

## THE 20 BEST KEPT TRAVEL SECRETS

Empty beaches, lost temples, hidden valleys...  
Where the travel professionals get away from it all

'Nowhere is more beautiful than the tiny wilderness  
Island of Fernando de Noronha': Sarah Miller, editor of  
Condé Nast Traveller, on the joys of Bahia, Brazil



### Interiors

# Specs and the city

Marble tables, lavish loos, a spectacle chandelier... the London Design Festival crackled with talk of pricey one-offs and eco-friendly products. **Ian Tucker** picks the 10 entries with the most vision



at shows such as Grandmateria, Trash Luxe and Established & Sons' 'Elevating Design', where party-goers grumbled about elitism and prices while downing Martinis made possible by those very same prices.

There's less cash in sustainability, which in essence is about using, replacing and buying less – not the message the furniture industry wants to trumpet. So most of the sustainable noises are made by students rather than big manufacturers. The furniture industry's attitude to the environment is beginning to look shameful when compared with the eco-efforts made by supermarkets and fashion brands – ie, really shameful. It appears it will take legislation to encourage them – an FSC-certified stick rather than a biodynamic carrot.

#### 1 PUT ON A PEDESTAL

Probably the most spectacular show of the week was held in a huge hangar under Westminster University. In a space usually used for stress-testing concrete, British furniture firm Established & Sons displayed one-off versions of their production pieces made from Carrara marble – the material used for Michelangelo's *David*. The pieces, including a two-tonne version of Zaha Hadid's Aqua Table, sat on 6m-high plinths, so they were only partially visible from ground level – some viewers complained of whiplash. The show, entitled 'Elevating Design', intended to provoke debate on the topic of 'the much-discussed grey area between contemporary design and art'.

While it was described as a 'non-selling exhibition', don't be surprised if you see hefty price tags attached at Established's new London gallery, which opened to coincide with the super-rich collectors and art magpies who are in town for the Frieze Art Fair.

Established & Sons, 2-3 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1; [www.establishedandsons.com](http://www.establishedandsons.com)

#### 2 FLUSH WITH IDEAS

Sanitaryware tends to be neglected by designers. Occasionally a design superstar such as Philippe Starck or, most recently, Jaime Hayon will try to reinvent the toilet bowl, but on the whole they tend to keep the bathroom door firmly shut. However, recent ceramics graduate Marah Whitehead has been attracted to sanitary from the beginning of her fledgling career. ▶

**T**he fifth London Design Festival got off to a mixed start. At the opening ceremony at the Festival Hall, mayor Ken Livingstone presented the inaugural London Design Medal to Zaha Hadid to much applause from the crowd. 'I'd rather that [London] be second in financial services and first in creative industries. No one comes to look at a city for its bankers,' quipped Ken, to more clapping, before planting a big kiss on the architect's cheek.

Later, the party moved upstairs to the sixth-floor Design Embassy, but the euphoria subsided when a woman described as a 'gatecrasher' chucked a glass of bubbly over a party-goer and attacked his male companion with the empty flute, requiring him to attend hospital. Things had really kicked off.

London's Design Festival may not have the commercial or deal-making appeal of other European events in Milan or Cologne, but for diversity and emerging talent London is sovereign. With more than 200 events, mainly centred on the 'hubs' of Brompton, Brick Lane and the Festival Hall, it was hard not to be impressed by people's resourcefulness and innovation. It's a shame that some of the mainstream players in British design, the likes of Heal's and Habitat, chose to stay away.



That aside, the two recurring themes of the festival were design-art and sustainability. The former, being awash with cash, had the largest galleries, the shiniest parties and the bigger buzz. The love-hate relationship many in the design industry have with limited-edition work – bought for vast figures not to be used but to be admired, stored and later sold for even vaster sums – was in evidence

◀ 'Considering the frequency of use, the bathroom is under-appreciated, so my work celebrates something that is often taken for granted,' she observes. Her work is based on traditional Victorian designs, but whereas the Victorians used ornate patterns to distract from their supposedly taboo function, Whitehead adds hands, feet and breasts to her pieces, playfully emphasising their necessity in modern life.

marah.whitehead@hotmail.co.uk; four-piece bathroom suite, £6,900

### 3 SPEC SAVER

Prior to last month, Stuart Haygarth's best-loved work was a chandelier he'd constructed from man-made debris he'd found washed up on Dungeness beach. Transforming rubbish into a thing of beauty is Haygarth's bassline and made him a perfect choice for *Dezeen* editor Marcus Fairs' Trash Luxe show at Liberty, where emergent designers took everyday objects and transformed them into high-end design pieces. For his Optical chandelier Haygarth used around 4,500 second-hand spectacle lenses suspended on nylon thread. 'It became this monster with a huge appetite – it took about five times more lenses than I originally thought,' he says. The result is an elegant, shimmering piece whose opulent appearance belies its humble, surplus materials.

www.stuarthaygarth.com; The Optical Chandelier is an edition of 10, price on application

### 4 BRANCHING OUT

Matthew Hilton's show at 100% Design was so fresh you could smell the sawdust – he'd only just rescued the work from Felixstowe customs. While the brains behind one of the most iconic British pieces of the Nineties, the Balzac armchair, will continue working for Habitat, Ercol, SCP and many others, Hilton used 100% Design at Earl's Court to launch his own-name line. His collection of 12 pieces, from bowls to dining tables, demonstrated his desire to manufacture 'high-quality modern classics' with their understated and practical design, and he picked up the best newcomer award from *Blueprint* magazine for his troubles.

www.matthewhilton.com

### 5 3D SOUVENIRS

We are now becoming used to considering the environmental downside of our holidays.



Hi Jane, I am so tired from all the SHOPPING! I didn't forget about you though! Here's your present...The Statue of Liberty! Mei 2007

REDUCED CARBON FOOTPRINT SOUVENIR BY HECTOR SERRANO

design of anything from golf drivers to hearing aids. It's claimed it won't be long before 3D printers are as common as inkjets in the home.

www.hectorserrano.com; www.3dsystems.com



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## VAN NISTELROOY CAN MAKE A CHAIR WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A SEWING MACHINE AND A PAIR OF SCISSORS

Taking this a short-haul further, Hector Serrano's project 'Reduced Carbon Footprint Souvenirs' showed how it would be possible, using 3D print technology, to email a virtual souvenir to a friend, which they could 'print' out as a solid object – saving on packaging and transport. Not as far-fetched as it seems, these rapid prototyping technologies are already used in furniture production, and the

### 6 FURNITURE RACKET

Product designers are always nosing around for new materials and this year it appeared many had been hanging out at sports centres for inspiration. Swedish designers Andreas Aaltonen and Gustav Kjellin exhibited a coffee table made from ping-pong balls, and Charles Furniture showed a stool made with tennis balls. The most beautifully realised example of this racket was Gitta Gschwendtner's light made of old shuttlecocks, made as part of the Deptford Design Market Challenge – an exercise where designers were asked to make something new from the second-hand items on offer. 'I think that the final piece captures a sense of a moment frozen in time, almost a shuttlecock explosion,' explains



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Gschwendtner. 'Although the metal rods are visible, the shuttlecocks appear to be suspended mid-flight. Additionally, the construction reminds me of molecular models. Viewed that way, the chandelier looks like a mad science experiment.'

Shuttlecock light, made to order, price on request; www.gittagschwendtner.com

### 7 THE BULLET-PROOF CHAIR

Over at the Designersblock show in Shoreditch, recent graduate from the Royal College of Art Henny van Nistelrooy presented his chairs and vases made from Kevlar aramide, the fabric of choice for anti-ballistic body armour. While it might be tempting to see furniture that would be unscathed in a drive-by shooting incident

as a comment on our gun-tastic times, it's probably more an indication of van Nistelrooy's willingness to experiment. Using the hi-tech fabric, he can make a chair with nothing more than a sewing machine and a pair of scissors, and still soft, it can then be packaged flat for transportation

In the hot seat: (above) Matthew Hilton won the best newcomer award for his new own-name line

and hardened off at a later stage. It opens up furniture production to communities without a great deal of knowledge of manufacturing history. 'It doesn't require high tooling costs and it is a process that has been used for a long time in the fashion industry, so no specific skills are required,' says van Nistelrooy. It may even have uses in arenas like prisons and nurseries, where traditionally produced furniture can be hazardous.

The 'Little Stool' is available for £150; www.hennyvanistelrooy.com

### 8 TONGUE-IN-CHEEK CHINA

Candles with built-in wax dripping effect, cereal bowls shaped like milk splashes, tea cups with women's legs for handles and mugs you can lock... European e-zine Designbloom curated an innovative show, 'Handled with Care', which showcased the playful work of young designers who are breathing new life into the ceramics sector – while keeping their tongues firmly in cheek.

www.reikokaneko.co.uk; www.frenchknicker.de; www.undergrowthdesign.com; www.gommeh.com

### 9 TURNING THE TABLES

For the second year on the hop Peter Masters's Burnt Toast Design was presented with the Best Eco Product Award at 100% Design. Last year he won for his tables crafted from one piece of sustainable plywood; this year his Final Stand dining table took the plaudits. The legs are made from recycled or FSC-managed timber, finished with a vinegar stain or toxin-free tung oil; the leg joint is made from recycled steel and the top is made from 15 per cent recycled glass (a higher proportion isn't flawless). 'I want to show that you can make work that is desirable but does not cost the earth, or harm it either,' Masters says. Next he is looking into sustainable flat-pack furniture and designing an eco-cafe in his home town of Manchester.

www.burntoastdesign.co.uk; Final Stand from \$800

### 10 DIXON LIGHTS UP TRAFALGAR

This year, in what is becoming a must-go annual event for design buffs on a budget, Tom Dixon took over Trafalgar Square and handed over 1,000 energy-saving lights to anyone who had patiently lined up (last year he gave away 1,000 polystyrene chairs). Dixon's 'Blow' lamps are inspired by the shape of an incandescent light bulb but are designed for use with low-energy CFL bulbs. Dixon will be putting a copper version of 'Blow' into production soon. Meanwhile, some hard-won souvenirs from Trafalgar Square have found their way on to eBay. ★

'Blow' light in copper, £240; www.tomdixon.net

