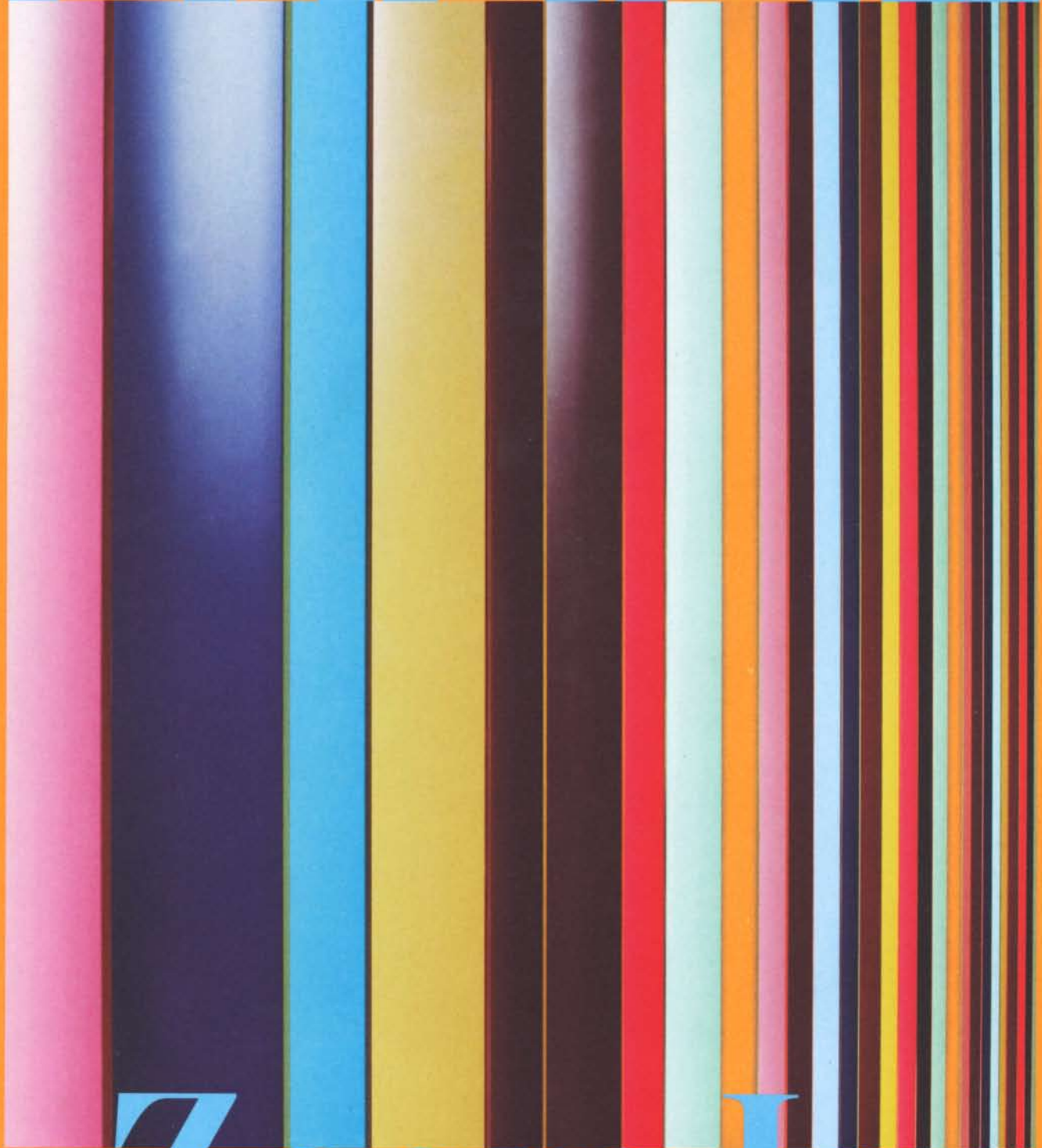


FRAME



Issue 52

The Great Indoors

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Zoom In

ALL EYES ON SÃO PAULO'S DESIGN SOUL, PAULA HAYES' MINI BOTANIC GARDENS, AND NEW BRANDED RETAIL IN PARIS, ZÜRICH AND BARCELONA

Slick on the Draw

Deliberately omitting explanatory text, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec let sketches reveal the essence of their work, as we learn in talking with Erwan about *Drawing*.

Words Femke de Wild



Why did you want to make a book about drawing? Erwan

Bouroullec: *Album* – an exhibition at Arc en Rêve Centre d'Architecture in Bordeaux two years ago – was the first major project that featured our drawings. After gathering together all our sketches for that show, we started thinking about doing something with them in book form. The concept for this book, however, came from graphic designer Cornel Windlin. He compiled the publication, and he deserves all the credit.

You ended up with an 868-page book. How did it get so huge? *Drawing* is intended to illustrate a process – a way of working. Maybe even a way of life. The drawings are not presented as works of art. Cornel felt that to explain the process correctly, we should include as many drawings as possible. He came up with the idea of web offset printing, which is typically used in high-volume publications like mail-order catalogues. You can work with very cheap, very thin paper weighing as little as 35 or 40 g/m². It's a fast and relatively inexpensive method, particularly for high-volume printing jobs. To achieve the desired opacity, we opted for paper with a weight of 51 g/m². Our decision to use this method was crucial to the making of the book. At a certain time, *Drawing* had expanded to nearly 2000 pages. We had to find the right balance.

There's hardly any text in the book. Cornel wrote an explanation of the book and its origins, but the publication itself is a direct reflection of the drawings we collected. In most cases, one drawing takes up an entire page. When you see various drawings on top of one another, you're seeing exactly what we

found when we went through our sketchbooks. To an increasing degree, however, we aim for a more straightforward approach, bypassing the layers that move a design in this or that direction. It's the reason we haven't included critical analysis. *Drawing* is raw and pure; it has no meaning other than what you see. In previous books we added information, such as measurements of original products, techniques used, names coupled with drawings. We omitted that sort of info here, in order to generate a certain flow.

Why are the drawings in chronological order? When Cornel first suggested putting our drawings from 2005 to 2012 in order, by year, we didn't see the logic in his idea. Generally speaking, we don't like to present our work chronologically. Sometimes we spend six years on a project, sometimes six months. The precise moment of completion seldom says anything about the reason or idea behind the project in question. But looking at the drawings arranged chronologically, we discovered an evolution we hadn't noticed before. Suddenly it seemed totally logical to show them according to date.

Can you explain the evolution you observed? Over the years, our drawings have contained

more and more important information. They divulge the irrationality of the design process. Usually, drawings are presented only as they relate to the product for which they were made – and as the result of a structured process: from initial sketch to computer rendering to prototype. In our case, this approach doesn't reflect what actually happens. Our process differs from that of the architect or the fashion designer. An architect begins with broad outlines and, as the project progresses, gradually focuses on the details and their importance. Product design is just the opposite. The further you get, the more ideas you have to eliminate. A product has to weigh less, be easier to manufacture, not cost so much. Calculations gain the upper hand but don't show what a product is really all about. Abstract drawings, on the other hand, expose the essence of a project. Hand-drawn sketches give us the distance we need, allow us to resist the dogma of rationality, and prevent the loss of information.

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