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"STYLISTIC DIVERSITY AND ECLECTICISM

IN CONTEMPORARY INTERIOR

AND FURNITURE DESIGN"

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INTRODUCTION:

Contemporary European Design is difficult to pin down to one particular movement, as it is still in a state of flux. European designers are re-evaluating both their relationship to the tradition of craft, which is their legacy, and their relationship to current culture-media, exploitation, cultural diversity and changing social consciousness which is their present. They have added a recognisable narrative to their designs in order to communicate on multiple levels. No single dogma prevails. It is this layering of a recognisable narrative on to the origins of twentieth-century design that has marked the emergence of contemporary design in Europe. At the heart of what may be termed the new design is the dialogue between image and content.

Many cultural phenomena of current turn-of-the-century Europe have collectively impressed upon a television generation that image is everything. It seems that we have lost the necessity for words, that all can be expressed visually, in gesture, in a glance, in a styled image.

"The everyday is made up of a succession of instants which pass by without us paying attention to them. Sometimes an instant disrupts the flow of time or routine. The object carries within it this faculty to memorize the instant, functioning between the anodine and the primordial". - Ref.1.

In other words the object has the ability to entertain. But what is the role of this visual message? Is it to shock or to seduce? Is it good design or just deliberately novel? Does the piece contain cultural or political messages or is it just meant to indulge the viewer in what looks and feels good? Designers are using interiors, buildings and furniture to communicate on a conscious and physical level. Designers such as Nigel Coates and Garouste and Bonetti manipulate urban culture, street style and dream worlds, breaking the traditions of design, creating a counter culture.

The new design movement has its roots in the English Arts and Crafts reformers of the late nineteenth century. Its leading theorists, men such as William Morris, had trained as architects and worked towards unity in the arts, believing that all creative endeavour was of equal value. With its division of labour, the Industrial Revolution had devalued the work of the craftsman. The aim of the arts and crafts leaders was to re-establish a harmony between architect, designer and craftsman and to bring handcraftsmanship to the production of well-designed, affordable, everyday objects. By the height of the movement at the turn of the century new links were forged between craft and industry. These principles have been adopted by contemporary designers, resulting in both one-of-a-kind objects and limited batch production, as well as pieces mass-produced by big manufacturing companies such as Cappellini, a large Italian furniture manufacturer, working with Tom Dixon.

The production of modern furniture spans a huge spectrum ; at one extreme, furniture design in America, which was much quicker than Europe to adopt mechanization and, at the other, the craft workshops of Scandinavia and Italy. Italy's success in furniture, lighting and clothing has been due, in part, to the survival of a lively artisan tradition, based on a small-scale workshop infrastructure, which makes it possible to produce, in small batches, products which could not economically be made in huge factories. Inevitably, the larger factories have directed their products at lower and lower income groups in order to expand their markets and to develop production, while the craft-based industries have continued to aim their goods at a higher income bracket, emphasizing quality rather than competitive prices. It is true that the produce of these smaller companies rarely gets used in the homes of the majority of people. But these new designs play an important role in establishing the major breakthroughs of this century, most of which are reflected sooner or later in designs for the mass market. Such is the case with companies like IKEA, based in Scandinavia with production in the Far East, selling mass produced, well designed goods at affordable prices.

The new designers and smaller companies exist to experiment with new ideas, new materials and new forms, bringing design into line with cultural changes. Since the 1980's these smaller, more flexible companies have flourished, proving that there is a market for the more one-of-a-kind objects. In an increasingly synthetic and de-natured world, there is a need for products which are more sympathetic to our emotional and sensual needs.

The designers I have chosen to talk about are closer to artists than purley problem-solving designers. Their work is sold in galleries as well as furniture shops and incorporates varying themes and influences, as Sylvain Dubuisson describes:

"But, at the same time every object represents the delimitation of territory whose frontiers are not so much spatial as thematic. The key themes are : the void, metaphysics, inner quality, myths, the anodine, ambiguity, speech." - Ref.2. (Speaking About Furniture)

The dual nature of contemporary design, this designer/artist approach, is a normal condition. Furniture design changes as quickly as hemlines in fashion, and with this perception of furniture as fashion, the integrity of the design is being questioned. Yet integrity is truth to oneself and contemporary designers must deal with the duality of their work, making experimental, ground-breaking pieces which must also have a desirable element. Their integrity is kept by keeping their own personal visions intact.

Many styles exist in contemporary furniture and interior design, the calm versus the sensational, object craving versus a true appreciation of design. Energetic people with fresh ideas shape contemporary design. People like Nigel Coates and Andree Putman, although from two very different standpoints, are building the foundations for an exciting future in design, Putman's standpoint being from a Modernist ethos and Coates's from a reaction against Modernism.

At the beginning of the 1980's people began to speak seriously of the imminent demise of the Modern Movement. Although reports were exaggerated and premature, there could be no doubt that a most profound culture shift was in progress. The Modern Movement which dominated from the 1920's to the 1970's and its assumption of the natural right to occupy the moral high ground in the world of design, had a new opponent. Reactions against the arid and reductive aesthetic of Modernism led to new diversity and eclecticism ; the Post-Modern era had arrived. Smaller movements and groups with wildly different outlooks found common cause, and were drawn together, for the moment, by their shared anti-Modernist ideals. Adolf Loos, who had effectively banished ornament and all historical references, was no longer the father of design. Instead Designers began to make their own rules, especially in England where there had been a strong counter culture since the 1960's. Once again, designers could embrace meaning and symbolism in form, elaboration of detail, surface and ornament.

'Salvage' design and work by Architects such as Coates reflect this in a fresh attitude to the design of cities and streets, and in a general apprehension that things are not working as they should. N.A.T.O. (Narrative Architecture Today) began to question the artificiality of inflexibly planned cities, mass-produced artefacts, in fact all the dehumanised patterns of life in the 'man-made' world. Trash and junk started to be invoked as a powerful antidote to the over-rational design of cities and objects. But some Architects and Designers still think, that technological, ordered and sanitised environments are the solution. This comes from the generation of Designers educated in the Modernist tradition, even when there are clear signs that society is looking for more sensuous, organic qualities in its surroundings. Cultural expression is no longer divided into high and low culture. Communication is the new common denominator. Today fashion, media and design combine to create a stage set for living. The new design, as it relates to our personal environment, our tastes, and ourselves, is a means of defining who we are as unique individuals.

The existence of these new designers depends on many criteria. Contemporary designers must have talent, backing and management. But they also survive due to the media and existing commercial structures. Exposure is the key word in today's world where designers have learnt to exploit the media. The 1990's have seen a proliferation of design galleries and shops in all major European cities. Galleries such as David Gill's in London have not only promoted and shown work by the furniture and interior designers Garouste and Bonetti, but have also commissioned them to create new pieces, acting as a support system for the artists. Design publications have also helped in this support system, following activity in the design world as well as educating the public to these new aesthetics. Although most of these innovations are not available to the general public, each design publicised through the media can reach an international audience. The media's reproduction of images visually replaces the assembly line. Designers such as Andree Dubreuil and Tom Dixon have become well known through publications such as Blueprint, Interiors, Elle Decoration, and House and Garden.

Designers in France and England are now showing the way in contemporary design ; Italy is no longer at the cutting edge. While English designers are going to countries like Italy for their industrial and commercial expertise, they continue to experiment and push forward. The French designers are more fortunate as they have their own support system at home. Since its inception in the late 1970's, the VIA has sponsored the production of over two hundred and fifty prototypes and has given its prestigious 'Carte Blanche' awards to designers. This organization was set up by the French Government through collaboration with the French furniture industry, to bring French design to world attention and to give designers the freedom to innovate.

The desire to be measured against the proven achievements of the past, and yet to make objects that are of importance today ; to evoke the sense of wonder that the finest artifacts of other centuries still command ; and to be seen to create objects and decorative schemes of lasting value - these have been potent sources of encouragement to many of the new wave of designers/makers. Their new style is a curious hybrid, which manifests a whole-hearted affirmation of delight in the richness and grandeur of things. Their work has a love of imbalance and sense of danger, sometimes extravagant, whimsical, grotesque and at times even vulgar. Their work has provided ample fodder for a visually hungry society.

Stephen Calloway summed up this new direction very well in his recent book BAROQUE BAROQUE :

"As if in reaction to the complacency of much interior decoration and stirred by a perversely romantic attitude to urban wreckage, a number of young designers seem either independently or in small groups to have arrived at a curiously obscure but exciting and expressive neo-baroque aesthetic. The influences which have come together here are varied but may well include the imagery of Cecil Beaton and the taste of the Sitwells, who had their own baroque revival in the twenties and thirties ; the neo-romanticism of the war years and the work of visually obsessive film-makers such as Fellini and more recently Derek Jarman. There is a distinct element of London street fashion too. Luxury or indeed adequate comfort or practicality is eschewed in favour of the visionary in the architectural projects of the radical NATO group, whilst in the monumental ceramics of Oriel Harwood or Andre Dubreuils's designs for furniture and interiors such as the chocolate shop Rococo all the ordinary notions of scale and of use of materials are challenged. This neo-baroque manner restates for the eighties John Piper's original neo-romantic phrase 'pleasing decay', but its essence is a new grandeur and a new theatricality : 'The mise-en-scene a ruined palazzo in a post-Holocaust landscape.'" Ref.3.

NIGEL COATES:

At a time when the public has become more involved in architectural debate than for many years, Nigel Coates is an architect who has sympathy with this loss of faith. His buildings are contemporary rather than modern and his style reflects an organic rationalism. His buildings fit perfectly into the cityscape, taking elements from their surrounding area and mixing them with elements of the future. Most people today are disillusioned about what a new building may be, being all too aware of ever-erupting tower blocks, dreadful, faceless buildings. The debate is still centred on the old argument between ancient and modern. Coates somehow has gone forward from this to create a new style.

Coates is one of the new breed to have emerged from England over the last ten years, the Designer/Architect. He graduated in 1976 from the Architectural Association in England, where he also teaches today. With most major building commissions divided between the planning departments, large building contractors and a few internationally famous architects, it has been shopkeepers and restaurateurs who have become the new patrons of the younger generation of architects and provided a public proving-ground for their talents. One of the chief beneficiaries of this new movement has been Coates, whose interiors for shops and restaurants have enabled him, since 1985, to build up a practice with his partner Doug Branson which now employs up to fifteen other young architects.

He calls his style narrative architecture and he formed his own group NATO (Narrative Architecture Today) after some clashes with the architectural establishment. In 1983, the work of the students of Diploma Unit 10 at the A.A. was dismissed by their external assessor James Stirling as cartoons. After some panic from the staff, his decision was rescinded, but it had been sufficient to incite the students concerned, with Coates as their tutor, to form a breakaway movement and to publish what amounted to a manifesto (N.A.T.O.).

They produced a series of large-format magazines which attacked the concept of the modern city and, taking areas of London, they drew up 'mightlihoods'. Projected plans for the re-energising of areas of the city.

A first glance at these projects might produce some sympathy with Stirling's reaction. Coates' drawing style owes more to fine art than to the formal geometry of architectural plans. His sketches are a maze of overlapping layers and cross-sections, winding organic areas and suddenly recognisable sections of architectural history. They are colonised by armies of squiggly little people, with cars and planes and walkways successfully simulating the atmosphere of the urban chaos which Coates so much enjoys.

Coates feels that most current architecture still tends to look at the building as an object rather than an arena in which quite specific activities in the life of the city can take place. There is always some concept of movement, of dynamism, an emphasis on flow in Coates' work. He tries to capture the energy of the city in architectural terms, the trains going over the viaducts, the people flowing from their homes to their places of work. His work is eclectic, but reflects his deliberate handling of urban chaos.

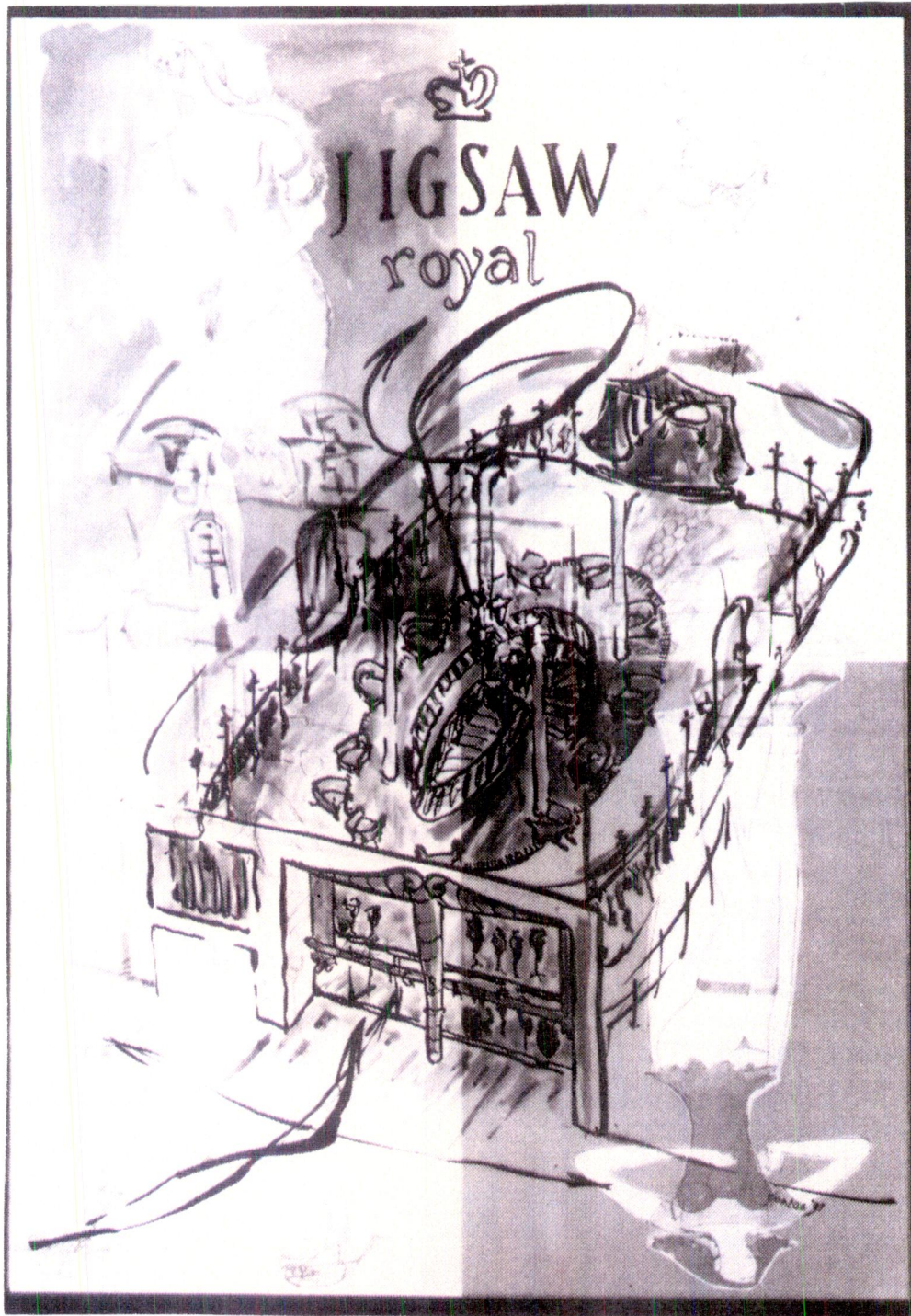
Coates speaks of design in England today as survival in an aesthetically hostile society. His style, like that of his other contemporary English designers, has evolved from street culture, making use of salvage from the past and an established eccentric tradition, like that of the Sitwell family from the early part of twentieth century England. England had no design based industry, no design 'gurus' until the sixties/early seventies, with a man such as Terence Conran. English designers found their own way, discovered as they went along, as Coates puts it, "Harnessing the way society was set up to do things". Ref.4.

Society today is accustomed to absorbing information from the fields of fashion, film and furniture, interior and product design, which have merged, so one tends to feed off the other. Marketing is big business, and an intrinsic part of design, aware that it is not only selling a pair of jeans for example, but the contemporary fantasy and lifestyle that goes with it. Consumer society has become very sophisticated and shops, cafes and restaurants have moved in line with this development. Coates talks of social rejuvenation of the city scape, yet most of his shops to date have been elitist small shops for designers. Coates has designed shops for the fashion designers Jasper Conran, Katherine Hamnett and for Jigsaw, a large retail chain in England, selling a well-designed, mid-priced range of clothing for men and women (one of which has just opened on Grafton Street, in Dublin).

In his work there are no clean lines, monotonous or stark interiors. His work is full of activity, just like his drawing style. When one walks into a Coates interior, one is surrounded by his vision as the interior seems to swirl around, encapsulating the viewer. His lines are organic, yet there are elements of the machine aesthetic juxtaposed with fragments of Baroque and Roman architecture. His wall colours come from the materials and textures he chooses. The richness of surface, the ornamental elements and feeling of space and light come together to create a feast for the senses.

Fashion meets theatre at Jigsaw's flamboyant store in London's Knightbridge. The two-storey shop was completed in 1991 after a £600,000 re-design. Jigsaw brought Branson Coates in to turn the outlet - which was previously operating with a temporary shop-fit - into the flagship store for its 24-strong English chain. Their largest shop, at 350 square metres, had to be a very special and splendid space.

The Jigsaw group felt that Coates' work had wit and a feeling of fun, not threatening or intimidating. Jigsaw shared his non-conformist ideals. It is one of the most ambitious London shop interiors in recent years, thought it came at a time when retail design had subsided into caution and gloom.

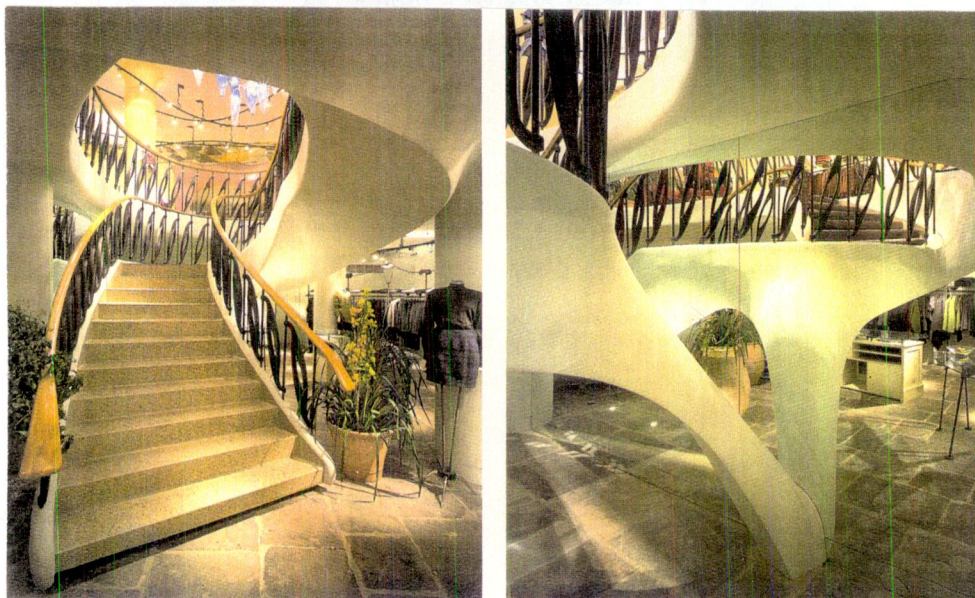


1. Coates' drawing for Jigsaw shop , Knightsbridge, London, 1991.





2. Shopfront for Jigsaw by Coates, 1991.

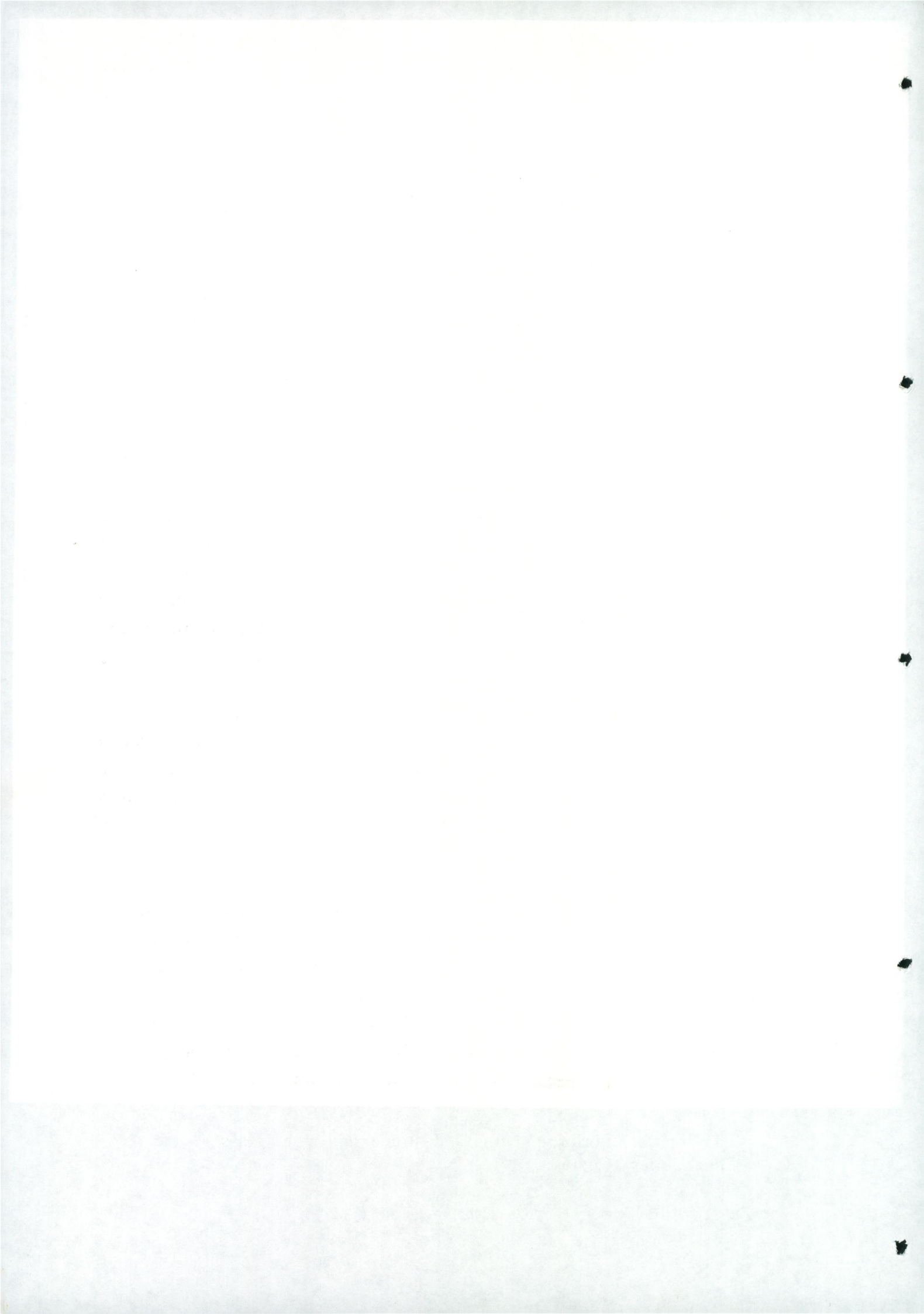


3. Terrazzo staircase and sculptural curves of the Jigsaw interior, Coates , 1991.





4. Jigsaw interior showing balustrade and blue glass chandelier, Coates ,1991.



The theatrical entrance stops passing shoppers in their tracks. The two-storey glass shop-front is set back from the pavement, the upper storey part-concealed behind a vivid orange curtain. In front of the window and the drapes, a massive copper-clad, sculptural column dominates the facade and sets the theme for the rest of the store.

Both levels are dominated by the grand staircase, the cast-iron banisters continuing on up to the upper level in the form of a balustrade. Coates has accomplished his primary purpose as a retail designer : he has got the customer moving through the shop, drawing them upstairs into the main selling floor.

At the top of the staircase, there is a spectacular chandelier of cast aluminium and hand-blown blue glass pendants. The york-stone floors and grey walls produce a half-street, half-interior look. The wrought-iron wall display units incorporate blue glass fleur-de-lys to match the chandelier. At the moment the Knightsbridge store is the most striking among the four Jigsaws that his practice has completed.

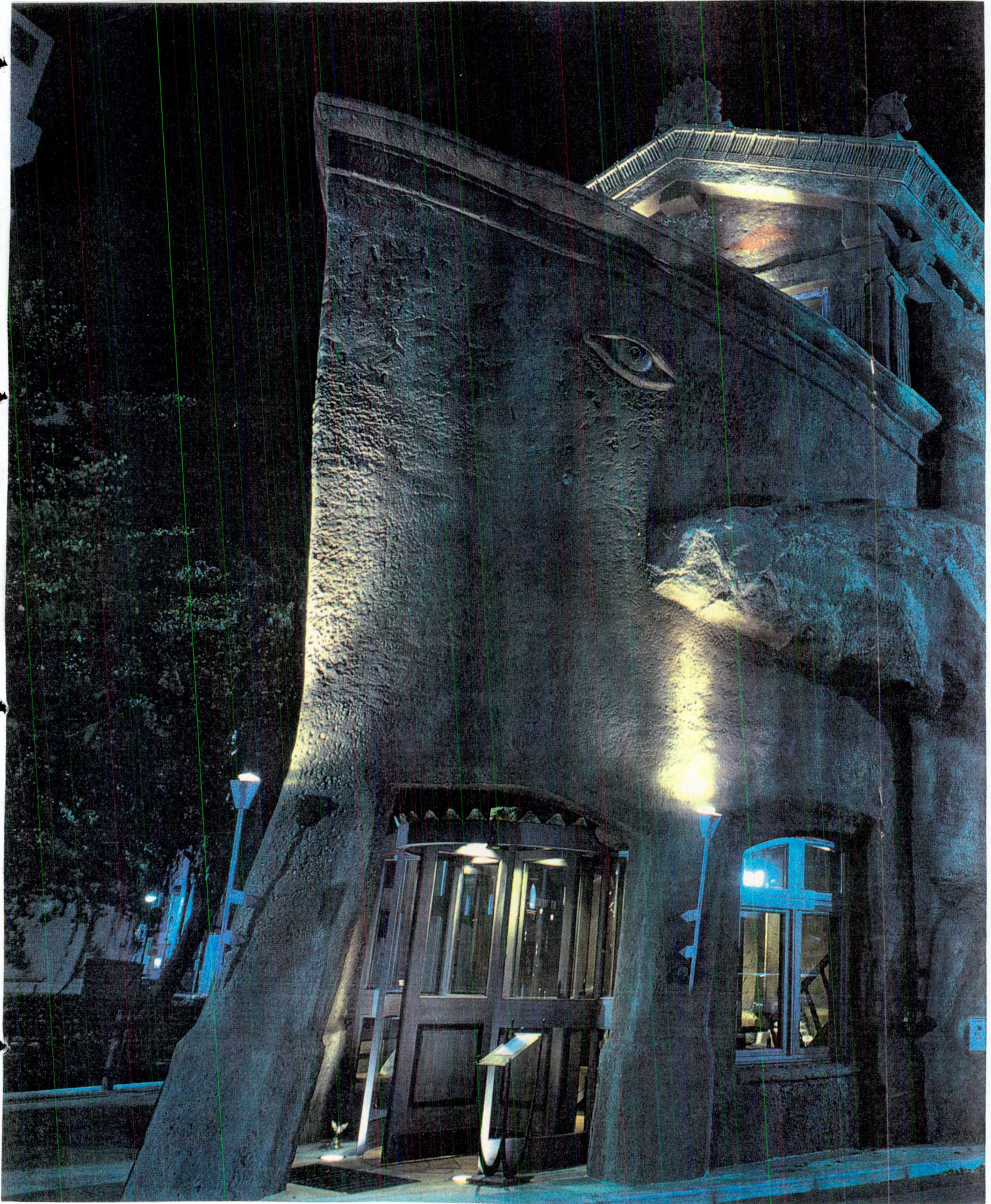
The Dublin store has continued the theatrical theme. The full drop of the two-storey facade is clad in glass, with raw wood supporting the floors. It has the same feeling of space and grandeur and is a bit of a landmark for shop design in Dublin, which rarely sees the work of such celebrated contemporary designers.

Coates' narrative architecture never obliterates the world, but exploits and overlays it. He mixes textures of urban wreckage and decay with existing structures. This can be seen in the larger schemes he would like to develop, for example his Channel Tunnel Terminus design, exhibited at the London I.C.A. in August 1988. But for the moment, most of his large commissions have been from Japan.

The past decade has seen a rapid increase in the number of effective cultural go-betweens capable of bringing Japanese clients and foreign designers together in fruitful interaction. Shi Yu Chen is Nigel Coates' agent in Japan. Tokyo's tens of thousands of design-conscious young people, the readers of magazines such as Brutus, Popeye, Global Architecture, Axis, and the rest, have been avid vicarious consumers of avant-garde western architecture. Tokyo's pollution was monstrous. Suburbs proliferated like malignant cells, and two-hour journeys to work became commonplace. The traditional elegance of the city was bulldozed or died of neglect. Coates catered for a Japan that was bored with blank minimalism and desperate for content.

Coates' work for the Sapporo district restaurant, L'Arca De Noe, outside Tokyo, completed in 1989, is one of his most outstanding achievements. Looking slightly Gaudi-esque from the outside with its cement-clad exterior, coloured to look like weathered sandstone, it is full of Coates' usual mixture of styles. It is modelled on Noah's Ark, with one end like an upturned boat and the other like a Greek temple. The client wanted a building of character on a river site. The triangular-shaped site immediately suggested a boat and Coates developed the idea from there. It is a large complex which houses a restaurant, bar and a patisserie. The mood is positively Baroque, the interior and exterior are heavily loaded with cosmic iconography and symbolism. There are also murals which include birds, flowers, leopards and other animals. Coates' imagery combines illusion, eroticism and mysticism. His projects marry architecture and the visual arts, developing the inherent spatial dimension in art, with the use of wall and ceiling murals.

Coates does not have a defined style ; all his projects are different, avoiding being locked into any stylistic idiom. It is obvious in the technological, eclectic age we live in now that architecture cannot function if it is totally detached from contemporary urban culture.



5. Exterior of L' Arca De Noe, Tokyo, Coates, 1989.

6. Overleaf : Coates' drawing for L' Arca De Noe restaurant .







7. Interior of L' Arca De Noa restaurant, top , bar , above left, and patisserie above right.

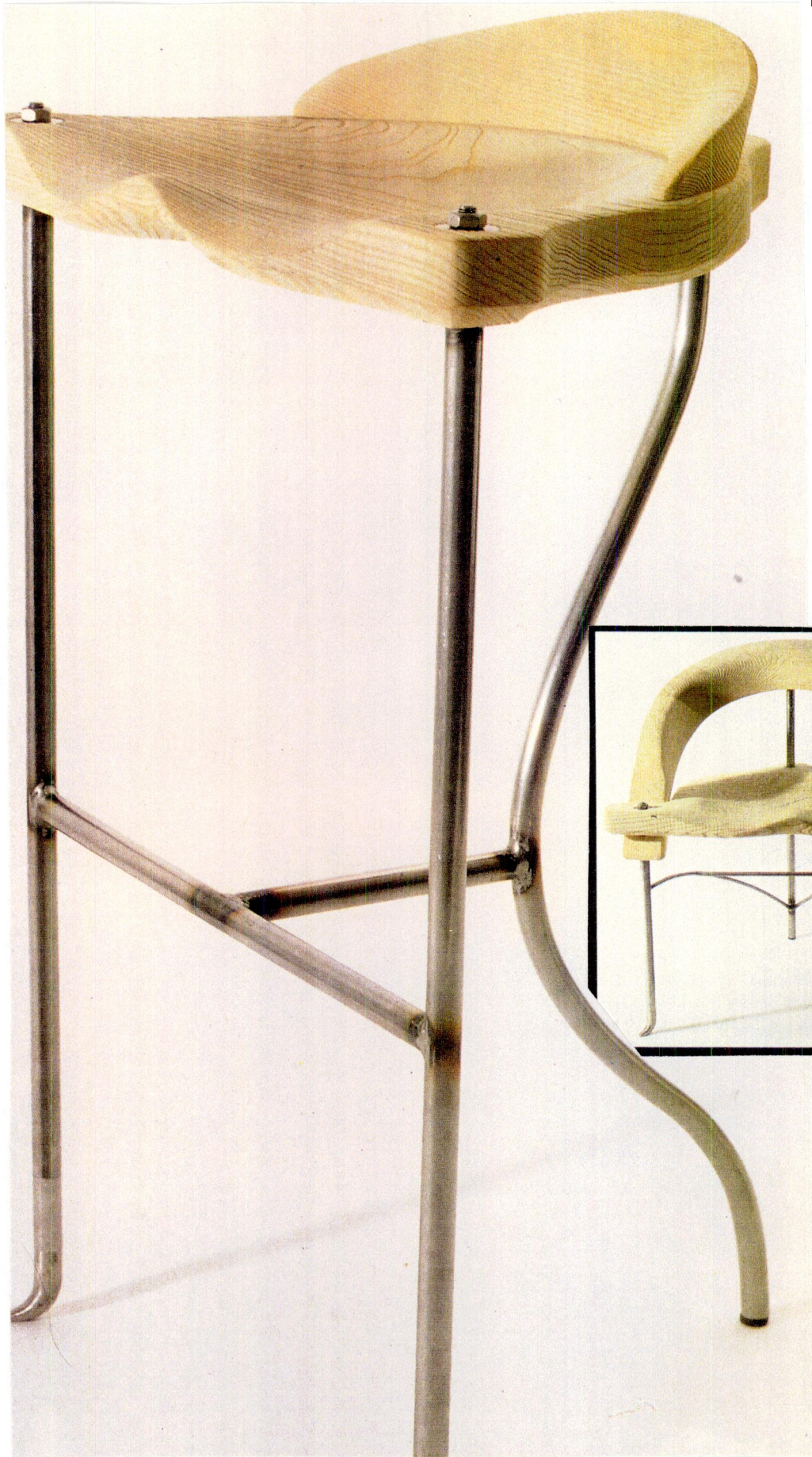


Japan, it seems, is one of the few places where Coates' brand of architecture has been accepted. It has a forward-looking vision, the money to invest, a booming urban culture and a public awareness of architecture, especially since the war, which is higher than anywhere in Europe or America. The Japanese are fascinated by brave individuals and have proved it by backing work by Designers such as Philippe Starck and Coates. Their work has come to represent the total opposite of traditional Japanese style and indicates where the Japanese would like to be in the future.

Coates also designs furniture with S.C.P. (Sheridan, Coakley Products, a small English-based furniture production and marketing company), where he is working with manufacturing expertise. This company markets modern English furniture, such as Jasper Morrison and Matthew Hilton, and sells in Stockholm, Paris, New York, Berlin and Milan. As a manufacturer, S.C.P. tries to keep prices as low as possible. In Europe they use agents who take ten percent, rather than distributors, who maintain the stock and therefore require thirty or forty per cent. In England some of the pieces are sold exclusively by S.C.P.'s London shop to avoid an additional retailer's mark-up, though their market is still a mainly high-brow art orientated one rather than a domestic one.

Coates' 'Noah' stool and chair for S.C.P. (1988) were first designed for the 'L'Arca De Noe' restaurant in Japan. They are made up of pelvic hip bones carved out of wood astride stainless steel poles. Both pieces are from the 'Noah' collection and the back rest on the dining chair is shaped like a life-saving rubber ring. The moulded seats are in solid ash, sand-blasted to give a weathered effect.

Coates is also known for his collaborations with other Designers in his interiors. He has worked with Tom Dixon and Andre Dubreuil, both of whom fit very well into Coates' dramatic, provocative and theatrical style.



8. Above 'Noah' bar stool by Nigel Coates, £487, at S.C.P.
,135-139 Curtain rd, EC2, London.
9. Above left 'Noah' dining chair £600 at SCP.



TOM DIXON:

Dixon's work for Nigel Coates included an enormous clock for the exterior of a building in the Nishe Azabu District in Tokyo (across the road from Coates' Bohemia Jazz Club in Tadaoando's Kikuchi building) called 'The Wall', and the lighting fixtures for the Katharine Hamnett Designer Fashion Boutique in Glasgow.

Tom Dixon started out as a Salvage Artist in the early eighties, welding pieces of scrap metal to make new pieces of furniture. Dixon was part of the group 'Creative-Salvage', made up of Furniture-Makers and Artists, with more of a fine art than craft approach to furniture design. Dixon even welded on stage in night-clubs as a performance artist in his early days in Salvage. Soon people took notice and Dixon was taken more seriously. Due to his collaboration with Coates in the 1980's, Dixon's new style reached a wider audience. He later went on to work with Cappellini, Italian furniture manufacturers and today his pieces hold pride of place at the International Furniture Fair in Milan. His work has almost become mainstream, due to mass marketing ; he has become part of the establishment, something which he could not have envisaged at the beginning of his career.

*Danny
Cave?* Although the Salvage Group consisted of a very small group of Artists/Designers ; Tom Dixon, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison and Nigel Coates, it did a great deal for the furniture industry, providing it with a fresh influx of ideas. It changed the possibilities for furniture, opening up new channels for aesthetics and for financial backing. Rather than the Craftsman/Artist working in isolation, being almost a martyr to his work, designers like Dixon could make money and have their work available to a broader public, through their collaboration with industry.

Dixon, like Coates, has made use of existing marketing structures, harnessing their power, enabling him to sell his work to a wide public while allowing him to continue experimenting with his creative method of working.



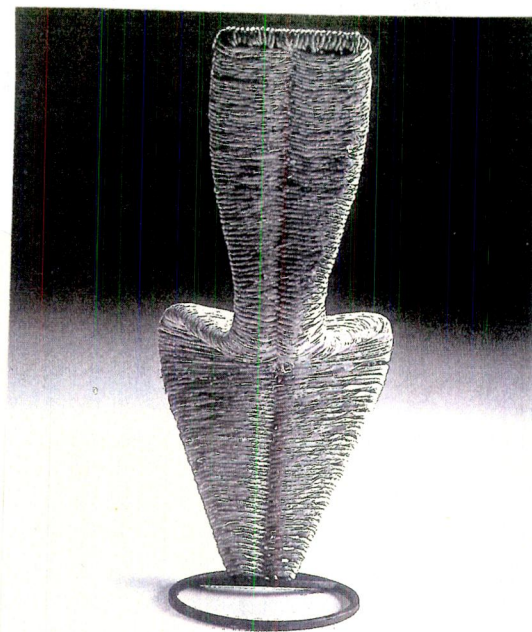
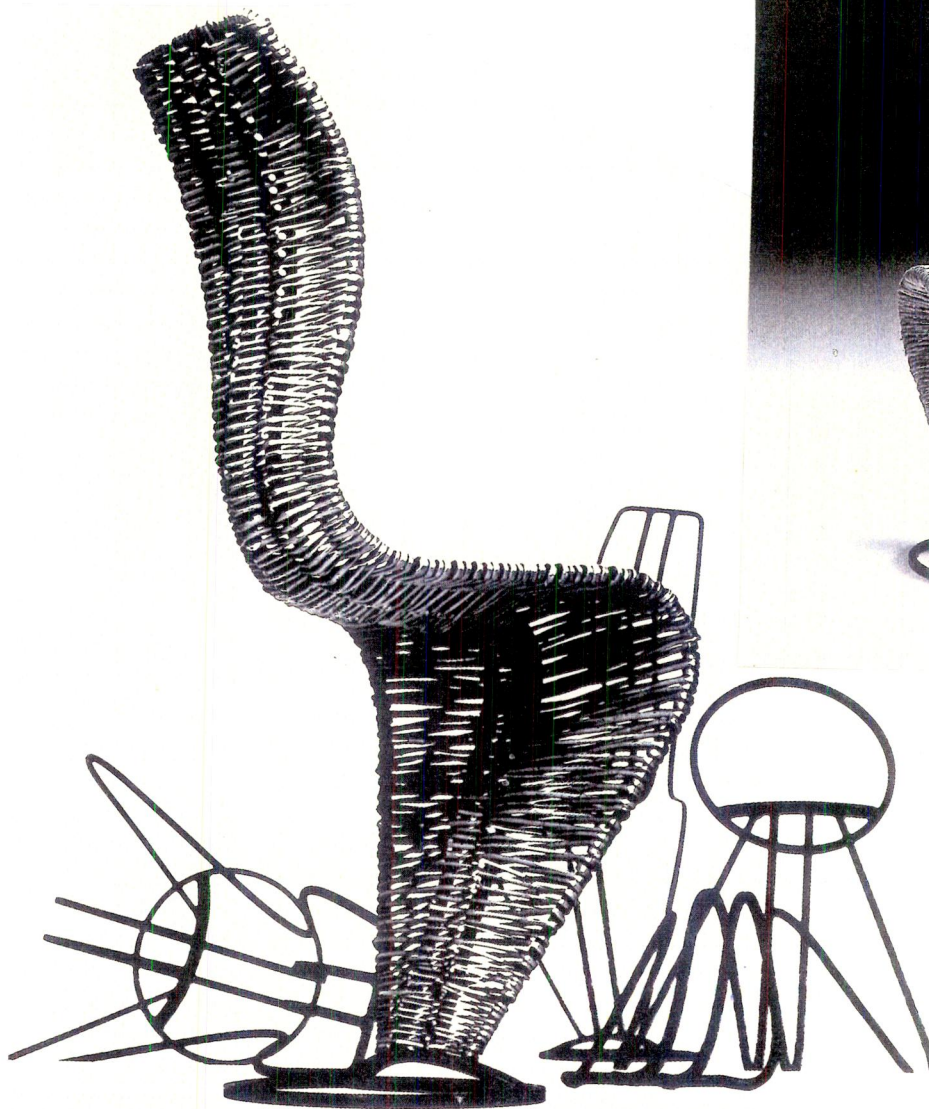
10. Salvaged- metal chairs ,Tom Dixon , 1986 , above.



There is a whole industry based on the marketing of new designs, consisting mainly of Interior/Design magazines and books, design conscious T.V. programs, sometimes films and retail outlets. These industries help promote Designers' work, almost creating an appetite for the consumption of this output. Everything must be 'new' or it is 'passe' ; in a way, once one is taken into this world, there is a danger of being too consumable. Although this need to be new can be quite healthy, always looking for newer, better ways of designing, it can also stifle quality design, creating only deliberately novel furniture without direction.

Tom Dixons's work is based on the exploration of geometric forms, with the aesthetics of the fifties. He uses unusual materials, such as straw, black rubber, galvanized wire and lycra. He has a gusty hands-on approach. Dixon borrows from bridge building, D.N.A. molecular chains, pylons, planes and automobiles. Science informs a lot of his designs, he creates rational, logical elements and uses them in a expressive way. While Dixon loves machine-age imagery, he avoids the mass-manufactured look by working from prototypes, rather than from sketches for others to streamline in the factory. Dixon is more a Craftsman than a Designer ; when he gets a new commission he goes to the factory and works with Artisans in situations as varied as the Marble Works at Bigelli, the Glass Works at Murano (for the Lighting Company, Foscarini), and the Capellini Furniture Factory near Lake Como, all in Italy.

London's contribution to the History of Design has been to approach it from this non-designer point of view. Dixon has worked in clubs, bands, designed furniture, has exhibited in major museums and worked on video and in theatre. His fresh approach and originality has led him to work on experimental one-offs, limited batch production and mass-production with help from companies like Capellini in Italy. Just like Garouste and Bonetti and Andre Dubreuil, Dixon has proved to the world that Designer Craft is alive and well. He has also shown that it does not have to cost thousands of pounds a piece, if it is approached in the correct manner.



11. 'S' chair , Tom Dixon, 1986-87, manufactured by Cappellini since 1991, above .

12. Poltrona fat chairs , Tom Dixon, 1990, manufactured by Cappellini ,below .

Dixon's metal work is often consciously over-wrought, a bit make shift : Art pieces without Art prices. There is a deliberate crudeness to Dixons's work because he makes his own pieces experimentally. He began his career as a Cartoonist's Colour-In Artist at Disney (a job which involves hand-colouring twenty-eight frames a minute). Before this his six-month foundation course in Art at Chelsea ended when he refused to settle down and specialise, wanting to weld, draw, sculpt, learn typography and take life classes all at the same time.

His first entry in the 1987 International Design Yearbook, edited by Philippe Starck, was 'The Chair'. It had a perforated, round metal seat on unicorn-horn legs, with a chair back of iron railings, the one in the middle sporting Neptune's grizzled face. Brash, challenging, a bit weird, it was listed in the book as "Neo-Baroque". Dixon's work in sheet metal, burnished steel and scrap iron seems too realistic and immediate for such a description.

Dixon's latest commissions include stage design with Bunty Matthias, a contemporary dancer whose Riverside Show in London reveals a Tom Dixon sci-fi work-out gym fit for a Barbarella on steroids - all wavy bars and climbing frames - and a band stand in Reading, his first building. Dixon chose the name "Space" for his Design and Shopfitting Business in Southeast London - where he has a foundry and ten employees - for its ambiguity : it means a void to be filled, but also gives a sense of freedom, with no limitations, while also relating to the conquest of outer space. Dixon picked a word perfectly in tune with his outlook on Design, no limitations of materials, medium or concepts, just an ever-present need to go forward.

ANDRE DUBREUIL & DAUM

Designers today are turning to the Craftspeople who will create the antiques of the future. Pre-eminent among them is Andre Dubreuil, who is reviving the traditions, if not the designs, of the great French eighteenth-century masters.

Dubreuil spent his childhood summers, in the Dordogne at the Chateau De Beaulieu, where his love for Classical Furniture and Architecture was instilled into him. As soon as Dubreuil was able, he took to decorating.

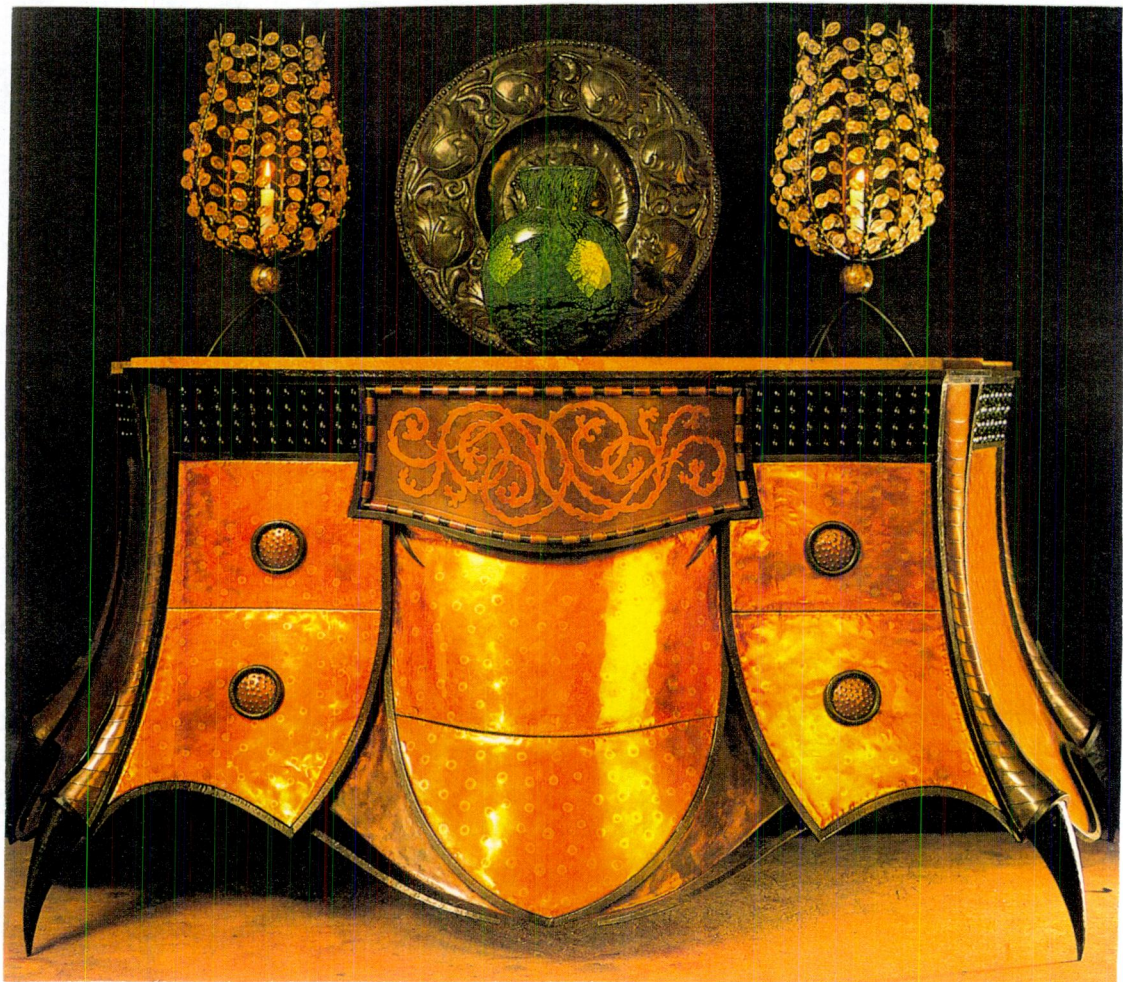
His parents first let him loose on a far-flung turret bedroom while he was in his teens. Influenced by a diet of Connaissance Des Arts magazines, with its focus on academically correct period decor, Dubreuil's rooms always had a Classical backbone, incorporating Louis XVII panelling, beds set into elegant recesses, and a fastidious sense of symmetry and proportion.

With that kind of background and hands-on practice, it was perhaps inevitable that Dubreuil would pursue a career in decorating. He moved to London in 1969 and went to work for the trendy Decorator Zarach. Two years later he joined the Swiss-born Decorator Christophe Gollut, whose layered antique sensibility was closer to his own. By 1976 Dubreuil was turning his hand, with some success, to Trompe L'Oeil artistry and selling late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century furniture and objects.

In the Spring of 1985, while transforming Rococo, a chocolate shop on Kings Road, London, into an Austrian Palace, he decided to work with Tom Dixon on the shop's elaborate chandelier. Dubreuil learned to solder and weld metal from Dixon and a new passion was born. Dubreuil's elegant pieces in scrolling welded metal were soon collected by discerning clients.

In 1991, after more than two decades in London, Dubreuil decided to return to his great love, the Chateau De Beaulieu. This would mean a minimum of distractions, ample studios, and some serious space for his dogs, an airedale, Ruhlman, and the mongrel that Dubreuil aptly named Conran.

Working out of a complex of converted barns on the Estate, Dubreuil and five apprentices work on a single important piece or commission at a time.



13. Copper and steel chest with glass beads , Andre Dubreuil, 1989.



Both Andre Dubreuil and Tom Dixon are represented by Gladys Mougin, their French agent, who keeps a waiting list for their work : the first on the list has the first option to buy. Dubreuil's many eager clients have to learn to be patient ; they can wait years for him to deliver.

As if to reinforce the influence of such eighteenth-century Designers as Adam Weisweiler, who incorporated Japanese laquered panels and Wedwood plaques into his pieces, Dubreuil creates new furniture around antique elements such as panels from a Japanese screen or a thick marble top from a Louis XV commode. Recent commissions include a cabinet of curiosities that suggests a mid-seventeenth-century model : in place of what would originally have been wood veneers or tortoiseshell panels, Dubreuil has produced chased and enamelled metal plaques.

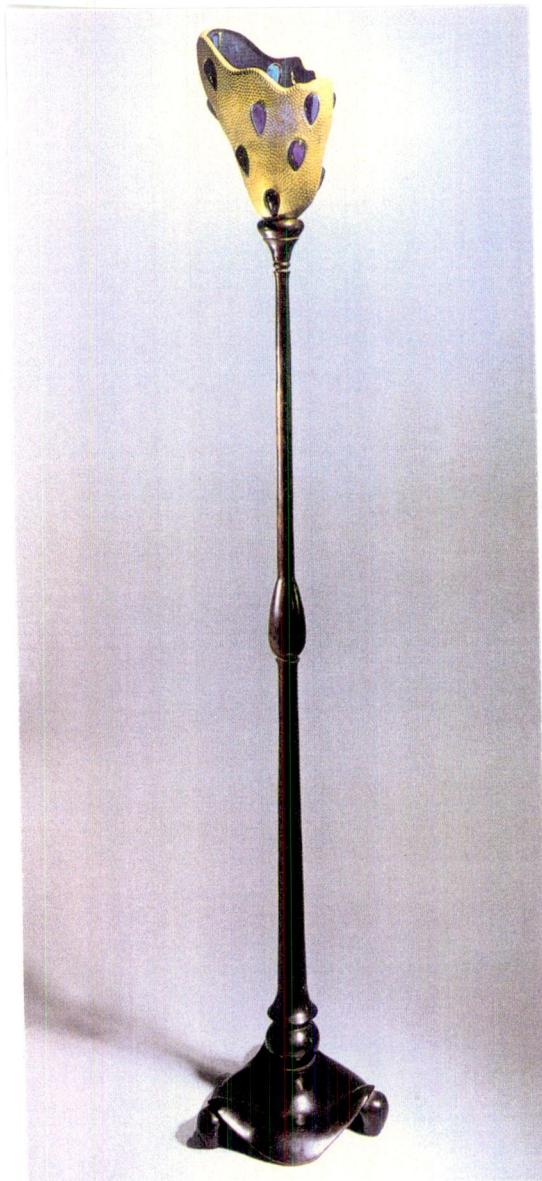
Dubreuil is presently working with the porcelain manufacturer Sèvres to produce an occasional table, its top set with a porcelain plaque - a device originally employed by Martin Carlin, the great Louis XVI cabinet maker whose pieces adorned Versailles. Drawing on his vast knowledge of Design History, and using his own family Chateau as a laboratory, Andre Dubreuil has become a well known and respected furniture maker, a modern version of Gilbert Poillerat, (metal worker from 1930's Paris). Dubreuil makes very dramatic pieces, believing in excitement for the eyes, and works to the highest standards, creating decorative rather than functional furniture.

Most of his work to date has been one-offs for specialist clients but, like Tom Dixon and Nigel Coates, he has also worked with industry to get his pieces into production. His work for the French glass company Daum, since 1986, is amongst his best, where he has used metal with glass, a technique not used by the house since the turn of the century. Dubreuil plays with whirls, curves and counter curves, ovals and low angles, creating a sculptural frame out of which the glass seems to grow and bulge. This is seen to best effect in his Shanghai floor chandelier from 1990.



14. 'Shanghai' chandelabra , Andre Dubreuil, 1990, produced by Daum.





15. Left , Andre Dubreuil , 'Lacrima' floor lamp , blue crystal, 1990, produced by Daum.

16. Right , 'Lacrima' bowl and vase by Dubreuil , 1990 , Daum.

For his other pieces for Daum, he has continued to depend on his Baroque sensibilities for the colouring - deep-blue crystal, gilded decoration on a textured surface, with a bronze base.

Daum provides a very special link for Artists. It has the experience and expertise of years in the business. It has an innovative outlook, not afraid to back Artists and put their work into production, keeping both quality and artistic vision at a premium. There are no compromises where the Artist is concerned.

The 1980's displayed a mosaic of trends with mixed materials, styles and codes and the frontiers of art and design intermingled. Daum took note of this and employed Designers from different fields to create new and innovative designs for their glass, among them Dubreuil, Hilton, McConnico and Garouste and Bonetti. Although quite different Artists, their work seemed to share a similar aesthetic, fitting very well into the image of the company. New objects of desire were created in the theatrical spirit of the times and the Baroque was reborn. This kind of collaboration with master Craftsmen has opened new directions for Designers, freeing them of the limitations of their drawings.

GAROUSTE & BONETTI

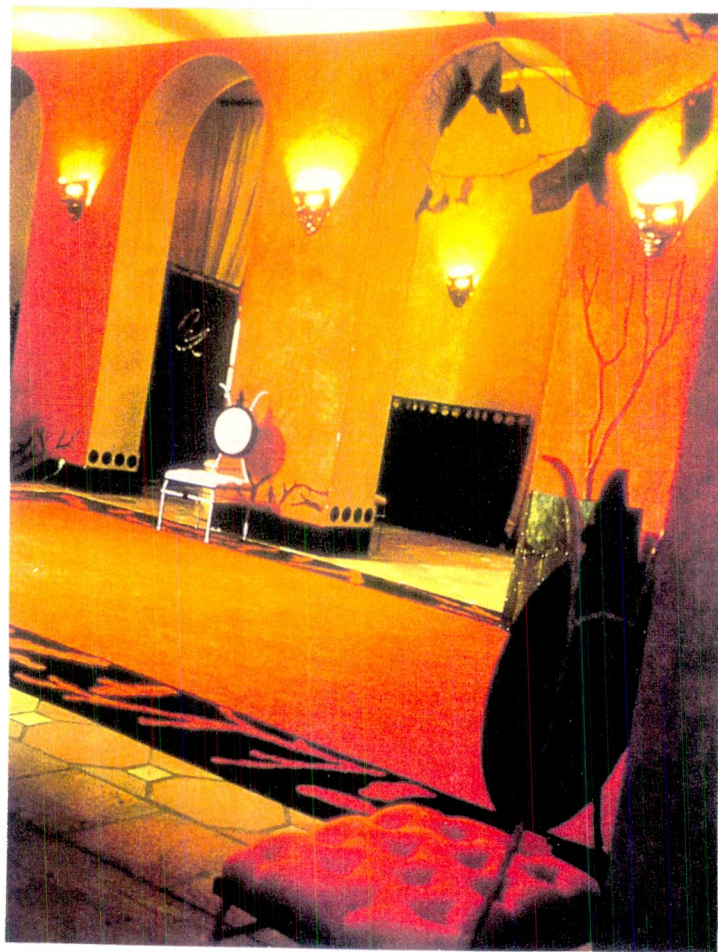
In the early 1980's the French design team Elizabeth Garouste and Mattia Bonetti, frustrated with the limited offerings of Modern Design, began to forge a new style for themselves. They met whilst both were involved in making rocks of papier mache and other illusionary fantasies for the stage. From the start, their designs have displayed a certain theatricality, almost like the eighteenth-century aristocratic taste for everything fairytale or make believe. The influences they have toyed with have so far been extraordinarily diverse. Sometimes they use rustic forms, sometimes monolithic rocks, surrealist trees, plantlife or the human form.

Garouste and Bonetti first came to prominence through their work for Le Privilege, the restaurant of the Paris discotheque, Le Palace in the early 1980's. Afterwards their work in furniture and Interior Design won them the commission for the Paris boutique of the couturier Christian Lacroix. This was a major achievement, as it propelled the duo's names into the lime-light, bringing them new commissions and offers from manufactures, such as the Gazebo Collection for Etamine, 1990.

Even though ^{it is} one of their most publicised projects, their work for Christian Lacroix is amongst their best. Working for a Designer with such a strong style and image must have been a daunting task, yet they carried it off superbly. Luckily Garouste and Bonetti seemed to have the same ideas and tastes as Lacroix. As Lacroix says of them:

"We discovered a mutual passion for the same simple, fragile materials, the same precious details, the same ranges of colours and textures, the same space, the same touches of incongruousness and irony, along with a mutual distaste for the rigid forms of a stale and insipid Modernism." Ref.5.

The resulting interiors were a meeting of the worlds of fashion and theatre, secret and sumptuous. The building on the Rue Saint-Honore, for many years the street for all the big fashion couturiers, was classical and dramatic, with a courtyard, small shop, then more rooms and a couture salon. With Lacroix, Garouste and Bonetti chose the colours with great flair, using strange mixtures which somehow worked very well in this traditional setting : fuchia pink, red, yellow, black, white and gold were the main colours. They used theatrical imagery, huge curtains and plaster masks as lighting, in a kind of 1940's Elsa Schiaparelli or Jean Cocteau style, a kind of couture Baroque. As inspiration for the furniture they used natural forms such as coral and tree branches. They also evolved these natural forms for the wrought iron gates and detailing on the interior fixtures. They designed everything inside including furniture, carpets, fabric, lighting, display units and fixtures.



17. and 18. Christian Lacroix Haute Couture Salon, Paris, furniture and interior design by Garouste and Bonetti, 1987.

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2. The second part of the document outlines the procedures for handling financial transactions. It details the steps involved in processing payments, receipts, and invoices. The text stresses the importance of following established protocols to avoid errors and ensure that all transactions are properly documented.

3. The third part of the document addresses the issue of budgeting and financial planning. It discusses the role of the finance department in developing and monitoring the organization's budget. The text also mentions the need for regular communication between the finance department and other departments to ensure that the budget is realistic and achievable.

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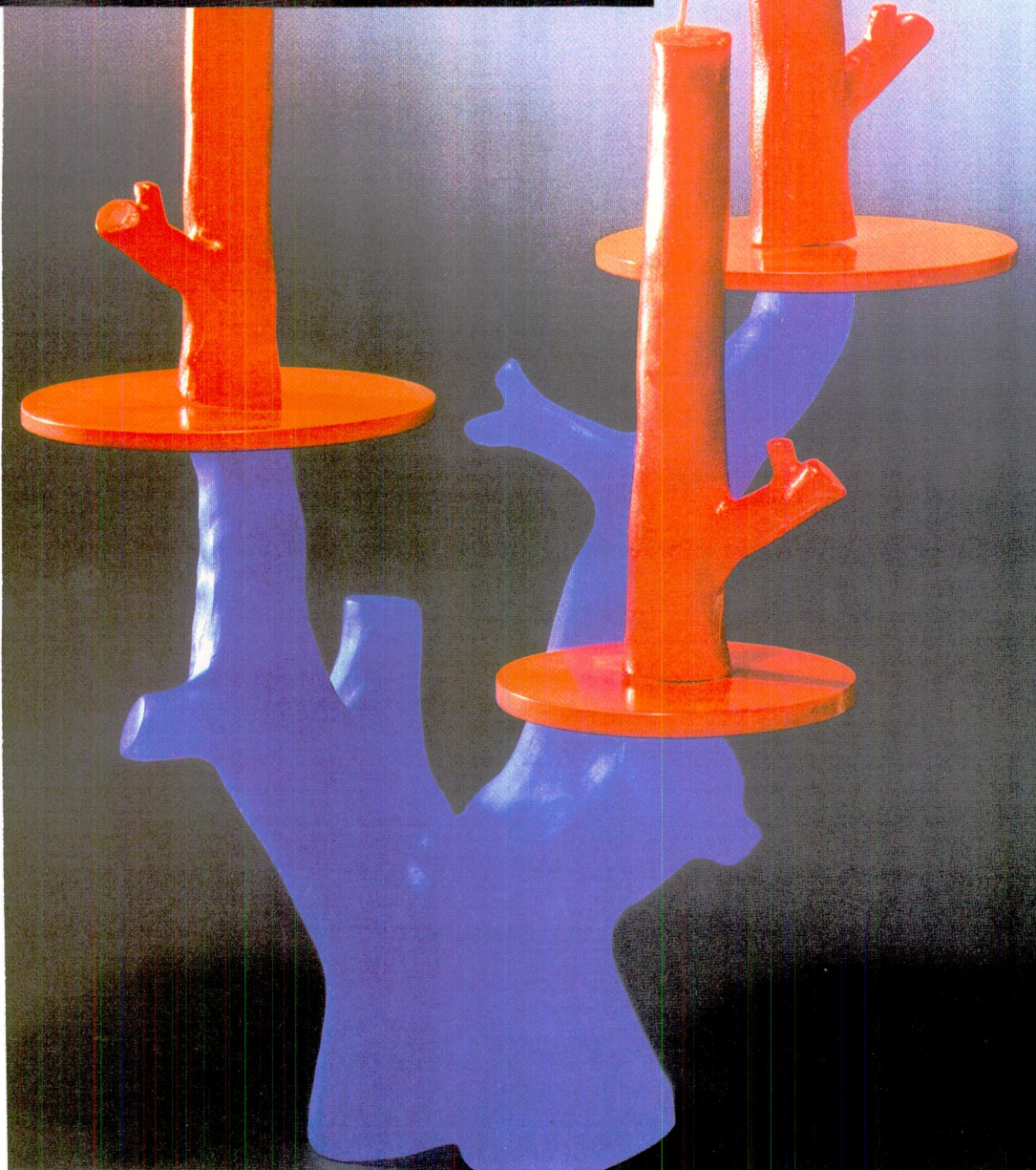
10. The tenth part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the transparency and accountability of the organization. The text also mentions the need for regular audits to ensure that all financial data is correctly recorded and reported.

Garouste and Bonetti also designed the bottle and packaging for Lacroix's perfume, 'C'est La Vie', which is a huge financial risk for any couture house, since most of their money comes from licencing, cosmetics and smaller commercial lines.

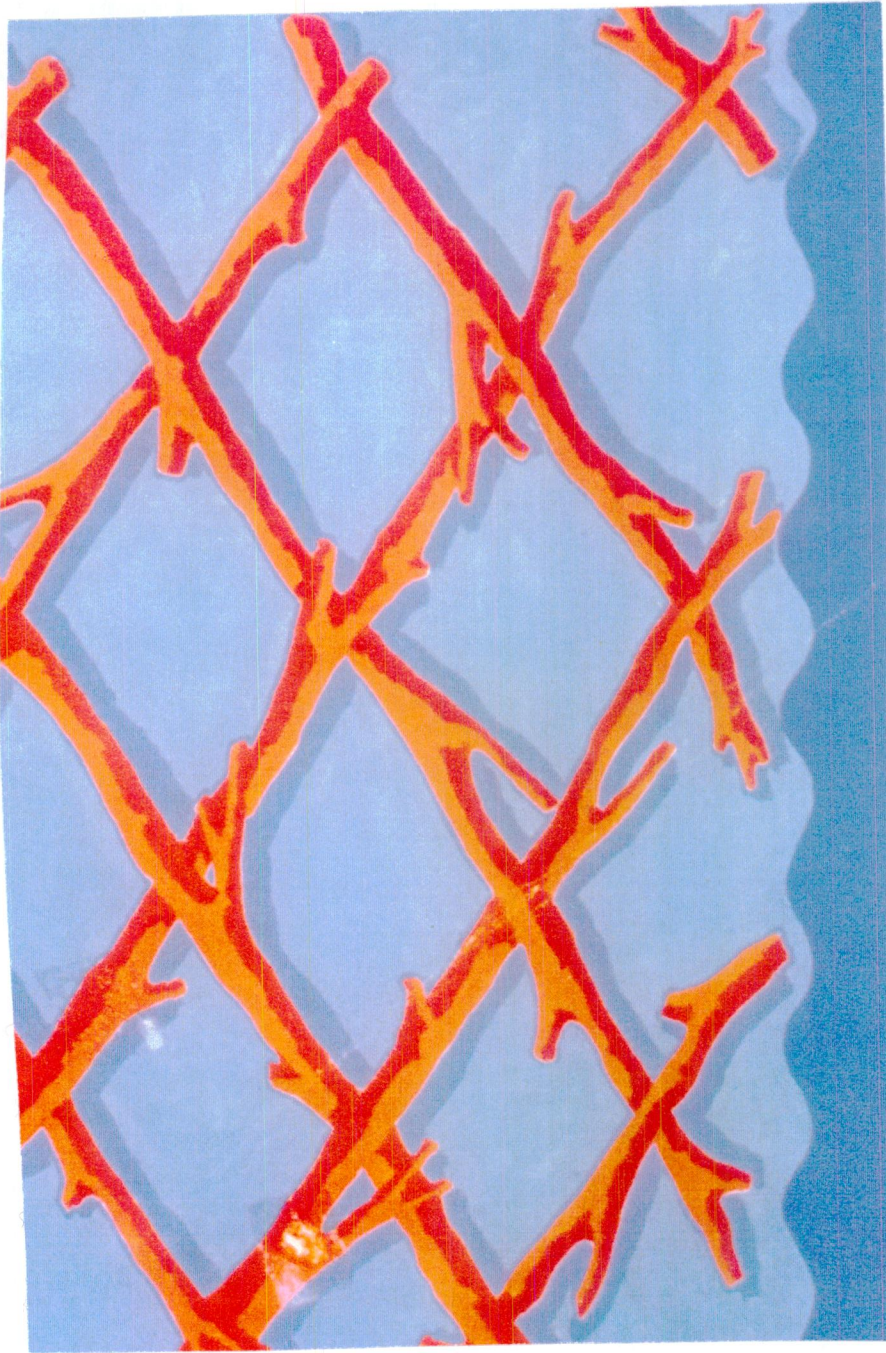
They are more like Artists than Designers in their approach to their work, yet they have worked with many manufacturers, also setting up their own manufacturing company, B.G.H., which produces fabrics at more affordable prices. They have produced designs for furniture and tableware for Neotu, fabric for Etamine, carpets and furniture for En Attendant Le Barbare, furniture, lighting and carpets for Via and Galerie Lieux, glass and tableware for Daum, carpets for Editions Philippe Laik, the list goes on and on. Most of these designs are based on natural forms, using coral branches as imagery, strong bold graphic patterns, and bright reds, oranges and blues.

Their work is a reaction against what has been overly processed ; it is tactile, Baroque and grand, yet comforting. Their work is meticulously detailed and informed by a knowledge of art and culture. A lot of their work looks primitive but they are totally aware of contemporary society, they use all the knowledge and expertise available to them, to produce something which to me is a natural progression from an industrialised age.

Just as Nigel Coates has done, they have embraced everything around them but worked it in a very individual manner. Their work looks hand made, more like pieces of Art. Although they may be manufacturing it, it still retains a craft quality. They changed the expectations of the process of Design - smooth functionalism flowing off the assembly line is not their goal. Nor were they seeking to be furniture makers in the crafts sense. They ponder the possibilities in Design, enjoying the mix of elements, to create forms devoid of preconceived notions, pushing the boundaries between industry and craft closer together.



19. and 20. Glass for Daum by Garouste and Bonetti, made of clear crystal and pate-de-verre , 1989.



21. Above left, carpet from the Trapani collection (detail), Garouste and Bonetti , 1989, produced by V.I.A. and Galerie Lieux.

22. Above right, fabric from the Gazebo collection by Etamine , designed by Garouste and Bonetti, 1990.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying our curiosity about the past, but also a means of training the mind and of developing the character. He concludes that the study of history is one of the most important and most useful of all the sciences.

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ANDREE PUTMAN:

Born in Paris, the daughter of a wealthy, intellectual family with a grand apartment in Paris and a Medieval Abbaye at Fontenay. Andree Putman trained as a pianist at the Paris Conservatoire under Francis Poulenc. Yet in 1952 she gave up the idea of becoming a composer, after being told by her Professor that she would have to lock herself in a room for years if she wanted to become an accomplished composer. Putman moved with ease into the energetic and extroverted field of journalism during the late '50s working for fashion magazines that also embraced Art and Literature. Her marriage in Paris to a wealthy intellectual, Jacques Putman, introduced her to the contemporary art world and inspired by the spirit of the time - which was to make art and good design accessible to all - she became in the '60s a stylist for Prisunic, the mass-market chain based in Paris. This was famous for pioneering inexpensive but well-designed furniture and houseware. Although Putman had no formal art or design training, she subsequently designed furniture for the mail order company Les 3 Suisses, and in the 1970's became co-founder of Createurs Et Industriels, persuading designers such as Issey Miyake and Casteljard to create not only clothes but objects as well. Sadly the project was a failure due to bad-timing, as the public did not respond. But in 1978, after her divorce she founded Ecart International, a company reissuing design classics and soon afterwards the design agency Ecart, with the help of a young architect, Jean Francois Bodin, they funded the company themselves after some interior design work for friends and based the company in Paris.

Putman's role in Ecart and Ecart International is manifold. For Ecart she designs interior spaces both commercial and private - she also designs furniture, lighting and other objects either for each new interior design project or for production purposes. For Ecart International she collects designs from past furniture designers who she feels were particularly accomplished. She also chooses work by young contemporary furniture designers and puts this into production through Ecart International.

Putman founded Ecart International to specialise in exact re-editions of furniture and lighting, which initially she had collected and restored for her own pleasure. These items have be re-issued with the exclusive authorisation of their designers and heirs; under careful control, all design details are exact reproductions using the best materials. These pieces were made by Artists and Designers such as Mallet-Stevens, Fortuny, Gaudi, Herbst, Lartigue, Dufet and Frank. They were, like Eileen Gray, whom she especially admired, designers who worked alone were not part of any school and remained largely unrecognised during their lifetimes. Putman chose their work for its striking design and innovative qualities, like Gray's Portable Coffee Table E-1027, first designed in the 1920's but which looks contemporary to us and Fortuny's Reflector Lamp (1907), like a giant puzzle, which still has the ability to startle. I think that Putman's Design Sense became more developed after her exposure to these early 20th Designs in her work.

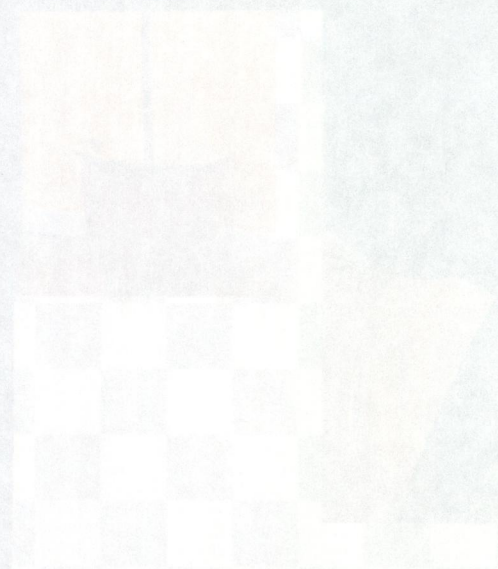
Andree Putmans own work, although very different stylistically from Coates' have many features in common with his. Like Coates, Putman creates a totally new environment for each project or commission. She does this by making use of space, sometimes cutting it, in the manner of Eileen Gray, with metal mesh screens, as in the designer clothes shop for Georges Rech in London, where two metal screens either side of the stairs go the full height of the two-storey shop, defining the space and leading the customers upstairs. Or she enlarges the space through her choice of wall colourings and textures, these normally reflect the building or surrounding environment e.g. the Sandy Shades used for the Interior Walls of the Wasserturm Hotel, Cologne (1989), which is built form a yellow-ish brick. But unlike Coates' attention-grabbing and theatrical work, Putmans' is ordered in a modernist manner. Her spaces are clean and functional, like a well designed ship or a machine. This can be seen to best effect in her work for offices. She realises that they are places devoted to concentration, to work, to public life, to efficiency and to a certain type of corporate identity.

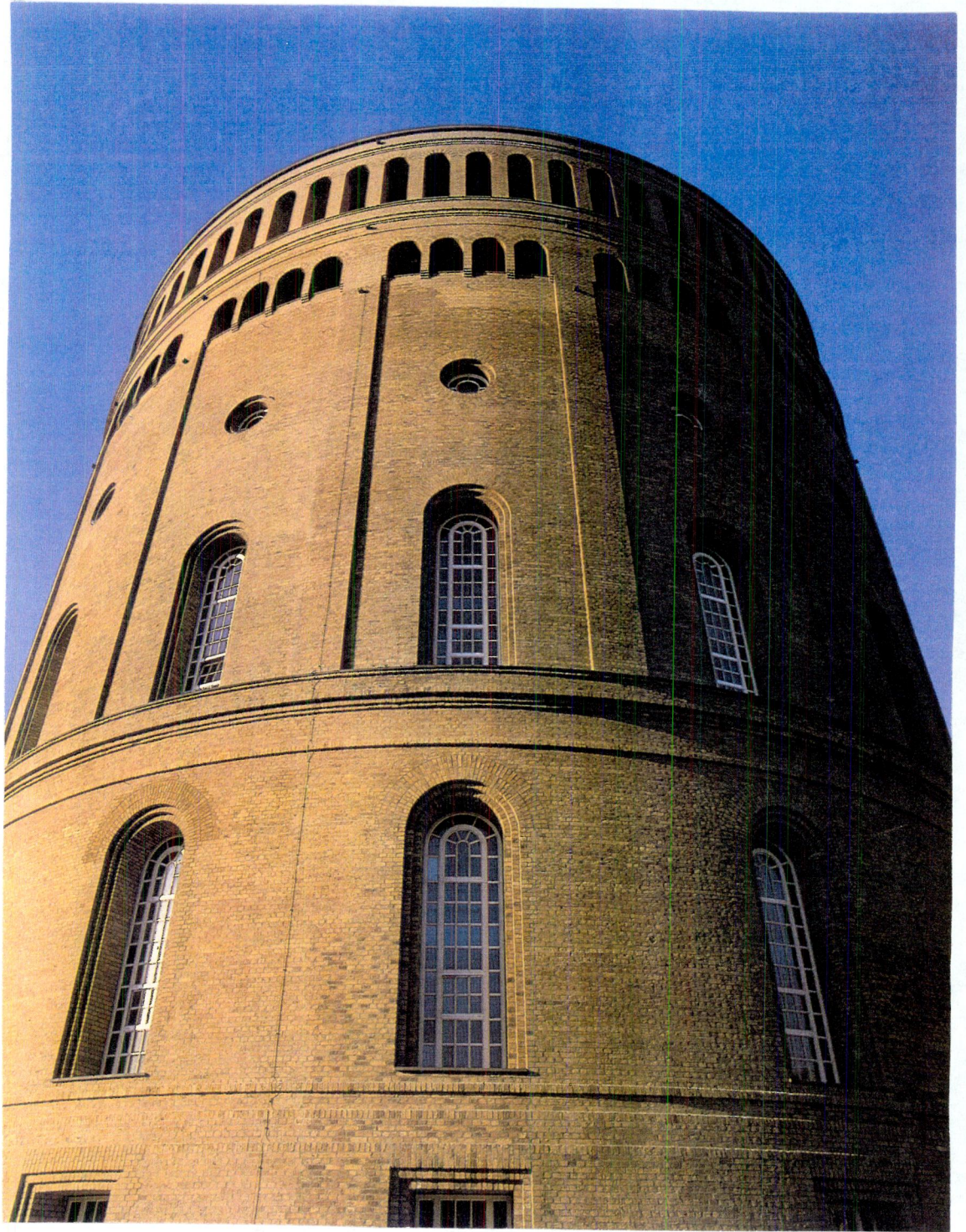


23. Portable coffee table , 'E-1027' by Eileen Gray .



24. Shop for Georges Rech, London(1991) A. Putman , showing ground floor.





25. Wasserturm Hotel in Cologne, 1987, exterior showing brickwork.



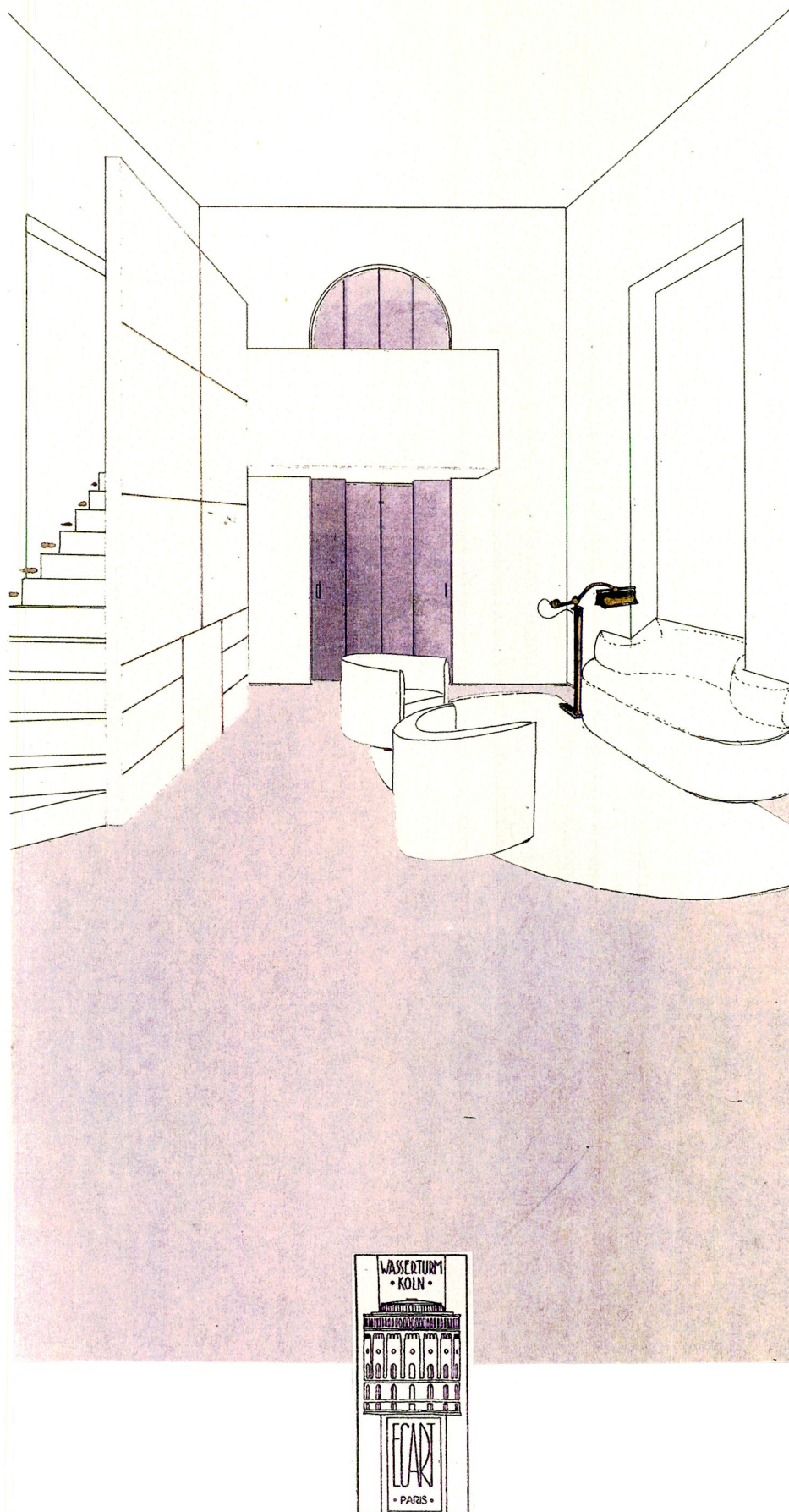
But there can also be places that could mirror their occupants, so she creates offices which are welcoming, conducive to thought and which are comfortable enough to spend a lot of time in (often people spend more time in their office than they do at home). An example of this is her work for the office and sitting room for the Hotel De Region in Bordeaux (1987), The room contains a limed-oak desk and mole-grey leather armchairs. The curtains are pleated white taffeta and circular woollen rugs cover the oak floor. The domed ceiling light is made of ground glass with a nickel reflector and more lights are set into slits in the pillars all designed by Ecart. The Desk Lamp is by Fortuny, one of Ecart International's re-editions. One side of the room is oak-panelled and the walls are painted white. Like so much modern art, which Putman also used in her interiors (Artists such as Pierre Alechinsky, Bram Van Velde and Jean Thome), she strips everything down to the bare minimum, yet through her use of materials, her interiors never look stark or unwelcoming. Putman is primarily concerned with quality, she uses the best materials and craftsmanship, and her pieces and interiors are designed to be both aesthetically pleasing and easy to use.

When Putman is designing an interior, she tailors her choice of furniture and fixtures to each project. She may decide that new furniture must be designed, as in the case at the Wasserturm Hotel with her 'W' furniture line, where each piece was designed echoing the lines of the Hotel, housed in an old Victorian Watertower. The pieces were semi-circular in shape, developed from aspects of the arc of a circle, with straight lines unfolding in a fan shape on the axis of a curve. They also reflected the colouring of the interiors, a discreet mix of oyster and cream, mixed with sandstone tones and shots of a vivid royal blue. She may also decide, as in the case of the Morgans Hotel situated on Madison Avenue between 37th and 38th Streets, New York (1984), that a mix of her own designs and some re-editions would suit the project.



26. Hotel De Region, Bordeaux (1987) designed by A. Putman showing office and sitting room for M. Jacques Chaban-Delmas.





27. Wasserturm Hotel, Cologne, 1987, Preliminary design for sitting room area with limestone floor and chairs upholstered in blue velvet.



For the bedrooms she used Mallet Stevens' Dining Chair made of lacquered metal from the 1920's and for the bathrooms she designed all the fittings and accessories herself.

Putman combines expensive with inexpensive materials in her interiors, marble complements concrete, wood against glass, the rough contrasts with the smooth, the effect is simple, though undeniably modern. She is one of the few contemporary Interior Designers who really understand the principal workings of a successful interior. She does not design overwhelming pieces or interiors ; everything has an understated ease, a well thought-out modern aesthetic. Just like Eileen Gray in the 1930's, Putman designs functional interior spaces to house the objects to be used and lived with. These developed design qualities have emerged over the last 17 years, through many and varied projects. Her client list is long and prestigious ; she has designed shops, studios and homes for the Fashion Designers Karl Lagerfeld, Yves Saint Laurent, Azzedine Alaia and Thierry Mugler. Her commissions include the Ebel Foundation's Le Corbusier House in Switzerland (1987) and The Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux (1985-92).

She shows great versatility in her design work, adapting her style to different environments. Putman works well with strong personalities such as Karl Lagerfeld, fitting into his vision rather than imposing her design aesthetic on him. When Putman's interior design represents a name, a logo, it is actually an exercise in portraiture.

Putman's work for the Morgans Hotel generated remarkable publicity both in America and Europe. Luxury hotel chains such as the Ritz Carlton and The Four Seasons in New York had opulent, well-detailed design schemes. However, luxury hotel design, while elegant, was always in the same traditional mode and never experimental. Ian Schrager and Steve Rubel, disco owners of Studio 54 and Palladium, brought new life to the hotel scene in America with Morgans, their 113-room luxury urban inn. It immediately found its niche through Putman's design strategy. Aiming their business at professional, well-travelled people looking for an intimate setting and personal service. Over the past six years, it has maintained the highest hotel occupancy rates in New York city and attracted a loyal clientele.



28. Paris (1983) , Salon des Artistes Decorateurs: mock-up of a Morgans Hotel bedroom .





29. New York ,(1984) Morgans Hotel, Putman's Bathroom with checkerboard pattern on the walls .



Putman's classic bedroom for Morgan's, first presented at Paris's annual Salon Des Artistes De Corateurs in 1983, is made up of long, low lines. There are incandescent lights on either side of the bathroom mirror, to flatter the face. All the little touches are designed to pamper and cosset, like the luxurious but simple bed linen and zipped headboard cases, in Brooks Brothers striped shirting fabric, the different but subtle patterns on each cushion, everything from the paper holder to the wastepaper bin has been designed to fit in with Putman's sense of quality and innovation. There was no attempt to give a false impression of the size of the rooms ; it was to be a private and intimate space. The accompanying bathroom has a simple chequerboard pattern of 10x10 cm black and white ceramic tiles on the walls, a stainless steel basin on legs and a rounded mirror with a white porcelain soap dish set into the wall. Her clinical look for bathrooms, with steel and tiles in the Eileen Gray tradition, were an innovative departure in 1984 and still has an unconventional look. Morgans look is minimal, but rich materials and careful detailing create an aura of luxurious elegance.

What is it about Morgans that is so appealing? Guests do not care that the rooms are relatively small, the lobby is practically nonexistent and there is no restaurant. What Morgans offers is an experience that is refined, personalized and private in a setting that is aesthetically bold and idiosyncratic. Unfettered by the conservatism that shackles traditional hoteliers, Schrager and Rubel chose Putman, after seeing her work for Yves Saint Laurant's fashion shops in America (1980-84), knowing she had no prior experience with hotel design, they felt she would have no preconceived notions about hotels.

"Morgans is unpretentious. I am not at all intellectual but I know I have a capacity to think about how things should be. I think that you are sometimes a little unhappy when you are away from home, so a hotel should subtly try to make you feel at home again. There should be comfort of course, but visual comfort, not physical. If you describe a chair to an American he will immediately ask 'Is it comfortable?' Who minds? Who wants to be comfortable? Comfort comes from being able to open a door easily, or having a place to put your boots when you come in from a muddy walk, not from the plumpness of a chair". Ref.6.

Putman's approach made good business sense, as the owners went on to open three other hotels in the same vein. The Morgans Hotel Group is currently owned and operated by Schrager and partners Philip Pilevsky and Arthur Cohen (Steve Rubel died in July 1989). Their other hotels are The Royalton on West 44th Street, The Paramount on West 46th Street and The Barbizon on Lexington and 63rd Streets, all in New York. The interiors for The Royalton and The Paramount were designed by Philippe Starck (1989-90) and The Barbizon by Jacques Grange (1992). While nothing fits a formula in these hotels, they all share a striking aesthetic, which Schrager has consciously striven for by using French Designers, whose European sensibility, he believes, is inherently different from what American eyes are used to.

Ecart's work is primarily concerned with thoughtful touches. Putman likes to leave her interiors without a trace of her presence behind her. Ecart, which spells trace backwards, if the sort of linguistic joke she enjoys : the word is hard to understand even in French, but roughly it means 'on the Margin' or in layman's terms, 'side stepping' - both equally valid definitions of her work. Ecart is a backwards - forwards company. Its forward line is the design side : from being a company of only two, it now employs seventeen young Designers who work with Andree Putman on everything from interiors to lights, china and textiles. Backwards are the 'Editions' - the furniture reproductions.

Putman and her team are based in Paris, but she also has a small permanent team in New York. Ecart International has nurtured the abilities of young French Designers such as Patrick Naggar, Ched Berenguer-Topacio, Paul Mathieu, Michael Ray and Sylvan Dubusson who work on Ecart's interior design projects and produce and market furniture by them. Finding and working with young talent is now the aspect of Putman's work she most enjoys. Her multinational and youthful design teams work is ceaseless, unhurried and productive.



30. End table 'Renate' by Paul Mathieu and Michael Ray ,for Ecart International (1994).



31. 'Leger Regel' coffee table in mahogany by Mathieu and Ray (1994).



The drawing office has been pursuing two types of activity since it was set up. On the one hand, it handles furniture design for specific projects. It is unusual for Ecart not to design the furniture for a space it is working on ; this always provides a fresh opportunity for designing new forms and re-interpreting functions. These designs are occasionally issued by Ecart themselves as an independent line, as with the Wasserturm Hotel's 'W' line of furniture. On the other hand, the drawing office does design work for other manufacturers, like De Sede or Mobilier National (both based in France), who commission Putman to produce furniture collections bearing the Ecart label.

Putmans licensing division in Ecart now designs objects and fine houseware which are distributed around the world through each client, e.g. cosmetic and clothes packaging for Cacharel, the French-based company exporting worldwide. Putman has designed upholstery fabrics for Romanex, rugs for Toulemonde Bochart, both based in France and a mannequin for Pucci, now American, to name only a few.

Putman's style deliberately avoids labelling though she does admit to being a Modernist, in keeping with the Bauhaus claim that "Less is More". Interior design today is so varied ; such a variety of styles exist, mostly cluttered, with flowers, frills, chintz and glitz. Putman's is amongst the most fresh and exciting anywhere.



32. A. Putman's porcelain collection for Manufactures Royal 'Barette Royales' (1987).



33. A. Putman's bench for Tectona, (1993).



She attributes some of her success to her supportive Government. She has redesigned the offices for the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang and for the Minister of Finance (both in 1985). As Putman puts it:

"As Ecart started in 1978, I didn't expect any success, as I had never changed my mind about modernity and simplicity, it had put me "A L'Ecart" (out of the main stream), to word it with an American expression. I passed from 'bad timing' to 'good timing', in other words, I was ready and organized at the exact moment when France woke up to new ideas, as you know, Francois Mitterrand asked young designers to redecorate and organize his official residence, the Palais De L'Elysee. This is only a symbolic image but the media celebrated design like it had never been before. Like a fairytale everything I liked was suddenly approved."

Ref.7.

CONCLUSION:

"But what really matters is not this or that Artist dabbling in 'applied' projects, or the small number of individuals experimenting in new media. The 'Opening to Art' in design is significant because it represents the first signs that the super-rationalistic, anti-nature, mechanistic world view of Planners and Designers is beginning to soften" Ref.8.

Post-Modern contemporary design can be exciting and outstanding, like the work of Coates, but some new designs follow innovation rather than achieve it, some, despite imaginativeness of concept, do not mirror this in their execution, and some may represent a failure to break away from previously established directions in the work of other designers. Design, especially furniture design has become more accessible and popular, after the serious intellectualism of the Modern Movement.

Stylistically, contemporary furniture design relies more often on the tactile qualities of materials and ingenuity in operation than on applied decoration or ornament. There is renewed interest in exploring the basic formal archetypes of the chair or the sofa. Designers have in some cases returned to the classics and attempted to update them rather than starting from scratch. There is also renewed interest in more decorative household objects with increasing involvement of Architects in the design of simple tableware, teapots and cutlery and this has ensured that considerable attention must now be lavished on them too.

"The return to eclecticism as a cultural norm is not, however, without its accompanying dangers. The resultant orgy has become too gaudy, perhaps an over-reaction to the joys of liberation after all those decades of repression. Post-Modernism has itself become somewhat overbearing. It revels too much in the apparent triumph of Capitalism over Socialism, and the reign of the haves over the have-nots". Ref.9.



This is a particularly stimulating and rewarding moment for studying contemporary Designers. Although their Post-Modern design is a luxury, and a high-style escapism, in some cases it only glosses over the surface of our tensions and problems in contemporary society. It is more than just nostalgia dressed up or a marketed history. Due to the orthodoxies of stylistic schools being overturned, more experimentation is possible than for many decades. The work of Designers such as Coates, Dixon, Dubreuil, Putman and Garouste and Bonetti, coexist with each other and all other forms of visual language, colourful or otherwise, showing the cultural and stylistic diversity of contemporary design.

"Now that the older generation has seen the way forward, a younger generation is beginning to play with the possibilities : everything can be merry and colourful, even though the progenitor of the trend has deserted them". Ref.10.

The Italians are no longer pre-eminent in the world of contemporary design, they still have the best facilities for producing high-quality new design, but it is no longer the dominant cultural force it was in the 1980's. Innovative ideas are coming from new places and it is possible to see other countries developing their own approaches to design. In England and France design is being deliberately promoted as part of Government policy, attracting substantial investment and media attention - e.g. in France the V.I.A. and in England the Design Council. England and France are also the centres for the new tradition of Artist-Craftsmen Designers, with people such as Dixon, Dubreuil and Garouste and Bonetti. In London the wit and narrative style of Coates and others seems to echo the new directions in design. The once mundane objects like furniture and tableware are no longer regarded as simply utilitarian and are now displaying all kinds of levels of meaning and expression.

With the work of companies such as Ecart International, revivalism is flourishing, with ever more obscure Classics of the 20th century being unearthed and put into production. At one extreme there are the eclectic, often Baroque pieces by Designers such as Dixon, Coates and Garouste and Bonetti, which are flamboyant in form and defiantly unconventional. At the other end of the spectrum is the sleek, Neo-Modern functionalism of Putman. Currently both coexist because there is no longer a dominance of the design world by any one nationality.

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