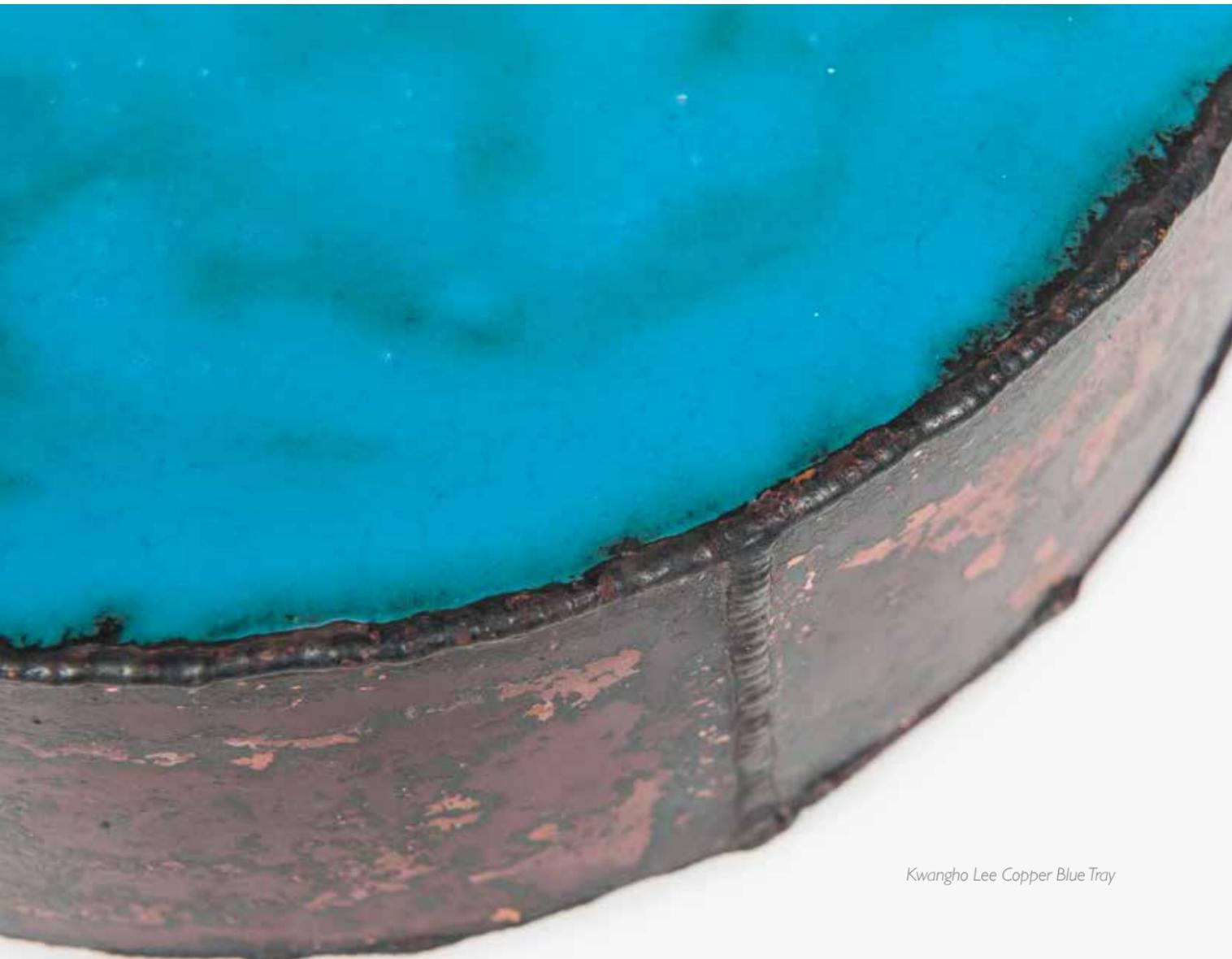


# POP DESIGN CRAZE

HOW DOES CONSUMPTION OF POP CULTURE APPEAR IN PRODUCT DESIGN?

By Cyril Zammit .....



*Kwangho Lee Copper Blue Tray*



*Sea Chair*

Popular culture is a direct reflection of our current society. It's the current state of the country, the feelings of people or simply what seems to be trending. When it comes down to fashion, you can look around the street for a feel of contemporary trends, and you will understand what is fashionable. Art and popular culture seamlessly go hand in hand. An animated figure or a prominent leading personality could be interpreted and fused into an artwork, and, as a result, commemorate a certain period in our lives.

Product design tends to steer away from the mainstream reflection of pop culture.

While this is slightly intentional, the process of creating a piece lends its own story. It will convey to you how different materials might react to being assembled into the final product through unexpected processes. It will introduce you to natural elements that are in abundance via a series of techniques and products that haven't been explored.

In today's society, no one is immune to popular culture - try as you may, but you will find something in your home that stems from it. That is the environment we live in, where advertisements are alluring and captivating and can instill a sense of inception. As a result, you walk into a store with a set prenotation of

blind consumption. What companies fail to explain is the process through which your consumables were produced. Since product design is designing furniture pieces or objects d'art, story telling is of importance in that it gives an identity and a soul to any item; something it prides itself on doing.

London based Studio Swine's project Sea Chair is based on collecting plastic from the ocean, segregating them by density using the Nurdler, then melting and fusing it into a chair. On an ecological level, this story showcases the considerable amount of plastic present in oceans, either from sailing, and cruises or cargo ships that dispose of waste into the ocean. >>



*between classic and lacquered*

During Design Days Dubai 2013, Studio Swine, presented by Coletivo Amor de Madre, conducted a live performance Construction Series creating objects from the cities ever-changing skyline.

Over the years of working closely with design related events and thereafter directing Design Days Dubai, my interest to hear designers' stories, inspiration and ethos behind various projects has grown tremendously. Many designers and studios share a common way of thinking and in a way I became fixated with that. While building up the public program for the first edition of Design Days Dubai, I knew I wanted to convey storytelling through workshops.

I visited Seoul in South Korea, as an escape of the madness of the fair's buildup. While

visiting galleries throughout the city, Korean designer Kwangho Lee's name remained at the back of my head. Kwangho works in his studio on the outskirts of Seoul. Like many others, the designer works with his hands and allows the material to take control. In a short movie produced by Victor Hunt DesignArt Dealer, Kwangho speaks of how he embraced his grandfather's techniques of working, and how that unintentionally grew into his way of working. One of his projects, Skin-enameled copper produced for Victor Hunt DesignArt Dealer, tries to revive old Korean crafts using modern techniques and applications. The process institutes welding various copper plates to create different objects, later on sanded to aid the chil-ho (traditional Korean enamel) and then cooked for 4-5 hours. The final result is an array of unexpected colors

that appear on the surface. Kwangho Lee believes the closer the object is to its natural material, the more beautiful it is.

I invited Kwangho to partake in the first series of workshops as part of the extensive Design Days Dubai public program. His idea was to lead a workshop in Camel Leather Weaving inspired by his project titled Weave Your Lighting. When conducting the workshop, two types of materials were used, camel leather as well as traditional Emirati talli. Camel leather, while expensive, is being utilized more in home and wearable accessories. The workshop was a success, and the end product was a light shade comprised of camel leather alone. Talli, weaving, and camel leather are all common in the UAE, but combining the three to produce a design object reflects the way items are being consumed nowadays. It provided an inspired solution to a material that is traditionally categorized under one label.

I met Pili Wu two years later in Taipei, he is a Taiwanese designer known for his practices in weaving the traditional into modern times and saturating it by mass production. Living in what used to be the kingdom of plastic production, Wu saw the infamous plastic stool which was being used everywhere from kitchens, to garages, and homes. Its simple structure gave it the "iconic" title and hence weeded itself into mass production by its high demand. Despite it all, the designer has yet to be discovered. What tends to fascinate Wu is how an iconic design piece can be modified and become an elegant and lavish object. His Plastic Classic Loop project focused on transforming the simple plastic stool by introducing the classic Chinese loop chair and fusing the two pieces together. The fusion resulted in the Plastic Classic Loop, an expensive expression of a piece used by many.

Wu continues to revive the basic pieces that surround our environment as he did with his GloballyLocal project with furniture empire IKEA. Imported largely around the world, IKEA tends to provide a western lifestyle through very affordable

furniture. While it is in high demand globally, it remains somewhat sterile and uniform, which to me, doesn't give a comforting feeling. Wu took the IKEA pieces and combined them with Taiwanese cultural references, which remain very visible and important. Including iconic figures such as the deity of protection, Guan-Yi, riding a dragon and a mythical battlefield of tigers and dragons. The storytelling turns dull imported goods to interesting pieces

with background, richness, and life making them stand out in a sea of cloned pieces.

While many things in life are inspired or affected by our surroundings, product design reverses the process. It utilizes what remains and builds something beautiful. Listen carefully to what inspires designers and their design process, and you shall explore a different layer of the world we inhabit. ■



*Kwangho Lee during his "Camel Leather Weaving" workshop*



*Studio Swine Live Performance, Construction Series*

# DESIGN IN PROCESS

By Cyril Zammit, Design Days Dubai Fair Director



Verner Panton Moon Lamp

Gearing up for the fourth edition of Design Days Dubai, Cyril Zammit, the fair's director, is excited by the variety of new works presented by the world's leading modern and contemporary design galleries. Showcasing pieces by renowned and emerging designers alike, the variety brings different processes and materials to life in unexpected ways. The final result is enchanting, creative and exploratory.

The Birdsmouth Table



City Cabinet



## CITY CABINET

Presented by Fiona Barratt Campbell Privé.

Middle, this page.

To know Privé is to know that quality material and craftsmanship are pioneering factors in her designs. City Cabinet is crafted from hand-applied chipped oak while the doors are finished using smooth bronze patina. Chocolate brown oak is used for the outer sides and top, and her base is made from mirror finished polished copper.

## FUZZ COFFEE TABLE

Created by Study O Portable presented by London-based Gallery Fumi.

Bottom right, this page.

Consisting of 120 layers, the coffee table is made with layering pigmented acrylic resin. The product is inductive of the designed environment and Study O Portable's relationship to the cultural landscape that enables it. >>

Fuzz Coffee Table



## VERNER PANTON MOON LAMP

Presented by Beirut-based Ardeco Gallery.

Opposite page

This iconic chrome lamp consists of a large number of ring-shaped discs suspended around a centrally located bulb. The discs hide the bulb while acting as reflectors spreading a soft light throughout the room.

## THE BIRDSMOUTH TABLE

Designed by Adam Goodrum presented by Melbourne-based gallery Broached Commissions. Top left, this page.

The table takes its name from the Birdsmouth mast which was invented in the 19th century. The hollowness of the mast combined with the colorful legs reflects Adam's passion for bright colors. The final result is an airy yet strong design. >>

**FACETED BOX**

Created by Andrea Walsh presented by Crafts Council UK.  
Top right, this page.

This 22ct burnished Gold Porcelain and glass box is handmade and acts as a sculptural piece of intrigue. Walsh explores the box form as both an object and metaphor and ends with objects of remarkable translucency and clarity.



Facted Box



Vesu White Vase



Ceramic Lamps



Split Chair

**CERAMIC LAMPS**

By Jean Cacheleux presented by Galerie Silberis.

Middle left, this page.

Ceramist Cacheleux fuses black and gold glazes into his lamps. Hints of opulence and vintage feel give these lamps a classic pair while transcending various periods of our time.

**SPLIT CHAIR**

By Chinese designer Zhoujie Zhang presented by Gallery All.

Bottom left, this page.

Zhang's designs transmit you to a kaleidoscope view of the world with infinite possibilities. The Split Chair is the first object developed through Zhang's own digitalized fabrication system generating an endless amount of ever-changing objects. He is simultaneously continuing to build a path towards a digital future through his design.

**CROSSED LEGS**

By design duo Sofie Lachaert and Luc d'Hanis presented by Galerie Judy Straten.

Bottom left, this page.

The bronze chairs echo a feeling of familiarity through subtly intertwined legs. The construction of the chairs allows people to come together in comfortable gatherings and the function evokes using furniture as a stage for social interaction.



Crossed Legs

**VESU WHITE VASE**

By starchitect Zaha Hadid presented by Wiener Silber Manufactur.

Top, this page.

Using silver, the soft shimmering white metal, Hadid has created immaculate vases with designs that mirror her aesthetic. The allure and value convey the high quality of work produced by Hadid and Wiener Silber Manufactur.

**LIQUID GLACIAL TABLE**

Designed by starchitect Zaha Hadid presented by David Gill Galleries.

Bottom right, this page

Pushing the envelope of creativity, Hadid advances the filed architecture. His design projects may require a shorter amount of time to execute, but they express concepts through various scales and utilize new and evolving technologies. ■



Liquid Glacial Table