

Brussels Design September (EN)

September, 2018

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At the Horta Museum the floral creations of London-based designer Marcin Rusak fuse seamlessly with Victor Horta's art nouveau. Rusak is not only inspired by nature, but flowers also form the main ingredient of his dreamy creations.

Marcin Rusak studied at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, and afterwards at the Royal College of Arts in London. After his graduation in 2014 he established his studio in the British capital. That's why he doesn't feel really part of the Polish design scene. "In the sixties Poland had an interesting design scene, but afterwards it disappeared in favour of the emergent industry. Nowadays designers rediscover our crafts and natural materials. Poland has some fairs and festivals, and some good design schools. The public gets also more interested in design. At the same time it's difficult to find artisans who want to work on small-scale projects. That's why we

established our own workshop in Warsaw. It gives us the freedom to work the way we want to work", tells Rusak.

One of the reasons Rusak does feel very connected to his home country, is the use of flowers in his work. "My great-grandfather started a business to grow flowers in 1904. My grandfather transformed it into an industrial company. A few years after I was born he stopped the business. But I still remember the abandoned glasshouses, which I used as my playground. I remember their textured and rough industrial materiality and the presence of decay at every step I took. They remained quiet and empty, but at the same time almost opulent in their multiple traces of living elements. Inspired by this and by the traditional carved wooden wardrobe with floral motifs in my bedroom, I noticed that humans have an enduring obsession with flowers. This interest was sparked further by a trip to the London flower

market, where I witnessed the huge amount of discarded flowers lying around. I started collecting and processing them- as a reference to how often we use nature as inspiration in creating decoration but how rarely we actually use nature itself as decoration."

CONTEMPORARY ART NOUVEAU

In Brussels Marcin Rusak shows around forty creations from different series. "Almost three quarters is newly made for the exhibition. Victor Horta and his house inspired them. "I must admit that I didn't know a lot about Victor Horta and his work when I first met curator Françoise Aubry three years ago. But I researched a lot, and I'm amazed by his engagement, his holistic approach of design and his attention to details. Even the door handles, lighting and carpets perfectly fit in the overall philosophy of the house, which is inspired by nature", tells Rusak. "The exhibition

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is divided into two parts: in the house itself you can discover our Perma collection, and in the new annexe we bring our interpretation of the objects in the house. It functions like a mirror."

In his sculptural Perma collection Rusak for the first time applies his distinctive floral pattern all over the surfaces. "Thanks to a newly developed technique and synthetic resin, called Flora Perma, we don't need any other materials to construct the furniture. Household objects from our daily life inspire the rather traditional function of the objects. This familiar sculptural forms enhance the quality of the material, which reminds us of the veins in marble or the cavities in fossilised stones", tells Rusak. "To me the pieces are like a contemporary form of Art Nouveau. While Art Nouveau took inspiration from nature to transform the shapes into something decorative, I use nature itself in my work. By cutting for example a rose into two, you can discover its patterns and the way it is constructed. Doing so, I reveal the secret beauty of nature."

Rusak gives a new life cycle to the discarded flowers by making them a permanent part of the material. "The flowers are ordered by colour, and afterwards bound by resin. Then they are machined lengthwise, so the surface reveals a new world of natural adornment, wherein petals, stems and buds unveil the anatomical arrangement of their shapes and properties. The

pattern they create is an unexpected array of colour combinations interweaved with sculptural forms", tells Rusak. "In the Flora Temporalia treatment I first sculpt a composition before putting everything in resin. The result recalls the 17th century Flemish still life paintings."

TOO MANY CHAIRS

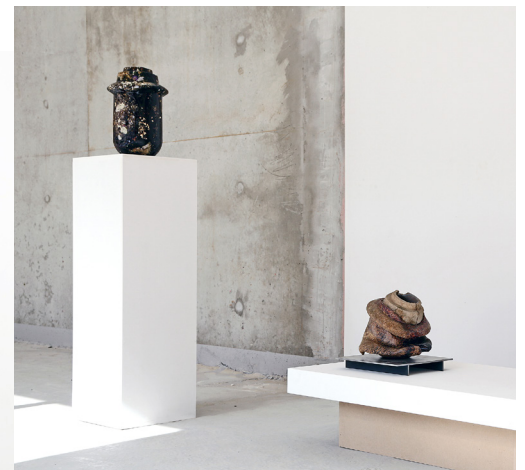
Although this last collection is meant to last, Marcin Rusak loves to play with decay. "In the past I made for example a vase which grows over with fungus, so in the end nothing lasts. Another example is the Transitional vase, which is made in close collaboration with Japanese artisans. By adding the Urushi lacquer the texture and imperfections of the flowers look like they are frozen in time. But the vase will slowly transform and the original colours will be visible again", tells Rusak. "In the annexe of the museum we show an installation with the Perishable series. By adding an incubator, which plays with bacteria, water and temperature the process of decay will be speeded up. Just like objects of everyday use, which are often designed with planned obsolescence, these sculptures have a limited lifespan dictated by the natural processes that overtake them."

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in how objects can get an emotional layer, and how they can mean something to us in order that we don't want to throw them away. That's why I create handmade objects that have an element of life on their own. Although I still contribute to material culture, I hope I'm making things that have enduring appeal both aesthetically and conceptually."

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06.09 > 07.10
NATURE OF THINGS II
HORTA MUSEUM

27 Rue Américaine, B-1060
Vernissage : 05.09 / 6.30pm
+32(0)494 32 06 56
www.hortamuseum.be
www.marcinrusak.com

12.09 - 8.15 PM
LECTURE MARCIN RUSAK
Flagey - Place Sainte Croix, B-1050
www.flagey.be
www.marcinrusak.com