







This and previous page: Photography: Alister Thorpe

While kicking off 2025, Atelier Vierkant finds itself in a frontrunning position in the field of inventing and reinventing the ancient art of pottery making. As sole independent family-owned ceramic production in Belgium, we are positioned at an intersection of product development, architecture, interior and landscape design. In February, together with cherished partners, we open our first exhibition space in Cape Town, Ballotina, and we are excited to bring our work to the South African design community as an open invitation to collaborate on future projects. In April, our second production unit close to Brussels will open its doors; our commitment to invest in advanced production facilities remains a top priority. Manual production with assistance of modern mechanical support allows us to generate a unique product. At the yearly design fair in Milan, Salone del Mobile, we will reveal an ‘animistic’ collection of vessels, shapes and volumes, in a setting created under the guidance of architect Dieter Van der Velpen.

In this review, we report from the 60th Venice Biennale where Belgian artist Arne Quinze presented his exhibition ‘Are we the Aliens’, inviting the spectators to reflect on the transformative potential of humanity’s reconnection with the natural world. The exhibition presents the artist’s creativity and imagination in a variety of materials, such as glass, metal, paint and clay. Together with a team of Atelier Vierkant craftsmen, Quinze spent two months sculpting in clay, ‘not only trying to get the shapes right but also getting familiar with the material’. The result was an installation set in the courtyard of a renaissance church complex, campo San Francesco della Vigna in Venice.

We also dive into the microclimate around lake Annecy, the promontory of the French Alps, where Arnaud Charvin has been exploring the work of his father, François, and pursuing the introduction of new colourful furniture like the ones of Paola Lenti into traditional settings. Keen to achieve a homogenous result, Charvin challenged his partners to collaborate and to match colours and textures to an exquisite result. With this layout and level of presentation, the Pépinière has become a ‘point incontournable’ in the world of outdoor furniture.

Atelier Vierkant often goes on-site with a photographer to document the garden projects. What happens however if the photographer is asked to shoot his own garden? London-based garden photographer Alister Thorpe has a keen eye for detail and a deep appreciation of nature. Designed by landscape architect Stefano Marinaz, Thorpe’s garden is conceived as a captivating woodland experience, featuring diverse plant life with a mix of perennials, annuals, self-seeding and evergreen plants. A passionate plantsman himself, this garden has become a daily sanctuary where every element draws attention and begs to be photographed. In this review, we present details of the garden in various seasons, from spring to summer, autumn to winter, illustrating how the outdoors can be experienced differently depending on the season and how additional clay works can be enjoyed throughout the year.

Furthermore, we make a stop at Lake Maggiore where designer Tanja Casparis has gone back to her roots. As a child, Casparis spent summer vacations with her family at the lakeshore and this is where she recently chose to build a tiny holiday home in the attic of an old cheese factory. For more than 20 years, Tanja was part of the team at a highly esteemed landscape firm, and since a couple of years, she has been working independently, now setting her own course as a designer. The house and its surroundings in Ticino allow her to find new inspirations, like the constant changes of light running off the mountains and into the lake, a source of creativity, ensuring the feeling of regeneration each time she arrives there.

At the end of his poem *Le Voyage*, dedicated to Maxime du Camp, French poet Charles Baudelaire throws himself on the brink of eternity to find ‘du nouveau’. With the new year ahead, Atelier Vierkant also makes resolutions. We reach out to the design community, partners and colleagues to pursue new designs with innovative approaches and interpretations, and to find new ways to handle old challenges. In Northern Italy, at the Loggia dei Mercanti, the south wing of the Cathedral of Ferrara, the sculptor started with the classical renaissance Ionic column, then got bored and launched infinite variations, to end up with a new interpretation and invention of the column. That same eternal search for newness drives us too in our daily wonderings about beauty.



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Lay-out: wimvandersleyen.com



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Charvin Pépinière

— *Annecy*

Photography:
Stéphane Candé

atelier
vierkant



Just 10 kilometers outside the French city Annecy, up on the mountainside facing the picturesque Annecy lake and the rising Alps, the Charvin family has been maintaining the forest and planting trees for generations. Still nursing trees, designing gardens and outdoor spaces is now the core of their activity with landscape architect Arnaud Charvin and his wife Julie continuing the family heritage.

‘My grandfather planted the first trees here in the 1950s, and in 1977 my father decided to develop the nursery to also include the service of landscape design’, says Charvin about the history of the family location and business.

Encircled by green mountain fields and forests, the nursery with its coniferous and deciduous trees as well as various fruit trees blends into the natural environment in a respectful and harmonious way without marked borders between one and the other.

Five years ago, the Charvin couple took the initiative to redesign the nursery, creating a link between their various activities, and customers can now enjoy a visit to their garden where plants, outdoor furniture and pots are laid out in an inspiring way. ‘Here at Pépinière Charvin, we have created a garden with a subtle and balanced expression to make it integrate well

into the natural landscape’, explains Charvin, ‘With low and organically shaped stone walls our outdoor area invites visitors to circulate and quietly walk around to appreciate the greenery and objects, not to mention the overall scenery’. Even the discrete shop building is organically shaped; the circular structure offers an intimate indoor space where Valentin Pollani, the manager of the place, welcomes guests.

For their recent presentation, Pollani designed different terrace spaces where he integrated both Paola Lenti furniture in close juxtaposition with ad hoc colored and textured Atelier Vierkant vessels.

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Paola Lenti — We started from a thread: the one used for the rugs, the first products introduced on the market. Paola Lenti started as passionate artisans, paying a scrupulous attention to the quality of materials: always looking for a point of contact, a special harmony between colours, signs and shapes. It was 1994. Year after year, they have experimented on yarns and fabrics; this led to the first outdoor collections that have made them known in Italy and in the world.

The outdoors has strengthened the brand identity. Lenti discovered the talent for colour: it has become their trademark. We started new collaborations with selected artisans to preserve the unmistakable sign of craftwork and, at the same time, intensified experi-

mentation and research in partnership with scientific institutes, universities and other companies.

Tradition, innovation. Today Lenti can count on cutting-edge technical yarns and at the same time recover 'ancient' fibers such as flax and hemp, enhancing cultures from other parts of the world and cultivation methods that risk disappearing. Since inception, the respect for the planet is among the priorities. Lenti produces sustainable furniture because durable and recyclable, using process with low environmental impact. We were small, but we have grown. Today the collective is an industrial reality made up of multiple professionals – tailors, upholsterers, weavers, architects and engineers – and consolidated collaborations with

local workers, thus enhancing an all-Italian production chain.

To the outdoor collections, those for interiors have been added, transforming the house Paola Lenti in a complete domestic universe. Carpets, sofas, armchairs and chaise longue can be combined with tables, bookcases, movable backdrops and many other furnishing accessories; materials such as wood, ceramics, glass and metals, which dialogue through colors and finishes, have been introduced next to the exclusive yarns and fabrics, creating this way harmonious and comprehensive environments.

After almost thirty years, Paola Lenti is still tied to that thread: proud of their history.











Text:
Sisse Bro
Photography:
Dave Briel

UTOPIA IS ALREADY HERE

Left page:
*Arne Quinze's
wildflower garden,
Sint-Martens-Latem (BE),
2024*

Right page:
*Ceramorphia study,
pencil drawing by
Arne Quinze, 2024*



Arne Quinze

Belgian artist Arne Quinze is an outspoken optimist. Something which is hard to come by these days. Since the beginning of the '00s, Quinze has become known for his large expressive installations, often set in public spaces, difficult to overlook. Colourful, shiny, textured or fragmented, his works represent an artist with a pressing message.



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Left and right page:
Arne Quinze's
wildflower garden,
Sint-Martens-Latem (BE),
2024





‘There is so much beauty around us, we just have to open our eyes to it’, says Quinze. Settled in the Belgian countryside, in the idyllic landscape surrounding the small town of Sint-Martens-Latem, Quinze resides on a quiet plot of land, with a wildflower garden and open skies. From here, he depicts nature’s wonders, just like artists did generations before him. The Latemse School, a renowned artist group founded in 1898, moved here to escape industrialisation and the grey cities, just like Quinze. They portrayed the countryside, the green meadows, the clear waters, the ancient trees and the grazing cows, rejecting the bustling progress persevering in the large cities of Gent, Antwerp and Brussels. But where the 19th century artists found peace in rural tradition, representing the simple life in nature, Quinze seeks to provoke and raise awareness with elements that contrast the natural surroundings and thus shed light on the beautiful phenomena of nature.

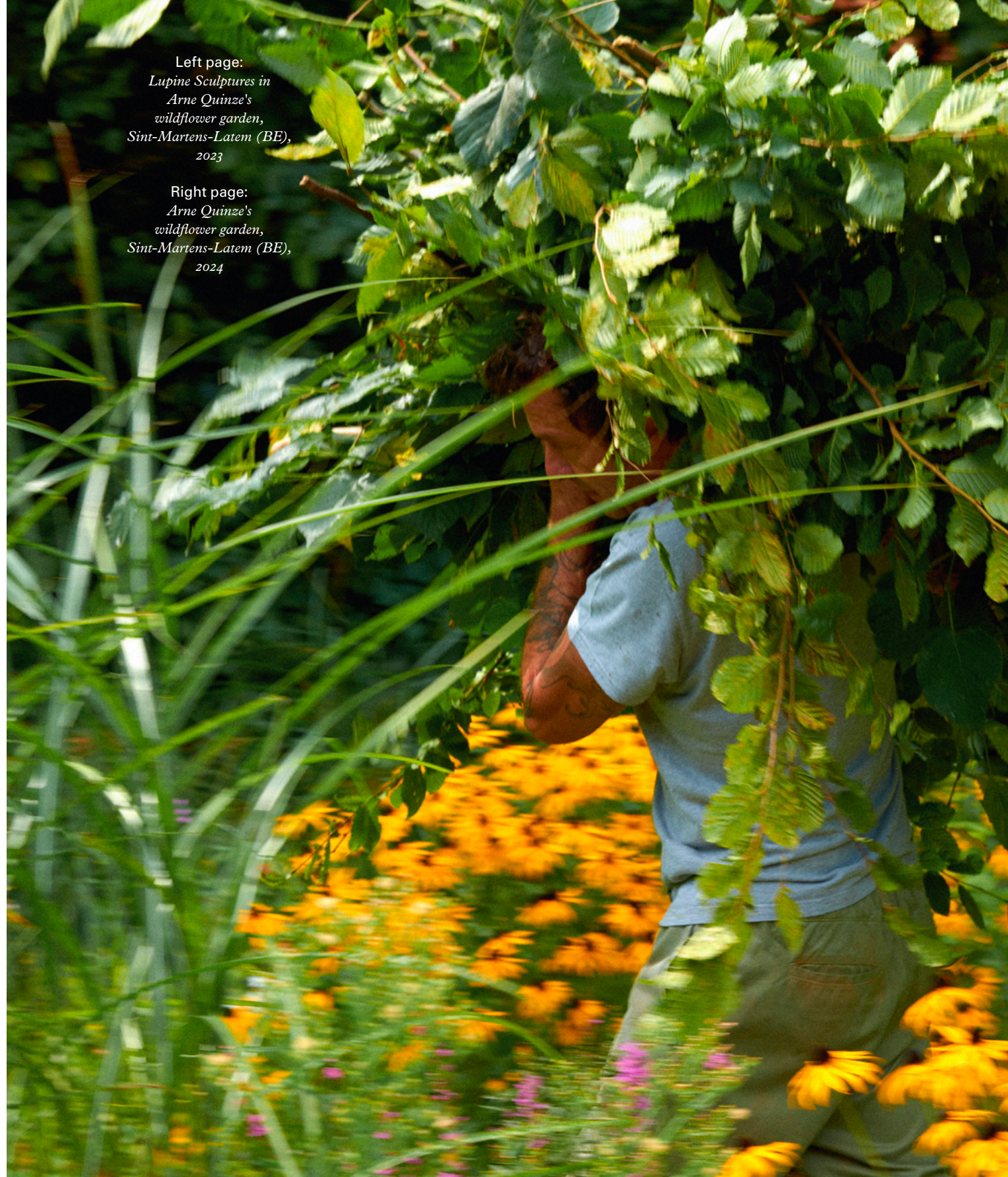
Quinze uses the traditional canvas for his sizable flower compositions, energising and uplifting, two-dimensional mirrors of his own flower meadow next to his atelier. In the past, he also worked with wooden laths, joining them into building-size structures, airy and interactive for people to walk through and breathe through, over-sized bird nests turning man into small beings in comparison. Today, Quinze bends and sculpts aluminium into otherworldly figures, quirky installations made to grab the viewer and make some visual noise. Quinze seems, so to say, tireless in his exploration of materials and ways of creating vibrant rumble.

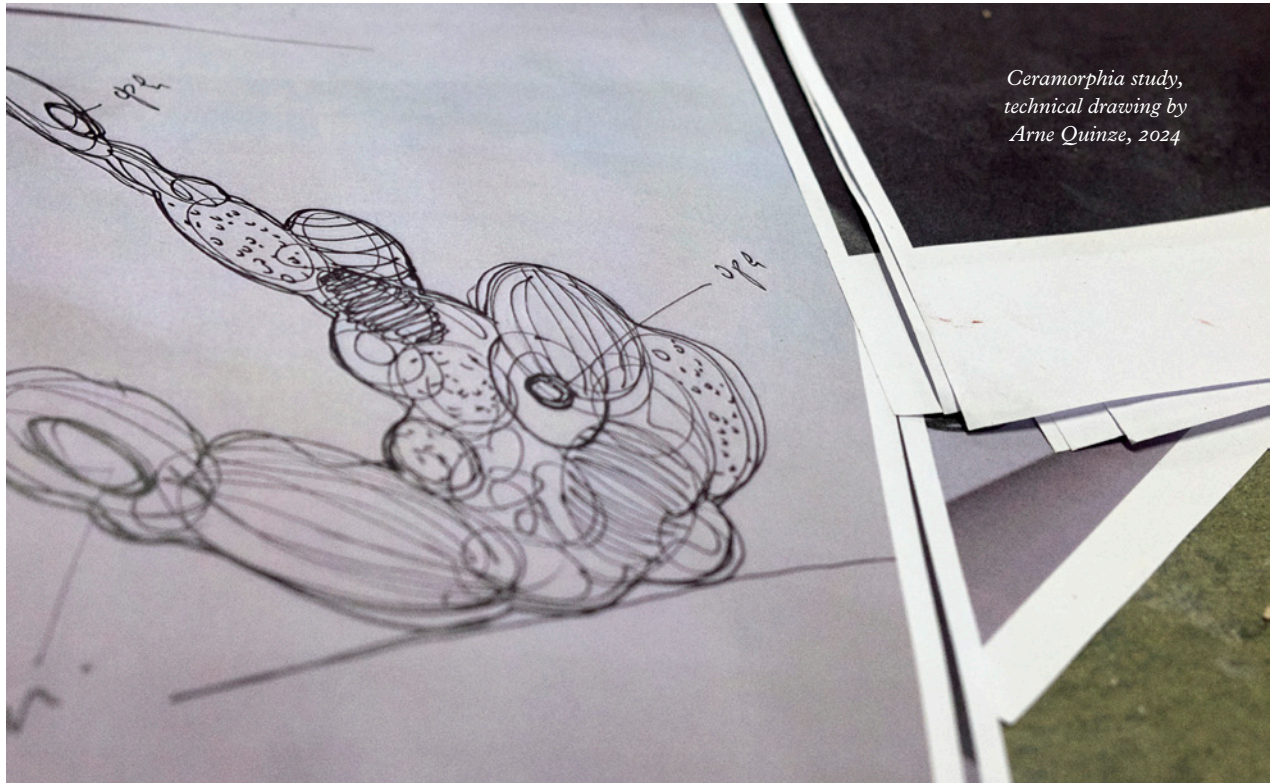
At the 60th edition of the art biennale in Venice, in 2024, Quinze pushed the discoveries even further and brought together known types of works with completely new ones. ‘This exhibition unites my entire family of works’, says the artist. Set in a renaissance church

complex, Campo San Francesco, the artist created a major installation titled ‘Are We The Aliens_’, rich in materiality as well as in vision, ‘...inviting spectators to reflect on the transformative potential of humanity’s reconnection with the natural world’, as stated in the exhibition catalogue. ‘Are we the Aliens_’ is built around a story that a meteor crashes on earth into the Garden of Eden, bringing human genetics with it, a species which will soon start altering the former paradise. The human disconnection to nature and to earth is the central topic that Quinze touches in his entire oeuvre. Besides his artistic activity in his atelier and studio, he daily goes outside, sits on the ground and touches the plants and the ground. ‘When you kneel down and sit close to the earth, you feel it’s alive, and then you start opening your eyes’, he says.

Left page:
Lupine Sculptures in
Arne Quinze's
wildflower garden,
Sint-Martens-Latem (BE),
2023

Right page:
Arne Quinze's
wildflower garden,
Sint-Martens-Latem (BE),
2024





*Ceramorphia study,
technical drawing by
Arne Quinze, 2024*

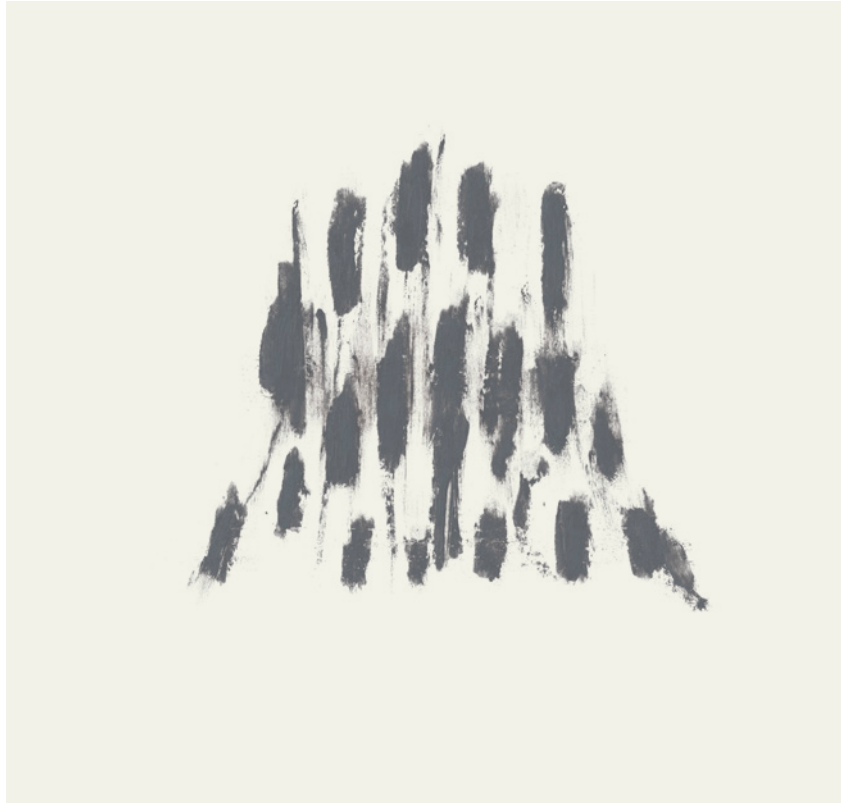
For the biennale installation, Quinze was searching for a partner which would have the right facilities to burn large-size ceramic sculptures. ‘I was searching in many different places until I landed in my own backyard, so to speak, at Atelier Vierkant. Sometimes we do not have to look that far,’ Quinze explains, ‘I know their products and their quality and of course that was the best place for me to work on this.’ Based on sketches and drawings of miniature size shapes and structures he found in his garden, Quinze materialised his own utopian architecture, upsizing organic structures with bumpy, coarse, uneven, striped and holed surfaces. The clay represents the pure matter of earth as well as reminding the viewer of the mineral urban environment so many people spend their lives in. ‘I perceive these artworks not as lifeless entities but as the vibrant sprouts of nature reclaiming urban landscapes from the confines

of mineral cities.’ Together with his assistant and some of the craftsmen from Atelier Vierkant, Quinze spent two months working on the clay sculptures, not only trying to get the shapes right but also just trying to get familiar with the material. ‘Clay is a totally new material for me to work with and it took some time to get the hang of it. It was a true physical challenge’, Quinze says. ‘I tried and tested a lot of things; it was an intense process. It’s not easy to find your own unique language. I see that as an ongoing research process. I’m quite the perfectionist and knowing the quality level at Atelier Vierkant, I wanted to make sure the result was good. Annette (Lantsoght) was of great help, being at the atelier almost the entire time. She has so much knowledge and we had a constant dialogue going on. And Willy (Janssens) can pass by, look at your work and judge it in a minute. It was such an eye opener to work with this family, all of them.’

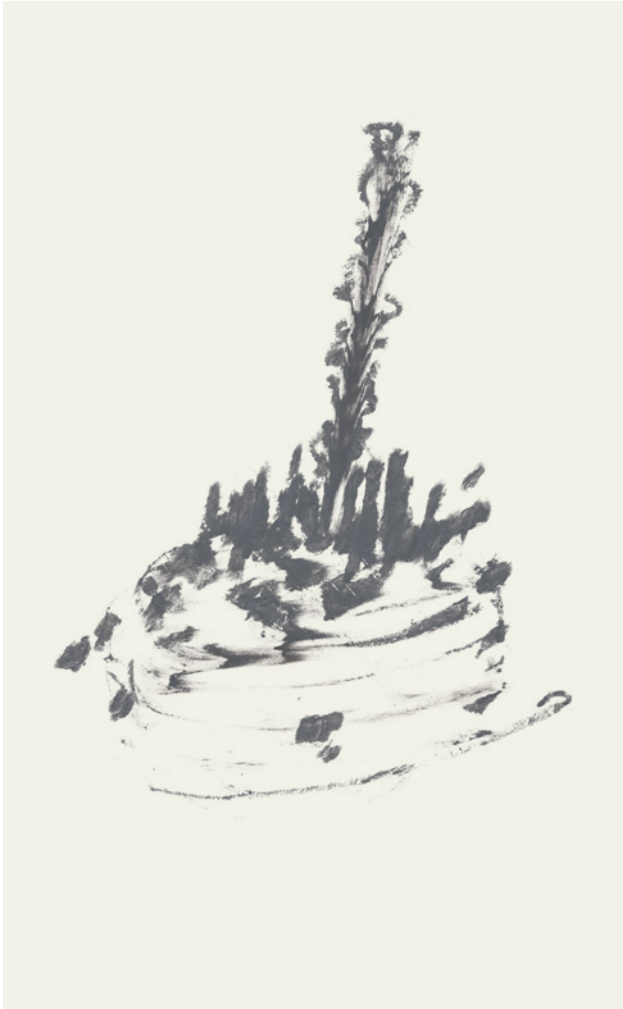
Arne Quinze travels all over the world with his work and looks for creative influence wherever he goes. He mentions the capital of Columbia, Bogotá, a city which used to be one of the world’s most polluted cities with severe environmental problems having ignored the importance of wetlands for too long. Quinze finds inspiration in looking at the way the city has been replanting and, thanks to nature-based solutions, carrying out tests on how to conserve native plants, protecting their ecosystems threatened by human deforestation. ‘We humans need to embrace nature because we are nature. Utopia is already here. We don’t need to reinvent it. I’m a very optimistic person, always searching for the harmony between nature and humans. Nature is already showing us all the solutions so let’s open our minds and hearts to it.’



*Ceramorphia study,
pencil drawing by
Arne Quinze, 2024*



Left and right page:
Ceramorphia studies,
pencil drawings by
Arne Quinze, 2024





Left and right page: *Ceramorphia studies*, oil sketches by Arne Quinze, 2024





Left and right page:
Arne Quinze
 working on *Ceramorphia*
 at the ateliers of
Atelier Vierkant (BE),
 2024





Left and right page:
Arne Quinze
 working on *Ceramorphia*
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 2024



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Arne Quinze
 working on *Ceramorphia*
 at the ateliers of
Atelier Vierkant (BE),
 2024

*Ceramorphia,
part of the
Are We The Aliens_
exhibition during the
Venice Biennale 2024 by
Arne Quinze, 2024*



Nestled in the heart of West London, amidst the city’s hustle and bustle, lies The Photographer’s Garden—a tranquil oasis beneath the towering canopies of old London Plane trees. This natural canopy creates a woodland habitat within the city, providing the perfect escape and opportunity for creativity. The garden’s serene environment, with dappled sunlight filtering through the leaves, invites you to pause, appreciate the details captured by the light, and immerse yourself in nature’s beauty. Our client, Alister, who is also our photographer, has a keen eye for detail and a deep appreciation for nature. He envisioned an atmospheric garden with a naturalistic feel and a sense of privacy. His desired for us to create a unified design that harmonised all aspects of the garden. The result is a captivating woodland experience, featuring diverse plant life and a secluded seating and dining area. The garden is designed as a walk-through woodland experience, with intriguing plant life and sight-lines that reveal hidden corners, playful elements along the path and sculptural elements within the planting. It offers a tasteful and engaging environment that invites exploration and relaxation.

The planting scheme includes a mix of perennials, annuals, biennials, self-seeders, and evergreen plants, creating a successional display that changes with the seasons. The planting is like a symphony, orchestrating a dynamic and ever-evolving display of colours and textures. It has been designed to mimic natural woodland habitats, with careful consideration given to the establishment of plant communities. Our aim is to create plant palettes that grow harmoniously together, ensuring a balanced and thriving garden. This approach ensures that the plants complement rather than compete with each other. Additionally, the planting is designed to create a haven for wildlife, providing habitats for animals, birds, and invertebrates. Alister, also passionate plantsman, has played an active role in the garden’s establishment and ongoing maintenance, ensuring its success. The garden has become his daily sanctuary, where every element draws attention and begs to be photographed. It is not just a space to enjoy but also an ever-evolving masterpiece, captured through the lens of the photographer who pours his care into it. The garden provides endless inspiration in the ever-changing play of light and shadow, the vibrant seasonal colours, and the intricate textures of its lush vegetation.

The Photographer’s Garden is a testament to the harmonious blend of nature, artistry, and thoughtful design, offering endless opportunities for enjoyment and inspiration. It is a place where one can sit and dine outdoors, explore winding pathways, and experience a piece of nature, managed organically to encourage wildlife in all its forms. This garden is a living, breathing canvas, reflecting the dedication and vision of its creators. It stands as a sanctuary in the city, inviting and enchanting all who step into it.

The Photographer’s Garden

A project by Stefano Marinaz
Photography: Alister Thorpe



February



April



May



June



July



August



September



October

A tapestry of urban greenery

Nestled on an east-facing plot, this sun-soaked haven measures approximately 20 x 6 meters. Bounded by the rear facade of the house on one side and a sleek black timber fence on the remaining three, this space is a harmonious blend of nature and design. As you step in, you'll notice the concrete paving creating a terraced expanse near the house, tapering into a winding path with spaced paving units and low creepers weaving between. This leads to a tranquil seating area at the far end, perfect for basking in the late afternoon sun. Closer to the house, a welcoming arrangement of tables, chairs, and a bench sets the stage for delightful breakfasts in the morning light.

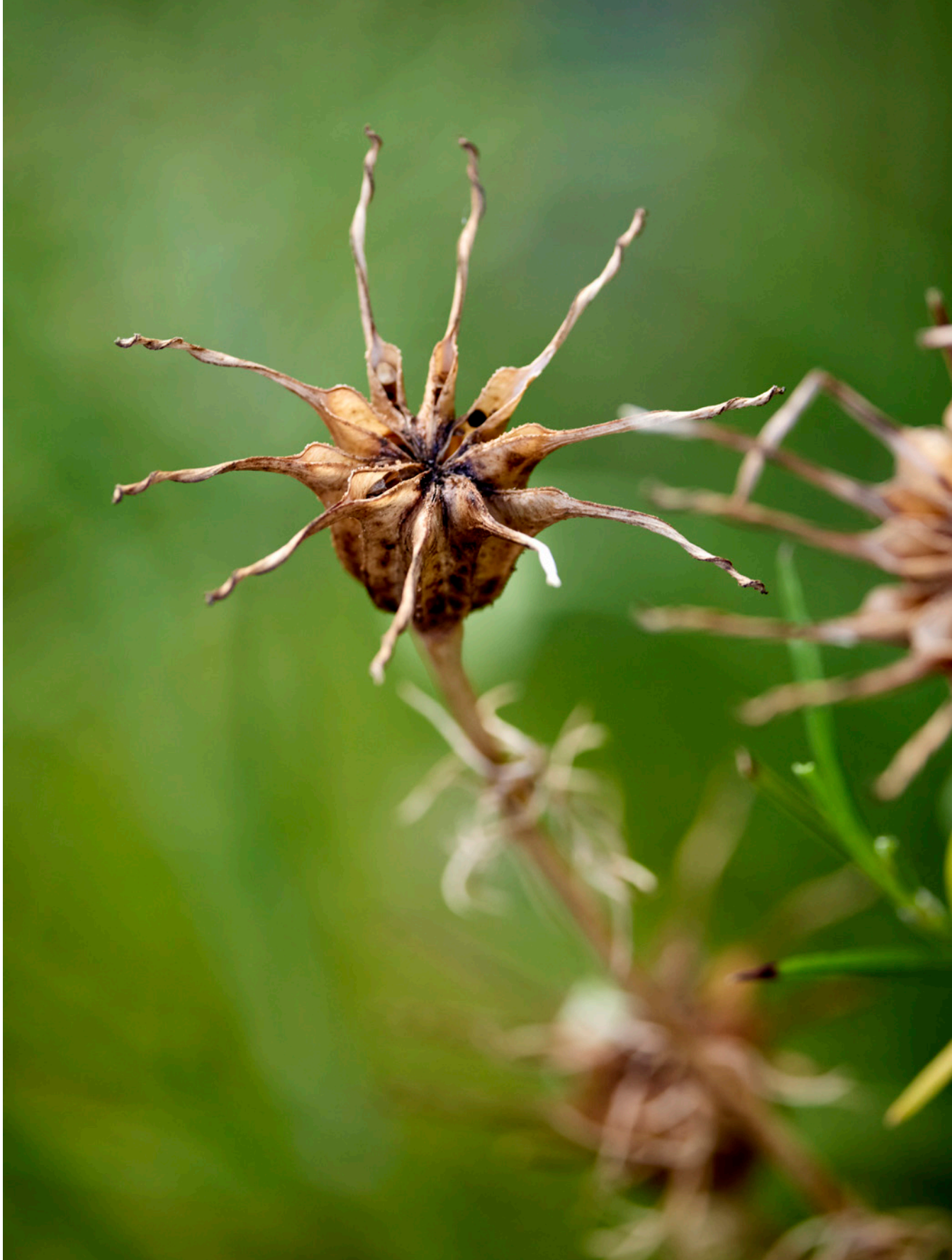
A central play area takes center stage, embraced by lush, naturalistic plantings that offer a canvas for kids to set up tents and enjoy playful moments with friends during warm months. Amidst this verdant tapestry, three multistem *Amelanchier lamarckii* trees stand tall, casting their graceful presence. Softening the perimeter, ivy graces one side while *Akebia* and *Hydrangea petiolaris* lend their charm on the other. A captivating water feature positioned in the garden's initial third serves as both a focal point and a wildlife oasis, graced by miniature water lilies. Meandering through the soft plantings are log waves that guide the path from the house to the garden shed.

The paving units, each measuring 1m by 30cm, create a structured pathway, complemented by Belgium terracotta pots scattered throughout the garden. These pots mirror the lush planting beds, housing an array of captivating flora. The diverse plant community offers year-round interest, featuring the intriguing patterns of *Persicaria filiformis*, the fragrant charm of *Mentha requienii*, the cotton-floss flowers of *Sanguisorba 'Burr Blanc'*, the elegance of *Nigella damascena*, and the enchanting *Lunaria annua 'Chedglow'*.

Ornamental grasses play their role too, with *Sesleria autumnalis 'Greenlee Hybrid'* as a low filler, *Schizachyrium 'Ha Ha Tonka'* providing a short accent with its hairy blue-hued leaves, and the majestic *Calamagrostis 'Karl Foster'* as a taller accent that graces the garden from summer through winter. In this urban sanctuary, nature and design converge, creating a harmonious space that thrives throughout the seasons, offering a haven of relaxation, play, and natural beauty.

A project by
Stefano Marinaz
Photography:
Alister Thorpe





The garden with a vibe

Situated near the picturesque Vondelpark in Amsterdam, The Garden with a Vibe is nestled in a neighbourhood known for its lush, leafy surroundings and historic homes. This charming setting provided the perfect backdrop for our garden design. The garden benefits from its proximity to the park's large, mature trees, which create a woodland edge and dappled shade environment. To complement these towering trees, we introduced twelve multi-stem trees in the rear garden and five in the front, enhancing the woodland atmosphere and making the garden feel like a natural extension of the park. The addition of these trees also helps harmonise the scale of the park's trees with that of the garden, creating a seamless connection. A notable tree added to the garden is the Vitex agnus-castus, known for its upright, fragrant flowers that bloom in autumn. This tree is not only visually striking but also an excellent choice for attracting pollinators.

We also designed extensive planting borders along the property edge and added climbers to the boundary walls. This approach disguises the property's boundaries and creates an illusion of an expansive space. As a result, the end of the property becomes less distinct, making the garden feel larger and more inviting. To maximise greenery and create a more permeable landscape, we strategically broke up the concrete pavers in the middle section of the garden. By bringing the planting closer to the house and positioning the lounge and dining areas further away, we enhanced the immersive natural experience. This arrangement provides stunning views of the garden from inside the house, which is especially valuable during the colder months when outdoor activities are limited but you still wish to enjoy the garden. Instead of looking out at furniture, residents can enjoy the vibrant planting year-round. Additionally, placing the outdoor living areas further from the house ensures that you are completely surrounded by nature when using the garden. The planting scheme is anchored by a matrix base layer of Sesleria 'Greenlee Hybrid,' Sesleria heufleriana, Luzula nivea, and Melica uniflora f. albida. Three of these grasses are evergreen, ensuring year-round interest and coverage. Perennials and bulbs emerge through this matrix, introducing seasonal



A project by
Stefano Marinaz
Photography:
Alister Thorpe

variety, texture, and colour. The plants were chosen for their ability to thrive in woodland edge conditions, given the influence of the surrounding trees and those added to the landscape. This thoughtful selection fosters a harmonious and dynamic garden that maintains visual appeal and ecological health throughout the year.

To ensure the garden remains captivating even in winter, we included winter-scented shrubs such as Daphne odora, Sarcococca confusa, Edgeworthia chrysantha, and Chimonanthus praecox. These plants add fragrance and visual interest during the colder months, enhancing the garden's appeal throughout the year. The Garden with a Vibe seamlessly blends design with natural beauty, offering a serene and engaging outdoor space that invites exploration and relaxation. It is a place where one can enjoy the tranquility of nature, whether indoors or out, all year round.





An atmosphere that caresses the soul

Text: Sisse Bro
Photography:
Ladina Bischof



In March 2021, Swiss interior designer Tanja Casparis went to visit a mountain house with centuries of history. Without hesitation, she and her partner decided to make this into their second home. ‘Rustico-Loft’ they call it. A quiet refuge, designed with respect for the original structures and with a soft touch which has become emblematic of the work by Casparis.

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This house clearly has a long history, could you start out by describing what you know about its past?

Tecetto is the name of a small group of houses, situated high above the great Lake Maggiore. History reveals that there have been dwellings here since the time of the Roman Empire. There are four houses in total and one of them used to be a cheese dairy. Our apartment is in the attic of the old cheese factory. The beams in front of our oven still bear traces from that time. During the 1940's, the owners of one of the houses realized its historical and architectural value and decided to pursue a renovation process where they, bit by bit, carefully preserved the original structures from the Middle Ages. It's thanks to them that the houses are still in such good condition today.

What made you and your partner decide to go ahead with this project and how did you approach the renovation process?

As soon as I entered the house, I knew immediately that a listed building like this, from around the year 1500, was a rarity which is hard to find nowadays. Its signs of ageing were obvious and might have put off other visitors, but for me it was a rough diamond whose hidden potential I recognized straight away. After the sale was completed in July that same year, I was able to quickly start up the detailed renovation planning. From the very beginning, I had a clear vision of how the house should look. The conversion was kicked off just a few weeks later, I was responsible for the planning and construction management, while Mathias, site manager of a renowned construction company, and his team took over the execution of the work.

I dreamt of a small, quiet retreat – a secret hideaway – just for the two of us, and I was convinced that this place could satisfy all our wishes if it was designed with sensitivity and respect for the existing building structure and history. With only 45 square meters of living space every detail counts.

It was important to make use of the space properly and to preserve its aesthetic appeal at the same time. My main ideas for the interior design came down to the interplay of natural materials, the use of quiet colours, suitable proportions and uncompromising functionality throughout. Every piece of furniture and detail, no matter how small, was included in the planning from the start; the only way to create a harmonious whole. Today, our dream has come true, the old cheese dairy has become a gem of peace, light and comfort. Every time I enter and look out over Lake Maggiore from the terrace or through the windows, I'm fascinated and filled with happiness. As they say in Ticino: «senza parole».

What is your relation to this region of Switzerland?

Ticino is the most southern canton in Switzerland and is often referred to as the sunniest part of our country. The region is enchanting with its breath-taking landscape, majestic mountains, sparkling lakes and the many charming towns and villages. The Mediterranean charm of Italian-speaking Switzerland has always attracted me in particular. As a child, I spent many summers with my family in Ticino, and I have collected countless memories of this precious area. A place that has grown dear to me and where I always find new inspiration.

Around the apartment, you've placed pots from Atelier Vierkant rather discreetly both inside and outside which suits the quiet interior and the small proportions. What ideas did you have regarding the integration of pots? I love the restraint, sincere and simple, and I try to add just a few but right accents in my interiors. The vessels, or objects as I rather tend to see them, from Atelier Vierkant are the proof of true craftsmanship and they just had to be integrated in the design of this place. The reduction and unique design language of the GR and GRS vessels have always fascinated me. They are the perfect addition to this living space; not alone attractive to

look at but they also fulfil practical functions - be it as a storage object or a vase for individual branches or flowers. In the small arbour outside, some U vessels have been planted with herbs to complement the ensemble, and the HV bowls are a brand-new addition. I use the outdoor vessels not only for planting but also to stage an ambient fire. I'm excited to see how everything will look once the terrace is finished and the plants have grown.

It's a small house with only a few windows yet it still looks quite bright. The interior design certainly played a role in this. How did you ensure such a luminous result?

Firstly, we're so lucky that the place is flooded with natural light. This is due to its optimal orientation and the unobstructed location of the house. We enjoy a 180-degree view on the lake which allows the sun to shine through the rooms from early in the morning until the evening. When planning and designing, it was very important to me to preserve the open, historical roof structure and make it visible. The sandblasted and brushed chestnut wood has a special character that I wanted to highlight with a consistently bright interior design. The surfaces, from the plastered walls to the ceilings and the flooring, are the result of careful work. I developed a balanced mixture of lime, clay and white cement, a natural white hue with a fine shading, which gives it a special and holistic feel when covering all the surfaces seamlessly. This uniform design opens up the room, makes it seem more spacious and reflects the light beautifully - even on grey days. It was essential to implement natural materials. For me, living means designing spaces that become places of lightness, protection and comfort. This personal project has given me the freedom to express this conviction without compromise. Natural light, soft tones and subtle nuances create an atmosphere that caresses the soul and wonderfully highlights the beauty of this special place.







Salvioni — *Milano*

Photography:
Andrea
Bartoluccio



Roda — Lots of energy and a visionary kind of enthusiasm led to the birth of Roda. The company's founder, Roberto Pompa, followed his revolutionary intuition to approach al fresco areas as places to inhabit and enhance with refined pieces of furniture. The vision and ambition gradually became a process. The early 2000 was a decade of great importance, centered on the cultural enhancement and ennoblement of a new type of outdoor furniture. In order to encompass design, a sense of conviviality, and the kind of emotions given by interiors, Rodolfo Dordoni was welcomed in the team as an artistic director. In 2005, Roda participated for the first time at the Salone del Mobile in Milan, while its innovative catalogue featured a clear overview of the company's original approach to outdoor living.

Strengthened by an affirmed identity, in its third decade Roda has been a conscious and responsible reality. Its vision was born from daily life, sustained and guided by a new generation of the Pompa's family and by the determination and total commitment that a mature entrepreneurial company requires and encourages. A new location for production and logistics was added to the headquarters in Gavirate: the premises in Bodio Lomnago represent a strategic investment in the internalisation of certain processes in order to reach elevated flexibility in terms of prototyping, manufacturing and packaging, all fundamental ingredients in the unique mix and match of colours, materials and finishes that is a particular source of pride at Roda.

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Salvioni — The history of Salvioni Design Solutions began in the 1950's with its founder Angelo Salvioni, who was responsible for starting a small family-run business in Brianza, dedicated to the creation of furniture. Over the time the company transforms, moving from an exclusively artisanal vision to a more commercial one characterized by the sale of multi-brand furniture and enhanced by collaborations with sector brands which have now become leaders in international luxury furniture. With the advent of 1980's, management passed into the hands of this sons Ercole and Gianni and transformed into a truly high-end entrepreneurial reality.

As the business expanded, the Salvioni brothers inaugurated a series of multi-brand showrooms in Brianza with the shops in Inverigo and Copreno. The company's headquarters, the Inverigo showroom was redesigned in 1995 by the architect Paolo Piva and further expanded in 2010 to better represent the progressive growth of the company. Later, in 2005, Salvioni made a first important expansive leap, reaching the historic center of Lugano with two showrooms with a strong architectural and design value. Finally, it arrives in the nerve center of design, Milan, creating a true center of excellence thanks to the showroom in via Durini. Today the business is run by Gianni and Ercole supported by his sons.

In the outdoor spaces, Salvioni presents Roda Outdoor collections, next to different Atelier Vierkant vessels, ranging from high AHC vessels with grey and cork textures, to U and UR in cork, dark green sofa's next to SP and AS vases.





Haut — *Oostende*

Outdoor furniture: Ethnicraft
Furniture supply: Design Oostende
Photography: Bart van Leuven
Planters: UZ at the entrance,
and UZ in combination with HK vessels



In 2024 restaurant Haut opened in Ostend. The new fine dining address by chef Dimitri Proost and manager/ maître d'hôtel Randy Degroote is located on the 28th floor of Ostend's SKY Tower One, making it the highest restaurant in Belgium. We provided for a refined interior which is serene and relaxing and allows all attention to the view and food experience.

Restaurant Haut serves French-Belgian cuisine. The experience already starts on the ground floor. At the entrance, UZ planters guide the visitor to the main door. An intimate elevator with green velvet carpet takes you to the door, where the maître awaits you and gives you access to a buffer zone in the form of a black box. It is a piece of

no man's land that allows guests to mentally start to relocate into another world and very practically too – to leave coats in the cloakroom. As soon as the doors open, the expansive view of the coastal surroundings will be the first treat of the evening. The panorama sets the tone for a restaurant experience where the sea serves as the central guest.

This project shows how clever alignment and balanced proportions not only ensure a better layout and organisation, but also introduce visual tranquillity. The materialisation contributes to a harmonious interior too. Natural stone, warm veneers and sandy textile tones were chosen to echo the surroundings. A bonus: the

kitchen was also designed in the same style. And even though we love art, we have consciously chosen to leave it out in order to keep the focus on the food experience. And since we believe that disconnecting does not mean losing touch with the outside world, a light daytime atmosphere during lunch hours and an intimate lighting plan towards the evening were deliberately used here. In the late hours, daylight is exchanged for atmospheric artificial light or even candlelight. Other special features are the outdoor terrace, the benches combining natural stone with upholstery in dark blue suede, and the private dining area with large bronze mirror that enlarges the space and – how could it be otherwise – allows everyone to enjoy the sea view.

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Text:
Sisse Bro

Duke Design—*Nashville*

Classic & modern — Like the city he calls home, Nashville, Tennessee, American landscape architect, Gavin Duke, juggles both the classic and the modern simultaneously. Nashville, the birthplace of country music is equally known for its thriving contemporary indie music scene. Gavin Duke, a long-time member of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art is additionally keeping his mind open to new influences, even if the new notions might sometimes contradict with previous convictions.

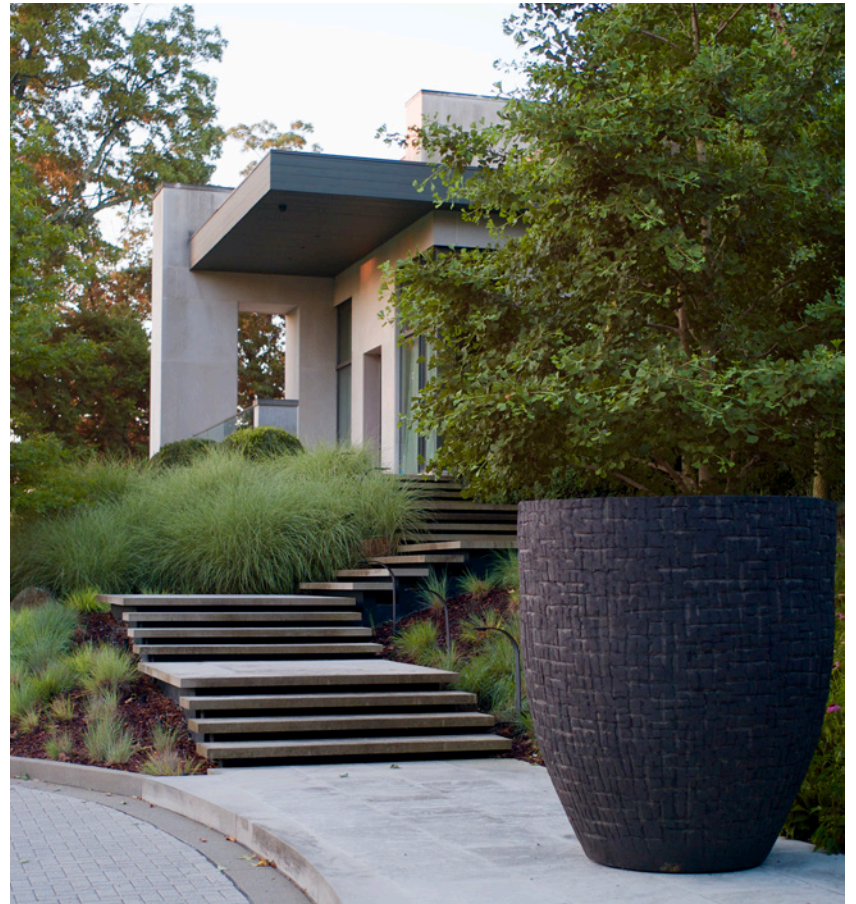
Gavin Duke grew up in the southern U.S. state, Arkansas. A rural environment where he at an early age was introduced to buildings and architecture through his grandfather's carpentry and to plants and gardening through his parents' vegetable garden. His college studies started in the architecture department yet the leading postmodern tendencies at the time did

not encourage him to design houses and instead he found inspiration in the neighbouring landscape architecture section. With a love for the outdoors, he realised that this was his calling. After finishing his studies, he quickly made his way to Nashville, a city brimming with culture and action. 'I moved to Nashville in 1987 and worked in a landscape architecture company for 33 years before I opened my own studio a few years ago. It was an adventure to be part of such a growing business because it took me around the whole country and I had the privilege of working on great projects,' says Duke.

Today, with Duke Design Group, he is still travelling, designing for clients in many different locations. And in a variety of settings. Although trained in and dedicated to a classical method and genre, Duke sees himself as a chameleon, firstly taking the clients wishes into account and staying open

to the task in front of him by looking at what the architecture and the site propose. Whether taking on a traditional approach or a more innovative angle, the basic principles are very similar, Duke underlines. Setting up the views, designing the proportions and creating the axis follow the same classical guidelines. Afterwards, it is down to the more aesthetic choices. 'When you work with a traditional method, there are certain expectations and formulas of how to do things. You use plants like boxwood for example to create a sense of order and symmetry, and you design different entries to the house which set up the user and make it easily readable how to move around on the ground,' explains Duke, 'With a modern approach, nature is allowed to get closer to the house and the edges are looser. The choice of plants is different, more diverse, creating a slightly more whimsical expression.'

In his own garden, Duke is currently exploring how to create mixed flower beds, inviting more pollinators and butterflies into the environment. 'I'm intrigued by the naturalistic approach and we're discovering the self-seeding landscape increasingly in our projects. When Piet Oudolf introduced his landscape design on the Highline in New York, the Americans started opening their eyes to his principles. But it takes time for such practices to gain ground. The wish for an organised and presentable garden is still strong in residential projects.' A naturalistic garden needs years to grow to show its full potential which is a challenge to some garden owners who, understandably enough, would like to see a beautiful result right away. 'For one client, we installed a hillside with a mile and a half long path system surrounded by wild meadow flowers. The client was rather sceptical when it was done and we had to keep ensuring him that it would end up beautifully,' says Duke, pointing out the difficulty in finding the right balance of planting enough plants at the beginning for it to look impressive yet leaving room for them to grow into their natural long-term shape. 'I've also learned along the way of course. I've had to go back to projects we carried



out in the nineties where the plants had simply overgrown the house, leaving too little room for the natural light to reach inside. Today, I look at the placement of plants differently, and by using different types of plants and by convincing the clients that it's ok if it looks a bit small in the beginning, we can create more sustainable long-lasting gardens.'

Duke has also found an accompanying tool to sculpt some of his garden projects; tools which help secure an immediate presence and volume in a new garden. 'The containers from Atelier Vierkant give the feeling of an instant landscape', says Duke, 'The variation in proportions have helped with the scaling in several of our projects. Their objects are obviously functional but some of them also work as art pieces. Put several of them together and you have what looks like an installation.' Duke met Atelier Vierkant for the first

time at a garden fair at the American Society of Landscape Architects and became fascinated by the quality and craftsmanship behind their work. He already had a couple of projects in mind where their products could be implemented and that is how the collaboration was established. 'Our studio's intention is to create elegant and tailored landscapes where vernacular materials and plantings blend the boundaries between nature and architecture, and the Atelier Vierkant pieces, in all their timelessness, are very suitable to help reaching that', says Duke, 'This autumn I went to visit Atelier Vierkant at their showroom in Belgium and it blew me away to see how much they are actually working on and how well organised it is. Producing at such a high-quality level is already impressive and they handle everything with such precision. That visit inspired me to think of more ways of designing with pots.'

Haverbrack — *Melbourne*

Photography
Dylan James

Jack Merlo was launched following several high-profile awards including a Gold Medal win at the London’s Chelsea Flower Show in 2005. Since then, the studio has embraced a collaborative design ethos, working alongside architects and developers to become one of Australia’s leading landscape architecture studios.



Through Jack’s personal involvement in every project, tailored outcomes respond directly to context, cultivating spaces in harmony with architecture and interior design. This hands-on approach ensures that each garden is a unique reflection of its surroundings, seamlessly integrating with the existing structures and interiors to create a cohesive and harmonious environments.

Drawing on extensive experience and long-standing collaboration with industry-leading designers and developers, Jack Merlo shapes exceptional botanical environments distinguished by attention to detail and high-quality natural materials. These partnerships enable Jack to stay at the forefront of landscape design, incorporating the

latest trends and innovations while maintaining a timeless appeal. Each project is a testament to Jack’s commitment to excellence, where meticulous planning and execution result in gardens that are both functional and aesthetically pleasing.

Jack Merlo gardens are compositions of seasonal beauty, where each seasonal transition is considered a primary pillar of design. The careful selection of plants ensures that the garden evolves throughout the year, offering a dynamic and ever-changing landscape. From the vibrant colours of spring blooms to the rich textures of autumn foliage, every season brings new interest and delight. This thoughtful approach not only enhances the garden’s visual appeal but also creates

a sensory experience that engages and inspires visitors year-round.

Collaborating closely with clients, landscape architect Jack Merlo and his team have transformed the luxurious Haverbrack Avenue’s outdoor space into a beautiful and functional Mediterranean-inspired sanctuary. Embracing a sandy beige palette with olive trees intended to create the perfect shady retreat, 'Haverbrack' emphasises both structural and soft landscaping. With outdoor furniture from Cosh Living, this space has been transformed into an inviting and functional area, perfect for relaxing and entertaining guests just in time for summer.

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Their owner's goal was to enhance their high-end home's exterior, which fell short of their standards. They retained elements like the pool and building while working closely with Jacks's design team to realise their

vision. The project involved presenting various concepts to the clients and seeking their feedback on colour palettes and materials. They settled on a warm off-white colour and travertine-like tiles, with neutral timber decking.

The choice of outdoor furniture and large clay pots from Cosh Living was crucial to achieving both beauty and scale. The furniture selection considered the clients' functional needs, including lounge pieces and daybeds

from the renowned European outdoor furniture brand Tribu and Sofa from Australian brand Kett. The larger-than-life clay pots from Atelier Vierkant provided the perfect structural support for advanced olive trees, which were

selected for their appealing foliage and suitability for the Mediterranean-inspired project. To soften the pots' appearance and create a balanced and visually pleasing arrangement, cascading rosemary plants were added.



Private garden — *Maienfeld*

Photography:
Jonathan Ducrest

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Tanja Casparis, landscape designer, who after 20 years of work in an existing practice, set up recently her own activity. Known for her creativity and playful planting schemes, she explains the set up of a recent project in the eastern part of Switzerland.

“For a young family who fulfilled their dream of owning their own home in Maienfeld, I was able to design the outdoor space, combining modern design with natural elements.

The detached house impresses with its clear, contemporary architecture, which is characterised by durable materials. I wanted to create an exciting contrast with my design - precise geometries meet soft transitions and

organic shapes. This interplay of clear lines and gentle curves is particularly important to me, as it creates an inviting and harmonious atmosphere that elegantly frames the house.

I have used few but targeted elements - I have also deliberately reduced the planting to protect against unwanted views, while at the same time setting accents with the *Taxus media Hillii* and the *Amelanchier lamarckii* umbrellas and emphasising the flowing transitions between the different garden areas, as with the *Cedrus deodara ‘Pendula’* in the large U-shaped bowl.

Naturally, the furniture and accessories for the outdoor space were also carefully selected to emphasise the modern

character of the house. Contemporary furniture with simple shapes not only offers comfort, but also blends harmoniously into the aesthetic clarity of the garden.

For me, this garden is far more than just an extension of the house - it is an integral living space, a place of peace and retreat, a place of play and socialising, but also a living space that can grow with the needs of the family. I designed every detail with care to make this possible and to create a harmonious overall picture that combines functionality and aesthetics.”

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Merkle Metallbau — *Trimmis*

Photography:
Jonathan Ducrest

In another context, Tanja Casparis took the task of redesigning the offices of Merkle Metallbau AG in Trimmis.

“As soon as I entered the new head-quarters of Merkle, I immediately realised how architecture, design and craftsmanship merge into a complex, harmonious composition. It is a place that not only impresses with its visual aesthetics, but also creates an inspiring connection between technology and nature. The materials used - black steel, wood and lime - as well as the warm earth tones of umber, ochre and

light clay emphasise this connection. They create an atmosphere that radiates both cosiness and naturalness and fills the rooms with a special warmth.

My task was to connect space and people with nature and to integrate this into a subtle, well thought-out concept. It was a passion for me to incorporate plants as an indispensable part of the living space. The integration of nature into the working environment is much more than a design statement - it is a conscious decision for a better quality of life. The fusion of organic form and

modern structure creates a space that encourages creativity and at the same time provides peace and inspiration.

Every detail has been carefully chosen - from handmade clay pots and gently curved clay pebbles to the clean, cool accents of metal. These elements create a harmonious balance between tradition and innovation. The interior greenery, inspired by biophilia theory, brings a piece of nature right into the workplace - a place that grounds the spirit while reflecting the dynamism of our modern world.”

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Private residence — *Palo Alto*

When the owner of this historic property decided to undertake a significant architectural and landscape renovation, he returned to Collin Jones Studio to envision a garden respectful of the original 1925 Birge Clark residence. The outcome honored the historic property while responding creatively to a different owner in a different time. Working collaboratively with Fergus Garber Architects, the site was clearly organized with simple, classic, rectilinear geometries punctuated with subtle shifts in scale and proportion. An iconic, generously overscaled Atelier Vierkant planter marks the entry gate while a simple square fountain basin establishes the organizing nexus of the rear yard.

The residence's Spanish Colonial Revival style inspired a Mediterranean plant palette that celebrated sculptural Olive trees, hedges of Bay Laurel, carpets of creeping Thyme and boldly geometric Agaves and Fan Palms. Site features were designed with a nod to the home's period, while maintaining relevancy to today's time and place.

Collin Jones, Landscape Architect,

Collin's passion for horticulture combined with his architectural education brings a unique dual perspective to his work as a landscape architect. After completing his Bachelor of Architecture, Collin shifted his focus to landscape architecture, but not before

gaining a hands-on understanding of plant material by working in a nursery setting for several years. Prior to establishing Collin Jones Studio in 2021, Collin designed and managed a range of residential, hospitality, civic and institutional projects in the Bay Area and internationally for over 20 years. In approaching projects with a clean, organized, architectural approach counterbalanced with the ephemeral, ever-changing dimension of plants, Collin strives to unite these opposing forces in a way that brings a timeless beauty to his clients' worlds.







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POQQ

Frustrated by tangled cables and cluttered spaces, POQQ seeks to create a solution that seamlessly blends aesthetics with functionality. Drawing inspiration from elegant product design, meticulous craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology solutions, the POQQ wireless charger was born. Proudly designed and produced in Belgium, our chargers are created with care, reflecting durable quality and attention to detail.

Founders Bart De Backer and Griet Jacobs started from the intention of linking daily needs to unique products that don't only offer a solution – they enhance your living experience. Through innovative technology and sleek designs, they have put themselves on the market of both tech and interior enthusiasts.



Puur —*Alken/Liempde*

Photography:
Kurt Dekeyzer



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Raoul Hagenbeek and Jan Nickmans have jointly managed PUUR Groenprojecten for over 20 years, and since 2005 they have also owned the company. Together with the team, the two-headed management reflects the character of the company, lively, powerful and skilled.

The company has had two branches since 2015, born out of Jan Nickmans' desire to turn his passion for beautiful gardens into reality in his native Belgium as well. Jan conducts management and organisation in the Alken branch and Raoul does so in Liempde.







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PUUR Groen projects as a member of Tophoveniers. Nine experienced gardeners, based throughout the Netherlands, have joined forces under the name Tophoveniers, a label to be proud of. The advantages of the partnership are knowledge exchange and critical assessment of each other's work and company; thus, quality is always guaranteed.



atelier vierkant

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In his projects, Jan has used a variety of models, ranging from UF and UZ planters to HK and OF. The vessels are both implemented in the scheme as accents as well as space definers.

A marvellous house in Punta Cana without borders in and out

Text:
Miriam Alcaire
Source:
Elle Decor Espana,
August 2020
Photography:
Jacques Pépion

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Between the sky and the Caribbean Sea, this house in Punta Cana is the epitome of happiness. Bruno Moinard Editions has created an exquisite interior design with a sixties feel and an unmistakable French stamp.

Sometimes, reality exceeds all expectations. So it has been in this house, which looks like something out of a dream catalogue: surrounded by tropical gardens, white sandy beaches, golf courses and with extraordinary views... It is a family mansion, where the owners spend four or five months at a time, sharing their time with their children, grandchildren and friends.

Built in 2018 by the company DUPLA, according to a project by the architects Mario & Jeannette Desangles, it is a bright building, clad in light stone. Its open plan, with spacious rooms arranged around a courtyard sheltered from the wind and with verandas sheltered from the sun, nevertheless allows the breeze to travel through the rooms. A luxury in the sweltering Punta Cana summers. The building is immersed in a lush, leafy nature, which seeps into the interior through the successive porches and atriums and is a still photo from any private setting. Rosangela Bobea is the architect of this scenic, wild and overflowing landscape, which

is in fact perfectly ordered. The interior design was entrusted to the Bruno Moinard Editions team, who created an exquisite, bright and cheerful décor, in symbiosis with the surroundings. The love of light, simple and strong lines, transparency and the essence of things are present in all his work. Guided by the dominant materials in the house – Coraline and Kalissa stone - the clarity of an off-white on the interior walls was chosen to give continuity and perspective, which the artificial lighting – carried out by MAVA - reinforces exponentially.

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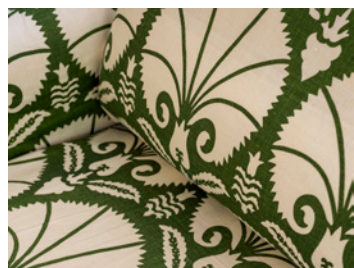








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Fountains in the form of an irrigation channel and overflowing vegetation flank the walkway to the entrance. Two types of stone, Coraline and Kalissa, clad the exterior and interior spaces of the house, the façade, the courtyard, the pavements and the bathrooms. The visual order is exquisitely harmonious in this open-air dining room. The central axis is the rectangular table by Paola Lenti, surrounded by wrought iron chairs by Hervé Baume. On either side, clumps of plants and palm trees

provide a refreshing counterpoint. The living room opens onto the garden on all four sides. On the outside porch, two beautiful twin vintage Bonacina armchairs, and at the edge of the pool, Sika fibre sun loungers. In an endless perspective, indoor and outdoor spaces are naturally intertwined. In the foreground, a brilliant still life of vintage ceramics by Accolay on one of the wooden tables in the living room. They were purchased

from Van Rossum. In the background, two rattan planters with pedestals lead into another room. They are by Atelier Vime. The colour palette, full of greens, blues and woods, imitates the colours of the ever-present nature through windows protected by curtains, by Bruder. The petrified wood stools are by Indosign. Art is integrated as another element in this aesthetic symbiosis. Three paintings by Benoît Averly stand out on the back wall.

The curve is beautiful. The order, the light and the friendly shapes make the living room, framed by a carpet by Geoffroy Van Hulle, hyper cosy. The semi-circular Paris Paname sofas embrace the coffee tables. They are designed by Bruno Moinard for Roche Bobois, with fabric by Gancedo. In the background, on the coffee table on the left, vases by Gilles Caffier. The box of the house reflects and multiplies the light. In the anteroom to the living room, a white resin table by Geoffroy

Van Hulle presides over the space. Above it, ceramic objects in organic shapes by Fos Ceramiche add a splash of colour. The sensation of fluidity is formidable: the spaces are almost weightless. Furniture made of wood and plant fibres (rattan, cane...), textiles with botanical and geometric prints, and this mix of antique and contemporary pieces, contemporary art and traditional craftsmanship, envelop the deco with

expressiveness and a mix that is as dynamic as it is refined. Special homage is paid to handmade objects, to ceramics. In every room you will find a sample of it: tables with decorated tops, vases and bowls in vibrant colours forming artistic still lifes on a table, a bookcase or directly on the floor. This decorative richness, this mix & match so enveloping makes the huge open surfaces become intimate and very personal spaces.



Warm minimalism, sobriety without austerity, elegance and timelessness. Bruno Moinard lists the stylistic rules that are repeated in his projects? They are not lacking in this house either. But there is an added bonus that makes it very special, the Caribbean rhythm ... The lounge area is furnished with sofas by designer Axel Vervoordt and upholstery by Geoffroy Van Hulle. The coffee tables with decorated tops are by Paola Lenti, and the rattan chairs are vintage models.

The dining table, by Heerenhuis, is illuminated by a papier-mâché lamp by Isabelle de Borchgrave. The 1950s chairs are by Geoffroy Van Hulle. The vintage sideboard was bought at a Parisian antiques market, and on the wall, works by Benoit Averly.

The kitchen follows the same decorative line as the rest of the house. Natural materials and a mix of contemporary and retro furniture, such as the central island that also houses storage cupboards. Above it, lamps by Gervasoni are reminiscent of floating jellyfish. The stools are by Alki. The bed presides over the bedroom, carpeted with a model by Nani Marquina. At the foot of the bed is a pouf by Tinekhome, upholstered with fabric by Gancedo, as is the armchair, and behind it, mirrors by Atelier Vime. The mini bookcase and floor lamp were bought at a Parasino market. Next to the window, desk by Ercol with Thonet chair. The light fixture is by Aromas, and the waridon is by Geoffroy Van Hulle. The art is provided by paintings by Marielle Guéguan. The bathroom, with

continuous floor and wall coverings, white sanitary ware and glass cubicles, offers an impeccable look.

Bruno moinard. The french charme.

Architect, set designer, designer, draughtsman? With a kaleidoscopic look, Moinard has earned a prestige backed by an impressive résumé. He has worked for museums, luxury boutiques, hotels? In 1995 he founded 4BI & Associés, his own interior design agency, and in 2014 Bruno Moinard Editions (brunomoinardeditions.com) launched its first furniture collection and opened a gallery in Paris. An unmistakable hallmark? The subtle, elegant and refined - but warm - integration of French culture in each of his creations.

Eterno — *Cheongdam*

Project:
Pomona
Photography:
Raphael Olivier

Jose Rafael Moneo was born in Tudela in the province of Navarra (Spain) in May of 1937. He obtained his architectural degree in 1961 from the Escuela Técnica Superior of Madrid.



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In 1963 he was awarded a fellowship at the Spanish Academy in Rome where he remained until 1965. Upon his return to Spain he opened his office in Madrid and began teaching at the Escuela Técnica Superior of Madrid (1966-1970). In 1970 he won a teaching chair in architectural theory at the Escuela Técnica Superior of Barcelona where he was professor until 1980.

From 1980 to 1985 he was chaired professor of composition at the Escuela Técnica Superior of Madrid. In 1985 Rafael Moneo was appointed Chairman of the Architecture Department of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, a position he held until 1990. In 1991 he was named Josep Lluís Sert Professor of Architecture at Harvard University Graduate School of Design

where he continues to teach. Rafael Moneo combines his professional activity as an architect with that as lecturer, critic and theoretician. His writings have been published in the foremost professional magazines and the presentation of his work through lectures and exhibitions has taken him to numerous institutions on both sides of the Atlantic.

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As a master and intellectual of contemporary architecture, Rafael Moneo has developed his own new architectural grammar based on intellectual inquiry and architectural thinking, and has had a great influence on the world of modern architecture. Rather than following the trends favored by the times, he has explored socially and historically meaningful building materials, recombined various traditions in his own sophisticated way, and pursued the permanence of architecture and the universality of modernism. He took advantage of the Spanish architectural culture that respects regional diversity and created his own world of works characterized by a modern reinterpretation of hybrid styles, respect for the local context, exquisite use of light, and active intervention in the landscape. In recognition of his unique artistry, he made a mark in the history of architecture by winning the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1996, the first Spanish architect to do so.

For this project in Cheongdam, the designers chose a series of large UZ vessels in cork finish to guide the visitor and apartment owner to the entrance. At the back and the sides of the building, high AHSB planters emphasize the height, while at the at the side entrance particular UT and OE vases mark the gangway, planted with Eriobotrya japonica und Fraxinus uhdei.

Maasmechelen Village

Text:
Sisse Bro

ateliervierkant

Connecting crafts—An unusual installation has been placed in the centre of the Belgian retail village, Maasmechelen. Metre-long waves of willow, shooting up in the air and bending into arches, interconnected by dots of clay, a dynamic arrangement curiously combined. Movement and matter. All created by nature’s plenitude and human hands. The outcome of a collaboration between creatives, dedicated to nature’s raw supply.

That craftsman Jean-Louis Muller and pot maker Atelier Vierkant now unite their work in a project was somehow meant to happen. Both tirelessly discovering and developing their craft, they share the same enthusiasm for organic materials and the curiosity of how to create enchanting and beautiful spaces. ‘I’ve known about the work of Atelier Vierkant for many years’, says Muller when we are on a video call, on a cold December day. On the screen, I meet the epitome of a man of nature: long curly hair, a fresh complexion and a warm smile. In the background, I notice walls clad entirely in wood and through the windows, a direct view on the surrounding fields, and I have to ask him where he is. ‘This is my home’, Muller answers and explains that he

lives in a repurposed caravan which he designed and made himself. About ten minutes from the sea, on the Belgian coast, Muller resides on a plot of land where friends are developing a ‘food forest’, a permaculture project in the making. An environment seemingly suitable for a guy who spends most of his waking hours outside bending willow twigs.

‘I’ve been working with plants since I was in my early twenties’, says Muller, ‘First, in a nursery where I was introduced to fruit trees and coastal plants and from there, I went into gardening, learning more about grasses and perennials. It was during that time, I discovered basketry and wicker work. I looked for courses and found some

good teachers, especially a guy in Holland who took me on as his apprentice. It’s thanks to him that I learned about the work on a bigger scale, the free and ornamental installations. I’ve started my own studio since but we still often collaborate on projects. I’m very grateful for what he taught me and that we remain colleagues.’ With an increasing demand for assignments, Muller has slowly grown his sculpture craft into a full-time activity. ‘I’ve been practising to find my own proper techniques. The form and lines are very important. I find a lot of inspiration in the Art Nouveau aesthetics, based on floral and organic lines.’

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Muller makes his installations with local material from either Belgium or the Netherlands, for example from a small Belgian family company, De Vos Salix, located only one hour away. ‘The two sons have now taken over the business and they’re growing different varieties of willow in very high quality. They’re the last ones in Belgium working with willow on that scale,’ says Muller. Willow grows well on the Belgian and Dutch coastline, thanks to the sand and clay ground, and it is a plant which easily propagates. Muller also grows a bit of willow in his nearby forest, to add some different colours

and details to the pieces. ‘I love working with this material. It’s natural and sustainable and it’s growing right here. As an artist I can flex and shape it into whatever form I’d like. I sometimes use metal structures to ensure stability but even without the metal it’s strong. The free forms are my favourite. Then I really feel that I’m guided by the material and I can compose and design on the spot. The process often becomes like a sort of meditation as it takes hours and you need to be really focused to get it right.’ Being an ancient craft, willow weaving has a long history in the making of objects

and outdoor structures. Muller treasures all the knowledge behind the craft and the impressions it brings along. ‘Humans have always been interested in making things that were beautiful but nowadays so much is designed with the computer and produced in materials that feel dead. In the past, people paid attention to the fact that something has to feel good. When I buy a new tool for example, I feel the effort that has been put into making it. It vibrates and feels alive. The same goes for the willow structures.’



For the project in Maasmechelen Village, Muller did not have to think long when he was considering which sturdy and beautiful objects to include in his installation. ‘My client asked me to come up with an idea for a six-months campaign and they gave me carte blanche. I’ve worked with them for six years so they know my work well. They wanted something impressive which would make a visual impact on the outdoor area; an area where people would stop up and potentially sit down. I had to design something sculptural which couldn’t be inserted in the ground, and I therefore needed something heavy to connect and stabilise the structure. That’s when I thought of Atelier Vierkant.

Beautiful anchors which would blend in naturally with the woven willow.’ Muller explained to the client how the pots would be useful for years to come and how much they would add to the public space, not just for this project, but as future planters too. It did not take much convincing to get a green light on the budget and Muller contacted Atelier Vierkant to get the project started. ‘I think Atelier Vierkant liked the idea because it was innovative and different. We needed 11 pots but we only had three months to prepare so in principle this was too tight for them to deliver the pots. But they made it work anyhow. They proposed some options and we chose two different pot models in three different colours.’

Installing the pots went fast, in just one and a half hour, Muller and his colleague had set up the ceramic pots and then began building the metal structure and the final willow wrapping. The Italian landscape and garden designers, Studio Frassinago, helped out with the plant design and chose together with Muller some climbing plants which will make the installation even more alive with time. ‘I was asked to make a six-month installation but it has been there for about nine months and it will surely stay for a few years. The combination of clay, willow and greenery is excellent, now it just needs time to age and get fully mingled and absorbed by the plants.’



Photography: Alistair Thorpe



