

ISAAC MONTE

H A N D
M A D E
H I G H
T E C H
L O G Y

INTERVIEW IRINA BEIAN PHOTO PRESS MATERIALS

CURRENTLY, HIGH-TECH, AI, AND 3D PRINTING ARE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF DESIGN, PROMPTING CONCERNS ABOUT THE UNIQUENESS AND AUTHENTICITY OF DESIGNS. THE WORKS OF THE DESIGNER ISAAC MONTE, HOWEVER, PROVE THAT OUR DOUBTS ARE IN VAIN. HIS DESIGN IS THE CENTRE OF ATTENTION OF COLLECTORS, MUSEUMS, AND GALLERIES ACROSS BELGIUM, FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS, USA, AUSTRIA, HUNGARY, UAE, CHINA, AND GREAT BRITAIN. NOTABLY, ONE OF HIS PROJECTS HAS BECOME A PART OF THE PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE CENTRE POMPIDOU IN PARIS. DURING THE DUTCH DESIGN WEEK IN EINDHOVEN, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIT DOWN WITH ISAAC AND EXPLORE HIS PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE AND THE CHALLENGES WITHIN THE FIELD DESIGN.

This year's theme, Picture This, was an urgent call to face contemporary and future scenarios

I have seen your Stone Printing pieces at Kazerne during Dutch Design Week this year. Congratulations! They are truly impressive. What motivated you to take part in DDW in Eindhoven?

I have been doing research for about two years, exploring the utilisation of waste streams, including materials such as calcium and exotic fruits. I think that DDW is a great opportunity to showcase all the research and its outcomes due to the extensive audience it attracts. There are lots of people who are interested in your design. Besides, there is also a big group of professionals within the industry, architects, and journalists. In my opinion, DDW is a great platform to meet a broad audience.

You have experienced different design fairs such as PAD London, Nomad, Luxembourg Design Week, Salon Art + Design in New York, and others. Could you highlight the main difference between them and DDW in Eindhoven?

The fairs you mentioned are specifically targeting art collectors – people with existing art and design collections who seek inspiration to acquire new works. For some of the fairs, I collaborated with the gallery Spazio Nobile based in Brussels, in Belgium. So, these events differ primarily due to their different audiences.

Who are the collectors of your design?

The first category of collectors includes well-known individuals. These are famous collectors such as Ariane de



I COLLABORATE WITH NATURE. THERE IS A SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPECT FOR NATURE WITHIN MY CREATIONS



WHILE THE TECHNOLOGIES INVOLVED,
LIKE 3D PRINTING, ARE RECOGNIZABLE,
**THERE'S AN UNDENIABLE ALLURE IN
THEIR NOVELTY AND MYSTERY**



Rothschild and Galila Barzilai Hollander. She is a collector of contemporary art with her own museum in Brussels. Her unique collection spans eight themes – eyes, watermelon, monochromatic white, Hitler, books, and cigarettes. She is rather famous, yet there are also private collectors who prefer to stay anonymous. I think, in my work, people are attracted by the materials and the fact that I am developing my own production process. The handmade nature of my creations, developed through a unique production process, seems to resonate with them. I collaborate with nature. There is a sustainability and respect for nature within my creations.

Not all of your designs are made by hand. What led you to incorporate high technology, such as 3D printing, into your creative process?

I have undertaken a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional stone sculpturing techniques. Typically, stone sculptures begin with massive blocks of stone, and artists carve away material to create art or architectural elements,

often using limestone. When it is excavated, there is lots of dust and gravel that is not being used. To address this, we repurpose the limestone waste as a base for 3D printing. So, instead of taking away materials, we build it up. The problem was that we couldn't use the existing 3D printers for this material, as they couldn't manage and process it. Consequently, we designed our own 3D printer and extruder tailored for this specific material. During DDW, we showed our artistic outcomes – a series of three giant clams. The choice of shell forms aligns with limestone's sedimentary nature, composed of shells. So, we go back to the origin of it. The first clam is a little bit clumsy. The second one is better. The third is completely impeccable. The reason why it is so is because we had to perfect our recipes. We had to perfect our material. And also, we had to know our 3D printer and extruder. With the development of these three objects, it is noticeable that our attempts are becoming better and better, as well as more refined. It's important to note that I refer to our work as "hand-made" because we constructed the 3D

an evolutionary biologist

printer and extruder by hand, as they were non-existent in the world at the time. We collaborated with Oviso Robotics, a Romanian robot company, connecting our extruder to a robotic arm for printing larger objects. Additionally, VEDA, a Dutch 3D printing company, assisted in developing the extruder. Collaborations extend beyond technology; I also work with scientists like Professor Toby Kiers, who specialises in evolutionary biology at the Free University in Amsterdam, for specific projects.

Aren't you afraid that some of your collectors might be frightened by the usage of technology instead of a pure handmade job?

Technology and techniques are now widely embraced. I believe the challenge lies in working with new materials. And, still, our raw material is handmade. Even our 3D printer is crafted by hand. While machines could produce them, we intentionally avoid objects that appear mass-produced. We want imperfection. We want irregularities. Each object looks unique, partly because our machines, made by us, introduce imperfections that add to their beauty.

Are you planning to continue to work with the waste materials for your upcoming collection?

Yes, we use exotic fruits. There are lots of them, for example, bananas, pineapples, mangos, limes and so on, imported from South America. Unfortunately, a portion of these fruits gets damaged during the import to Europe. Over nine months, we developed a recipe to effectively use these fruits. In the beginning, we had lots of issues, like flies and moulds, causing the print to collapse like a pudding. We use 80% of fruits and 20% of additives, all of which are natural. The printed objects are biodegradable. Additionally, calcium plays a big part in our project. Our project started two years ago when we were doing a collaboration with a packaging company from Bulgaria, Europack Bulgaria. They produce all kinds of packaging materials, including bread and vegetable bags. In their production, they use stone paper – which is the alternative to cellulose paper. Instead of cellulose they use calcium – the paper is sustainable, an alternative for cellulose-based paper. Despite its sustainability, they faced the challenge of dealing with cutting waste generated when

**WE WANT
IMPERFECTION.
WE WANT
IRREGULARITIES.
EACH OBJECT
LOOKS UNIQUE,
PARTLY BECAUSE
OUR MACHINES,
MADE BY US,
INTRODUCE
IMPERFECTIONS
THAT ADD TO THEIR
BEAUTY**



converting large sheets into smaller pieces. So, they have lots of cutting waste – and they challenge us to use it. Calcium not only allows us to add colours and pigments to the material, creating a visually interesting effect, but it also gives the material a fluffy appearance. At first glance, people often mistake it for something soft, with some even thinking it's made from textiles.

I was sure that they were made from fabrics when I saw them.

It is fascinating because it sparks curiosity, prompting you to wonder what it is made of. While the technologies involved, like 3D printing, are recognizable, there's an undeniable allure in their novelty and mystery. These objects look like something yet to be discovered.

Must we expect something new from you in the near future?

Currently, we are working on a small collection of functional objects, for example, a mirror, a clock, a side table, and a stool, using this unique material and technique. These functional pieces are set to make their debut at the Collectible Design Fair in Brussels next year in collaboration with Spazio Nobile Gallery. This collection is inspired by a spirograph, which is a drawing tool to make geometrical structures on paper. However, we have written our own software to translate this into the 3D surface. —■

from 7 to 10 March 2024