

Objects of desire

Unique art and design on show at London's PAD Fair

By Rachel Fellows



In the London art world, “PAD” is a word that carries weight. These art fairs are more than social events; they are boutique affairs where galleries large and small exhibit visual art, furniture and jewellery by international artists and designers, known and unknown. Founded by Parisian dealer Patrick Perrin, who started his home city’s Pavilion of Art and Design (originally the “Pavillon des Antiquaires et des Galeries d’Art”) 22 years ago, PAD debuted in London in 2007, in Geneva last year and in Monaco last April.

“With PAD, we privilege dealers with a real niche expertise,” Perrin says. “It’s not about the size of their galleries, it is about their level of connoisseurship and passion for what they do. We showcase a vibrant range of works across various disciplines, historic and contemporary, and wish to inspire collectors and show them what it means to ‘collect’ in the real sense.”

The unusually intimate size of PAD makes this aim achievable, with this year’s London edition (30 September to 6 October), hosting 68 galleries from 14 countries in one marquee on Berkeley Square, its home since 2009. The Mayfair location is strategic. “It’s a very cosmopolitan crowd,”

says Perrin, “with collectors from Asia, South America, USA and Europe, either based in London or flying in for the big art week,” which also includes Frieze London, Frieze Masters and The Other Art Fair.

Immersed in art since his youth, Perrin has worked to bring design into the artistic sphere, raising it “to something more than a mere functional object. Today, a chair, table and lamp by the greatest historic and contemporary designers are appreciated and valued as art. Recognition for craftsmanship and creativity no longer belongs to a small clique of cognoscenti.”

He is also keen to prevent art becoming mere investments for the super-rich. “With prices rocketing and creating a bubble, the art world is losing its real collectors, those collecting out of passion,” he says. “It should be about falling in love with an artwork for the pleasure it brings, whether small or large, expensive or not, and about combining genres with flair and taste.”

And if he could offer just one piece of advice for the novice collector? “Buy the chef-d’œuvre of the smallest artist, not the cheapest work of a great master.” pad-fairs.com

Previous page: a stand
by Galerie-Meubles
& Lumières at PAD
Fair London 2018.
Right: Poseidone,
hand-blown Murano
glass vase and gold
enamelled candle holder
by Achille Salvagni.
Bottom: an interior
by Salvagni in London



The PAD London 2019 highlights

Achille Salvagni

It is hard to imagine a more quintessentially stylish Italian than Salvagni. His interior design and architecture studio boasts clients from his home town, Rome, to Mumbai and Miami (Jeff Koons and architect Peter Marino are regulars) thanks to creations that blend contemporary and classical Roman aesthetics: rich, sumptuous colours and attention to fine materials (“hinges and handles on a cabinet,” he tells *Esquire*, “or the mill work on a piece of joinery”). He is the subject of a monograph published by Rizzoli last month and, for his second appearance at PAD London, brings his Murano collection of furniture, lighting and decorative objects. It is the first time he has worked with the traditional Venetian glass: “It marks a really new territory in my work. A highlight is the series

of candlesticks-cum-vases in jewel tones entitled ‘Oceano’, ‘Poseidone’ and ‘Tritone’. To create them, I sourced a unique Muranese silica last employed in the production of glass in the Twenties, which here gives the vases their remarkable vibrant tones.

“I have enjoyed PAD fairs since long before exhibiting at them,” says Salvagni. “PAD London draws an unrivalled crowd of art and design collectors, enthusiasts, designers, makers and dreamers. Patrick Perrin has been very clever to keep the size of the fair relatively small, so compared to some of the larger American or European fairs, you are not overwhelmed or intimidated by the size or the number of booths you must visit. This means as a visitor you have much more chance to see everything and engage with the dealers.” →

Rich Mnisi (Exhibited by Southern Guild)

“Having shown in Dubai, Basel, Miami and New York, this felt like coming home,” says Trevyn McGowan, who founded Cape Town’s Southern Guild with husband Julian in 2008. “We lived and worked in London for 20 years before moving to South Africa.” The gallery’s mission is “to cultivate and provoke a new African narrative in design,” according to Julian, with artists such as Johannesburg-born fashion designer Rich Mnisi, who they tempted into the furniture world in 2017. “Rich straddles many disciplines,” says Trevyn. “His work is very dynamic visually — it has a bold,

arresting energy that almost jolts you. It’s unlike anything else.”

That applies particularly to Mnisi’s sinuous, striking, navy leather chaise longue, inspired by his great-great-grandmother “and her contribution in shaping my family,” says the artist. He hopes “to pay homage to the role of African mothers whose stories are either seldom documented or given the light they deserve. I want people to feel safe when they’re embraced by Nwa-Mulamula.” He is currently working on follow-up furniture and fashion collections, both titled “Nwa-Mulamula: Alkebulan”.

‘Nwa-Mulamula’ organic-shaped chaise longue in navy leather by Rich Mnisi





Above left: 'Ethereal' console table in sycamore and acrylic by Marc Fish
 Right: 'Ghirlande di Lacrime Estive' sculptural chandelier by Sam Orlando Miller

Marc Fish

(Exhibited by Todd Merrill Studio)

New York's Todd Merrill Studio, a mecca for sleek and unusual works of 20th-century art, joined PAD London for the first time this year. "It's the most stylish and well-presented fair in Europe," says owner Merrill, who is using the space to show off a selection of work by British artist Marc Fish. "Marc is one of the few artists in the world working with wood who has pushed this medium to its absolute limits," he says. "He creates work in wood that could not have been done before the 21st century."

Based in East Sussex, Fish has spent 10 years creating his method of micro stack-lamination: ultra-thin wood slices are peeled off a log, kept in sequence, then shaped and glued back together to look like one solid piece. "Laminating wood is not new," he says, "it has been done for 4,000 years but we've developed unique techniques that further develop it." He has been working on his "Ethereal" collection for four years, unveiling a chair and pair of console tables at this year's PAD London. It plays with setting veneers apart within resin to allow light through to alter the colouring. "The effect is quite mesmerising," says Fish, "providing a sense of peace through simplicity."

A new chandelier by Sam Orlando Miller

(Unveiled by Gallery Fumi)

At the forefront of contemporary design, Gallery Fumi was founded by Sam Pratt and Valerio Capo in 2008, neither of whom originally started out in the art world but whose eyes for handmade pieces have earned them unilateral esteem. "We like the character that patina gives to metal," they tell *Esquire*, "the uneven finish of hand-blown glass, the knots in the wood and so forth. Anything that we show at the gallery has to pass the test of 'would we want it in our home?'"

We've been using that test with Sam Orlando Miller's 'Ghirlande di Lacrime Estive', a giant green chandelier unveiled to huge excitement at PAD London. Born in London, Miller now lives in the central Italian countryside. "It's his most ambitious light sculpture to date," the gallerists say, having collaborated with the artist for the last six years. "Inspired by the changing luminosity of the passing seasons, Miller sculpts light using facets of jade green mirror and droplets of hand-cut bronze. His mastery of reflection and colour transforms the artificial light of the bulbs into the soft warmth of dappled sunlight in an ancient grove." ○