SEBASTIAN HERKNER
DESIGNER OF THE YEAR
MAISON&OBJET PARIS
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SEBASTIAN HERKNER

Age has no bearing on worth. At 37, German designer Sebastian Herkner, who trained at Offenbach University of Art and Design, is embarking on an ever-growing number of collaborations with international design houses (no less than 21 projects in the pipeline during 2018 for Moroso, Dedon, Thonet and Lintello to name but a few), and over the course of the past decade has received some thirty awards in recognition of his innovative yet traditional work. MAISON&OBJET has always sought to honour designers whose originality and excellence impact their generation, and Herkner’s astonishing career path propelled him straight onto the trade fair’s radar, sealing the decision to turn the 2019 spotlight on the design scene’s rising star.
A DESIGNER WHO STRADDLES THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN MODERNITY AND TRADITION

Since first setting up his studio in the Frankfurt suburb of Offenbach am Main back in 2006, Sebastian Herkner has unremittingly focused on creating designs that fuse tradition with creativity, new technology with craftsmanship. An approach he adopted long before the design world started surfing this now supremely fashionable wave. His unconditional love for traditional craftsmanship was what guided his first landmark design, the “Bell” table, whose steel and brass platter nestles on a hand-blown glass base produced in a centuries-old Bavarian glass factory.
What’s so ironic is that in 2009, not a single design house wanted to back the project - “people were so unaccustomed to seeing this combination of materials that it didn’t interest them in the slightest” he explains. In the end, it took three whole years and an encounter with ClassiCon for his table to see the light of day. Instantly achieving best-seller status. “It’s absolutely vital we revive all these traditional forms of craftsmanship before they get lost forever, as they’re an integral part of our cultural heritage” explains Sebastian Herkner. It is this very kind of craftsmanship that his designs regularly intertwine with the most up-to-the-minute technology. Such was the case with the “118” chair (Thonet, 2018), which uses a mix of CNC milling and steam bending to fashion the wood.

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His appetite for a challenge and relentless desire to explore unchartered territory has not only led him to design glasses, bicycles and perfume bottles or make forays into the world of interior design, but also to embark on an internship with Stella McCartney during the course of his studies. “I was interested in the manufacturing processes used in fashion, and understanding how colours are put together” he explains. The flair for combining colours he honed whilst there now underpins his signature style. “Colour is often the very last thing designers think about. For me, it’s always the starting point for the whole design process”. He does admit, nonetheless, that “it can take years to find that perfect colour combination”.

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MUTLICULTURAL INSPIRATION

Be it in his studio, surrounded by a six-strong team that herald from all four corners of the world, or during his frequent trips to China, Colombia, Thailand, Senegal and Canada visiting local manufacturers, design houses and craftsmen, Sebastian Herkner has a longstanding habit of quenching his thirst for ideas elsewhere. “Different cultures, skills and lifestyles all fuel my inspiration” he explains. He also finds his inspiration in traditional materials - ceramics, leather, marble.... And art. Another of his iconic pieces, the “Oda” floor lamp (Pulpo, 2014), bears testament to that. Resembling a reservoir of light, the design was directly inspired by photographic images of water towers captured by Bernd and Hilla Becher. Every single source of inspiration is perfectly in tune with his quest for authenticity, his desire to use sustainable materials, and his sense of respect for the time it takes to create a truly stunning piece. His approach to design is both ethical and committed, imbuing the creative process with the same degree of importance as the actual end product itself.
AT MAISON&OBJET

As a regular at the fair - “I never miss a session”, he smiles -, Sebastian Herkner is thrilled that this accolade will give him a platform to unveil some of his latest creations whilst simultaneously showcasing the manufacturing processes that have always been so close to his heart.
Pastille Table for Edition van Treeck

Lucio Doro - Sebastian Herkner

La Che for Ames

Beret for Nude

118 for Thonet
« Different cultures, skills and lifestyles all fuel my inspiration »
ABOUT MAISON&OBJET PARIS

Since 1995, MAISON&OBJET has been the world’s foremost event for professionals of the lifestyle, interior design and design industries. Every edition brings together some 3,000 exhibitors and more than 85,000 unique visitors – of which 50% hail from outside France. Promoting new contacts and emerging talents, MAISON&OBJET presents twice a year the latest sources of inspiration by shedding insight into current and future trends. As a result, the event has become an effective catalyst for brand development and business growth. Launched in September 2016, the digital platform MOM (MAISON&OBJET AND MORE) offers a comprehensive overview of the latest news from and products by exhibiting labels, manufacturers, artisans, craftspeople and designers. A never-ending source of inspiration, it also provides a tool for visitors to establish a direct conversation with thousands of brands all year round.
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