

The world as we want it

The rediscovery of craftsmanship; an enquiry into sustainable technology; the sociology of contemporary living; co-design; the empowerment of women in the design field – five young designers talk about the directions their work is taking right now

by **FRANCESCA ESPOSITO**

As the great Albert Einstein once said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." (*The World as I See It*, 1935). In order to solve climate change, social inequality, migration and political tension, we need input from the minds (and hands) of those who will inhabit the future.

How useful will design be? We asked five young designers from Holland, Italy, Germany, England and Brazil who use experimentation and lots of research to probe what the future holds and offer constructive alternatives. Their work is driven by an undying sentiment: hope.

Christien Meindertsma, a Design Academy Eindhoven alumna with an impressive repertoire of achievements, has made research her forte. She refers to her method as "documentary design", capturing her studies on film and writing to illustrate her subject matter, investigating and questioning how products

are currently manufactured, commercialised and used. The 26-year-old Giuseppe Arezzi, a recent designer-in-residence at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Paris, is interested in anthropological transformations underway in contemporary living.

The industrial designers Cesare Bizzotto and Tobias Nitsche – the former Italian and the latter German – are the founders of the lighting company From Lighting, for which they conduct research on the most advanced technology in their field. The Londoner Oliver Marlow is the cross-disciplinary designer-founder of Studio Tilt. He favours co-design to facilitate the democratic involvement of people in addressing social changes. Finally, there is the Brazilian-born, Milan-based Thayse Viégas. After having founded Casa Canvas, an art and design gallery in Brianza, she is now an ambassador for the Brera Design Week and organises monthly talks on a wide range of design subjects, inviting women to share their experiences in the field with other women.

CHRISTIEN MEINDERTSMA



"The only real, good reason I do the job I do is to preserve a hopeful outlook on the future," says the Dutch designer Meindertsma. Born in Utrecht in 1980, she has been awarded three Dutch Design Awards for the particular way she approaches, researches and studies materials and resources. Her Flax Chair, designed in 2015 and the winner of a DDA in 2016, is fully biodegradable. It is built from a felt-like layer of linen fabric, rigidised by polylactic acid. The rectangle of fabric is cut out in such a way that the middle forms the chair's shell, and the remnants around it become the legs, so there is no waste. Produced in collaboration with Enkev and Label/Breed, the Flax Chair will be present at the 2019 Milan Design Week. Meindertsma's publications read like etymologies of the materials she uses. The book *Bottom Ash Observatory* (2015), takes the reader on a 160-page illustrated journey that follows the contents of a 25-kilo bucket of bottom ash, tracing it back to its origins as household waste.

Checked Baggage (2004, mentioned in the book *A History Volume II* by the British photographer Martin Parr) is an exhaustive catalogue of all the items confiscated by security from travellers in a one-week period at Schiphol airport. "My way of looking at design and my approach are very pragmatic. I don't like preaching. What I do is work critically on my feelings and emotions towards objects. From the chair to the iPhone, we don't know where objects come from, but throughout production, each one transits through many hands. They are the result of collective work." Until January this year, her exhibition "Beyond the Surface" was hosted at the Vitra Design Museum, showing products, photographs, prototypes, videos and interviews. "Of course technology and science will play a role in the future. Everything will evolve and become faster. But I'm an optimist and believe in connections. We are one community, all of us together, each with his own diversity. We connect with one other through materials, what we eat, the environment around us and our emotions."



The Fibre Market project for the Design Museum in London by Christien Meindertsma included the shredding of wool sweaters

GIUSEPPE AREZZI



"Do you happen to know where I can find digs in Milan?" This question is asked by a designer-busy multi-tasking while following an irreducible dream. Giuseppe Arezzi, a 26-year-old designer just back from Paris, is on a constant discovery of exhibitions and museums. He also enjoys looking for interesting vistas from which to observe the city. His talent was discovered by Domitilla Dardi and today, in addition to his projects dedicated to contemporary human life, Arezzi works with Emanuele Magenta after having collaborated with Francesco Facini, Andrea Branzi, Michele De Lucchi and Francesca Balena Arista. "Anthropology and sociology, studying contemporary humans, how they live, where they live and how they evolve on earth: these are the themes of my work." He has recently returned from abroad, where he was invited to take part in the one-month "Promesse dell'Arte" designers-in-residency programme by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Paris. As part of the programme, he presented the minimalist shelving system Dal Soggetto all'Objetto – Binomio. "My latest project stems from looking at the living conditions of young Parisians. They often live in small apartments just over nine metres squared in the attics of 19th-century buildings. They have a super-condensed life where multi-purpose thinking is key. They surround themselves with multi-functional furniture and use intelligent objects. I am interested in how our use of space changes according to contemporary life. Everything will be increasingly transient and temporary. We will not own houses anymore. They will be supplied already furnished and equipped, meaning we will have but very few personal objects. Today we study nature, the economy or, as Paola Antonelli says at this year's Triennale di Milano event, how to plan mass extinction. Designers have gained awareness, but the industry is lagging behind in these issues." Then he reassures us, "We will inevitably continue to make furniture; the world will always need tables and chairs. But the products will have a lower environmental impact and more sustainability in the manufacturing process."



The beech-wood Binomio shelving system (2019) by Giuseppe Arezzi is meant for small living quarters. Produced by Leibal

THAYSE VIÉGAS

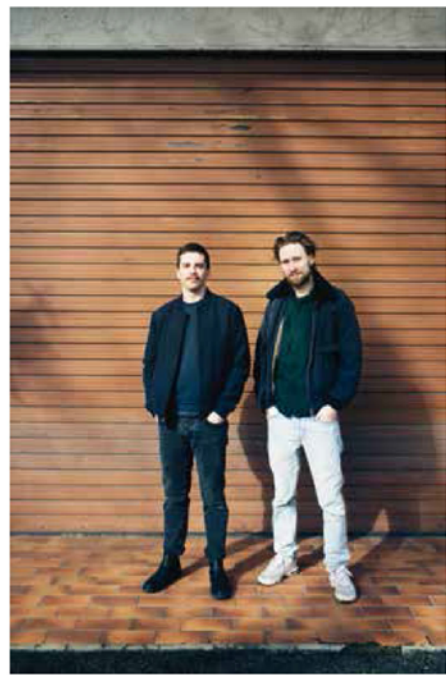


"It's not something that only regards women. I really hope we are heading for a future where conditions are fair for all women and all men," says Thayse Viégas, the founder of Casa Canvas, a concept store in an 18th-century home in Brianza. She feels inclusive toward men. "True, we are experiencing a wave of female pride, but I believe the battle must be fought together. As women, we must commit ourselves to finding our own space, becoming stronger, pushing harder in this direction to find equal opportunities." Born in 1985 in the heart of the Amazon Rainforest, she grew up in Rio de Janeiro, where she graduated in cinematography at the Pontifical Catholic University. Viégas still has an exotic accent despite having been in Italy since 2009, when she attended a postgraduate course in fashion buying at the Marangoni Institute of Milan. After fashion, she transferred to design (with sidetracks into art and cinema) with Behind the Scenes, a set of unusual porcelain plates. "For the Canvas Talks project now underway at the Brera Design Department, we are putting together an all-women roster of designers, independent producers, architects and influencers with the intention of founding our own community in the world of creation. Our guideline theme is 'constructing and reconstructing'. It's a republic of women, the design version of that. "Every month we choose a topic. They range from the experiences of foreign professionals to the importance of the foreign. We invite about 20 people. Each shares a thought, and dialogue ensues. For the future I strongly believe in the idea of community and the development of new circumstances for relationships and networking. These will include listening, knowledge sharing and comparison. It's good to be able to talk about your strengths and weaknesses. If we could become a better human race, even just the need for sustainability in design would be easier to understand. I've always looked for an art-design hybrid. At Casa Canvas (now closed, pending a move to Milan) there was something for everyone, from artwork by Vittoria Parnello to objects by the designers CTRLZAK. Everything mixes very well."

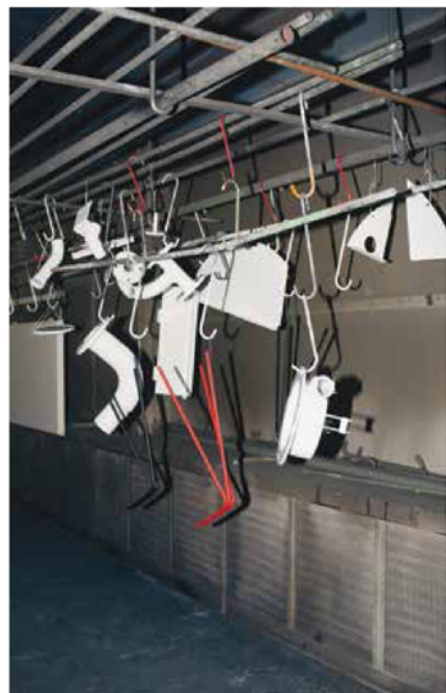


Behind the Scenes is a series of porcelain plates by the Brazilian designer Thayse Viégas, inspired by the Old Masters

CESARE BIZZOTTO, TOBIAS NITSCHÉ



To questions about what the design of the future will look like, they give a pragmatic response. "Intuitively, we think there will be two different directions for production in the future," says Cesare Bizzotto and Tobias Nitsche. The two industrial designers are in their early thirties. One is from Padua, the other from Augusta. After completing the master's degree programme in product design at the École in Lausanne, they started a lighting company. "The first direction will be 3D printing, a technology that keeps on revealing more potential in the areas of mass-production and small-scale series. The other orientation we see is the enhanced appreciation of local and artisanal products, a returning trend that cannot be overestimated. It is spreading to our sector, too. These two references are the starting points of our first collection. One line is being discovered; the other is being rediscovered." From Lighting will have a display during the 2019 Salone at the EuroLucce trade fair, and at Alcoa for the Fuorisalone, presenting four lamps lit by LEDs. "Exponential economic growth will no longer be the first objective. We will try working on a smaller scale, in a way that is highly considerate of the human race. Environmental sustainability and 'human sustainability' will be an increasingly great influence on the design approach." The associates Bizzotto and Nitsche design in Germany and produce in Italy. Both were enriched by growing up in mixed-culture families. They debuted last year with three lamps in Venice, at Casa Flora, and in Milan at the Asap store during the design week. Speaking about materials, they say, "Everyone will be forced to respect the environment. Light-emitting diodes have become a well-established and ubiquitous light-source, but there is still lots of room for exploration." And about the job market, they have this to say: "Unlike a technician, a designer knows almost nothing about technology, but is able to think freely and nimbly. That means there are many problems he can solve. In the future, many designers will work as consultants, sharing and making good use of their skills."



The workshop at From Lighting, where LED lamps are built by qualified craftspeople from the Venice area. Hanging to dry is the Aspect model

OLIVER MARLOW - STUDIO TILT



"The future?" Oliver Marlow repeats the question a few times to himself. Marlow is an interdisciplinary designer. He is the creative director of Studio Tilt, co-founded with Dermot Egan to facilitate the creation and transformation of spaces for work and innovation. "I can't answer the question without going beyond design. One aspect concerns the technological hyper-connectivity in cities. They will be global, connected places of interaction." Marlow says over the phone from London, where Brexit is in full swing. "The level of interconnectivity will be higher, but at the same time it will present challenges in terms of identity, sense of belonging and language. How to enable people to unite and become a community will be one of design's tasks." He has a word about the political situation, which he thinks can improve by means of design: "Brexit mirrors a growing feeling of disillusionment, where everybody blames everybody else and takes sides against one another. A creative design approach could induce people not usually in contact to put their heads together in harmony toward a common goal." Marlow works as a visiting professor at the Milan Polytechnic. In 2016, he and Kuryly Groves co-wrote *Spaces for Innovation: The Design and Science of Inspiring Environments*. "Design is a way to aggregate, and create a community that makes good use of creativity. This is why design is changing. It is shifting away from the link to industrial production it used to have back when designers gave priority to functionality and aesthetics when responding to the needs of humanity. It is now turning into a tool to look at more complex issues. We have moved from functional design to service design. The process, not just the product, is fundamental. This is why empathy will play an important role. Communication will be a strategic choice that makes a problem better understood, makes it real and relevant for people. Design will have more responsibility than in the past. It will combine all the most dynamic aspects of the process: creativity, materiality, craftsmanship and elegance. The challenge will be trying to understand what is right and what is wrong."



The Shed (2014) by Studio Tilt, one of three designs it made for the University for the Creative Arts in Epsom, Surrey UK. The other two are Pier and Flying Lines



PHOTO DANIEL LOREANO



PHOTO FRANCESCO CORTI

Left: the magnetic lamp Piazza (2018) in black, by From Lighting. Above: the habitative unit Beata Solitudo by Giuseppe Arezzi, made for the display "Una Stanza Tutta per Sé" (2017) held at the Cantiere Galli Design in Rome



PHOTO MATTHIAS LARBOE

Above: materials extracted from incinerated waste by Christien Meindertsma, seen in her book *Bottom Ash Observatory* (2015) produced in collaboration with the photographer Mathijs Labadie. Below: the Fibre Market project (2016) by Meindertsma used a new sorting machine to scan 1,000 sweaters in order to reuse their fibre



PHOTO JILL TAYE

Display designed in 2014 by Studio Tilt at the Derby Silk Mill, a museum in Derby, UK

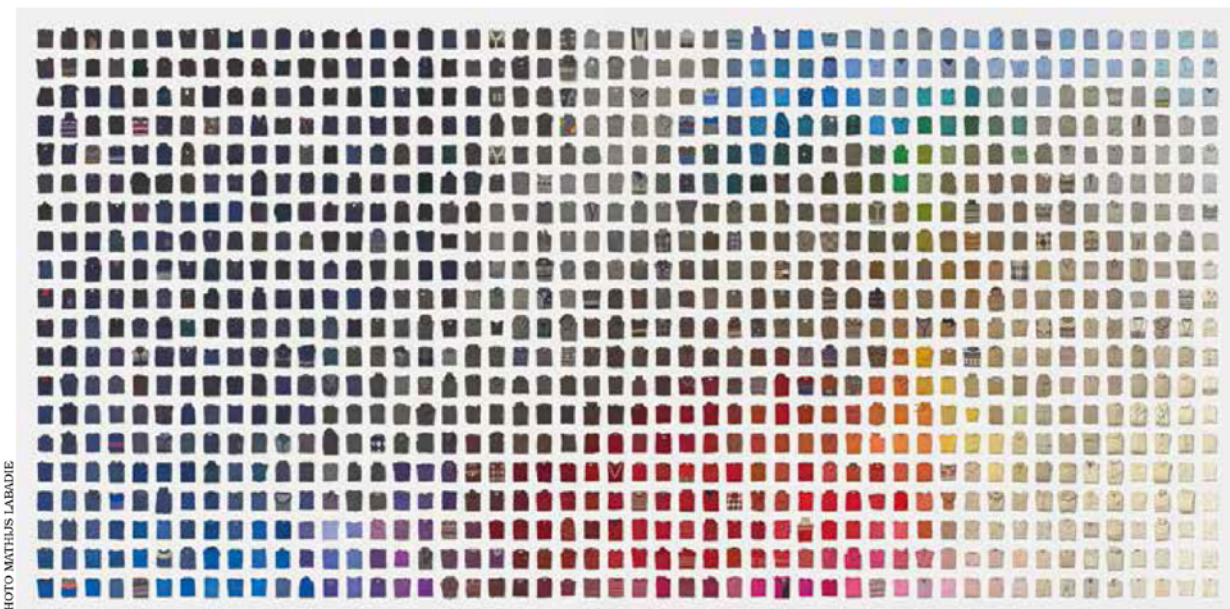


PHOTO MATTHIAS LARBOE