IN CONVERSATION WITH...
THE BOUROULLEC BROTHERS

The rising stars of European design, Ronan and Erwan reinvent convention to create thoughtful pieces for our peripatetic generation

TEXT BY VIDULA KOTIAN

It’s like watching one of those narrator-within-a-narrator movies — with a strong directional voice depicting the incidents but still flexible enough to let the characters tell their story alongside. But that’s what most of the designs out of the Bouroullec factory are like: A board on which you add your own strip. The easy, adaptable products are almost like an afterthought. In the sense that their user-friendliness is so entrenched and functions so variable that they end up having a completely different avatar based on who’s refining it. Like the Piddles collection of outdoor furniture in 2008 whose pieces work like an installation with multiple configurations. The four main seats are slightly concave shoes that you can use individually to sit, lie or collectively converge.

What is most striking about the Designers of the Year of the international EDIDA 2009-10 is how elementary a tale they seem to spin. “It may sound contradictory yet we always tend to make an idea basic by questioning it. Like the Piddles collection of outdoor furniture in 2008 whose pieces work like an installation with multiple configurations. The four main seats are slightly concave shoes that you can use individually to sit, lie or collectively converge.”

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Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Paris
Website: www.bouroullec.com

Design should be...
Ronan and Erwan: Useful.
The first memorable decor product you came across R and E: The famous chair Thonet 214 because it embodies a kind of design perfection. The subtle harmony of its shape with the breakthrough woodworking technique made it a timeless, classic chair. Every detail that must have required a highly rigorous work seems nonetheless obvious and light. It is a technical seat that integrates many constraints, the main one being to obey to seating standards.


The famous chair Thonet 214 because it embodies a kind of design perfection. The subtle harmony of its shape with the breakthrough woodworking technique made it a timeless, classic chair. Every detail that must have required a highly rigorous work seems nonetheless obvious and light. It is a technical seat that integrates many constraints, the main one being to obey to seating standards. But the subtext as usual is complex: the glass front allows passers-by to participate in the show as well, different ground levels ensure the space feels more like a performance area; and the space is voluntarily sparse to let the “scenery express itself”.

“So what’s next?” “As for the news, we will launch a couple of new projects during the Milan Fair in April, including a contemporary lamp with Established & Sons who invited us to work with Murano’s master glass blowers of Venini in Italy. We also have designed the Lampanahina lamp manufactured by Bitossi and will unveil two tables for Magis (one dining table and one round bistro-like occasional table). In the spring as well, we are invited by Galerie Kreo in Paris to do an exhibit. Finally, in June we look forward to the launch of a new collection of elements for the bathroom for Hansgrohe/Axor that took several years to be developed.”

Whether growing a chair (Vegetal), working on a cross-cultural collaboration (Wajima) or stringing together elements that can be combined in any way desired.

“WHETHER GROWING A CHAIR (VEGETAL), WORKING ON A CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION (WAJIMA) OR STRINGING TOGETHER ELEMENTS THAT CAN BE COMBINED IN ANY WAY DESIRED.”

To be launched in Paris this summer, the Azur Bouroullec range will have 75 individual elements that can be combined in any way desired.

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WAJIMA
Following Japan Brand’s invitation, the duo created a modern collection using the area’s traditional expertise: Lacquer.

DECOR PEOPLE
SALUTING DESIGN GREATS

DOS PALLILOS
The new eatery at Casa Camper Hotel, Berlin, offers a one of a kind culinary experience (reflected in the interiors) with elBulli’s former chef Albert Rouxich.

AND MORE...
Nothing is as simple as it seems – especially to make. Here’s why the boys are favourites of top European brands like Vitra, Magis, etc

PRODUCED BY VIDULA KOTIAN

STEELWOOD
Presented at Salone 2008 for Magis, the handsome series has chairs, shelving and table systems. The beech and steel family are popular office furniture for creative firms.

QUILT
Designed for Established & Sons, this armchair is made of a metal structure with fibreglass shell and seat.

PEBBLES
The five elements of this outdoor series – four seaters and a simple table – offer various solutions for any landscape. Resin strings have been interwoven around an aluminium skeleton to generate these installation-like pieces.

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