

‘Theirs is a world of strange creatures’

Craft | Creations by Lukas

Wegwerth and Corinna Dehn

take collectors into a shingled

wonderland, finds *Gisela*

Williams. Photographed for

the FT by *Julia Sellman*

When a friend broke his treasured handmade Japanese ceramic coffee cup, German designer Lukas Wegwerth came up with a novel technique to fix it. Inspired by the Japanese art of *kintsugi* – repairing ceramic using lacquer laced with precious metals such as gold – he fused the pieces together with a material that added its own dimension to the pieces: salt crystals which grew over time. The innovative approach to repair and evolving traditional artisanal techniques was the seed for a new creative chapter for Wegwerth and his partner in life and work, Corinna Dehn. That cup grew into the 2012 *Crystallization* series: traditional ceramic vases and vessels, the surfaces of which are used to cultivate huge salt crystals. For Wegwerth it was a powerful illustration of how humans and natural forms can collaborate and how nature can help provide design solutions as well as aesthetic inspiration. The pieces continue to sell through London-based gallery FUMI and influence the way the designers work. The couple have been collaborating for more than a decade, and as an “official” design duo for the last five, having

The surface of a piece might look like the skin of an armadillo, a bird’s wing or the scales of a snake



duo Voukenas Petrides, the piece was shown at FUMI’s 2021 exhibition *Together*, which paired 25 of the gallery’s artists and designers. “It was a fantastic experience to recognise something beautiful in the weathered shingles from the facade and then to put them into a new context and give them new life,” says Dehn.

They started to develop a process: Wegwerth builds the substructure while Dehn shapes, sands and paints the shingles using natural pigments. Together they apply the shingles, building the shape as they attach the individual tiles. The work’s final form is always a surprise, says Wegwerth. “You always have to start from the bottom and work towards the top, fitting the shingles as you go.”

Depending on the size and shape of the shingle, a surface might end up looking like the skin of an armadillo, a bird’s wing or the scales of a snake or a fish, Dehn, who retains an interest in experimenting with colour from her days in fashion, also noticed that the shingles looked uncannily like a close-up of a butterfly’s wing. “I never thought about placing colour like that,” she says. That image went on to “guide my choices when choosing colours for this piece.” She points to a stool leg covered with ombre-style painted shingles of all sizes and shapes. A butterfly wing also inspired the shape of a shelf that will be shown at the FUMI show.

“I have followed the *Armadillo* series since its debut at Design Miami in 2025,”

says Berlin-based design curator Anna Carnick. “The works have an almost magical quality – they look a little like objects from a fairy tale – but they are grounded in rigorous hand-craftsmanship and an experimental approach to material and process, suggesting new possibilities for how familiar materials can be used and understood.”

With pieces developed over a number of years, distributed among private collections and championed by interior designers and architects such as Angus Reid and Ramy Boutros, the pair are excited to see the work in one place. “It will help us understand what works best and give us ideas as to what to do next,” says Dehn. “This collection is just a starting point. We still have so many ideas.” Wegwerth points to the experiments around him – stools made from materials upcycled from around the farm: a fieldstone, a reused plank of wood from an apple tree, a piece of oak.

In the meantime, they continue to work on the family farm. “We want to develop it into a place that has meaning,” he says. Next up is finding a way to use the farm and its outbuildings as a place for makers and students to explore the forest as a source of inspiration and materials, just as he and Dehn do. “We imagine it as a creative environment that allows projects to grow.”

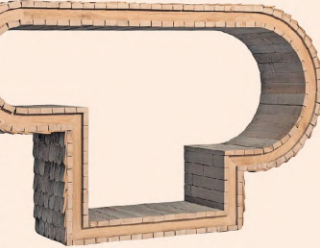
Companions, FUMI, October 6–November 21, galleryfumi.com

first met at Berlin’s University of the Arts in 2009, but only reconnecting several years later. Already during university Wegwerth was experimenting with how to use wood in sustainable ways, shaping found branches into elegant lighting pieces.

Dehn had studied fashion design and went on to work for Adidas and MCM before deciding to leave the industry at the start of the pandemic, a decision catalysed by growing concerns about its “impact on the planet’s resources.” Wegwerth now also co-leads Studio Silva Systems at Design Academy Eindhoven, which explores the forest as a superorganism, helping students create sustainable projects that grow out of investigation into natural environments. Together, their creative practice experiments with sustainable materials and develops sculptural furniture that evokes the natural world.

This month, the *Armadillo* collection – 14 pieces of sculptural furniture and objects – is being shown at FUMI in their exhibition *Companions* (October 6 to November 21); a towering cabinet that looks as if it was made from giant wooden fish scales is also being presented at PAD London. The former is “like a world of strange creatures that you might come upon if you were in a forest in a fairy tale,” says FUMI co-founder Sam Pratt. “It’s exciting that this is the first time people will see all the pieces together.”

The *Armadillo* series was indeed conceived near a forest – in Germany’s rural Vogelsberg region, north of Frankfurt. Wegwerth had inherited his grandmother’s 18th-century farm in early 2020. Built in the vernacular timber-



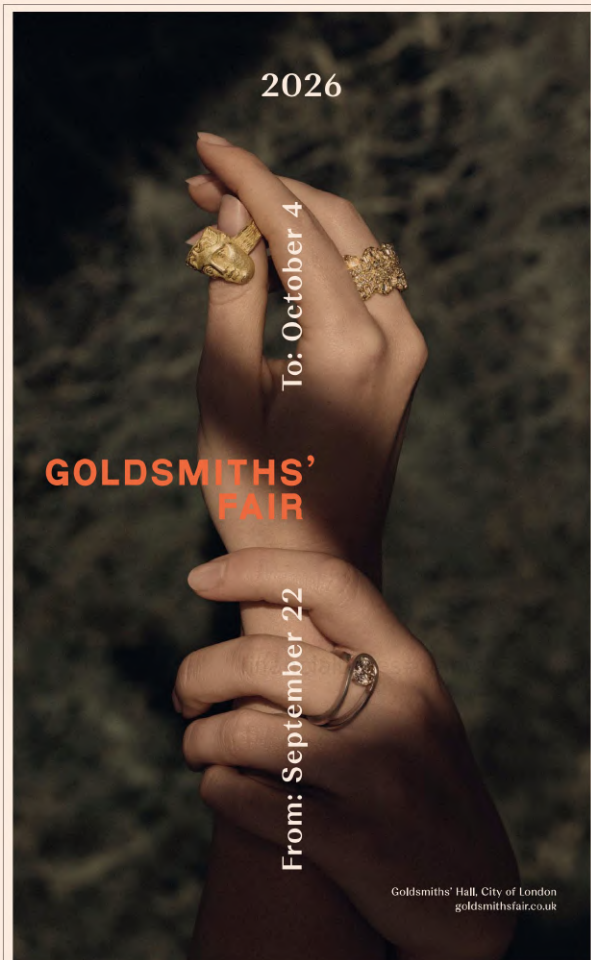
Clockwise from main: artists Corinna Dehn and Lukas Wegwerth; fish-like scales on one of their works; natural colour tones are used; an ‘Armadillo’ series cabinet; a console made with design duo Voukenas Petrides – Julia Sellman, Sarah & Graham

framed architecture typical of central Germany, it had been haphazardly renovated over the years, covered in different-sized wooden planks, and was in a state of disrepair.

“When we started renovating, we had to remove layers to expose the original surfaces,” says Wegwerth, sitting on a stool in the couple’s Berlin base, a studio within an industrial complex. That excavation process revealed sections of facades covered in weather-worn beech shingles – they also found a cache of these wooden tiles buried under bales of hay in the attic of the barn. The couple fell in love with their texture. “Shingles were historically an affordable and sustainable way to build protective facades, before people were able to cut trees into planks, before large industrial sawmills,” says Wegwerth. They could be fashioned from pieces of firewood and were easy to replace. “In Germany the surname Schindler, which means shingle maker, is quite common.”

The more the couple sought out other examples of shingled facades, the more compelled by the material they became. “It’s funny because I grew up seeing those shingles, but I never gave them much thought. When we found all those unused ones in the attic, it really inspired us to think about what we could use them for,” says Wegwerth.

That same year the Frankfurt-based Crespo Foundation – a project sponsoring artists to live and work in tiny houses in rural areas near schools – commissioned them to build four “flying artist rooms”. The couple used it as a way to experiment with shingles. “We made almost 100,000 of them in one summer,” says Dehn. “With some help,” she adds. Soon realising the breadth of their potential applications, “we became interested in testing this idea on complex shapes,” says Wegwerth. “We realised the thinner they are, the easier they are to use on curved surfaces.” The first object they made was a sinuous console covered in weathered shingles upcycled from the barn. A collaboration with the New York City and Athens-based design



2026

To: October 4

From: September 22

GOLDSMITHS’ FAIR

Goldsmiths’ Hall, City of London
goldsmithsfair.co.uk