italy, working with yarns sourced directly from Italian mills.

For DSCENE Magazine, Editor-in-Chief Zarko Davinic speaks with Aisling Camps about the pressures shaping her practice today. The conversation moves through production realities, the balance between precision and intuition, and the demands of building a brand while maintaining control over quality and output.

The theme of DSCENE's upcoming issue is “Design Under Pressure” for us it is often about what happens when creativity meets constraint. What does “pressure” mean to you right now, personally and professionally, and where do you feel it most, in the studio, in production, or in public?

I think pressure for me means finding a balance that works. Usually my work is a place for me to escape into my world however the fashion landscape has been difficult and shifting constantly in the last couple of years. It has been a challenge to find the best way to move forward for our company. I'm feeling it equally at home and at work. Our twins are two and a half years old so they're a handful. I do find having real connection with peers and colleagues to be the best way to ground myself amidst all the chaos.

You moved from mechanical engineering into fashion, two worlds with very different tolerances for error. How has your engineering mindset shaped the way you design, problem-solve, and make decisions under time pressure?

I can be very exacting. My design director Elise and I have so many spreadsheets to keep track of everything. I suppose that is a nod to my engineering past. I think prioritization is key. In fashion you receive so many emails that are classified as urgent. The best way I've found to wade through the muck is to keep priorities clear and organize the to do list accordingly. I think knitwear is such technical part of fashion design and my mind is very attuned to analytical problem solving. We do 25% of our production in-house so it helps to have an analytical mind. I think my engineering background has helped to keep our process systematic and clear.



"I THINK THE MOST RADICAL WAY TO MAINTAIN A SUSTAINABLE ETHOS IS TO ONLY MAKE PIECES THAT ARE TRULY SPECIAL."

You've spoken about sustainability being part since the start of your career. In 2026, what does sustainability look like when you are also trying to keep a business going, pay people fairly, and deliver quality at a luxury level? Where do you refuse to compromise?

I refuse to compromise on beauty and the highest quality materials. Fashion encourages you to constantly consume. I think the most radical way to maintain a sustainable ethos is to only make pieces that are truly special. There is no need for more clothing. So I refuse to put more disposable garments out into the world. I try to use the best materials and create garments that will outlast the trends and outlast disposable fashion purchases. The focus is on making something special that you cannot get anywhere else that is made with care and intention. We don't over produce and many pieces are made to order

New York Fashion Week can often feel like a referendum on a brand. What kind of pressure comes with showing during a fashion week, and what do people outside the system misunderstand about the cost, the logistics, and the emotional toll?

I just had my NYFW debut in February and it definitely was an undertaking. For something that lasts only 10 minutes, there is an insane amount of planning and consideration that is put into every minute detail. You have to have a very dedicated team to pull off a seamless show. I had several sleepless, anxiety ridden nights. I think having newborn twins prepares you to have your first fashion show. I think it's crazy that the industry expects small design teams to put on a show twice a year. I took my time and kept delaying until I felt like I was ready. It is extremely expensive and emotionally taxing. Backstage was filled with tears.

In the current political climate, there is a constant sense of instability, from trade policy to immigration to cultural polarization. How does that broader atmosphere affect your work, your customers, and your willingness to take creative risks?

With regard to creative risk, it has forced us to be laser focused and to really edit the collection down to what we feel is absolutely necessary. We do not over develop or over produce. That is in direct response to the tumultuous climate. Consumers are being more selective with their spending. It has also pushed us to connect directly with our consumer. At the end of the day, during unstable times, the most important thing is human connection. I found that inviting clients into the studio to see how the garments are made and to shop has been effective. We are offering an escape for our customers.

Knitwear is often treated as "seasonal", yet your work pushes construction and silhouette. What are you trying to disrupt in the way people think about knitwear?

Well I started my brand in Trinidad so what might be considered subversive was actually a practical decision in the early days. You are not going to design chunky wool knits for the customer in the tropics. I started with slip dresses and linen separates and made things that made sense for that client. It helped me to find a unique language. At the end of the day I am still an engineer. I love puzzles and I also finding beauty in intricate lines and shapes. I enjoy showing what could be done with the medium and I think that people are definitely coming around to appreciate my point of view.

When someone buys an Aisling Camps piece for the first time, what do you hope they notice immediately, and what do you hope they only understand after living with it for a season?

I hope that they notice the quality and the details. I hope that they gravitate to wearing our pieces over and over and style them in different ways. They are easy pieces that you don't have to overthink but there is always a playful element and twist.

Your brand is built on a dual production model, handmade work in Brooklyn, and a family-run factory in Italy known for fully-fashioned knits. How do you decide what gets made where, and what pressures accompany protecting craftsmanship across two continents?

It all depends on the quantities that we sell. If we hit the minimums, they are made in Italy. If we receive smaller orders for a style, we will assess if we can make it in house. If it is a style that we feel needs to be on the rack to complete the story, we will make it by hand in the Brooklyn studio. Sometimes it is important for those pieces to live. I also fully trust in my factory in Italy. They put the utmost care into making sure the garments are high quality. That trust has been built over time. It is a juggling act between quantities and what we have time to make by hand. Quality is never sacrificed.

You spent significant time in Italy, including learning the production "language" needed to communicate with programmers and factories. What did that time teach you about power dynamics in manufacturing, and how did it change the way you lead your own production process?



It taught me that relationships and trust are everything. As a small brand fighting for priority on the production floor, you have to show that you respect their work and give them reason to build your business with you. Your factory is the most important part of your business. Something will inevitably go wrong every season. It is important to have people that focus on solutions. You want to work with people that you trust and respect and with whom you can weather the bad times and celebrate the good times. I learned so many tricks from the technicians and seamstresses in the factory and I definitely apply these lessons back in Brooklyn.

The industry often rewards speed, constant drops, constant content, constant novelty. How do you protect your design integrity in a culture that forces designers to produce more, faster, and louder every season?

We are focused on quality over quantity. That is the only way to pro-

tect longevity in my opinion. There will always be someone doing more and doing it faster with a bigger budget. There is a lot of noise. I believe that slow and steady wins the race.

You are a Trinidadian native who built a brand in New York. How has your background shaped your relationship to ambition, resourcefulness, and the idea of “making it,” and do you feel pressure to represent more beyond the clothes?

I try to not let all those other pressures affect me too much. Making it in this industry is tricky enough. I am focused on the clothes. I do look back and feel proud of what I have built from nothing with just a machine and my hands. At the end of the day I am only competing with myself and the collection that I put out before. How do I improve? How do I refresh? Would a younger me or an older me be excited about this? My background has taught me to be determined, scrappy and think outside the box. It has served me well.

MDW 2026: Too Much to See, Nothing to Hold

Inside Milan Design Week's excess, where pressure to show outweighs what stays. and material-led experimentation.

By Katarina Doric

Milan Design Week has developed its own logic, where endurance becomes the method. Twenty-five thousand steps a day, moving from one address to the next, checking maps, saving pins, trying to keep up with a schedule that never had a chance of working. Everyone was there. Everyone was showing. The expectation was simple: see everything, be everywhere, miss nothing. The reality was the opposite. The more there was, the less any single thing could stay with you.

The first days carry a certain optimism. There is still a belief that something essential will emerge from the density, that somewhere within the volume there is work that will shift perception. Alcova comes closest to sustaining that belief. Its distance from the center remains important. It creates a separation not only in geography but in expectation. The projects there do not feel obligated to resolve themselves immediately. They exist within a slower rhythm, where experimentation still leads and outcomes remain open. That condition allows for a different kind of engagement. You are not asked to consume the work instantly. You are allowed to stay with it.

From there, the week accelerates. The city fills with installations. Apartments, courtyards, galleries, abandoned spaces, brand headquarters. Every address offers something. Every brand presents something. The expectation becomes clear: keep moving. See more. The list grows faster than it can be completed. By the second day, the number of steps becomes a quiet metric of productivity. Movement replaces attention.

I probably saw more than fifty installations. At a certain point, they begin to collapse into each other. Not because they are identical, but because there is no time to process them individually. You move from one environment to the next, absorbing fragments. A material here. A color there. A reference that feels familiar but never fully lands. The experience becomes continuous, without clear edges.

The pressure to exhibit is everywhere. Participation feels mandatory. Design Week no longer asks whether something needs to be shown. It assumes it will be. Brands, studios, collectives, institutions, and companies from outside the discipline all arrive with projects. The result is density. An environment where presence carries more weight than intention.

Fashion and beauty brands now occupy a central position within this structure. They arrive with scale, with production value, with the ability to construct environments that feel complete. The line between disciplines dissolves quickly. A fashion brand presents furniture. A beauty brand presents objects. The categories blur, but the reasoning behind them often remains unclear.

One moment stays with me. A beauty brand introduced a lamp. A €2,000 object, placed within a context that asks to be taken seriously as design. The question is not whether it looks good. The question is why it exists, and why it holds value. Why buy a lamp from a beauty brand, when there are designers who have spent years working within that discipline? Authority shifts easily when branding leads.

The same pattern appears across the city. Fashion brands enter design spaces with confidence, often treating objects as extensions of their identity. Materials and forms become secondary to narrative. The object supports the brand, rather than the other way around.

At the same time, fast fashion brands push further into these spaces, often through collaboration. The strategy feels precise. Partner with emerging designers, with artists, with figures who carry credibility, and build a narrative around creativity and culture.

One project unfolded in a public park. A carousel, built in collaboration with a young artist, placed within a setting that felt deliberately innocent. Bright colors, soft shapes, a sense of play.





From Left to Right:
Objects of Common Interest for
DOOOR at Alcova Milano, Photo ©
DSCENE

CARDIO Armchair by Fabio
Novembre for Kartell, Photo ©
DSCENE

An orchestra performed nearby, using vegetables as instruments. The sound, the visuals, the atmosphere, everything worked to create a moment that felt light, almost detached from reality. It was beautiful. It was engaging. It was easy to photograph and easy to share. And yet, the intention felt clear. To create a space where the brand's presence shifts away from its production model, where the focus turns toward experience, toward emotion, toward something that feels harmless.

Another fast fashion brand took over a Milan palazzo, working with a well-known interior designer to present a collaborative collection. The setting carried weight. The rooms were layered, the furniture placed with precision, the lighting controlled. It felt complete. It felt convincing. The collaboration added credibility, the designer's name anchoring the project within a design conversation. But again, the question remained. What sits behind this? What structure supports it? How does this translate beyond the week itself?

A third brand partnered with a young designer who currently holds a strong position within the industry, someone widely recognized, widely discussed. The project drew attention immediately. It carried the energy of something current; something aligned with the moment. But the underlying dynamic stays the same. Visibility flows in one direction. Credibility transfers. The system that produces the brand's core output remains unchanged. At what cost?

The language surrounding these projects often points toward responsibility. Words like sustainability, awareness, care. They appear consistently, repeated across press releases, installations, conversations. The tone feels considered. The messaging feels aligned with broader concerns. But the gap between language and structure remains visible. The projects operate as moments, while the systems behind them continue at scale.

In parallel, many established design brands take a different approach. They stay within known territory. The collections feel controlled, refined, but rarely unexpected. Risk feels limited. The work functions, it sells, it fits within an existing framework. There is a sense of stability, but also a sense of repetition. The contrast becomes clear. Brands from outside the discipline push into design with confidence, while those within it often move carefully, protecting position.

By the time I reached Fiera for Salone del Mobile, I had already moved through most of the week. I had reserved the final day intentionally, as a way to separate the fair from the rest of the city. The scale is different. The structure is different. The rhythm allows for a more focused way of looking. It is also where the brands and clients sit, where the industry gathers in a more direct, transactional way. Yet even there, a pattern repeats. The same brands, in the same booths, often working with the same few designers who circulate across projects. The collaborations feel familiar. The risk feels minimal. Everything functions, everything looks correct, but very little shifts.

SaloneSatellite disrupts this pattern. A space dedicated to emerging designers, where the work feels direct and unresolved in a productive way. The projects carry a different kind of energy. They are not fully shaped by market demands. They hold onto experimentation. You see ideas in motion, not yet refined into final form. That state feels valuable. It reflects a stage where design still develops through questioning, through testing, through uncertainty.

Nearby, Salone Raritas offered another point of clarity. The focus shifts toward collectible pieces, limited editions, objects that exist within a different framework. The presentation feels more contained, more deliberate. The value sits in the object itself, not in the surrounding narrative. It does not try to explain beyond what is visible.

“THE FIRST DAYS CARRY A CERTAIN OPTIMISM. THERE IS STILL A BELIEF THAT SOMETHING ESSENTIAL WILL EMERGE FROM THE DENSITY, THAT SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE VOLUME THERE IS WORK THAT WILL SHIFT PERCEPTION.”



Chloe x Poltronova, Photo ©
DSCENE

After all of this, I found myself on a plane, asking a simple question. What do I actually remember? Not everything. Not even most of it. Out of more than fifty installations, only a few remained clearly. The ones that allowed space. The ones that did not try to resolve everything at once. The ones that did not rely on scale or noise to exist.

The rest fades into a continuous surface. Not because it lacked effort, but because there was too much of it. Too much to see. Too much to process. Too much to hold. Milan Design Week continues to expand. More participants, more projects, more expectations. The pressure to be present grows each year. But presence alone does not guarantee impact. At a certain point, it begins to dilute it.

What stays is not what demands attention the loudest. It is what allows attention to settle.

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THE ISLAND HOLDS STILL

A figure mapped against volcanic light. Light falls without urgency, flattening distance until horizon and ground feel like variations of the same surface, and the body becomes less a figure than a measure of how quiet space can get when nothing is asking to move.



Blazer CANALI
Vest LORO PIANA
Tanktop SONGZIO
Pants KARTIK RESEARCH

Next Page:
Jacket and pants WOORYOUNGMI
Sandals TOM FORD





Shirt LARDINI
Jacket, pants and shoes GIORGIO ARMANI





Jacket and pants WOORYOUNGMI
Sandals TOM FORD

Next Page:
Suit AURALEE
Shoes LORO PIANA









Shirt, belt and bag ISSEY MIYAKE
Overshirt CANALI
Pants DROLE DE MONSIEUR
Shoes MANOLO BLAHNIK

Previous Page:
Suit KENZO
Shoes ETRO



Hat, pullover, pants, socks and shoes LORO PIANA
Previous Page: Hat MAISON MICHEL, Shirt LARDINI
Jacket GIORGIO ARMANI



Total Look TOM FORD

Next Page:
Total Look PAUL SMITH



Photographer MOÏSE MBARGA-ABEGA, Art Director JUAN AREIZAGA, Stylist SANYA BATRA, Casting Director FERNANDO HERBERT, Grooming JAIME HERNANDEZ, Model TEO ABIHDANA at Success Models, Production GABRIEL FRANCO — BARBATANA PICTURES, Local Producer Studio Volca, Equipment support PARAISO PRODUCTIONS



A *new*
gene
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at

Carla Sibiceanu, Maria Koshenkova, Emilie
Luc-Duc, Kilian Vos, and So Koizumi shape
emerging practices through material, timing,
and intent

By Katarina Doric

Five designers, five distinct approaches, shaped in real time. Entry into the field no longer follows a gradual build. Work appears early, often alongside its own process, with little separation between development and exposure. Ideas circulate fast, and each project carries the weight of immediate context.

Carla Sibiceanu, Maria Koshenkova, Emilie Luc-Duc, Kilian Vos, and So Koizumi each operate within this environment, building practices that respond to shifting conditions. Their work moves across different materials and scales, from object to system, from individual gesture to broader structure. Each decision reflects a way of navigating timing, access, and expectation.

There is no fixed model at this stage. Some hold onto slower processes, protecting space for refinement. Others move quickly, allowing speed to define direction. Both approaches carry intent. Both require control. The differences sit in how each designer manages momentum and when they choose to pause or continue.

These practices take shape through selection. What stays, what disappears, what moves forward. Constraints inform these choices, yet they do not limit them. They sharpen them. Materials become more deliberate. References become more precise. Outcomes reflect a clear position, even as they remain open to change.

Placed together, the work holds tension and variation. Shared conditions appear, then shift through individual interpretation. Each designer builds within the same moment, yet arrives at a different result.

work

Maria Koshenkova

Maria Koshenkova works with glass as a physical force, shaping it into tense, twisting forms that suggest bodies caught mid-transformation. Drawing from her early training in ballet, she approaches sculpture through movement and repetition, pushing the material to its limits through blowing, casting, and experimental techniques. Her practice moves between control and instability, producing works that hold the trace of their own making

How does pressure affect the way you work?

Pressure is fundamental to everything I do. Before studying art, I trained as a ballet dancer, so I learned early that discipline, control, endurance, and vulnerability can exist at the same time. When I discovered glass at university, it felt immediately familiar. Glass is like the body: it reveals itself under heat, force, timing, and risk.

Making sculpture is a kind of choreography. Every movement matters, every second matters, every hesitation leaves a trace. In the hot shop, I work with the same physical awareness I once used in dance. I do not try to eliminate pressure, I enter into dialogue with it. Sometimes the material resists, sometimes it yields, sometimes it surprises me completely. That charged space between control and surrender is where the work becomes truly alive.

What is the one thing you never compromise on?

I never compromise on intensity. The emotional and physical charge of the work must be real. I give everything of myself to each piece. If it does not carry that energy, it is not finished.

What excites you most in your work right now?

I have begun experimenting with larger sculptures that demand more courage, engineering, and control. They require total commitment. I am excited by the possibility of pushing both the material and my own imagination to their edge.

When do you know your work is finished?

When it starts to speak back. There is a moment when the sculpture develops its own presence, logic, and tension. At that point, I have to stop imposing and start listening.

A young designer we should know about?

The designers Espace Aygo. They have so much freedom, humor, and courage in how they move between art, craft, design, and spatial practice. They do not just create objects, they create entire visions. What I find especially inspiring is how they function as a group. They really work as a collective artistic brain, achieving together more than they could separately.

Who changed the way you think about design?

Not one person, but many artists and makers who treat material as a collaborator rather than something to control. That shift in thinking changed everything for me.

One object you keep returning to and why?

I do not return to objects that already exist. My work does not begin with a fixed reference point or a prefabricated image. The body is present, but not literally, more as memory: tension, balance, fragility, strength, desire, collapse

What is missing in design today?

Every time I visit a museum collection or look through books, I am struck by how much incredible work has already been made. I do not think design is missing anything. There is still so much to rediscover, especially work that was never properly seen, named, or credited. I am always drawn to work that takes risks, has vulnerability, and a strong sculptural quality.

Where do you see design going under constant pressure?

My own practice is closer to art, although glass naturally belongs to traditions of craftsmanship and design. I am interested in breaking beyond categories and creating objects with depth, tactility, and meaning. Under pressure, I hope we return to things made slowly, honestly, and with soul.

What's next for you?

To push glass further, physically and emotionally. New sculptural bodies. Larger scale. Greater tension. Greater vulnerability. dream of installing works in a vast space, suspended by rope, moving slowly through time. I want to continue making forms that feel as if they are still in the act of becoming.



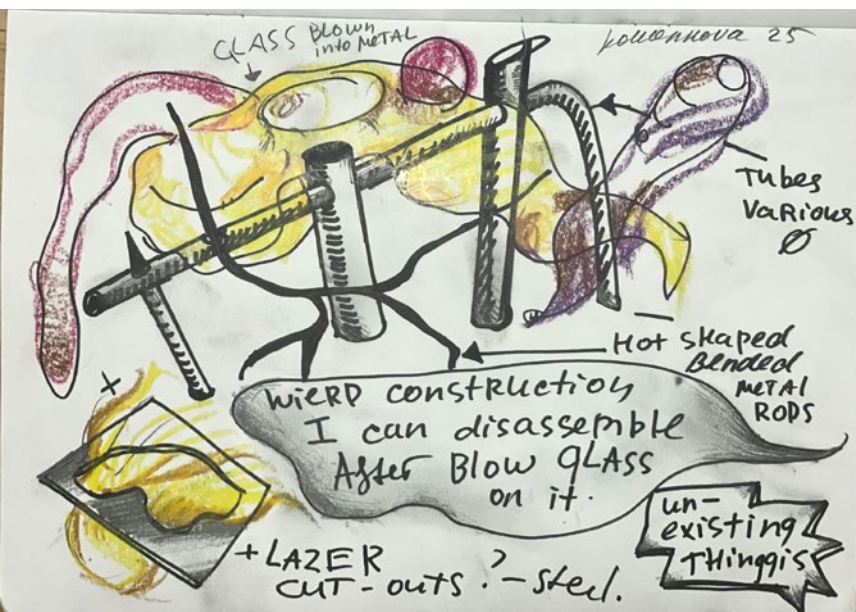
MARIA KOSHENKOVA
Sorry this Space is Reserved
Nikolaj Kunsthall
Photo Mads Holm

MARIA KOSHENKOVA
Fauns Flesh Vespertina
Intuition Revolution
Sophienholm, 2025
Photo Jan Søndergaard



From left to right:
MARIA KOSHENKOVA,
The Caretakers
2025

MARIA KOSHENKOVA
Photo Iben Gad



FINEPIANTA

FINEPIANTA is a Milan-based studio founded by Carla Sibiceanu, focused on interior design shaped through a strong material sensibility. Drawing from her background in fashion and jewelry, Sibiceanu approaches space with a precise understanding of form, structure, and surface. The studio develops geometric interiors and monolithic objects, where each element holds its own presence within the composition.

How does pressure affect the way you work?

It depends on its source. The most intense pressure is self-imposed. It's constant, and it can easily turn into overthinking or creative paralysis. I tend to push myself to the point where that pressure becomes overwhelming.

External pressure feels different. It becomes something you learn to live alongside, without letting it fully interfere with your process.

What is the one thing you never compromise on?

I don't compromise when it comes to my work. I'm quite stubborn, in general.

I remember a situation from the very beginning, when I had a modular piece that would have completely lost its concept if divided. I was asked to split it and sell it in parts. It would have been my first sale. I didn't do it, because it would have meant compromising both the work and myself. It sold shortly after, exactly as intended, as a whole.

What excites you most in your work right now?

The sense of evolution. Not only in what I create, but in how I think, how I navigate the process, and how I hold everything together beyond the work itself.

At first, I thought it was only about creating. Now I understand it's an entire structure, a practice that needs to be sustained and developed. Learning how to build that, day by day, has become something I genuinely enjoy.

When do you know your work is finished?

There's no fixed moment. Sometimes a piece exists fully formed in my mind from the start. Other times, it requires continuous adjustment, small shifts in proportion and balance, until it settles into something that feels right to me.

It's like a puzzle, where the final pieces are still missing, but the image is already clear.



A young designer we should know about?

Illya Goldman Gubin comes to mind. I'm drawn to the clarity in his work, especially in the way he uses cardboard.

Who changed the way you think about design?

I've never had a single reference point. Even early on, I found it difficult to define an "idol" or a fixed direction. There are, of course, key figures, including artists, designers, and architects, who shaped an initial way of seeing. But it was never about one influence. Each of them opened a different path, and it's still an ongoing process of discovery.

One object you keep returning to and why?

My first piece, 01. It feels untouched, free from expectation or pressure. There's a directness in it that becomes difficult to access once awareness sets in. It remains the most honest reflection of my work, and the point where everything began.

At times, I wonder if I'll ever reach that same clarity again. But that thought is tied to a version of myself that no longer exists. As I change, the work inevitably shifts with me.

What is missing in design today?

A recent trip to Lanzarote introduced me to the work of César Manrique. He didn't impose his vision onto the landscape. He worked with it.

Volcanic caves became living spaces, architecture grew from the lava fields, and everything felt natural, as if it had always been there.

I think that's what's missing in design today. There's less attention to context, to place, to what already exists. Everything becomes more about the object itself.

What stayed with me is this idea of working with something, not on top of it. That kind of connection feels rare.

Where do you see design going under constant pressure?

I think the pressure today is strongly tied to visibility, especially through social media and the expectation of constant output. It shifts the focus from developing ideas to maintaining relevance.

At the same time, it's double-edged. On one hand, it pushes you to produce, to move past hesitation, to stop overthinking. On the other, it can lead to the opposite, where exposure to what performs well begins to influence your decisions, sometimes unconsciously. The work starts to lose its distinction.

I don't think it leads in a single direction. It moves both ways at once.

What's next for you?

I'm interested in experimenting further with metal, particularly by exploring casting. It's something I've been wanting to return to for a long time. It connects back to my time working as a jeweler, where I was always fascinated by the process of melting silver.

I want to revisit that within my current work, but at a larger scale.



Images courtesy of FINEPIANTA



Emilie Luc-Duc



Emilie Luc-Duc is a Paris-based artist whose work examines the persistence of feminine archetypes embedded in collective memory. Working primarily in stoneware, she constructs fragmented sculptural forms that carry traces of bodies, symbols, and inner landscapes, shaped through instinctive and direct gestures. Alongside her sculptural practice, she maintains a long-standing engagement with fashion and design, bringing a precise visual language into dialogue with her material explorations.

How does pressure affect the way you work?

Pressure is part of the process, and I don't try to eliminate it. When it remains creative, it can bring joy and intensity. In my practice, especially with stoneware, pressure exists both physically and mentally. The material itself requires force and resistance. Rather than resolving it, I work through it. It often leads to gestures that are instinctive, less controlled, and closer to something raw. At the same time, I preserve spaces for drifting and daydreaming, moments where I'm not constantly producing. These pauses are essential. They allow something more intuitive and unexpected to emerge. Working in stoneware is a long, delicate process, at every stage, even during firing, a piece can crack or break. It's an art of patience and letting go, two qualities I didn't really possess at first!

It's often afterwards, when the pressure fades, that things can feel more fragile or difficult for me. During the process, it sustains and reveals the work.

What is the one thing you never compromise on?

I never compromise on the integrity of the gesture. The gesture carries something immediate and essential: intention and vulnerability. I don't try to smooth it out or make it more acceptable. Even when a form feels unresolved or fragile, I choose to preserve that state rather than correct it.

It's important for me that the work remains honest and not decorative or overly controlled. I am drawn to what resists, what escapes, what cannot be fully fixed.

What excites you most in your work right now?

Right now, I'm excited by the possibility of bringing these silent, ancestral feminine forms (Caryatids, canephorae, and mascarons) into new contexts. I'm fascinated by how reinterpreting them can challenge the way they are seen and understood today, inviting fresh conversations about presence, strength, and visibility.

When do you know your work is finished?

I never fully feel that my work is completely finished. Each piece exists in a state of becoming, holding traces of past gestures while remaining open to change and reinterpretation.

I know it's ready when it reaches a point of balance between presence and unresolved tension, where the form feels alive but not overworked. Finishing is less about perfection and more about knowing when to step back and let the work speak for itself.



A young designer we should know about?

One young designer I admire combines intuition with precision, creating work that feels alive and thoughtful. I am drawn to designers who explore materials, gesture, and presence, and who aren't afraid to challenge conventional ideas. Their work reminds us that design can carry memory, emotion, and subtle narrative. I was touched recently by the jewelry designer Zoé Mohm. Each piece is unique and crafted by piecing together a narrative using what the customer comes to Zoé with.

Who changed the way you think about design?

There isn't one single person, but many influences, from my training in fashion and design to the artists, architects, and everyday spaces around me. All of them taught me to see design not as decoration, but as a way to convey presence, meaning, and memory.

One object you keep returning to and why?

One object I keep returning to is the caryatid. I am fascinated by its dual nature: simultaneously figure and structure, presence and support. Caryatids carry weight, both literally and symbolically, yet often remain unseen or overlooked. Returning to them allows me to explore endurance, visibility, and memory, and to question how feminine forms inhabit public space and collective imagination.

What is missing in design today?

I like objects that carry memory, traces of gesture, or a sense of time. Design can be technically perfect and visually polished, but it sometimes lacks irregularity, vulnerability, or tension that makes a piece resonate deeply. I am drawn to work that feels alive, imperfect, and resonant, inviting reflection rather than simply harmonizing a space.

Where do you see design going under constant pressure?

Under constant pressure, design risks becoming safe and neutral. But pressure can also spark creativity and joy if it allows for intuition, risk, and imperfection; letting objects and spaces carry memory and emotional depth.

What's next for you?

Next, I want to continue exploring feminine archetypes in new contexts, pushing the dialogue between gesture, material, and memory. I want to bring them into spaces where they can be truly seen, questioned, and experienced, as a reflection on presence, endurance, and the narratives that women carry through time.

At the same time, I'm interested in further experimentation with materials, scale, and form, letting intuition guide the work into unexpected directions. I would be delighted to present my work in New York next year during Women's History Month. We do not have a month dedicated to women in France yet.



Kilian Vos

Kilian Vos is a young 3D artist and designer based in Amsterdam, working across CGI and physical fabrication to construct objects and environments that shift between digital and material states. Her practice questions perception, creating sculptural forms that feel tangible yet remain rooted in simulation, where the boundaries between virtual and real continue to dissolve. Through Studio Kilian Vos, she has collaborated with leading designers and presented work at institutions including Nxt Museum and PAN Amsterdam.

How does pressure affect the way you work?

To me, it clarifies. When there's pressure, a deadline, I find out quickly what actually matters in a piece and what was just noise. I don't think I work faster under pressure, but I make decisions more cleanly. The unnecessary and overthinking falls away on its own.

What is the one thing you never compromise on?

Proportion. Not just in a visual sense, but in how an object relates to space, to the body, and to its own internal logic. If proportion is unresolved, no material or finish can compensate for it. To me, It's about the sweet spot where intuition and precision meet.

What excites you most in your work right now?

My work sits at the crossover between CGI and physical fabrication. I design spaces that feel real and objects that move between both worlds. What excites me right now is how thin that boundary has become. The moment a rendered space starts to feel genuinely inhabited, when a shadow makes you question whether something was ever built at all, that threshold is where the interesting work happens. CGI is a design medium now. Not a tool for representing ideas, but a place where they emerge.

When do you know your work is finished?

Honestly, I'm not sure I always do. There's a version of finishing that's just stopping, but mostly it's when I stop wanting to change it and start wanting to understand it. There's a shift that happens. Work becomes something I observe rather than a problem I want to solve. That distance is usually the signal. It means the work is where it needs to be.

A young designer we should know about?

Vito Boox. I follow his work closely, and what strikes me is that we start from the same place, the crossover between digital and physical, and end up somewhere completely different. He's building a contemporary language around ornamentalism, rooted in natural processes like growth, erosion, and decay, and asking what that means for design now. In a moment when form is constantly being reduced, that's a serious counter-position. His work also makes me question my own design process - whether I'm simplifying with intention or just simplifying.

Who changed the way you think about design?

Frank Lloyd Wright, and through him, architecture more broadly. The idea that a building could generate its own logic, that structure and ornament could be the same thing, changed how I think about objects. The Amsterdamse School pushed that further for me. The way they understood mass, texture, and the relationship between a building and its inhabitants feels closer to sculpture than to architecture. I kept returning to that, and I'm based in Amsterdam, so this isn't just historical reference, but it's something I encounter on a daily basis when I walk through the city. And every time I do, I find something in the brick or the architectural proportions that ends up, somehow, in my work.



One object you keep returning to and why?

In terms of my design practice it's definitely the side table. In my opinion it holds the most sculptural potential of any piece of furniture. Everything is visible. There's nowhere to hide a bad decision. And yet within that reduction there's a surprising amount of freedom, formally speaking. A side table can be completely fluid in a way that a chair or a sofa rarely can. The constraints are fewer. I keep going back to it because it forces honesty about proportion and structure. It's also just the object where I have the most fun. Simplicity creates room, and the form can go almost anywhere from there.

What is missing in design today?

Surrealism. Not as an aesthetic, but as a method. Design is still largely bound by real-world logic, what can be built, what can be sold, what makes immediate sense. The digital removes those constraints and opens up a completely different way of working, one where the starting point isn't what's possible but what's imagined. I think design could use more of that freedom, and fewer apologies for it.

Where do you see design going under constant pressure?

In two directions at once. On one side, faster production, faster consumption, shorter relevance. On the other, something that feels almost like a reaction to exactly that, a longing for designs that are harder to reproduce, that challenge the imagination, that resist the logic of speed entirely. The growing market for collectible design is already pointing that way. It's not a niche, it's a signal. The work that leaves room for the imagination rather than closing it down.

What's next for you?

Building a consistent body of objects and spaces that move between digital and physical without belonging entirely to either. The debut collection I'm showing with Moooi and Moooi Carpets during Milan Design Week 2026 is part of that, a first realization of a world I've been building digitally for a while. The two inform each other in ways I'm still working out, the digital allows a kind of imaginative freedom that physical fabrication then tests and grounds. I want to push that conversation further and see what survives the translation.



From left to right:
MARIA KOSHENKOVA,
The Caretakers
2025

MARIA KOSHENKOVA
Photo Iben Gad



So Koizumi



SO KOIZUMI DESIGN, founded in Tokyo in 2021, works across spaces, furniture, and objects with a focus on material and structural inquiry. The studio approaches each project through reflection and experimentation, rethinking function to arrive at precise and unexpected forms. This process builds new relationships between people, objects, and the environments they occupy.

How does pressure affect the way you work?

Pressure does not narrow my vision so much as it sharpens its contours. Unnecessary elements quietly recede, leaving only what needs to remain. Within that state, decisions tend to resolve themselves naturally.

What is the one thing you never compromise on?

Communication. Not only with the people involved in a project, but also with the materials and the environment. Through repeated experimentation and working with my hands, I try to share a kind of sensibility and translate it into form.

What excites you most in your work right now?

When something I have carefully thought through reveals possibilities beyond what I had imagined at the moment of completion. And when that can be shared with everyone involved in the process.

When do you know your work is finished?

When a certain balance is achieved. It is also the moment when a conclusion emerges after considering all possible directions.

A young designer we should know about?

Rather than a specific individual, I'm interested in practices that quietly pursue their own beliefs outside of wider recognition. I feel I'm still in that stage myself.

Who changed the way you think about design?

There wasn't a single defining moment. After establishing my studio, encounters with art and design from around the world gradually shaped my perspective, such as the social approaches of Dutch design, the sensibilities of Italy and France, the rigor of Switzerland, and the distinctive formal expressions found in places like Mexico and Brazil. I continue to be influenced by their freedom of thought and their engagement with society.

One object you keep returning to and why?

I'm interested in the quiet beauty embedded in everyday things. Asphalt, for example, the material of the roads we walk on. When newly laid, it has a distinct texture and a subdued, dark sheen. At the same time, asphalt was used as an adhesive to bind different materials together as far back as 10,000 years ago. The same material carries entirely different roles across time. I'm drawn to that gap, which led me to create the work "As."

What is missing in design today?

A sense of purity. Rather than pursuing immediate results or outcomes, I think it is important to follow more instinctive impulses, the simple desire to make something, or to be moved by something.

Where do you see design going under constant pressure?

It may become more immediate and efficient, but also more prone to becoming superficial. I don't necessarily think taking more time is always better, but there is value in thinking deeply about one thing.

What's next for you?

During Milan Design Week this April, I will present a new work, "As," at ALCOVA MILANO.

"As" is a furniture collection that reinterprets asphalt, considered one of the oldest adhesives, as a contemporary medium for binding different materials together.



SO KOIZUMI
As Collection

ATRA WORKS BEETWEEN SYSTEMS

Alexander Diaz Andersson on craft, structure, and designing beyond objects

by Jana Kostic

Alexander Diaz Andersson approaches design as a system that moves between architecture, object, and material, where each element carries equal weight. Through ATRA Studio, he has built a practice that operates across Mexico City, Los Angeles, and New York, shaping residential and hospitality spaces through a precise control of volume, circulation, and craft. His work develops in close collaboration with artisans through ATRAFORM, where material knowledge and execution remain inseparable from the design process.

In this conversation for DSCENE, Editor Jana Kostic speaks with Andersson about building a studio across different cultural contexts, the role of craftsmanship in shaping a design language, and the decision to treat interiors as complete architectural systems. The discussion moves through the launch of Diálogo Gallery, the positioning of ATRA within emerging markets, and the discipline required to maintain clarity in a landscape defined by speed and expansion.

You have built ATRA across Mexico City, Los Angeles, and New York, working within very different cultural and architectural contexts. How do these distinct environments shape your approach to design, and how do you navigate the specific pressures each market places on your creative decisions?

The approach to design doesn't necessarily change. It remains consistent because we operate from a very clear philosophy that defines us as a firm and the story we are building.

What shifts is the context. Each market has its own conditions, its own behaviors, its own climate, its own way of being. Context is everything. Whether we are working in New York, Mexico City, or Los Angeles, the goal is always to create a dialogue between who we are and where we are. In New York, for example, the urban condition, the density, the pace, and the cultural framework require a different response. We adapt our language to that environment, blending our identity with the character of the city. New York, for us, is an amplifier. It positions us within a higher level of discourse across art, architecture, and institutions. It's not just another market, it's a statement of where we stand.

In your work, which moves between sculpture and utility, what takes priority when deadlines tighten or limitations come into play?

For us, there isn't a clear division between sculpture and utility. I don't see the work as sculptural. It's a design language informed by time, science, nature, and multiple references.

Functionality and comfort always form the base layer. From there, we build. The aesthetic and the expression come on top of something that works first. It's not about choosing one over the other, it's about constructing from a foundation that makes sense.

ATRA operates through ATRAFORM, a series of workshops focused on close collaboration with master artisans. How has working at that level of skill and experience shaped the way you think through a design?

My background started in building, upholstery, woodworking, paint, metals, oxidation. That process has always shaped how I design.

When you work directly with materials, you understand their limitations, but also their potential. The more you understand the material, the more you can push it.

Craft has always been part of the process because we design with construction in mind. At ATRA, you cannot separate the idea from how it is made. We don't just hand over drawings and expect someone else to resolve them. You need to understand the process, communicate it clearly, and guide it through execution so the final result reflects the intention.

With the launch of Diálogo Gallery in San José del Cabo, what changes for you when your work moves into a more public space?

Diálogo is a natural step in our evolution. It's similar to New York in that it positions us within a broader conversation, but it also introduces a new layer through collaboration with Glenn, Piero, and Marco.

We are entering a market where high-level design is not yet fully established. That creates an opportunity. By introducing a different level of quality and a new way of thinking, we can position ourselves as an entry point for a new type of clientele.







Top to bottom::
CHRONOS HANGING VERTICAL LIGHT SCULPTURE
DIALOGO
FLOW CHAIR



“CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING... THE GOAL IS ALWAYS TO CREATE A DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE.”

Cabo has an incredible natural context, but there is space to add value through design, through curation, and through a more considered architectural language. The idea of “Diálogo” reflects how we see everything, as relationships. Between client and designer, between architecture and landscape, between object and space. Everything is connected.

The gallery opens in Los Cabos at a moment of rapid luxury development. How do you navigate market demand while maintaining an approach rooted in Mexican material traditions? In Los Cabos, we believe in organic growth. We understand that what we do is not for everyone.

The focus is on design integrity. It’s about proposing work that makes sense for the market, while also responding to how people want to live and use space there. At the same time, we are contributing a cultural and spatial value that may not yet exist.

There is already a strong presence of international firms, but the landscape tends to feel homogeneous. By introducing a different perspective, we have the opportunity to help shape a new design and cultural narrative in the region, especially alongside our partners.

You describe your new gallery spaces as research laboratories. How do you sustain the time and space needed for experimentation that resists easy categorization?

We describe them as laboratories because each market requires a different approach, and each space evolves over time.

They often begin with a strong aesthetic statement, but the programming develops in response to the environment. In New York, for example, it starts as a showroom, but quickly becomes a platform for collaboration, for dinners, for conversations with people across disciplines.

We don’t see these spaces as retail. They are cultural platforms. Places to exchange ideas, host events, and understand the dynamics of the city. Through that, we identify where we can contribute and create value.

You were raised in Sweden, educated in Spain, and now work between Mexico and the United States. Do you feel your work belongs to a specific place?

The work carries a Scandinavian foundation, and there is clearly a Mexican influence, but together they create something more cosmopolitan.

At the core, the philosophy is about timelessness. It’s about creating work that can exist beyond a specific place or moment. Something that is not limited by geography.

The goal is to develop a language that can move across contexts without losing its identity.

You recently unveiled ATRA FORM in New York in the former Vito Schnabel Gallery. Why did you approach the space as an architectural system instead of a furniture showroom?

Because the work is not about isolated objects. It’s about systems. Approaching the space architecturally allows us to present the work as part of a larger framework, where objects relate to each other and to the environment. It becomes a spatial experience rather than a display.

You’ve been based in Mexico for nearly two decades. Beyond materials, what is it about the creative energy of Mexico City that allows a multidisciplinary studio like yours to thrive internationally?

Mexico offers a level of craftsmanship and flexibility that is difficult to find elsewhere. It allows us to develop new techniques and evolve together with the people we work with.

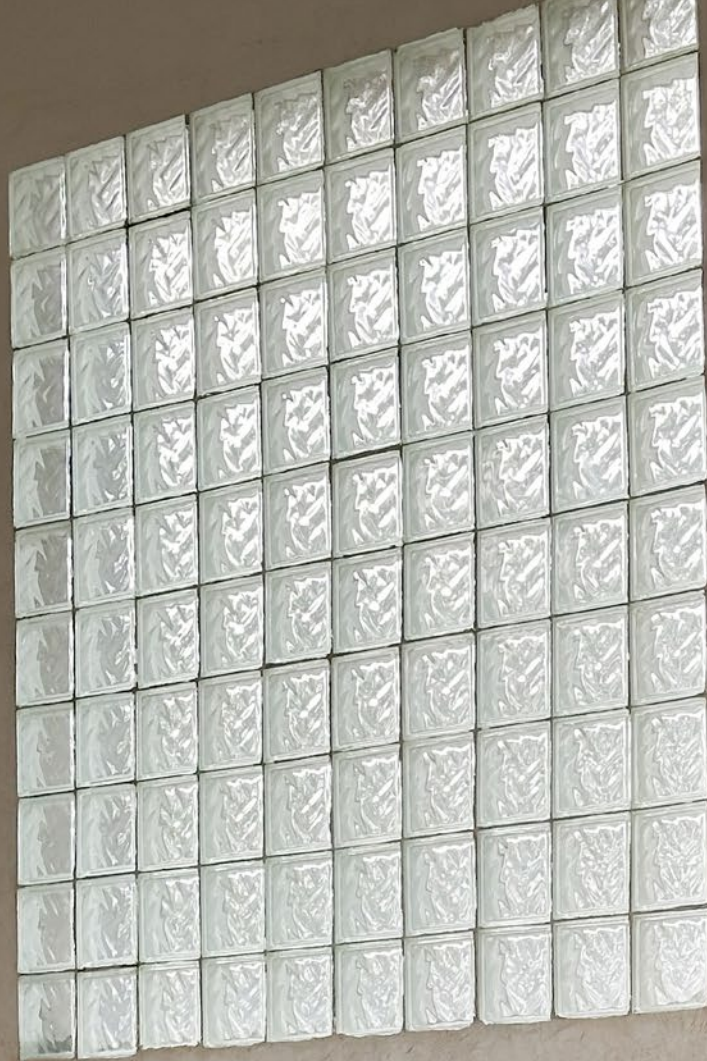
At the same time, Mexico City was not historically positioned as a global design capital, which forced us to define our own identity and language. That process created a certain resilience and independence in how we think.

There is also a broader cultural moment happening. Cities that go through periods of instability or transition often become fertile ground for creative output. New York in the 80s is an example of that. I think Mexico City is experiencing something similar now, and that energy will continue to shape its identity over time.

When everything moves faster, and expectations keep rising, what guides your design decisions?

Speed is not what defines the work. Our process is rooted in contemplation, research, and understanding. That takes time, and that is part of the value.

We create pieces that are meant to be specific and meaningful. That level of depth cannot be achieved quickly, and the people we work with understand that. What they are investing in is time, thought, and a level of uniqueness that comes from that process.



PHOTOGRAPHY
MYLENA SAZA

STYLING
AMANDHA GAILO

BETWEEN CHAPTERS

Set within the headquarters of Villa Albertine, the Payne Whitney Mansion on Fifth Avenue, Meredith Mickelson moves through a sequence of light, marble, and color, where each space holds tension and every shift recalibrates the mood



Dress BEVZA

Next Page:
Dress BA&SH







Dress TOTEME

Previous Page:
Top ELY ELY
Skirt and underwear LACOSTE



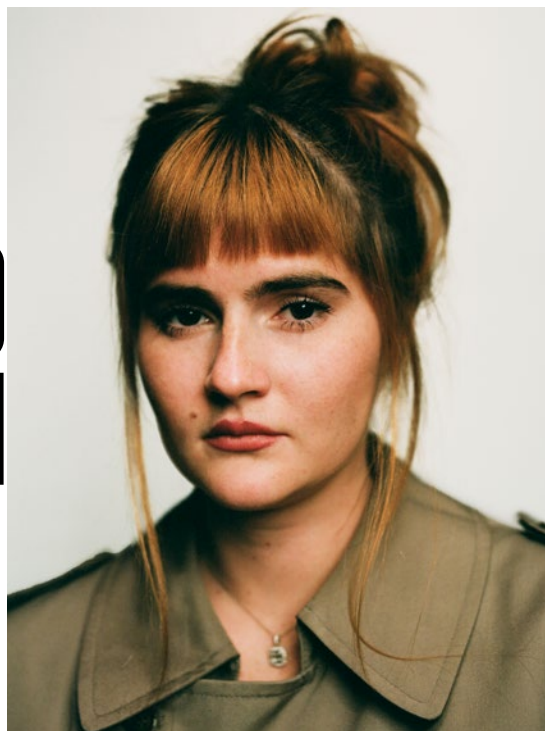


Photographer MYLENA SAZA Stylist AMANDHA GAIO at AG NEW YORK Styling Assistant DANIEL JACINTO at AG NEW YORK Makeup Artist TAKAYUKI UMEDA Photographer's Assistant MANUELA LOURENÇO Fashion Assistant DEBORA MEDEIROS Photo Assistant MANUELA LOURENÇO Model MEREDITH MICKELSON at WILHELMINA NEW YORK Retoucher MARCOS NASCIMENTO Location VILLA ALBERTINE - AMBASSADE DE FRANCE AU ETATS-UNIS



Top & skirt AKRIS
Previous Page Total look TIBI

PIPENCO THROUGH



BUILDS MEMORY

On Eastern European references, knitwear, and emotional construction.

by Ana Markovic

Pipenco builds its language through memory, drawing from Eastern European visual culture and filtering it through a lens of childhood clarity. The work carries a sense of softness without losing precision, where vibrant knits, exaggerated proportions, and trompe-l'œil techniques construct garments that feel both familiar and slightly displaced. Behind that visual directness sits a deeper intention. The brand positions itself as a space that resists inherited expectations, using color and material to revisit personal and collective histories without reducing them to nostalgia.

In conversation with DSCENE editor Ana Markovic, Lorena Pipenco reflects on maintaining that instinctive, almost naive approach while navigating the realities of a growing label. The discussion moves through questions of heritage, craft, and production, alongside the challenge of building a system that can expand without losing its core. What emerges is a clear perspective on clothing as an emotional structure, one that holds memory, tension, and play in equal measure.

In our 2024 interview, you spoke about reclaiming childhood innocence. Now that the brand is more established, how do you stop the adult pressures of the fashion industry, like sales targets and production deadlines, from killing that naive spirit in the studio?

I think the pressure is always there, but I've learned not to treat it as the enemy. The studio is still my apartment, it hasn't changed in scale, just in intensity. I protect that naive spirit by staying very close to the act of making. When I'm knitting, draping, touching the fabric, I'm back to that instinctive place. The industry exists around the work, but the work itself still comes from a very personal, almost childlike curiosity.

How has your relationship with your Romanian heritage changed as you've grown into your own voice as a designer?

At the beginning, my Romanian heritage felt like something I was looking at from the outside, almost studying. Now it feels internal. It's not something I reference, it's something I live through the work. I've stopped trying to "represent" it correctly and instead let it exist in a more emotional, fluid way.

How has your knitting technique developed since 2024 to accommodate the increased complexity and weight of recent pieces?

The biggest development has been structural. As the pieces became heavier and more complex, I had to rethink how weight is distributed across the body. I've been experimenting with tension, layering, and internal supports so pieces can hold volume without collapsing or becoming unwearable. It's a constant balance between sculpture and function.

Previously, you spoke about drawing from family history and generational memory. This season turns toward your own relationships. What prompted that shift?

It felt inevitable. I spent so long understanding the women before me that eventually I had to confront my own experiences. This collection came from a very honest place — love, confusion, loneliness. It's less about observing and more about admitting.

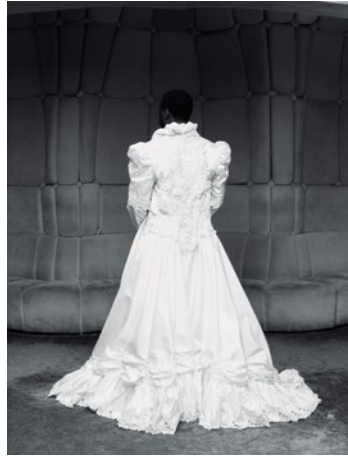
The collection brings together traditional Romanian symbolism and contemporary dating culture. How do these elements intersect?

Romanian embroidery historically tells stories about life stages, emotions, identity. Dating culture today also tells stories, just in a more fragmented and chaotic way. Bringing them together felt natural. One is slow and coded, the other is fast and disposable, but both are about trying to understand connection.

What is the approach to formalizing a "scrappy" supply chain to meet international demand while continuing to rely on FABSCRAP and personal donations?

It's something I'm still figuring out. The "scrappy" nature is actually the core of the brand, so I don't want to lose that. The focus has been on building relationships with organizations like FABSCRAP while also organizing my own archive more carefully. It's less about scaling traditionally and more about structuring what already exists.





"THE INDUSTRY EXISTS AROUND THE WORK, BUT THE WORK ITSELF STILL COMES FROM A VERY PERSONAL, ALMOST CHILDLIKE CURIOSITY."



How has the connection with the shoe repair shop evolved into your current collaboration with East Village cobblers on footwear?

It was actually a very short but meaningful collaboration. The first time, I came to them simply because I needed shoes made for my collection. Then we worked together again on a small collaboration. The team is Eastern European, so immediately it felt like home, there was a shared understanding in how we approached craft, problem-solving, and making things work with what we have.

Jumbo-knit proportions, especially the oversized caps, have become a brand signature. What has been the biggest technical challenge in engineering that level of volume so the pieces remain lightweight and balanced for someone to actually wear all day?

It's really all about the internal structure. I've been using variations of the same techniques for the past four years, so at this point it feels quite natural to me. The challenge isn't so much how to build the volume anymore, but how to keep up with orders while maintaining that level of craftsmanship.

Lauryn Hill has supported the label on tour and attended the FW26 show. How did that relationship begin?

It began very naturally through the work itself. She wore one of my hats on tour, and then placed an order for multiple colors. Later, she showed up in person to my show, which felt completely surreal. To have someone I respect so deeply and admire so much engage with the work in that way made me question everything, in a good way, like, am I even worthy of this? It was a very emotional moment.

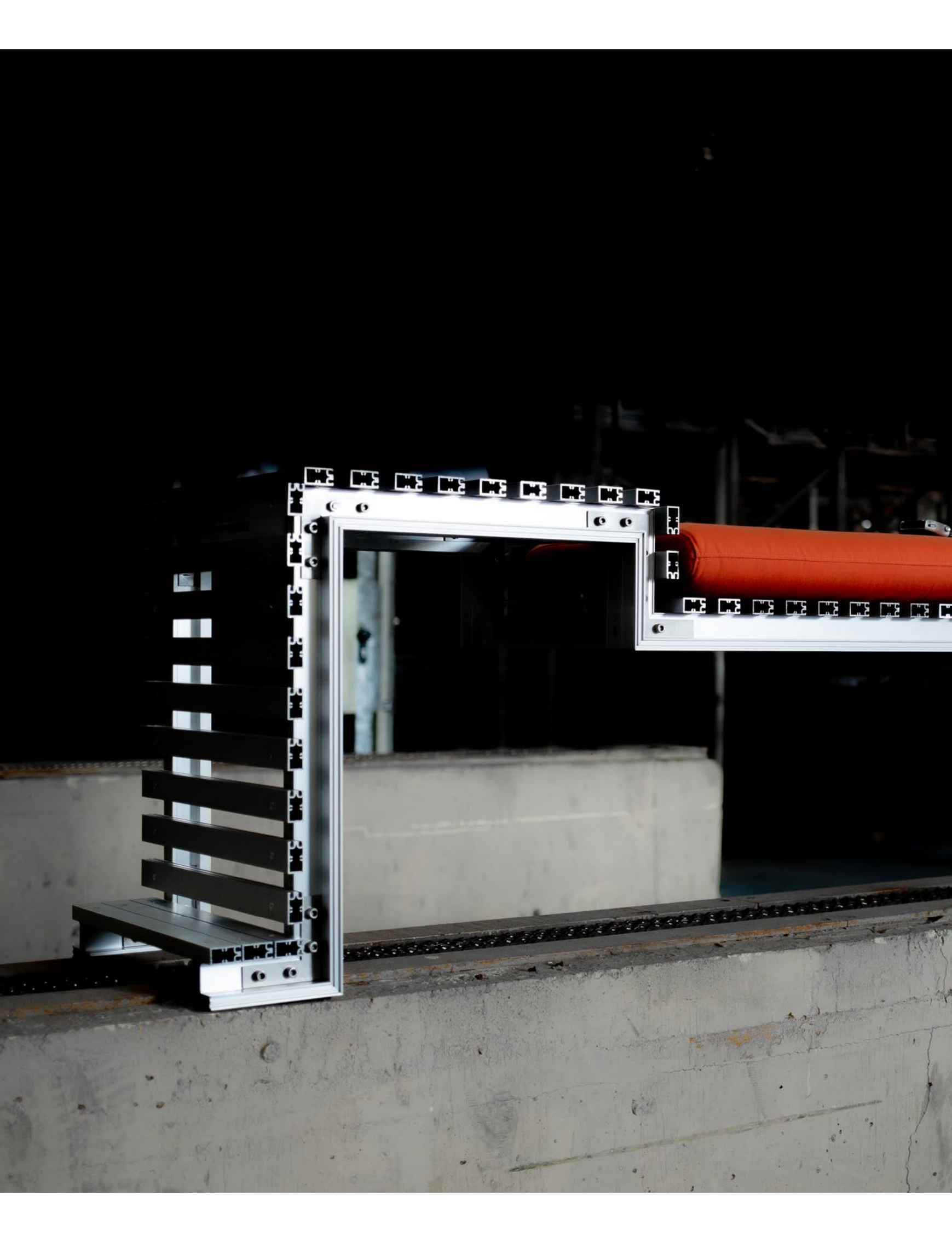
If your grandmother walked into the Brooklyn studio today, which piece would she connect with most, and which might feel unfamiliar to her?

Before anything, she would probably walk in, tell me to fix my life and start cleaning, and immediately begin organizing everything. That's just who she is. But then she would connect with the pieces made from traditional fabrics, the ones that still carry the memory of where they came from. At the same time, she loves the crazy ones; she gets so excited and confused, always saying, "I'm crazy," and asking how I even made that.

When we speak again in a few years, what is the one project or milestone you hope to be discussing?

I hope we're talking about building something more permanent, maybe an atelier in Romania, working directly with artisans there. Something that not only grows the brand but gives back to the place that shaped it.







CHRISTINE KALIA SHAPES MATERIAL NARRATIVES

On ecocentric design, modular systems, and Mission Seating.

By Borislav Utjesinovic

Studio Christine Kalia operates at the intersection of architecture, interiors, and object design, where each piece begins with material and expands into space. Founded by Christine Petrou, the practice approaches design through an ecocentric lens, working with found elements, deadstock, and industrial remnants to construct objects that hold both physical presence and narrative weight. These pieces do not sit as isolated products. They act as spatial devices, shaping how the body moves, pauses, and interacts within an environment. The work often exists in a state of suspension, grounded in material reality while suggesting something more speculative, almost atmospheric.

In this conversation with editor Borislav Utjesinovic, Petrou reflects on the role of pressure in shaping her process, from environmental responsibility to the constraints and opportunities embedded in material selection. She speaks about Mission Seating, her ongoing exploration of modular systems, and the decision to transform industrial aluminum offcuts into structural forms. The discussion moves through questions of durability, authorship, and transformation, focusing on how objects can carry traces of their previous life while adapting to new contexts.

The theme of this issue is Design Under Pressure. In your work, does pressure come more from environmental responsibility, material constraint, or aesthetic expectation?

Pressure in my work rarely comes from a single source, it's more of a convergence. Environmental responsibility sets the ethical baseline, material constraints shape the process, and aesthetic expectations are what ultimately communicate the work outward. If one dominates, the project feels unbalanced. So I tend to treat pressure not as a limitation, but as a framework that forces clarity in decision-making.

You describe your studio as operating between architecture, interiors, and product design. How does that spatial fluidity influence the way objects relate to the body?

Operating between architecture, interiors, and product design allows me to think of objects less as isolated elements and more as extensions of spatial experience. This fluidity makes me consider



“FOR US, PULSE IS NOT ABOUT ALTERING THE SCIENTIFIC RECORD BUT ENTERING INTO CONVERSATION WITH IT. SCIENTIFIC TOOLS CARRY THE VALUES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE SYSTEMS THAT PRODUCE THEM.”

how a piece meets the body not just physically, but atmospherically, how it supports, restricts, or frames movement. Objects become micro-architectures, negotiating intimacy, scale, and posture simultaneously.

Your approach is ecocentric, yet visually refined. How do you reconcile opulence with responsibility without slipping into contradiction?

I don't see opulence and responsibility as inherently contradictory. Opulence, to me, is not excess—it's depth of experience, richness in material narrative, and precision in execution. When responsibility is embedded in sourcing and process, refinement becomes a way of honoring the material rather than exploiting it. The tension is productive, not problematic.

Mission Seating transforms industrial aluminum offcuts into structural seating. Was the decision driven by material availability, sustainability logic, or conceptual intent?

Mission Seating emerged from all three drivers simultaneously. The availability of aluminum offcuts triggered the exploration, sustainability gave it urgency, and the conceptual layer—working with a material already shaped by industry, gave it meaning. The decision wasn't linear; it was an alignment of opportunity and intention.

The act of “buckling in” references astronauts preparing for the unknown. What does this gesture say about contemporary living?

The gesture of “buckling in” reflects a subtle shift in how we inhabit the present. There's a sense that we are constantly preparing, for instability, for acceleration, for the unknown. It speaks to a kind of quiet anxiety embedded in contemporary life, but also to readiness and adaptability. The object becomes both protective and anticipatory.

You often reshape found or discarded materials into domestic objects.

Do you see this as reclamation, reinterpretation, or resistance?

It's all three: reclamation, reinterpretation, and resistance. Recla-

mation acknowledges value, reinterpretation gives it new language, and resistance challenges the systems that deemed it disposable in the first place. I'm interested in how these layers coexist rather than choosing one over the others.

Modular systems promise longevity. In a culture of constant replacement, how do you design for durability without sacrificing emotional attachment?

Durability isn't only about physical longevity, it's about relevance. Modular systems allow objects to evolve alongside users, which helps sustain attachment. I try to design pieces that invite interaction, reconfiguration, and even imperfection over time. Emotional durability comes from participation, not just permanence.

Mission Seating was presented at Alcova Miami. How did the context of Miami River Inn affect how the work was perceived?

Presenting at the Miami River Inn introduced a layered dialogue between the work and its environment. The site carries a sense of transience and historical accumulation, which echoed the material narrative of the pieces. The contrast between the refined objects and the textured, almost cinematic setting heightened their ambiguity and invited slower reading.

Your pieces feel suspended between reality and daydream. How intentional is this ambiguity?

The ambiguity is very intentional. I'm interested in that threshold where an object feels both familiar and slightly estranged. It creates space for projection, for the viewer to complete the narrative. That suspension between reality and daydream is where the work becomes most active.

When working with repurposed materials, where do you draw the line between honoring their previous life and fully transforming them into something new?

The line is never fixed. Sometimes the previous life of a material is legible and essential to the piece; other times it dissolves almost completely. What matters is that the transformation is respectful, not nostalgic, but aware. It's about carrying forward a trace without being bound by it.

ALLORA & CAIZADILLA
Lightbound: a

fiber optic cable

of

total



SALEHE BEMBURY BUILDS HIS OWN SYSTEM

On shifting from collaboration to ownership and shaping a new direction in design.

By Katarina Doric

Salehe Bembury built his career by moving through the core systems of footwear, learning each layer from the inside before stepping out to define his own. Raised in New York and trained in industrial design, he moved from early roles at Payless and Cole Haan into positions that shaped the direction of contemporary sneaker culture, including leading men's footwear at Yeezy and later overseeing sneakers at Versace. His work introduced a distinct visual language, grounded in organic form, texture, and function, with projects for Crocs and New Balance becoming reference points within the category.

Now, with his independent label Spunge, Bembury enters a different phase. The shift moves from collaboration into authorship, from moment-driven releases into building a system that needs to hold over time. That transition sits at the center of this conversation. It carries a different kind of pressure, one tied to ownership, audience, and the need to communicate a clear position across product, design, and brand.

For the Design Under Pressure issue, Bembury also shapes the cover, working with long-time collaborator Troy Browne to develop an image that reflects this moment. In conversation with editor Katarina Doric, he speaks about the language he is learning, the instinct that guides his process, and the balance between function, identity, and scale as he builds something of his own.

What's been taking up most of your headspace lately?

What's been taking up most of my headspace lately is my brand, and more specifically, the transition that comes with it. I'm thinking a lot about language: the language I now have to speak, and the one I'm simultaneously learning and observing in real time. Careers have chapters, and I'm entering a new one centered around ownership. I've just come out of a chapter defined by collaborative partnerships with large corporations, and while that work isn't ending, my focus is shifting toward building something of my own, birthing and shaping a footwear brand from the ground up.

It's a space I've experienced closely as both a consumer and a collaborator, but creating something entirely from scratch is new territory. I'm approaching it with a balance of caution and urgency, trying to move quickly while still being intentional about what I'm putting into the world. One of the biggest differences is that collaborations are moment-based, they have a beginning and an end. The tactics that work there, whether it's polarizing design or short-term marketing energy, don't necessarily translate to building a lasting brand.

There's also a shift in audience. Speaking to a niche, hyper-fashion consumer is very different from speaking to a broader audience that a

footwear brand needs to cultivate. While there will still be fashion-adjacent collaborations within the brand, the bigger challenge is figuring out how to build multiple communities at once, while introducing a distinct point of view and ultimately making a product that looks incredible and feels great to wear.

The fact that this answer feels like a stream of thoughts is reflective of where I am mentally, there's a lot happening at once. It's designing, storytelling, community-building, retail strategy, collaboration, and brand identity all at the same time. It's a new language, one I was adjacent to before, but never had to fully speak. Now I'm learning it, actively using it, and making sure my audience understands that I'm operating in a new space. That clarity in communication is going to be key to making this transition successful.

On top of that, I'm very aware of how difficult it is to convert consumers in footwear. Most people already have brands they trust. So the question becomes, how do we shift that behavior? How do we build trust not just in the product, but in the brand itself?

So to simplify it, Spunge is taking up all of my headspace.

What made you decide it was the right moment to start your own brand and take full control of the process?

The foundation of SPUNGE is curiosity, the idea of being a sponge. Over the past 15 years, I've moved through many different corners of the footwear industry, and throughout that time, I've been doing exactly that, absorbing everything. The good, the bad, the firings, the hirings, factory work, marketing, PR, all of the moving parts that go into creating a shoe. That range of experience, across startups, high fashion, and something as culturally impactful as Yeezy, allowed me to develop a multi-layered point of view on how this business actually operates.

Because of that, I've been able to hand-build my own ideologies around what works, what doesn't, and what I believe best practices in footwear can look like. This brand is really a reflection of those learnings. I've been fortunate to collaborate with brands at a scale that very few people get access to, and while that meant selling a lot of product, more importantly, it meant I was constantly learning.

So when I think about why now, it feels less like a sudden decision and more like a natural progression. From an education standpoint, I reached a point where that accumulation of knowledge felt like it needed an outlet. It was time to take everything I had absorbed and apply it to something of my own.

That said, this isn't a departure from collaboration. I'll continue to work with other brands under my own name. This is just an expansion, a new challenge that allows me to fully express everything I've learned, and build something that reflects my perspective from the ground up.





You've said stepping into your own brand required a different kind of responsibility. What part of that shift felt uncomfortable at first?

I'd say the most uncomfortable part of the shift has been the change in language. With collaborations, the goal was often to create something polarizing, something that grabs attention and feels new or unexpected. It's about engaging eyes. But that formula isn't necessarily what you use to build a lasting brand.

When launching the Osmosis, I observed that some people were expecting me to play the old hits, without realizing I had moved on to a new album. The intention wasn't to shock, it was to create something that felt familiar, but still distinct. That balance is important when you're trying to speak to a broader audience. If you look at something like the Crocs Pollex, for example, it was very successful, but it also had a ceiling. There's a large group of consumers who would never wear a foam shoe, and even more who wouldn't wear one with such an aggressive design language.

With Osmosis, it was important for me to retain my design DNA, but also create something that more people could see themselves wearing. It's about making a product that feels approachable, something that can actually shift consumer behavior and encourage people to try something new, even if they're used to a different brand.

So the discomfort comes from changing how I communicate through design. I've been speaking one "language" to an audience for years, and now I'm speaking a different one. Naturally, there are going to be people who don't immediately understand it, or who question the shift. But that's part of growth. It's uncomfortable, but it's necessary, and it's something I fully embrace.

When you start a project now, what are you actually trying to get right first?

I just came out with a book, and for the first time I've really had the opportunity to look back at my work in a meaningful way. The same way you can look at old photos of yourself and understand where you were mentally at that time, I'm realizing I can do the same thing with my design work. Each project feels like a snapshot of my mindset at that moment.

For example, the Crocs Pollex came from a place of trying to prove myself, to my peers, to competitors, to people who doubted me, and even to myself. I was completely locked in, hyper-focused on being great, and I think that shoe reflects that energy. I'd even go as far as to call it a near-perfect design, humbly.

Then you look at something like my Clarks collaboration, and I was in a completely different headspace. My confidence was at an all-time high, and I was just going off instinct. I reworked the shoe, added asymmetrical lacing, reshaped the upper, and then pushed it further with hairy suede in a way that didn't need explanation. It was more like, this feels right, let's go with it.

Looking back, it's interesting to see how clearly my psyche shows up in the work. So now, when I'm starting a new project, the main thing I'm chasing is a vibe. It's something intangible that I don't always have the words for. It's a feeling more than a formula.

At this point, I'm fortunate to have a designer working with me who helps bring these ideas to life. And honestly, I'm sure it can be frustrating at times because I don't always articulate exactly what we're aiming for. But over time, he's gotten better at understanding that internal compass, even when I'm not spelling it out. He can feel when we're getting closer to that destination.

What's been interesting is noticing how consistent that instinct is. I'll see different projects across different brands, and somehow the color palettes or design sensibilities align, even when they weren't planned that way. That tells me I'm creating from a very honest place, from the gut.

So now, the process really starts there. It's about identifying the vibe first. Once that's right, everything else can be refined and built around it.

You've moved between very different systems: Yeezy, Versace, Crocs, and independent work. What stays consistent in how you approach design?

At its core, it's always the same system. It starts with identifying a problem, then finding the insight, and ultimately using design as the solution. That's really the foundation of industrial design, and it's something that's stayed consistent for me regardless of the brand or context.

Whether it was at Yeezy, where the goal was to bring Kanye's ideas to life and introduce polarizing product into a market that wasn't used to footwear, especially boots, coming from someone like him, or at Versace, where the sneaker category wasn't taken as seriously, so the challenge became how to build that business while still respecting and acknowledging their existing consumer. Or even with Crocs, working with a brand that wasn't always respected by certain audiences, the question was how to create something that those same people could appreciate, or even covet, while helping move the brand into a new chapter.

On the surface, those challenges all look different, but they're really all the same at their core. It's about identifying the problem, uncovering the insight, and then solving it through design.

That's the red thread for me. That system has never failed me, and it continues to guide how I approach everything I create.

You focus a lot on making things that actually work. How do you navigate the point where function and visual identity start to compete?

I could probably pull from a lot of classic design quotes to answer this, ideas around how the consumer doesn't always know what they want until they see it, or how the best design is something you don't even notice because it just works. But for me, it really comes back to my foundation in industrial design. I was taught to create things that function, that have real utility. If we're going to cut steel, build molds, and put product into the world, it should do something meaningful. It should be comfortable, or function in a way that introduces a new experience, something the user may not have even realized was possible.

That's where design serves the consumer. It pushes things forward. And at the same time, there's a personal satisfaction in that process, being able to introduce something new into the world, something that didn't exist before. There's something special about contributing to culture in that way.

For me, I've always been drawn to ideas that feel simple but unexpected. The kind of design where you see it and think, "why didn't I think of that?" A lot of the best ideas live in that space because they're so intuitive. Whether it's something like the Crocs Pollex or putting a whistle on the back of the New Balance Yurt, those moments come from wanting to explore something new while still keeping it grounded in function.



So yes, aesthetics matter, but that's just the entry point. Especially in product design, it has to work. It should make someone's life easier, more convenient, or even introduce them to a new way of interacting with something they thought they already understood.

And beyond that, I do think there's a responsibility. I've always been deeply curious, even as a kid, and that curiosity still drives how I design today. A lot of what I create pulls from that same sense of exploration and discovery. I've had people say there's a kind of childlike nostalgia in my work, in the colors, in the forms, and I think that's exactly what it is. It's me channeling that same curiosity I've always had, and sharing it in a way that others can connect with.

How much of your work is about solving a problem, and how much is about introducing something people didn't know they wanted?

Recently, I went to a restaurant and had pigeon. And to be clear, I'm a native New Yorker, so I grew up around pigeons my entire life. To me, they're both a majestic mascot of New York and also a disgusting animal. So the fact that I was able to eat pigeon, and not only eat it but think it was delicious, felt like a perfect example of a creator introducing something the consumer didn't know they wanted.

I think that idea applies to design as well. At the end of the day, the priority is always solving a problem. That's the foundation. But if you're able to create something people didn't even know they wanted, that says something bigger about your design ability and your capacity to be visionary.

To me, that's the distinction. Solving a problem is the job. But introducing people to something they hadn't imagined for themselves, and then making them understand why they want it, that's where vision comes in.

If you don't solve a problem, then what you've made is closer to art than design. And art is incredible, but it's different. Design has a responsibility to function. So for me, the goal is always to solve the problem first, and then, if possible, go a step further and show people a future they didn't know they were ready for.

You've built a strong audience over time. Does that awareness ever interfere with how you design?

I'd be lying if I said it doesn't affect things at all. The uninformed criticism that comes with putting work out into the world can definitely be frustrating, especially when you're trying to introduce something new. I've always relied on a trusted circle of friends and peers as a kind of internal focus group. When you've been staring at a design for so long, your perspective can get distorted, so getting honest feedback from people you respect helps bring clarity before release.

But once a product is out, it enters a much different environment. You have a large audience that feels deeply informed about footwear, whether that's consumers, bloggers, or reviewers. And while there are definitely knowledgeable voices out there, there are also a lot of opinions that aren't rooted in real understanding. The challenge is that those voices still shape perception. People go straight to the comments, and if the conversation is driven by surface-level or uninformed takes, it can influence how the product is received.

That can be frustrating, especially because of how much time and care goes into the work. You spend months developing something, there's real effort and intention behind every detail, and then it's reduced to a quick comparison or dismissed as something that already exists. That disconnect can feel both frustrating and, at times, disrespectful.

At the same time, I try not to let that become the focus. There's always going to be noise, especially in an environment driven by quick reactions. What matters more is staying grounded in the work itself and trusting the process.

What's something you learned the hard way that still affects how you work today?

When I was at Cole Haan, we had just finished designing the LunarGrand, which was about two years of work and ended up being extremely successful. It introduced Nike Lunar technology into a wingtip, essentially bringing sneaker-level comfort into formal footwear, and it really resonated with the professional market.

After that, we got word that Nike wanted us to explore using Nike Air, and my boss, Jeff Henderson, tapped me to lead the design. I spent about eight months developing a wingtip built around a 360 Nike Air unit, working through materials, colorways, and all the details. At the time, I had just experienced what LunarGrand did culturally and commercially, so I was convinced this was going to be the next evolution, and it was going to be my design. I was young, around 25, so this felt like a massive moment for me.

Right as I finished, Cole Haan and Umbro were sold by Nike, and the entire project got scrapped. I was devastated. It was a huge investment of time and energy, and I thought it was going to be a defining piece for my portfolio and my career at that stage.

I asked my boss if I could at least share it on my blog, which didn't have much reach, but meant something to me. He said yes, so I posted it. Within hours, Nike's legal team reached out, and the images had to come down immediately. And just like that, something I had spent months on disappeared from public view.

That experience taught me a lot about confidentiality and timing. It made me realize how important it is to protect work that isn't meant to be seen yet, or sometimes ever. Since then, I've been extremely intentional about that. Contracts and NDAs are real, and as creatives, one of the most important things we have is the reveal. So anything that compromises that moment is something I take very seriously.

You came up through sneaker culture in a very specific era. What do you think today's sneakerheads value differently?

I think the biggest thing is individuality. And even saying that, I'm aware it probably makes me sound a little older, but I've been in this space for a while now, and it feels like there's less emphasis on personal expression and more focus on chasing what's considered exclusive or desirable at the moment.

When I think back to my upbringing in downtown New York, it was really about individuality. Brands like 10 Deep, Rocksmith, Rockers NYC, Mishka, A-Life, Only NY, Lamour & Dolla, Mighty Healthy, Peg Leg, Staple, Awake, and others all represented distinct perspectives. People wore things because they connected to them, because it reflected who they were, not because an algorithm told them it was the right thing to wear.

"THE ONLY INTENTION THAT I REALLY HAVE IS TO RELINQUISH CONTROL. IT'S A RIDICULOUS ENTERPRISE TO START CONTROLLING IMAGES AND HOW THEY TRAVEL..."





Now it often feels like people are dressing based on what their phones are telling them is relevant, what's hyped, what's scarce, what's trending. And while there's nothing inherently wrong with any specific aesthetic, it can start to feel like there's less range, less experimentation, less individuality. Streetwear, at its core, has always been about disruption, expression, art, and color.

So if I could encourage anything, it would be to really lean into being yourself. No one can do that better than you. The career I've built came from that realization, from trusting my instincts and designing from the gut. That's how you develop a point of view. That's how people can look at your work and immediately recognize a palette, an environment, a story. That only comes from authenticity.

And I do think there's also something to be said about understanding history. Not in a gatekeeping way, but in a way that gives context. A lot of decisions today feel driven by what's being surfaced in real time, rather than a deeper understanding of where things come from. For me, it was always about what looked good, what felt right, what was cool to me, not just what was being labeled as important.

So the advice is simple, but not always easy. Be yourself, trust your instincts, and build from there. That's where the real longevity comes from.

If someone could see your work that never made it out, what would surprise them most?

If anyone saw the work of mine that never made it out, I don't think it would feel or look any different from the work that has. At the end of the day, within footwear and fashion, there are so many ideas that never see the light of day. (Shout out the cutting room floor only on Patreon.)

A lot of the time, what the consumer doesn't realize is that what makes a product special is that it actually made it through. It survived all the meetings, all the edits, all the revisions. It was challenged, refined, and pushed until the designer, the company, or the creative director felt it was ready to exist in the world.

What ultimately reaches the consumer is really a result of refinement, critique, and restraint. I often see products that could have been finished earlier, but the designer keeps going and it becomes over-designed. To me, one of the clearest signs of a strong designer is the ability to know when to stop. Restraint is a skill.

Sometimes minimalism is more powerful than adding more. It's about understanding when the idea is fully realized and not overworking it. That balance, between expression and restraint, is something I try to practice in everything I create.

What kind of projects still challenge you at this stage?

I would say the projects that challenge me most are the ones that exist in new environments or unfamiliar spaces within design. Industrial design trains you to be versatile and to approach any project through an insight-led process, but when you're working on something you don't have deep experience in, it naturally adds more layers to the climb.

That said, every project starts with research. If the research is done properly, it allows you to design from a truly informed place, regardless of the category. So while new spaces can feel more complex at first, they also present an opportunity to learn, expand your perspective, and apply the same core design principles in a different context.

And I don't really view challenge as a negative. To me, it's a positive. It's what makes the process more fulfilling. The obstacle is the opportunity, and overcoming it is where the real value comes from.

Who are the people that influence how you think right now?

Lately, I've been really inspired by Gustav Westman. Out of a lot of the creators I see, he feels like someone who is creating very freely. As you get older and more experienced, you also become more aware of constraints, budgets, timelines, production limitations, and all of that naturally introduces boundaries. And those boundaries often show up in the work.

What stands out to me about Gustav is that his work feels almost untouched by those limitations. It feels like it's coming from a place of childhood nostalgia, where there are no rules, just instinct and curiosity. The colors, the forms, the playfulness, it all feels very pure and intentional at the same time.

That's something I try to bring into my own work as much as possible. Designing from the gut, staying connected to that sense of

curiosity, and not overthinking to the point where the work loses its energy. What he's been able to do is build a very clear design language, cultivate a community, and create a body of work that's immediately recognizable.

That kind of clarity and freedom is really inspiring to me, especially within a space like footwear, where there are so many constraints.

Which young designers or creatives should we be paying attention to right now?

During my book tour last year, I spent some time in London and got to visit Slawn's studio. I was extremely inspired by his work, his operation, his energy as both an individual and an artist, and his story.

I think one thing my audience has become familiar with is my own coming-of-age story, paired with my design perspective, and how that's helped me build a community around passion and commitment to a craft. When I heard Slawn's story, it resonated in a similar way. And then actually visiting his studio, meeting his team, and seeing how everything operates, it really brought me back to that feeling of being young and hungry.

While I still have that hunger, I can't claim youth anymore. So seeing someone in their 20s fully leveraging all the tools available today to execute their creative vision was really powerful. What also stood out is that he's not just strong creatively, but he seems to have a solid handle on the business side as well, with a team that supports him in the right ways.

I don't even like saying someone is "next up" because it minimizes what they've already accomplished. He's already arrived. But he's definitely someone people should be paying attention to.

What's been exciting you lately outside of your own work?

What's been exciting me most lately is the technology that's becoming available to creatives, and more importantly, how accessible it's become. I'm really interested in how these tools are being used to increase efficiency and help designers achieve what they're ultimately trying to do.

There's a lot of conversation around AI replacing creativity, but I see it differently. To me, it's no different than when tools like Photoshop or Illustrator were introduced. Those tools didn't replace creativity, they enhanced it. They allowed people to move faster, explore more, and execute ideas more efficiently than doing everything by hand.

I think the same applies now. These tools are meant to be used in a way that allows creativity to thrive. My team and I have been using them in a way that's both inspiring and highly efficient. For example, if we want to see a shoe we've already designed in 50 different colorways, doing that traditionally in Illustrator could take hours. Using AI, we can generate those variations in minutes, sometimes even seconds. The ability to accelerate that process is immeasurable.

That kind of efficiency expands your bandwidth. It allows you to iterate more, explore more directions, and ultimately refine ideas at a much higher level.

So for me, it's less about the tool and more about how you use it. Technology doesn't replace taste, it amplifies it. The designers who understand that will always have the advantage.

Tell us about your DSCENE cover. Where did the idea start, and how did you approach it?

I first came across Troy Browne on Instagram and was immediately drawn to his graphic work. He has a way of digitally distorting images that turns them into entirely new compositions, and that perspective really stood out to me.

We ended up working together for about two years on my Crocs campaigns, where he brought a lot of energy to the visuals. His work became a big part of the identity of those campaigns, especially in the still imagery that people now associate with that collaboration. I had always wanted to collaborate with him on a magazine cover, and given the history and creative shorthand we've built over time, he felt like the right person to do it with.

It felt less like a one-off project and more like a continuation of a creative conversation we've been having for years, just translated into a new medium. And for me, that's always the goal, to build with people over time and let that shared language evolve into something that feels both familiar and new.

**PHOTOGRAPHY
GARY LUPTON**

**STYLING
DANIEL JACINTO
GIULIA SCHARPPE**

IN TRANSIT

At the TWA Hotel, Georgia Fowler moves through a space where design
and memory define the frame

Jacket & shirt LOUIS VUITTON
Skirt TOD'S





Total Look BALENCIAGA

Previous Page:
Shirt & skirt AKRIS
Earrings ALEXIS BITTAR
Shoes CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION







Total Look TOD'S

Next Page:
Total Look LORO PIANA





Total Look CHRISTIAN DIOR

Next Page:
Total Look CHANEL











Photographer Gary Lupton Stylist coordinator Daniel Jacinto Stylist on set Giulia Scharppe Editor in Chief / Producer Zarko Davinic Hair Stylist Rei Kawauchi at Bridge Artists Makeup Artist Anastasia Vavina Model Georgia Fowler at IMG Models Retouching Andrea Villa Photo assistant Seth Binsted Digital Technician Chris Glover Stylist Assistants Gabriela Cunha Debora Medeiros Special Thanks to TWA HOTEL at JFK Airport

Dress CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION
Shoes TOD'S

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Total Look CHLOÉ



PHOTOGRAPHY
ELLA ROSE PECK

STYLING
LEWIS STRATTON

BARE FORM

Bethany Antonia moves through a stripped-back setting reduced to essentials, where presence, form, and quiet clarity define the image through what is left out as much as what remains

Top & skirt EUDON CHOI
Shoes DIESEL







Top & skirt BOSS
Previous Page: Cape & collar CHRISTIAN DIOR, Jeans COS



Total Look ISSEY MIYAKE
Next Page: Dress EUDON CHOI, Shoes CHRISTIAN DIOR



Total look CHRISTIAN DIOR

Next Page:
Top & skirt BOSS



BETHANY ANTONIA TAKES THE STAGE

Bethany Antonia reflects on *Hadestown*, *House of the Dragon*, and shaping performance over time.

By Ana Markovic

There is a specific kind of control in the way Bethany Antonia approaches her work. Nothing in her trajectory reads accidental. From her early start in performance to her current position within *House of the Dragon*, she builds each role with a sense of timing that resists urgency. As Lady Baela Targaryen, she operates within a scale defined by spectacle and long production cycles, where character shifts unfold slowly and with intention. That distance between script, shoot, and release has become part of her method, shaping how she thinks about performance over time.

Speaking with Editor Ana Markovic, Antonia shifts the focus away from visibility and toward process. Her move into theatre, taking on Eurydice in *Hadestown*, introduces a different kind of discipline, one that relies on repetition, presence, and constant adjustment. The conversation moves through these contrasts without forcing a narrative between them. Instead, it reveals an actor working across formats with clarity, treating each project as a separate system with its own rules, pace, and demands.

How did you first get into showbiz, and what was the first experience that made you realize this was what you were meant to do?

My mom put me in dance classes as soon as I could walk - acting and singing came quickly afterwards. I had so much energy when I was little and it was the only thing that kept me entertained. So, it was a huge part of my childhood.

I started doing drama classes in secondary school and then I joined a local acting group. Someone came into the group looking for youngsters to be a part of a Shakespeare adaptation and I was cast. That was my first job, I was 14 and I couldn't quite believe this was something I could do and call it work. From there I didn't look back.



At that point, what kind of stories did you hope to be part of? Has the reality of your career been different from what you expected?

I don't think I'd even begun to think about what kinds of stories I wanted to tell back then, every story is a story worth telling when you're 14. So I was definitely more excited by the means and style of telling them and figuring out what kind of actor I wanted to be.

And I feel so incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to work across so many different styles of storytelling.

What did *House of the Dragon* teach you about power, beyond the script?

One of the blessings of being on a show like this for the amount of time that we have been now, is that you're able to watch the character you play evolve incredibly slowly. I'm reading about what's coming years before we

shoot it, we're talking about costumes she's going to wear years before they're made. Everything that happens to her on screen feels to me like slow motion, from script to shoot to post to release to reception. And it's taught me so much about the power of patience. How much can be gained from enjoying things slowly and building things atomically piece by piece. That's extended into my personal life in so many ways. I was 22 when I signed onto the show, and I'm 28 now!

Did being part of such a massive series make you more confident or more self-aware?

Initially it made me unbelievably self-aware. Even though I knew the legacy that preceded us I definitely underestimated the eyes that would be on us as actors and it didn't always feel kind or welcome. But recently, I've been able to find a lot of joy in the exposure and find ways to channel it into excitement and positivity. I'm feeling so much pride and excitement about what I'm a part of.



"THERE'S NO ART WITHOUT INSPIRATION, SO I WOULDN'T SAY IT FEELS LIKE TRAPPING. BUT THERE'S DEFINITELY ROOM TO TELL NEW STORIES THAT STILL AREN'T BEING TOLD."

In an industry that increasingly uses algorithms to predict audience wants, do you worry we're just trapping ourselves in a loop of what worked yesterday? What was the last film or show that blew your mind with its originality and made you think, "Wow, I did not see this coming"?

There's no art without inspiration, so I wouldn't say it feels like trapping. But there's definitely room to tell new stories that still aren't being told. The most excited I've been about a show in a long time was watching Rapman's Supacell on Netflix last year. It felt like a glorious homecoming for a new style of storytelling in black British TV.

And to my point about no art without inspiration, I also recently watched Marc Evans Mr Burton - and it absolutely blew me away. It's based on a true story, but the way they chose to tell the was so exquisite and so detailed, it really stayed with me. That's a really good example of a telling of a true-story that can still be made unbelievably original and fresh.

We've reached a point where if a dragon actually flew over London tomorrow, it would probably only stay in the news cycle for about twenty minutes. Does it feel like the world has finally out fantasied the fantasy writers?

It really does. Which speaks a lot to how de-sensitised we're becoming to what's happening around us. We're sort of beyond dragons flying already if we zoom out for a second.

Tell us about Hadestown. How does it feel to have a dream come true? Does the reality of standing on that stage feel exactly how you imagined it would, or has the real thing completely surprised you? Is it weird to look at the cast and realize you aren't watching the show anymore, but are in it?

SO WEIRD. Oh my. Nothing could have prepared me for the experience of getting to play Eurydice. If we'd done this interview a year ago and you'd asked me what my dream role in theatre was she'd who I'd have said. Roles like her coming along once in a lifetime and I'm so grateful to have been given the opportunity. It actually really does feel exactly as I'd hoped it would. Alive, fizzy, ever-important, different every night. I'm at my happiest when I'm on stage, and Hadestown has solidified that in every way.

What is the one thing about the character of Eurydice that made you say, "I have to play her," long before you even got the audition? She'd been top of the bucket list since Anais first released the album. The music in the show pulls your heart out of your chest and forces you confront what you're holding. And every single song Eurydice sings brings up something for me. She's so layered and nuanced and I found so much of myself in her words long before I'd been in a position to play her. It's so rare for that to happen, I just fell in love with her from the very first second.

Since you've already checked one of the 'Ultimate Dream Roles' off your list and escaped the dragons of Westeros, what's the next move? If you were opening a fresh spreadsheet for the next ten/twenty years, is the goal to find an even bigger underworld to conquer, get the chance to fly, or to start scouting locations for that animal sanctuary where the goats can enjoy their days?

Ooof. Big question. I feel so lucky that for the last decade I've been able to be part such a diverse spread of projects and storytelling. If things can keep ticking along in this direction, I'll be really happy.

There are still a few things I haven't conquered yet. I'd really love to do a Shakespeare play soon, and work on Broadway, and of course those animal sanctuary plans are ever in the making!!!



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MARMONIL

MARMONIL

MARMONIL

HELMUTH NEWTON



CASA NM3 REWRITES THE DOMESTIC INTERIOR

NM3 builds a modular home without walls, where furniture defines space and domestic life unfolds through systems

By Katarina Doric

CASA NM3 arrives in Milan during Salone del Mobile 2026 as a controlled rethinking of the domestic interior. Installed at Via Carlo Farini 93, NM3 constructs a home without fixed walls, replacing enclosure with a system of movable partitions that outline four rooms without ever fully defining them. The reference to Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich's Velvet and Silk Café remains clear, yet the project operates within NM3's own language, where structure stays light, open, and responsive. The result is a space that holds together without relying on permanence, where boundaries shift and the idea of the room becomes fluid.

Within this framework, furniture takes on a central role. NM3's objects move beyond singular pieces and begin to operate as systems, with the evolution of NM25 and NM26 introducing a fully modular approach that extends into kitchens, desks, and additional elements. Stainless steel, left untreated and precise, defines the atmosphere, while personal objects and textiles bring a lived-in dimension that resists the neutrality of a showroom. Editor Katarina Doric speaks with NM3 about building a domestic environment through subtraction, the moment furniture becomes architecture, and how everyday objects can structure a space as effectively as walls.



CASA NM3 builds a home without fixed walls. What does a room mean to you today?

A room has always been the most fundamental unit of dwelling, the most immediate form of protection in architectural terms, the space closest to us.

Traditionally, a room is defined by fixed boundaries: solid walls and a rigid perimeter. Within this stable container, objects are mobile, interchangeable, and temporary. Here, however, that relationship is reversed: objects become the architecture, while the walls take on the role of furniture.

At what point does furniture stop being an object and start becoming architecture?

It begins at the moment it is conceived as such. When, from a structural and functional perspective, it is no longer thought of as furniture, but as architecture, capable of existing independently, with its own coherent and consistent structural and functional logic.

This shift also implies scalability: the object maintains its integrity and meaning even when imagined across different scales, reinforcing its autonomy as an architectural element rather than a mere piece of furniture.

Your work often sits between presence and disappearance. When do you want a piece to be seen, and when should it fade?

A former university professor of ours, someone we consider a mentor, once said that the greatest ambition of architecture is to dissolve into its urban context, like the Blur paintings by Gerhard Richter. That idea has stayed with us and has deeply influenced our work.

Ultimately, we believe that objects are most noticed precisely when they fade into their surroundings, when they are not loud or overtly expressive, but instead quietly resonate within the context they inhabit.

You reference Mies and Lilly Reich, but through a softer system. What did you take from that history, and what did you deliberately leave behind?

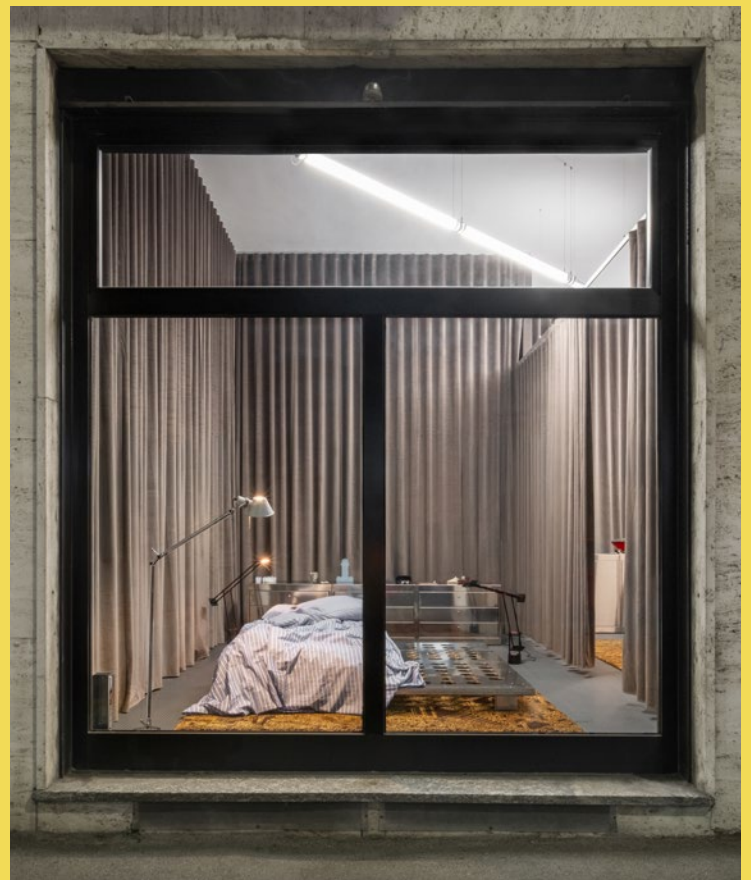
In fact, Mies and Lilly Reich's installation was entirely soft and permeable. We adopted their setup in a fairly literal way, embracing that same sense of openness and fluidity.

However, for obvious spatial constraints, we are not able to work at the same scale as their original project. At the same time, we introduced a different system for attaching the curtains to the supporting structure, adapting the construction logic to our own context and needs.

The installation feels quiet, almost restrained. What do you remove to get there?

We usually work, as you rightly suggest, through a process of subtraction. However, in this case, the preview only reveals two elements of the project.

"WE BELIEVE THAT OBJECTS ARE MOST NOTICED PRECISELY WHEN THEY FADE INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS, WHEN THEY ARE NOT LOUD OR OVERTLY EXPRESSIVE, BUT INSTEAD QUIETLY RESONATE WITHIN THE CONTEXT THEY INHABIT."



“WE CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO AVOID TREATING CREATIVITY AS THE STARTING POINT OF A PROJECT. INSTEAD, THE PROCESS SHOULD BEGIN WITH PRODUCTION, UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE RELEVANT INDUSTRY.”

There will be an additional layer of personal objects that will give the space the qualities of a real home. For instance, I will bring items from my own private bedroom, introducing a more intimate and lived-in dimension to the installation.

Where does control end in your process, and where do you allow things to remain unresolved?

Control usually ends when we begin to feel a sense of boredom in working on an object. This is not merely a matter of lightness or detachment; it is also about recognizing the precise moment when continuous adjustments and modifications start to erode the freshness and beauty of the work.

Stainless steel usually reads as industrial or cold. How do you bring it into a domestic setting without changing its nature?

As I mentioned earlier, on one hand there is the idea of blur, the ability of the material to merge with and adapt to a specific context. On the other, these are perfectly functional objects.

By using them in everyday life, they gradually become an integral part of the home, of daily routines, and of one's personal world. In this way, stainless steel does not need to change its nature; it is domesticated through use and familiarity. Even a so-called “cold” or uninviting material, once it becomes an everyday object, is never truly perceived as such.

NM25 and NM26 evolve here into systems. When does a product become a system in your process?

For us, this happens when a specific detail, together with certain formal characteristics, allows for complete modularity.

At that point, a product is no longer a single, isolated object, but a

system, capable of performing different functions and generating a variety of typologies through the same underlying logic.

Your work trusts the “ordinary.” What is something most designers overlook that you consider essential?

We consider it essential to avoid treating creativity as the starting point of a project. Instead, the process should begin with production, understanding the limits and capabilities of the relevant industry.

Only once these boundaries are clearly defined does it make sense to develop the project. We believe that work gains consistency when it emerges from constraints; when something is driven purely by creativity, it often ends up inconsistent, if not outright crap.

CASA NM3 includes objects from real homes. What happens when personal memory enters such a controlled environment?

What happens is that an abstract environment becomes marked, almost contaminated, by real life.

We hope to show that a home entirely composed of our furniture can truly be perceived as a home. For this reason, we deliberately chose to move away from the typical “showroom-like” installation, allowing personal memory and lived experience to coexist with the display

If you had to reduce the domestic space to its absolute minimum, what would remain?

For me, Francesco Zorzi, if I had to reduce domestic space to a single object, it would be the sofa. Because on a sofa you can perform all the fundamental acts of domestic life: sleeping, eating, making love, working, reading, watching a film, and, if it comes to it, you are even comfortably placed to die.

In reality, the same could be said for a bed, but I hate eating in bed.



M C M P R E S E N T S

D I S C O O N M A R S

Dirk Schönberger discusses how installation, sound, and space reshape the brand or its 50th anniversary

At Milan Design Week 2026, MCM marked its 50th anniversary with *Disco on Mars*, an immersive installation developed with Atelier Biagetti that transformed the Rotonda del Pellegrini into a three-level environment shaped by sound, movement, and spatial design. The project moves beyond exhibition format, placing objects within a constructed system where architecture, performance, and narrative operate together.

The experience unfolds as a sequence. A ground-level lab introduces objects as speculative tools, a central level shifts into a kinetic disco environment, and the upper dome reworks voice and sound into a ritual space. Each layer builds a different relationship between product and context, moving from display toward activation. The installation constructs a complete environment where meaning comes from interaction rather than observation.

This approach reflects how MCM positions itself at fifty. The brand draws from its origins in Munich's cultural scene while directing its focus forward, connecting past references with new forms of expression. The project extends an existing trajectory, where collaborations and installations function as platforms to explore ideas that exceed the limits of traditional product presentation.

In this conversation, Chief Brand Officer Dirk Schönberger discusses how *Disco on Mars* defines MCM's current direction. He outlines the role of installations in shaping perception, the shift from object to experience, and the importance of maintaining movement as a core principle within the brand's evolution.

What does "Disco on Mars" say about where MCM stands at 50?

At 50, a brand has to decide whether it becomes retrospective or stays in motion. "Disco on Mars" is clearly about the second. It's not a nostalgic look back, but a forward projection: optimistic, a bit unexpected, and culturally driven. MCM has always been connected to moments in culture, from disco to hip-hop, and this is simply the next

By Ana Markovic

evolution. It shows that we're still moving, still exploring new territory.

How do you keep MCM's original attitude intact while pushing into projects like this?

You don't keep a brand relevant by preserving it, you keep it relevant by evolving it. The original attitude of MCM was always about movement, energy, and a certain openness to culture. That doesn't change. What changes is the context and the expression. As long as the core idea is clear, you can take it into new spaces without losing authenticity.

movement, energy, and a certain openness to culture. That doesn't change. What changes is the context and the expression. As long as the core idea is clear, you can take it into new spaces without losing authenticity.

What role do installations play in shaping how people understand the brand today?

Today, people don't really connect with brands through products alone. They connect through experiences. Installations create a direct, emotional access point and they allow people to step into the brand rather than just observe it. It's less about explaining what MCM is, and more about creating a moment where people can feel it and interpret it in their own way.

Where does product end and experience begin for MCM here?

That boundary has become very fluid.

A product on its own is just an object. It gains meaning through context, through space, narrative, and interaction. What we are doing here is placing product inside a larger environment where it becomes part of an experience. That's where luxury is shifting from ownership to meaning.

What did this collaboration allow you to do that a traditional format cannot?

It allowed us to think beyond categories. Traditional formats are always tied to function - a collection, a product, a defined use. Here, we could build a complete world. You can combine design, sound, movement, and emotion in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise. That freedom opens up new ideas and ultimately, a different way of engaging with the brand.





YANI SHI AND THE DISCIPLINE OF PRESSURE

From Lyft to Pollen Nav, Yani Shi builds design through uncertainty, hard decisions, and clarity shaped by real constraints

By Zarko Davinic

Yani Shi's entry into design builds on initiative and direction shaped through action. She studied business at USC, taught herself design independently, and developed a strong portfolio that secured her place in UC Berkeley's Master of Design program. That trajectory already suggests something about how she works. Today she is a product designer at Lyft, where she is the sole designer responsible for the airport ride experience, including scheduled airport pickup, ride booking for others, and the XXL ride type for passengers traveling with checked luggage. These are among Lyft's highest-margin products, collectively contributing millions in revenue on a platform that serves more than 50 million active riders annually. Airport travel remains one of the platform's most central use cases, with more than half of its users citing it as a primary reason for choosing the service.

In parallel, she led the design of Pollen Nav, a navigation application built for allergy sufferers. The project received the 2025 Red Dot Award, New York Product Design Award Silver, European Product Design Award, and the 2026 iF Design Award. Both Red Dot and iF rank among the most respected global design prizes, with the Red Dot alone attracting around 20,000 entries annually from over 70 countries and accepting only a small percentage. Receiving both for the same project places Pollen Nav in a rare position. Her project Ursa, an AI-powered augmented reality system developed to assist astronauts during lunar missions, received the Muse Design Award Gold and Indigo Design Award Gold in 2026. Across these

two distinct bodies of work, she has been recognized by five independent international juries.

The origin of Pollen Nav was personal. In 2021, Shi was diagnosed with allergic asthma. She describes lying awake at night, unable to sleep, returning to a single question: what if it were possible to avoid pollen before exposure rather than manage the consequences after. That question became the project's starting point and reshaped how she approaches design problems.

The first version explored detection through a device capable of identifying airborne pollen in real time. The limitations became clear quickly. Allergic responses vary too widely across individuals for a single device to operate effectively at scale. The second iteration shifted focus to prevention, introducing reminders and medication tracking to support the routines that people with allergies already follow. The final version, developed between 2024 and 2025, expanded the project into a collective platform. Users report their reactions at specific locations, the data aggregates into a real-time network, and the system integrates with Google Maps to generate low-pollen route recommendations. China Daily covered the project in January 2026, identifying Shi as the lead designer and tracing the arc from personal experience

to international recognition.

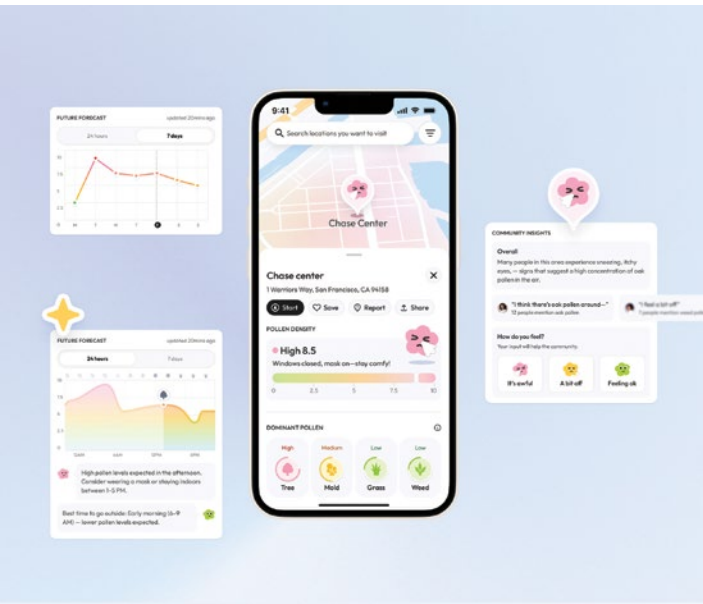
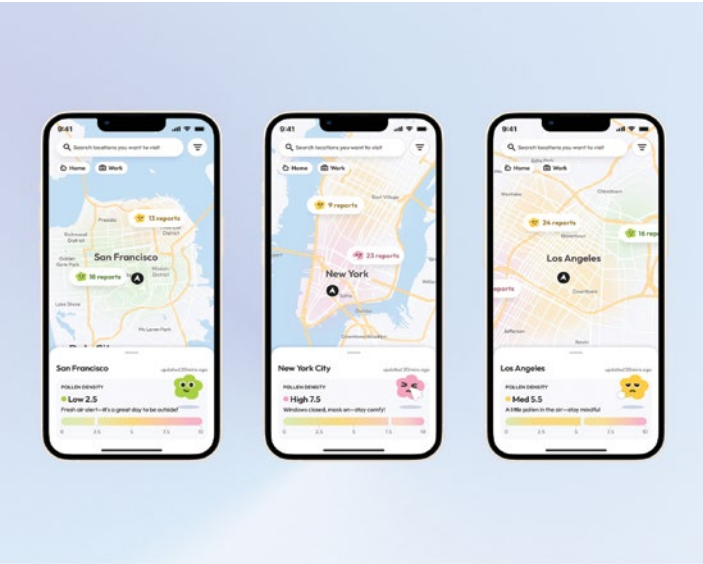
Leading the project required building and aligning a team from scratch. There were no inherited processes and no established norms. Different contributors brought different expectations. Shi created space for open discussion, then translated that input into



clear decisions. At the same time, the team developed a design system while building the product. The recognition that followed reflects the completeness of the system, from how users enter it to how they return, and how the community data they contribute increases its value over time.

At Lyft, the design problems differ in context but carry similar demands. The airport remains one of the most complex environments for any mobility platform. A rider under time pressure, navigating a multi-level terminal, must reach the correct pickup point without confusion, yet GPS accuracy indoors remains insufficient to deliver a single reliable answer. Too many options slow the decision, too few create errors. Designing within that tension, at the scale of tens of millions of riders, requires ground-level research. Shi studied airport layouts, categorized pickup structures by scale, analyzed how the product performs across different venue types, and worked with operations, engineering, and business teams to understand the constraints shaping the system.

Ursa follows the same logic, applied to more extreme condi-

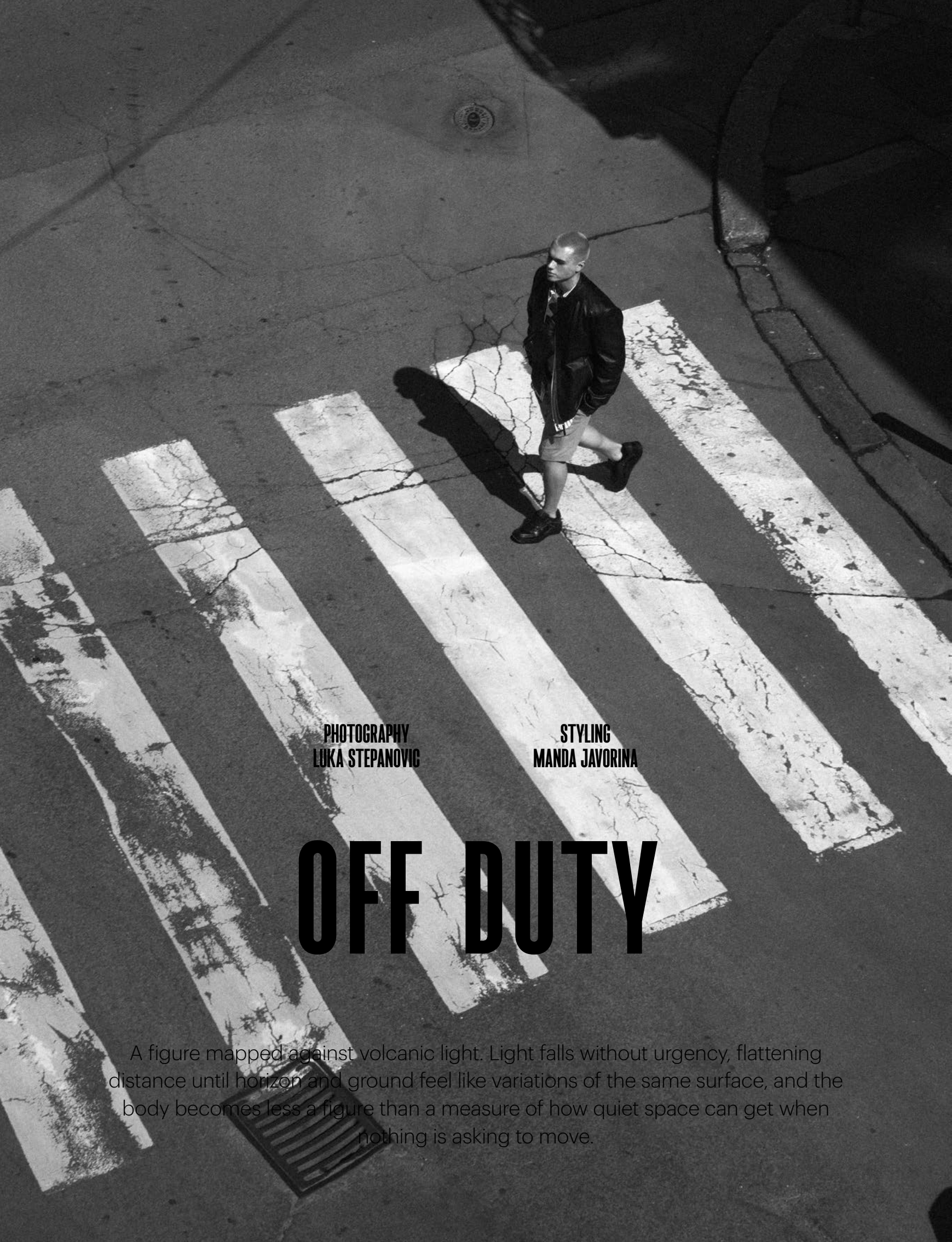


Originating from Yani Shi's experience with allergic asthma, Pollen Nav rethinks how people navigate environmental risk, shifting from symptom management to proactive avoidance.



ons. Astronauts on lunar missions operate with both hands occupied, maintain continuous situational awareness, and cannot take on additional cognitive load. Any interface friction carries real consequences. Ursa addresses this through voice interaction. The astronaut speaks, the system understands the context of the current task, anticipates the next action, and delivers information exactly where it is needed. Two international gold awards confirm that the system performs under the conditions it was designed for.

What connects these projects is a consistent orientation. Pressure, whether from a personal health condition, the demands of a high-stakes platform, or the constraints of a mission-critical environment, sharpens decision-making when the work is executed well. Shi distinguishes product design from artistic expression with precision. Artists express, product designers solve. The task remains to make decisions that hold under real conditions and to deliver systems that absorb complexity before it reaches the user.



PHOTOGRAPHY
LUKA STEPANOVIC

STYLING
MANDA JAVORINA

OFF DUTY

A figure mapped against volcanic light. Light falls without urgency, flattening distance until horizon and ground feel like variations of the same surface, and the body becomes less a figure than a measure of how quiet space can get when nothing is asking to move.

Shirt HUGO

Previous Page:
Total Look HUGO





Total Look HUGO

Next Page:
Top & pants HUGO

FILARRI ON BUILDING A WORLD WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Filarri approaches *Od krvi i mesa* as a complete work, built to be experienced in its entirety. In conversation with Zarko Davinic, Editor in Chief of DSCENE Magazine, he frames the album as a conceptual body rather than a collection of standalone tracks. The record captures a period shaped by emotional intensity, where personal experiences unfold through sound. He treats the album as a contained moment, one that holds collisions, shifts, and emotional extremes that no longer define his present, but remain preserved within the work.

At the center of the project stands a clear decision to push toward full emotional exposure. "I wanted to be honest to the core, to fully strip myself down emotionally, and to allow the audience to truly get to know me by listening to the album from beginning to end." That intention shapes both the structure and the pacing of the record. The album moves through eight songs and an interlude, building gradually toward a closing sequence where that openness becomes difficult to avoid. He describes the process as an act of expansion, not reduction, where creative control required him to embrace everything rather than hold anything back.

"Riski" introduces that world. Positioned as the lead single, it operates as an entry point into the album's emotional logic. "We chose it because it carries a cross-section of the entire album through its vibe, emotion, genre, and energy." The track reflects a time when instability and intensity defined his daily life. Those conditions no longer shape his present, which he describes as more stable and calm, yet they remain embedded in the material. The album functions as a record of that earlier state, where each track holds fragments of those collisions.

As the narrative unfolds, different versions of the artist emerge. Some remain close to what his audience already recognizes, while



others move into more exposed territory. The final stretch of the album concentrates that shift. He points to the closing songs as the most difficult to release, describing them as moments where emotional control disappears. "Every time I listen to the album from beginning to end I completely break down at the end." The closing tracks strip away distance and present a direct acknowledgment of vulnerability, framed through a simple but deliberate statement of being human.

Beyond the album itself, the conversation moves toward pressure, a condition that extends across both his creative process and public presence. His relationship to pressure has shifted over time. Earlier in his career, he associated it with performance and productivity. Now, he recognizes a need for distance when working on material that

carries personal weight. "I increasingly feel the need for my own comfort zone, especially when I am working on something artistically important." That need translates into a controlled environment, defined by trust and a sense of safety, where creative work can develop without external interference.

This distinction becomes sharper when he describes the difference between music and social media. Music remains a stable point of return, a space where he feels aligned with himself. Social media operates under a different set of expectations. "There, you often have to be smiling, in a good mood, interesting, and engaging enough to keep people's attention." The gap between those expectations and internal states introduces tension. Over time, that tension has led him to protect parts of himself that he previously shared more freely. Visibility remains part of his work, yet he approaches it with increasing distance and control.

Despite the expectations that usually accompany a debut album, he describes the creation of *Od krvi i mesa* as largely free from external pressure. The process followed an internal logic, guided by instinct and collaboration rather than anticipation of reception. "We worked only according to what we felt and how we saw that entire world without compromise." That approach extended across the entire project, from songwriting to visual direction. The album reflects a closed system, where each element developed from the same source without adjustment for outside expectations.

Maintaining that autonomy requires constant negotiation, particularly in relation to public perception. He describes a deliberate effort to preserve his connection to music as the central point of focus. "I try to remind myself why I wanted to do music in the first place." That reminder functions as a form of protection, allowing him to separate the act of creation from the responses it generates. Social media remains unavoidable, yet he establishes distance where possible to prevent it from reshaping his relationship to the work.

Social pressure enters the conversation through questions of identity and expression. He points to rigid expectations surrounding masculinity as a persistent source of tension. "The pressure I have felt most strongly is connected to stereotypes about how a man should or must look and behave." His response does not involve avoidance. Instead, those pressures become material within the album itself. The songs and visuals translate that experience into a direct message centered on self-acceptance and visibility, without adjustment to fit external norms.

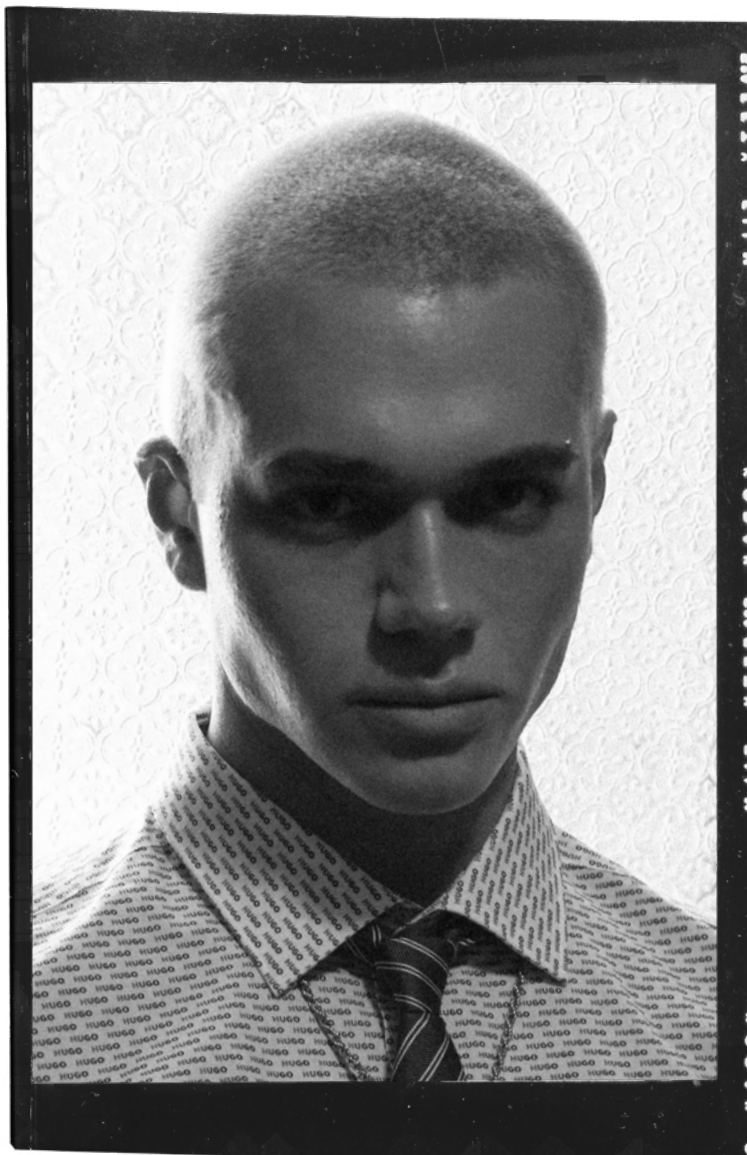
His collaboration with Ljubba forms a central axis within that process. He describes the relationship as instinctive and unforced, built on a shared understanding that shaped the direction of the album. "It felt as if I had something he needed...and he had something I needed." That exchange operates across both creative and personal levels, allowing the project to develop without formal negotiation. The result reflects a unified perspective, expressed through two distinct voices that align around the same core themes.

When he describes the album as a space, he frames it as immersive and continuous. "From beginning to end, the listener goes through a rollercoaster of emotions." The structure does not offer resolution in a conventional sense. Instead, it presents a sequence of experiences that move between intensity and release, without smoothing over the shifts between them. The closing track brings that process to a direct conclusion, where the listener encounters the same statement that defines the project as a whole. A recognition of vulnerability, framed through the body, the voice, and the shared condition of being human.

The album remains grounded in that idea. It does not attempt to distance itself from emotion or reorganize it into something easier to navigate. Instead, it holds those experiences in place, allowing them to exist without revision. Through that approach, *Od krvi i mesa* establishes itself as a fixed record of a specific time, shaped by pressure, exposure, and the decision to move through both without compromise.

"I WANTED TO BE HONEST TO THE CORE, TO FULLY STRIP MYSELF DOWN EMOTIONALLY, AND TO ALLOW THE AUDIENCE TO TRULY GET TO KNOW ME BY LISTENING TO THE ALBUM FROM BEGINNING TO END."

Shirt and tie
HUGO





Chinese snuff bottles leave the
vitrine and take on a human
register, where surface, scale,
and memory return to the body.

DESCENE

beauty



PHOTOGRAPHY
YUCHEN LI (MOXI)

MAKEUP
KYRA LUI

SKIN



RELIQS

Faces become vessels for memory and ornament, where colour, texture, and intimacy translate the form of snuff bottles into a living surface shaped by touch and history.

Model ERIKA KAIJA
Hair Stylist SAIKO HAYASHI



Bangles DINOSAUR DESIGNS





Left Model MINIE CHAN
Right Model JOHN LIU at Crumb Agency



Model JOHN LIU at Crumb Agency
Hair Stylist FABIEN PICOT





Earrings and necklace ALEXIS BITTAR



Model JANE FU at XDIRECTN AGENCY
Hair Stylist FABIEN PICOT



Model WING LAI
Hair Stylist SAIKO HAYASHI







Model HAZEL STEFFEN at Genesis Model Management
Hair Stylist FABIEN PICOT



Model JOHN LIU at Crumb Agency
Hair Stylist FABIEN PICOT





Touch Tint Trace: Bringing Chinese snuff bottles to life through a camera and makeup brushes

Small in scale yet dense in meaning, snuff bottles carry a history shaped by touch, ritual, and ornament. In “Touch Tint Trace,” visual artist Yuchen Li (Moxi) and makeup artist Kyra Lui translate these objects into a living surface, using the human face to explore their form, function, and emotional weight. Once used in late Imperial China to store tobacco for medicinal purposes, snuff bottles evolved through their intricate carvings and painted motifs into objects valued as much for their visual language as for their use.

The project draws from the Fuyun Xuan Collection at the Hong Kong Museum of Art, where Kyra first encountered the intensity of colour and detail contained within such a confined format. After returning to Hong Kong from London, this encounter stayed with her, eventually finding a connection to her own medium. For Moxi, whose photographic work often engages with cultural narratives, the collaboration extends naturally into a shared exploration. “Touch Tint Trace” moves between past and present, positioning these objects within a broader discussion on heritage.

In the 18th century, snuff bottles circulated within the Imperial court, carrying associations of status and exclusivity. By the following century, their production expanded, reaching a wider public while

retaining their original function. Designed for medical use, their contents came into direct contact with the skin, giving them a distinctly personal dimension. Over time, as they entered museum collections, this intimacy receded. Through makeup and photography, Moxi and Kyra attempt to recover that sense of closeness, shifting the objects away from static display and back toward the body.

Six models appear as extensions of the bottles, with proportions, colour, and surface translated onto the face. Eyes take on the tone of caps, lips echo the body, and compositions shift through angle and distance. In one image, two models face each other, mirroring the duplicated form of the object and suggesting intimacy through proximity. Hair, developed with stylists from France and Japan, introduces additional texture, placed across or over the face to recreate the irregular surfaces of the bottles.

“Touch Tint Trace” holds form, history, and sensation within a single frame. It moves beyond replication, approaching the objects through presence and interpretation. These images return the bottles to a state of contact, placing them once again in relation to the body, where they originally belonged.

These are the words chosen by the co-authors of “Touch Tint Trace,” visual artist Yuchen Li (Moxi) and makeup artist Kyra Lui.

“A COLLECTION OF POCKET-SIZED OBJECTS, EACH CARRYING THE WEIGHT OF TIME — A CULTURAL GIFT OF DEPTH AND RICHNESS, WORN CLOSE TO THE SKIN.”



ULTIMA CORFU: THE ART OF A PRIVATE ISLAND ESCAPE

Set apart from the over-traveled circuits of the Greek islands, *Ultima Corfu* is defined by one thing above all else: privacy. Approached by sea and revealed as a fortress-like silhouette on a private cliff, the villa feels less like a place you check into and more like a world you step inside, where the Ionian horizon becomes the only schedule. The first impression is immediate and lasting, sweeping water views, quiet confidence in the architecture, and a sense that everything has been designed to protect calm. It is a retreat for travelers who want Corfu's beauty without the crowds, and luxury without performance.

What makes the experience resonate is the human side of the house. From arrival, the team sets a tone that is warm, intuitive, and genuinely attentive. Service here is never showy, but it is constant in the way that matters, thoughtful timing, small details handled before they become requests, and a feeling of being looked after without being managed. That warmth is the villa's real charm, and it is what allows the outside world to fall away quickly.

CONTEMPORARY COMFORT WITH GREEK CHARACTER

Perched on a dramatic stretch of coastline, the villa accommodates up to 12 guests across six bedrooms, each arranged for space, light, and discretion. Floor-to-ceiling windows open the interiors to the sea, while private terraces and generous bathrooms give every suite the rhythm of a personal sanctuary. The design balances contemporary polish with a distinctly Greek sense of place, natural textures, clean lines, and an ease that suits the landscape rather than competing with it.

Although *Ultima Corfu* is not a hotel, it delivers the standards of the best five-star properties. Daily housekeeping, immaculate maintenance, and seamless coordination are handled with the precision of a world-class resort, while still preserving the intimacy of a private residence. The result is rare: the exclusivity of a villa, paired with the consistency and comfort of top-tier hospitality.

DINING, TAILORED TO THE MOMENT

Meals are a central pleasure here, shaped around the pace of the day and the preferences of the guests. The villa's private chef, Marco D'Orazi, brings experience from *Mirazur* and previously served as in-chalet chef at *Ultima Hotel Courchevel*, crafting bespoke menus across the property's collection of chalets. His work is overseen by Alessandro Bergamo, Ultima's Group Executive Chef, ensuring a level of rigor that is felt in every course. Menus lean into Greek gastronomy and local ingredients, particularly seafood, with the flexibility to move from relaxed poolside lunches to refined, multi-course dinners. With a fully staffed kitchen and this caliber of talent, there is little reason to leave, though the team can arrange boat trips to nearby towns and hidden coves for a change of scenery.

WELLNESS, WATER, AND THE FREEDOM TO DO NOTHING

The amenities match the setting: two heated infinity pools, an ocean-view Jacuzzi, a mosaic-tiled hammam, and a gym built for those who like to keep their routine even while disappearing from the world. The private dock offers direct access to the sea, ideal for swimming, paddleboarding, or stepping onto a yacht arranged by the team. On the water, Corfu reveals its quieter side, untouched corners of coastline, secluded bays, and the kind of light that makes time feel slower.

Wellness is treated as a core part of the stay, not an add-on. Yoga and Pilates sessions can be arranged at sunrise, while massage and beauty treatments are delivered with the same attention to detail as the rest of the house. Indoors, a cinema room and multiple dining areas support both total rest and effortless entertaining.

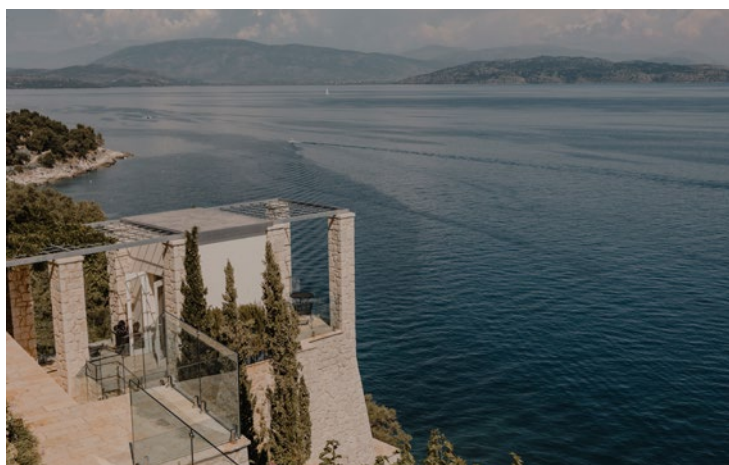
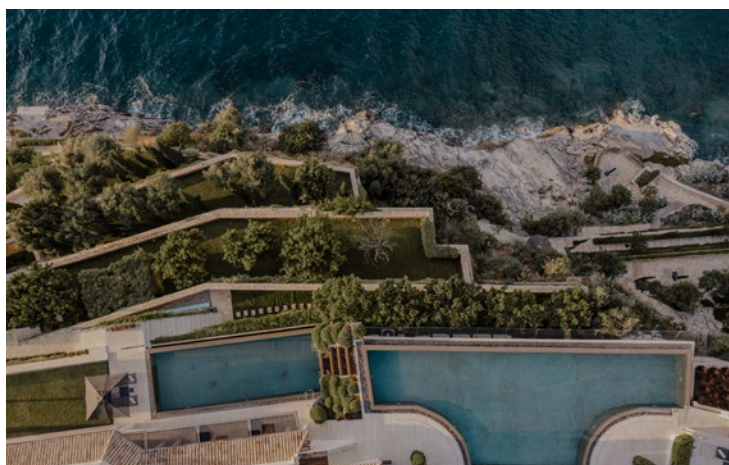
EXCLUSIVITY BY DESIGN

The most important detail is also the simplest: Ultima Corfu is rented to one group at a time. For families and friends, that exclusivity changes everything. A dedicated manager, chef, butler, housekeeping, driver, and spa therapist are on hand, with service that remains discreet and highly responsive. For guests traveling with their own staff, a lower-profile service option is also available.

With 180-degree views stretching toward both the Greek and Albanian coastlines, the villa feels like a modern sanctuary with the presence of a small medieval stronghold. Arriving by private boat, stepping onto the dock, and moving through wraparound terraces into sunlit interiors, the experience is defined by ease. Days unfold naturally between sea swims, long lunches, quiet afternoons, and evenings shaped around the table.

For travelers looking for the ultimate expression of Greek island luxury, private, peaceful, and far from the template of a traditional hotel, *Ultima Corfu* delivers exactly what it promises: an escape that feels entirely your own.

Ultima Corfu
Bouratika, Nisaki 490 83, Greece
Phone: +41 22 779 33 33
For booking and more ultimacollection.com



LA

COMPAGNIE:

A Design-Led Return to Comfortable Transatlantic Travel

By Zarko Davinic

There is a particular kind of fatigue that comes with modern long-haul flying, the sense that the journey has been engineered around throughput rather than wellbeing. LA COMPAGNIE positions itself as a corrective to that logic, not by chasing spectacle, but by returning to something more natural: a calmer cabin, a simpler product, and comfort that is not treated as a luxury add-on. As a French independent airline offering 100% business-class flights between New York and Europe, it makes a clear promise, transatlantic travel can feel refined again, without forcing passengers to sacrifice space, sleep, or dignity. Founded in 2013 and launching its first flight on July 21, 2014, LA COMPAGNIE was created to deliver a streamlined alternative to traditional long-haul travel. Under CEO Christian Vernet, the airline has built its identity around what it calls a “smart business-class” concept, a single-cabin experience where every seat is a lie-flat bed. That decision is more than a pricing or service strategy, it is a design decision. When an airline commits to one cabin, the entire journey can be shaped around a consistent standard of comfort, from boarding flow to onboard rhythm. The result is an intimate, boutique atmosphere that feels closer to private aviation in tone, yet remains accessible through competitive fares.

The airline’s network is focused and deliberate, connecting Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) with key European destinations that matter to business travelers and design, fashion, and cultural communities. LA COMPAGNIE operates nonstop service between New York and Paris Orly (ORY) daily year-round, flies up to six times per week to Milan Malpensa (MXP), and offers seasonal service to Nice Côte d’Azur (NCE), typically from May through September. The route strategy itself reinforces the brand’s promise of efficiency, choosing airports closer to city centers where possible, and reducing the friction that often defines transatlantic travel. It is a reminder that the passenger experience begins long before takeoff, and ends long after landing.

At the center of the product is the fleet, an Airbus A321neo configured with 76 fully lie-flat business-class seats in a 2-2 layout. In a market where wide-body aircraft can feel cavernous and impersonal, the A321neo’s narrower, quieter cabin becomes an advantage when paired with a single-class concept. The scale supports attentiveness, and the density supports comfort. Every passenger receives the same core spatial experience, a seat designed for real sleep, not a compromise. Contemporary designed LED lighting is used to enhance comfort throughout the journey, shaping the cabin’s mood and supporting rest. The aircraft also brings improved fuel efficiency and reduced emissions compared with previous generations, aligning a contemporary travel experience with more responsible performance.

This is where design becomes more than aesthetics. Design is the discipline that turns constraints into a coherent system, and LA COMPAGNIE applies that thinking to air travel. A 76-seat, all lie-flat cabin changes how people move, how they settle, how they sleep, and how they arrive. It is a different choreography. The experience feels less like enduring a flight and more like inhabiting a space for several hours, with the ability to work, dine, disconnect, and rest without constantly negotiating for basic comfort.

Onboard, the airline’s Smart Business Class experience is built around comfort, efficiency, and thoughtful service. Every passenger has a lie-flat seat, unlimited high-speed Wi-Fi, and a personal entertainment screen. Two checked bags are included with fares, and the smaller cabin supports attentive service that feels personal rather than procedural. Entertainment is curated to match the airline’s calm tone, with movies, music, meditation content, and kids programming. The airline also introduces a cultural layer through onboard events including wine tastings, book signings, and appearances by chefs, adding a sense of occasion without turning the cabin into a stage.

Dining is one of the clearest expressions of the airline's French heritage, and it is treated as part of the overall hospitality design. Seasonal menus are crafted by [Chef Christophe Langrée](#) and refreshed to reflect both the calendar and the destinations served. Beverage choices extend the same philosophy. The airline also builds variety and contemporary relevance through collaborations with chefs including David Toutain, Franco Smpogna, Nolwenn Corre, and the Tourteaux brothers, bringing a modern edge to the transatlantic dining experience.

Before boarding, lounge access reinforces the idea that the journey should remain comfortable from start to finish. The airline also makes practical decisions that signal an understanding of how people actually travel. Active travelers can check one piece of sports equipment free of charge in addition to the standard baggage allowance, including skis, surfboards, golf bags, and bicycles, subject to size and weight guidelines. Pets are welcomed in the cabin, allowing dogs and cats up to 8 kg including the carrier, with a carrier that fits under the seat in front. The policy is clear, one pet per passenger, up to four pets per flight, with a nominal fee per journey, while trained service dogs travel free in accordance with regulations.

Taken together, LA COMPAGNIE is a strong example of how design shapes an airline and, by extension, the culture of travel itself. It demonstrates that comfort does not have to be reserved for a small fraction of the cabin, and that a coherent, single-standard product can feel both more human and more efficient. In an era when many travelers have learned to lower expectations, LA COMPAGNIE offers a different proposition, a return to comfort as the default, and a reminder that the best travel experiences are often the ones that feel natural, calm, and considered.



LA COMPAGNIE offers a calm, all-business-class transatlantic experience focused on comfort, simplicity, and thoughtful design.





PABÚ BY COCO MONTES

MOVES AT THE PACE OF THE INGREDIENT

On micro-seasonality, precision, and a kitchen that begins from zero each day.

By Katarina Doric

PABÚ operates with a sense of immediacy that leaves no room for repetition. Each day begins from zero, shaped by what arrives in that moment and by the exact condition of each ingredient. In less than a year, the restaurant earned a Michelin star alongside a Sol Repsol and multiple international recognitions, placing it among the most closely followed openings in Europe. At the center is Coco Montes, trained at Le Cordon Bleu and shaped by his time under Alain Passard. His approach removes any sense of display. Flavors remain clear, distinct, and fully present, guided by a discipline that keeps technique out of sight while holding everything in place.

In this interview with Katarina Doric, Montes speaks with precision about a kitchen built on micro-seasonality, where dishes do not exist as fixed ideas but unfold through constant adjustment. Vegetables often lead, proteins follow, and every element responds to timing rather than hierarchy. The structure extends into the dining room through Rita González, whose direct and personal approach defines the atmosphere. Across the conversation, Montes returns to a single principle: choosing the right ingredient at the right moment, intervening with control, and allowing each flavor to remain exactly as it is.

Your kitchen starts from scratch every day. What does that demand from you mentally before service even begins?

Every day I start from zero, and that requires a very delicate balance between humility and responsibility. You cannot rely on inertia. You have to be fully present, to listen to the ingredient, and to accept that what you did yesterday has no value today. Mentally, it is about total availability, not imposing, but interpreting.

At PABÚ, you speak about micro-seasonality as a rule, not a concept. How does that change the way you build a dish in real time?

Micro-seasonality doesn't allow you to think in terms of dishes, it forces you to think in moments. A pea is not the same pea over two weeks, it changes every day. Cooking like this means adjusting in real time: texture, sweetness, water content, everything evolves. The dish is not designed, it reveals itself.

You trained in some of the most rigorous kitchens in the world. What did you choose to leave behind when creating your own language?

I left behind the need to prove something. For many years, you seek validation through complexity or visible technique. At Pabú, I decided that technique should disappear from the discourse, even if it is very present in execution. I also left behind a certain rigidity, here, the kitchen breathes.

You say purity is not a slogan but a rule. Where do you draw the line between respect for ingredients and creative intervention?

The line is very clear: if the intervention enhances the truth of the ingredient, it is valid; if it disguises it, it has no place. Creativity is not about adding layers, it is about removing everything that does not belong. Sometimes the most creative act is to do nothing.

You speak about ingredients with real emotion, I remember you getting chills while talking about peas. What is it about peas at their peak that affects you that deeply?

Because everything is there. A pea at its peak is sweet, vegetal, fresh, crisp, but above all, it is fleeting. It exists for a very short time. When you taste it, you understand time, the soil, the hand that grew it. It is a perfect moment that will not return. That is what moves me.

There is a strong focus on vegetables without excluding protein. How do you ensure that balance never feels secondary or forced?

There is no hierarchy. Protein is neither the protagonist nor the garnish, it is simply another element within a balance. If the vegetable is at its peak, it leads; if not, it adapts. The dish does not revolve around categories, it revolves around what makes the most sense that day.

Technique in your kitchen feels very controlled and precise. How do you decide how much to reveal and how much to hold back?

I always try to make sure the guest does not see the effort, only the naturalness. Technique is an internal language. If it becomes too visible, something is not properly adjusted. I am interested in a dish that feels inevitable, not constructed.

Your mother plays a role in the front of house. How does that dynamic shape the atmosphere and experience at PABÚ?

She brings truth. There is something very difficult to imitate, which is genuine care. My mother is not performing a role, she receives people as she would at home. That creates an atmosphere that is not theatrical, but sincere. And I believe that is felt immediately.

The soufflé remains the only constant on a menu that changes daily. Why was it important for you to keep one fixed element?

Because change needs an anchor. The soufflé is a gesture of continuity, of memory. For the team, it is a daily exercise in precision; for the guest, it is an emotional reference point. In the middle of something ephemeral, there is something that remains.

The wine pairings follow a very unconventional, intuitive logic rather than traditional structure. What are you looking for in that dialogue between food and wine?



I am looking for emotion, not academic logic. The wine does not accompany, it converses. Sometimes it reinforces, sometimes it contrasts, sometimes it disrupts. I am interested in creating a new sensation, something not predictable. And that the guest feels something, even if they cannot explain it.

Can you share a simple recipe or preparation that represents your philosophy at PABÚ, something that expresses purity, seasonality, and precision in its most direct form?

A very simple gesture: freshly shelled peas. I don't cook them in water. I pass them briefly through a very light butter with a touch of salt. Nothing more. Off the heat, just a fine thread of olive oil.

The key is not the recipe, it is the moment, the peas must be perfect. If they are not, no technique can fix it.

That is Pabú: choosing well, intervening just enough, and respecting the moment.



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