

Design Heroes
 'Roches' shelves by design duo Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec at Galerie Kreo. OPPOSITE: design giant Gaetano Pesce, renowned for his commercial as well as one-off pieces, in his New York studio

Designs of the Times

It's no longer enough to have an impressive portfolio of art to your name. Today's collectors want cutting-edge furniture and lighting to sit alongside their paintings and sculptures. Demand is high, prices are rocketing and the buzzword is bespoke. MARK C O'FLAHERTY reports on the increasingly blurred lines between art and design

Stuck in an industrial no man's land between the burgeoning art scene of Red Hook and the nightlife of Williamsburg, Brooklyn Navy Yard certainly doesn't resonate with the cosmopolitan glamour of the rest of New York's art and design scene. But here, in a vast warehouse space, is the workshop of one of the world's greatest living creative geniuses. Gaetano Pesce, who moved from Italy to the Big Apple in 1983, 11 years after MoMA included his work in the groundbreaking show *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, is putting the finishing touches to a new piece called 'Cloud'. To call it a lamp would be too prosaic. It is far too imposing; Pesce has fashioned a huge, glowing, artificial cumulus from Dacron and resin, from which a stand, in the shape of a giant lion's paw, descends. 'It is about nature,' says Pesce. 'The paw represents the aggressive, violent essence of nature. This piece is a curiosity. It won't be commercially produced; it's an experiment.'

As with many of Pesce's one-off pieces, 'Cloud', accompanied by a substantial price tag, is destined to end up in a private collection. It's indicative of how, in terms of what is being sold at auction and at what price, the lines between art and design have blurred. The market for the latter is catching up with the former. 'Today, many contemporary art collectors not only want the best art on their walls, but they also want to surround themselves with the best design,' explains Simon de Pury, the man behind the auction house de Pury de Pury.

It's easy to identify when the market for 20th- and 21st-century design changed for ever. The tipping point came at Christie's in 2007, when the auction house sold one of an edition of 10 Marc Newson 'Lockheed Lounge' chairs to a collector for £748,500, making his mercury-in-mid-pour, Enola Gay patchwork design icon

the Warhol silk-screen of the design world. Far beyond its starring role in Mark Romanek's video for Madonna's *Rain* in 1993, it has resonance and power; it is a sleek object of desire. And when Simon de Pury was at the helm of the auction house Phillips de Pury back in 2010, a 'Lockheed Lounge' prototype went under his hammer for about \$2.1 million (£1.2 million) in New York.

'Newson and other star designers like Ron Arad played a crucial role in the development of the primary market for design,' says Cécile Verdier, Head of Sotheby's 20th Century Decorative Arts & Design Department in Europe. 'Many design galleries opened in the mid-2000s, and works were exhibited at art fairs rather than interior design fairs. Contemporary art collectors could see that these fine design pieces looked great next to contemporary art paintings and sculpture.' Verdier points to rocketing market prices as concrete evidence that art collectors with deep pockets are investing enthusiastically in design right now. 'In 2008, we sold a pair of "Ours Polaire" armchairs by Jean Royère for €516,750 (£413,399), and they weren't even unique pieces. A couple of years before, these would have sold for €400,000. In 2013, we sold a wrought-iron five-light "Liane" wall sculpture by the same designer for €505,500 – more than three times the pre-sale estimate.'

The design market is as complex as the art market, and the status of a piece, its backstory, as well as the creator, dictate desirability and value. Pesce, for instance, is known for creating playful, surrealist, but still commercially manufactured furniture with the likes of Italian brand Cassina, which is a favourite of adventurous interior designers with big budgets. At the same time, his vintage folding 'Umbrella' chairs can be found on online art and antiques marketplace 1stdibs for as little as \$1,500. But he is also the revered





subject of solo exhibitions, where his assistants may be directed to scent the air with the aroma of minestrone soup to create a holistic, immersive environment. The prices are high, the production unique.

'Investment values relate to how many pieces are created,' says gallerist David Gill, who represents Pesce's work in the UK. 'Some of Gaetano's prototypes are museum pieces, while there are vases that he designed with a much wider audience in mind. The resin tables of his that we exhibited a while back were extraordinary and unique. When viewed from above, there was a depth that wasn't just about colour. They were as good as his very best work, and sold for around £75,000 to £85,000 each.' The secondary market for Pesce is thriving, too: a 'Moloch' floor lamp was sold at Phillips in 2013 for \$197,000.

There have been huge changes in the design market over the past few years, driven by the way designers and galleries work together. For a decade, the buzzword was 'editions'. 'That model was a complete failure,' says Patrick Perrin, co-founder of the international art and design fair PAD. 'The designer would create five drawings for five pieces, and one of each [piece] would be created, with each one taking months. Then it would sit in a gallery or on a stand at a fair, and then if someone wanted to order one, it would take a further few months. Now it's about unique, one-off pieces. The major dealers like Fumi and Kreo are working in a bespoke way.'

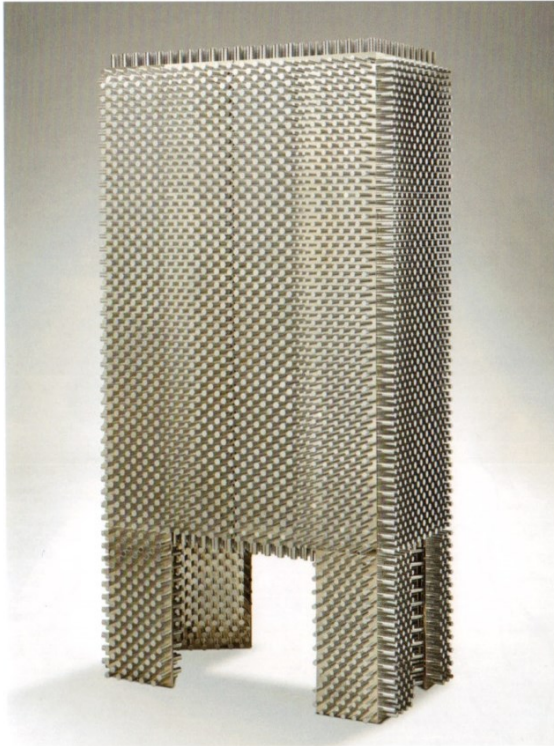
'It's very true,' says Valerio Capo, co-owner of Gallery Fumi in London. 'There is a growing demand for bespoke works, sometimes motivated by interior designers working with clients. Also, collectors are drawn to one-offs, or prototypes. And sometimes, because of the way something is produced, it can only be unique – like the hand-engraved and painted screens of French artist Zoé Ouvrier,

the "Fuzz" tables by design duo Study O Portable, made of layers of ceramic resin, or the jewel-like mirrors by artist Sam Orlando Miller.'

If the pieces themselves are as unique as the most detailed oil on canvas, then the way they are marketed has clear parallels with the rise of Frieze et al. 'When I became the majority owner of Phillips de Pury more than a decade ago, we decided to focus on cutting-edge contemporary art, design and photography,' says Simon de Pury. 'The other auction houses weren't doing it. We started championing the work of Ron Arad, Marc Newson, Zaha Hadid, the Campana Brothers, Mattia Bonetti, Ross Lovegrove, and others, by incorporating them into our contemporary art exhibitions and by marketing them to our contemporary art clients.'

Phillips de Pury [now just Phillips] was one of the key sponsors of the first Design Miami, in 2005, which presented design in the same context as contemporary art. Now it is a major player in modern and contemporary design auctions, from its spectacular new HQ on Berkeley Square, and there are scores of international design fairs, focused on the gallery and the collector rather than the commercial manufacturer. PAD, which takes place in Paris as well as London, is one of the biggest. 'London has become the centre of the design world,' says Perrin, 'and there is a change in attitude from the collector. People want pieces that they can actually use as furniture, not just something that's beautiful. It's okay for something in your bedroom to look great, but if you can't put your socks and underwear in it, then it doesn't work. The story of "art and design" is finished. Remember, design was something called "decorative arts" in the 20th century.'

While the contemporary art fairs of the world often rigidly concentrate on the work of living artists, design fairs customarily



Furniture Galleries
 FROM FAR LEFT: 'Cloud' lamp by Gaetano Pesce; 'Liquid Glacial' table by Zaha Hadid at David Gill Galleries in Mayfair; gallerist David Gill; 'Up6' armchair and footstool by Gaetano Pesce; 'Fakir' cabinet by Mattia Bonetti at David Gill; Didier Krzentowski, owner of Galerie Kreo, Paris and a new Mayfair outpost; 'Loula' screen by Zoé Ouvrier at Gallery Fumi in Shoreditch; 'Umbrella' chair by Gaetano Pesce

'NOW IT'S ABOUT UNIQUE, ONE-OFF PIECES. THE MAJOR DEALERS ARE WORKING IN A BESPOKE WAY'

PATRICK PERRIN, CO-FOUNDER OF ART AND DESIGN FAIR PAD

embrace pieces from the early 20th century, as well as cutting-edge work fresh from a designer's studio. As with the art world, there is a sophisticated secondary market as well as primary, and the scarcity of modernist and post-modernist work, when combined with an intriguing backstory, can turn a chair that was manufactured in the hundreds or thousands into treasure. It's one thing to have a Giò Ponti 'Superleggera' chair in your living room, but it's another thing to have sourced a Ponti chair or mirrored console that originally lived in one of the hotels he furnished in Sorrento and Rome.

Auction house Wright – which has gallery space in Chicago and New York, along with a mighty online presence at Istdibs – represents the usual modernist suspects of Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prouvé, whose work has been desirable for decades. At the summer sale in New York there were also Pierre Jeanneret tables and chairs that once sat in the cafeteria of the Punjab University in Chandigarh, India. These are scarce, compelling objects. But scarcity does not make something a hot property. Indeed, it can have a negative impact. 'Sometimes material can be too scarce, and the market suffers for it,' says Wright's President, Richard Wright. 'You need enough material by a specific artist to form a healthy market. And within that market the best material, by definition, is a small

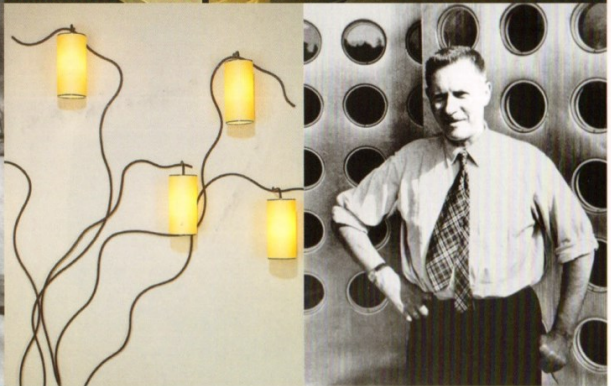
percentage of the offerings and performs exponentially better. There's a healthy market for George Nakashima in the low five figures, but exceptional works sell for over \$100,000.' Conversely, the work of someone like Ron Arad has suffered from a proliferation of it in galleries and at auction. 'He has made commercial mistakes,' says gallerist David Gill. 'The prices for his work have fallen.'

One of the reasons why the primary market is so buoyant, propelled by relatively new, young names, is that the heat surrounding design has allowed for galleries to invest in promising talent. This has had a direct effect on the quality of the product. 'If you're a painter, you need the canvas and paint and imagination,' says Gill. 'But if you are making furniture, there are many other costs. Young designers need patrons to finance their careers and help them get established.'

Gill has been working with London-based designers Patrik Fredrikson and Ian Stallard, who produce work under the moniker Fredrikson Stallard, for the past eight years. He has known them for 12. With his support, they have become design superstars, and honed an aesthetic informed by drama and fragmentation. Their glass-box coffee tables from 2010, with painted interiors that look as if a vessel of colour has exploded inside, are spectacular. A 'Basalt' side table from early 2014, with gold-painted aluminium legs, resembles a perfect black glossy museum stand that has been liquefied by a Photoshop filter.

'We have never tried to chase the market,' says Stallard. 'The most important thing is that we love our work. And all of our collectors are collectors of art also. They are well informed and knowledgeable. High-end design has to be just as contextually rigorous as its fine art

COURTESY OF GALLERIE KREO (ARAD AND PONTI); PERRIN; GILL; GILL GALLERIES; © FRANK PERRIN; © GALLERY FUMI



At the Cutting Edge
CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:
designer Charlotte Perriand in 1928;
20th-century furniture stand
Chahan at art and design fair PAD;
'Liane' lamp by Jean Royère;
designer Jean Prouvé in 1955;
'Bodyguards' chair by Ron Arad;
'Taiba' bookcase by Charlotte
Perriand; PAD co-founder
Patrick Perrin



'EXPECTATIONS AND TASTES IN TERMS OF COLLECTING HAVE CHANGED RADICALLY. TODAY, FUNCTION MATTERS'

DIDIER KRZENTOWSKI, CO-FOUNDER, GALERIE KREO

cousin. A new parallel avenue has opened up alongside the eternal appeal of 20th-century classics from the likes of Prouvé, [Serge] Mouille and Perriand. And you only need to look at the court of Louis XIV to see that high-end design has been collectable and a part of the art world before.

Some of the most interesting and sought-after design in the UK at the moment is as challenging, in its way, as any piece of fine art. If anything, it's easier to have impact with a piece of furniture that occupies space in a way that invites, nay demands, a tactile response, as opposed to a canvas or photograph. 'Martino Gamper and Bethan Laura Wood are two important British-based designers who cross the worlds of art and design,' says Vicky Richardson, Director of Architecture, Design and Fashion at the British Council. 'Their work is taking what has, in the past, been called "design art" in a new direction. It's a more cerebral form of design that can't be described merely as "decorative arts". These, and other young designers, like Study O Portable, Will Shannon and Kieren Jones, are making work that is questioning values, traditions and the idea of innovation. Some of it is actually ugly, in a conventional sense. Its awkwardness makes you think about what we look for in furniture, and the way we relate to objects around us in a historic and cultural context.'

As with fine art, the design that a collector seeks is informed as much by taste as considerations of value. Shamon's 'Shoe Dip,' with its branches of trainers dangling above a chaotic assemblage of white boxes with paint-splashed interiors, isn't perhaps going to sit well next to a Ponti dining table. But somewhere out there is a collector with an interior that it's perfect for – just as there are collectors obsessed with South American art, with lofts full of original Sérgio Rodrigues 'Sheriff' lounge chairs and Carlos Motta 'Do Not Touch Me' coffee tables with spiked wooden globe bases.

With the likes of Marc Newson, Jasper Morrison and Martin Szekely firmly established, who are the names to watch? Galerie Kreo, which recently opened a London outpost to work alongside its Paris mothership, has worked with all three designers since the birth of the high-end design market. The gallery's co-founder Didier Krzentowski is considered by many to be the most influential dealer of contemporary design anywhere in the world. His eye is extraordinary and he is a kingmaker. He says he is engaging with a new generation of collectors that has grown up in a thoroughly advanced design-oriented world, epitomised by the mass-market slick of Apple and Ikea that would have been unimaginable three or four decades before. 'Their expectations and tastes in terms of collecting have increased and changed radically. Today, function matters as well as aesthetics.' A set of Louis XIV candlesticks could never be enough for this kind of collector.

'The absolute stars of the market today are the people we have worked with for the past 10 years, including François Baucher, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Konstantin Greic and Hella Jongerius,' says Krzentowski. 'I think that new designers to watch include Studio Wieki Somers, who pose essential questions about how we view objects by adding fantasy to the designs, and Doshi



Future Vision
FROM TOP: the influential 20th-century designer Gio Ponti and his collectable Fifties 'Superleggera' chairs; contemporary Italian designer Martino Gamper, whose work crosses the boundaries of art and design



PERSONAL VIEW

Dylan Jones on design

As a boy, I spent most of my weekends traipsing along after my father as he visited every auction house and junk shop in East Anglia. Every Saturday and Sunday, regardless of the weather, we would be looking at Victorian bedside tables, Georgian standard lamps, reupholstered sofas, rickety old dining room chairs and the kind of *objets d'art* that even back then I knew were really nothing more than old tat.

My father was going to make his fortune buying and selling antiques, and nothing was going to stand in his way – certainly not the small army of flat-capped Lovejoys in their tweed jackets and cords who invariably told him that whatever it was he was trying to sell them was worth a lot less than he thought it was.

Heigh ho. While my father may have been no good at the antiques business, soon nobody else was, because by the mid-Nineties there not only appeared to be nothing left worth selling, but people's tastes had started to change, too. By the mid-Nineties, if you weren't in the Mid-century Modern game then you weren't in the game at all. It started with Italian furniture and Scandinavian lighting before everyone and their mother started hoovering up anything North American: TV dressers, drinks cabinets, laminated dining-room tables, bachelor-pad chandeliers, chrome kitchen panels and stained-glass coffee tables.

The market went mad, and in the space of three or four years, the antiques business changed completely. These days, collecting high-end design pieces – mid-20th century and later



Form and Function
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
'Spaghetti Junction' inter-stacking
tables by Bethan Laura Wood; 'Egg'
chair by Arne Jacobsen; designer
Bethan Laura Wood; Curtis Jeré's
brass lamp

Levien, whose whimsical and colourful design brings a new energy to the collision of East and West.' Studio Wicket Somers' recent exhibition at Kreo, *Mitate*, consisted of a range of lamps with relatively sparse decoration and economy of line, but with strong flourishes from the materials used and the silhouettes. Each represented, and was named after, a certain characteristic of the Japanese samurai code of honour. If Alessi is the McDonald's of personality in design, Studio Wicket Somers is Hélène Darroze at the Connaught. 'Each of those pieces is a character in its own right,' says Krzentowski. 'Each will bring to its owner so much more than just the simple satisfaction of light.'

The debate about whether there should be a distinction between art and design rages on, of course. There are artists who have produced furniture. And there are artists who have based their whole business model on creating editions, or concepts, rather than physical material. And there are designers who produce one-off objects. The definitions are fluid. And to resign design to the description of 'decorative art' is far too simplistic. It can be challenging, just as much as fine art can be bought purely for decorative purposes.

'You know at the time of the Impressionists, the public didn't consider them artists,' says Gaetano Pesce, leaning over his desk with a schematic for precisely where his 'Cloud' will be placed when it is exhibited in Rome over the summer. 'Time revealed the Impressionists to be the true artists, and again, in this case, only time will tell. I asked the director of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York why they repeat themselves with their name: Art. Design. It is the same thing.' ❧



– is a must-do for any self-respecting collector. And while people used to buy these pieces for utilitarian reasons – they were going to actually use them! – they now sit on specially built platforms in Case Study-style lobbies, on the very edge of purpose. A pair of Sigurd Resell's 'Falcon' chairs, an enormous Curtis Jeré brass lamp, a Milo Baughman sofa, an Arne Jacobsen 'Egg' chair, a white and red 'Tulip' office chair by Eero Saarinen – everyone wants their home to look like a Mid-century Modern museum; to look as though it were designed by an associate of Oscar Niemeyer.

Of course, there are many who think that Mid-century Modern is a fad, and that the craze for this kind of design will pass, but not me. I love it, and – with the help of my wife, who has all the taste in our family – have filled our house with it. However, unlike a lot of proper collectors, we actually use it all, as I find the idea of treating our home like a museum slightly ridiculous.

The thing is, I was never surprised by the Mid-century design renaissance. In fact, I remember exactly where I was when the bottom dropped out of the antiques business. It was 1997, and I was on my honeymoon. Having spent two weeks living it up at various Aman hotels in and around Bali, we eventually ran out of time (and money) and had to return to London. As we took a taxi towards the Ngurah Rai airport, speeding by all the furniture warehouses, I saw a huge sign: 'Bali's very best furniture shop,' it proclaimed. 'Antiques made while you wait.'

Dylan Jones is the Editor-in-Chief of British GQ and Chairman of London Collections: Men