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TADAO ANDO
at the opening of Punta della Dogana

53RD BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

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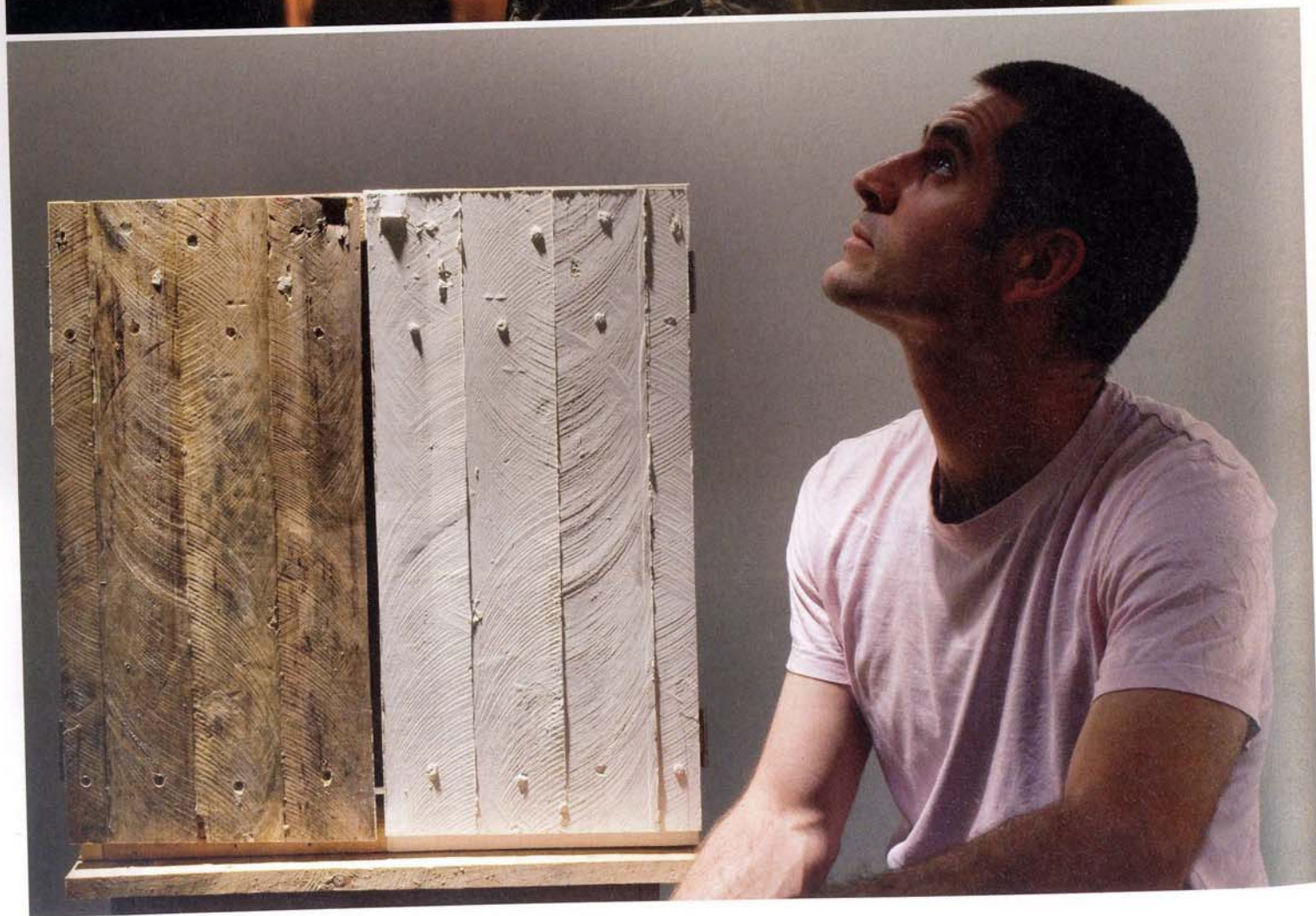


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Fertile Minds

Designers of the Future

With Design Miami/Basel moving closer to the bosom of Art Basel this year and in the case of one gallery, expanding the remit to include 18th and 19th century design, there was a danger that the event could be submerged by the general art crowd. However, as usual, the Designers of the Future presentation proved that there is life after vintage.

photos JAMES HARRIS, COURTESY OF DESIGN MIAMI/BASEL
text HETTIE JUDAH

Visitors to Craft Punk – the design zoo hosted by Fendi at this year's Milan Fair – found familiar faces greeting them at the Designers of the Future award show at Design Miami/Basel. All four Basel laureates had taken part in Craft Punk, which had likewise been coordinated by the Design Miami team. Either these guys are really good, or there are far fewer young designers out there than we realised.

With only six weeks between the two events, Peter Marigold, Raw Edges, Nacho Carbonell and Tomáš Gabzdil Libertiny must have been hard pressed to come up with fresh ideas appropriate to the dictated materials of plaster and mirror. Whether buoyed up by the rush of accolades, or simply enjoying the lack of commercial pressure, all produced monumentally themed installations.

Fallopian Forms

A pendulous scrotal form – complete with bristling hair – fronted Carbonell's booth, which led through into a darkened Fertility Cave lined with plaster-covered mirror paper against which writhed a handful of quasi fallopian forms faced in plastered jute. Rather than a literal temple to fecundity, Carbonell explained that the instal-

lation depicted the movement of his thought processes at this stimulating moment in his young career. 'It's a reflection of my brain,' says Carbonell of the twisting forms. 'Some ideas love each other so much that they loop over themselves and stay separate from the rest; others are looking for another idea to interact with.' Carbonell and his studio evidently thrive on the adrenaline of these back-to-back creative commissions. 'We have been working a lot and generating a lot of ideas recently – I hope my mind keeps as fertile as it is right now.'

Carbonell's tufty cojones made for rude contrast with Libertiny's burnished plaster egg, which stood taller than a man, on a plinth carved with the designer's name. Libertiny is a young man with a varied formation and very definite sense of where he is going: the aesthetics of the piece were informed by Michelangelo's rough-backed marbles in the Medici chapel, faux marble baroque interiors created from waxed plasterwork, and his technical training in material science. Libertiny sees little point in designers creating quasi-functional pieces for a non-functional purpose. 'If something is serious enough as a conceptual piece, its function is irrelevant,' he explained.

Fertility Cave by Nacho Carbonell
(facing page, top)

Palindrome by Peter Marigold
(facing page, bottom)

Reflection by Tomáš Gabzdll
Libertiny

Mount Domesticus by Raw
Edges: Yael Mer & Shay Alkalay
(facing page)

Alpine Scenes

Raw Edges' heroically proportioned Mount Domesticus is charmingly un-grandiose in its inspiration. Shay Alkalay and Yael Mer's new London digs came to them pared with the classic wall-sized alpine scene familiar from local cafes in the 1970s. "We love it; it's the reason we took the flat, and since then we can't stop thinking about mountains," enthuses Mer. Reaching beyond the booth up to the ceiling of the exhibition hall proper, it also pays homage to the mountains of old plasterboard that cascade across city pavements as districts are progressively gentrified. The material was tricky to work with – to construct the angular planes they had to slice through the top layer of paper and the plaster beneath while leaving the base paper intact to produce a sharp fold.

Like the trophy hall in an ancestral mansion, Marigold's poured plaster curlicues jut out of the surface of old mirrors within the distorted perspective of his tapered space. Inspired by a slab of ponyskin that he found in the Fendi archives back in Milan, Marigold's Palindrome

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