



70% Design.
30% London Design Festival.
100% inspiration.

As I'm writing this, a week has passed since 100% Design, Stills MD Chris Carpenter muses. So what's still floating around my head now I've had time to digest it all?





My experience in Milan earlier in the year has encouraged me not to just pitch up to exhibitions such as 100% Design and expect to be amazed. Instead it's worth trying to look at the wider picture – of 100% Design as part of London Design Festival and be inspired by the other creative experiences on offer.

The beauty of London Design Week is the interest it attracts to London, especially with 100% Design and London Fashion Week overlapping with it as well. This is a shop window for British creative talent, providing a focus for emerging stars, established businesses and visitors alike.

The festival is recognised as the UK's leading contemporary design celebration and is a key event in the international design calendar. In fact, some manufacturers, such as Kvadrat and Boss, opted to be part

of London Design Festival rather than exhibiting at 100% Design and therefore gaining kudos from being part of the bigger picture.

We started with the Kvadrat installation by the Bouroullec brothers in the Raphael gallery in the V&A. They created something quite magical; a 'Textile Field,' which is essentially a giant bed that allows you to lie at an angle on the floor to view the huge paintings that hang all around you. The platform is made of individual panels that are all upholstered in subtly different, graduated colours of Kvadrat fabric. Effectively, they have dropped a huge contemporary digital landscape into one of our most august and traditional museums.

Ronan Bouroullec describes the atmosphere as 'lascivious reverie, a more sensual experience in which you are a little bit more open to be touched, to dream'.

Superficially, the Bouroullecs have simply installed a temporary viewing platform in the Raphael Gallery, but the underlying subtext is our relationship to art, and whether more contemporary forms of furniture might help to build a bridge across the centuries. Giving a new perspective on how younger generations may be able to breathe new life into our nation's heritage.

Then on to see John Pawson's installation at St Paul's. He has positioned the largest Swarovski lens ever manufactured at the foot of Wren's spiraling staircase. This lens is reflected by the mirror way above you. The effect is head-spinning and it offers you a perspective not normally available to mere mortals.

Having loved designjunction in Milan, we searched out their display at Victoria House Basement in Southampton Row. Amongst the collection of excellent work,



one piece stood out – the reality defying Tree. It is a gigantic 11.4m table made from a single plank of oak, ‘balanced’ on a mirrored pyramid. Apparently the plank comes from an oak that was planted in SW France in 1870, which took over 6 months to locate.

Also on show at designjunction was Nomad, a spectacular 5m long lighting installation made up of 200 individual components, created by Beau McClellan using a glass mirror-coating finish, reflecting the interior by day and becoming semi-transparent at night, when illuminated by LEDs.

The second day was spent with Anna and Ceri at 100% Design, and we wanted inspiration. Unfortunately, this year, you really needed to go looking for it, so it was great that the organisers had provided an app which was both easy to use and stylish.

Unusually for these things, the app itself was an incredibly useful tool and as a user experience the best we had come across yet. It contained news, videos, photos, Twitter feeds and show information on exhibitors, seminars, speakers, and a planner.

To be fair, there were plenty of products that caught our eye, a great many interesting people to talk to, but it has to be said that our overwhelming impression of 100% this year was of feeling, well, a bit underwhelmed.

It was an exhibition with two sides – on the one hand there seemed to be a large number of smaller designers, happy to chat about their inspirations and aspirations. Then, on the flipside, the space seemed to be dominated by the international collectives at virtually every turn.

Products that stood out for me were Sung’s Uncomfortable Bottle, which

imitates the shape of a conventional water tap. Sung explains; ‘drinking water out of PET bottles has become the norm...yet we can easily drink water out of the tap. This design aims to inspire us to be more energy-efficient and also to take simple actions for our environment.’

The Bird Lamp from the Alhouette Collection literally lights up the room with its charm. The lamps either sit on a horizontal tube or clamp on to a vertical one via a multi-angle joint. This joint allows the birds to move and rotate in various directions. Delightful!

Armourcoat introduced Ductal, its lightweight decorative concrete for building façades. They claim it is a genuine revolution in the concrete sector being strong, flexible and durable, enabling designers to create sculptural forms in exterior concrete – and who am I to argue? >>>



▶▶▶▶▶ Clearly one of the stand-out products was the Animal Chair Collection designed by Maximo Riera. Not really sure how much I liked it, but you certainly couldn't ignore it, especially as each chair costs £35,000.

We had great fun at 100% Materials, squeezing, touching, grabbing, scratching and sniffing – it was certainly the most interactive area of the show, with lots of activity and interest.

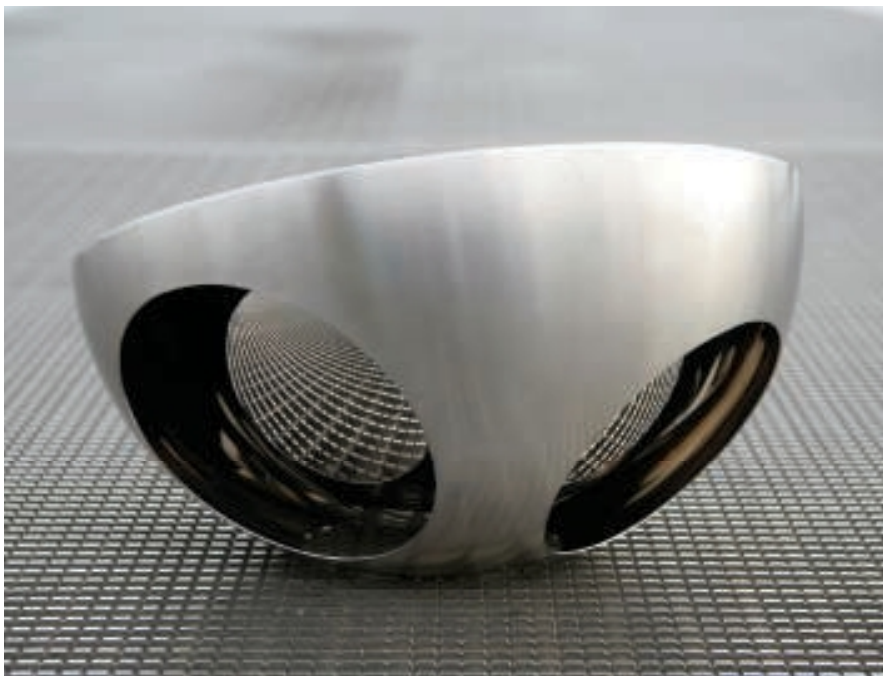
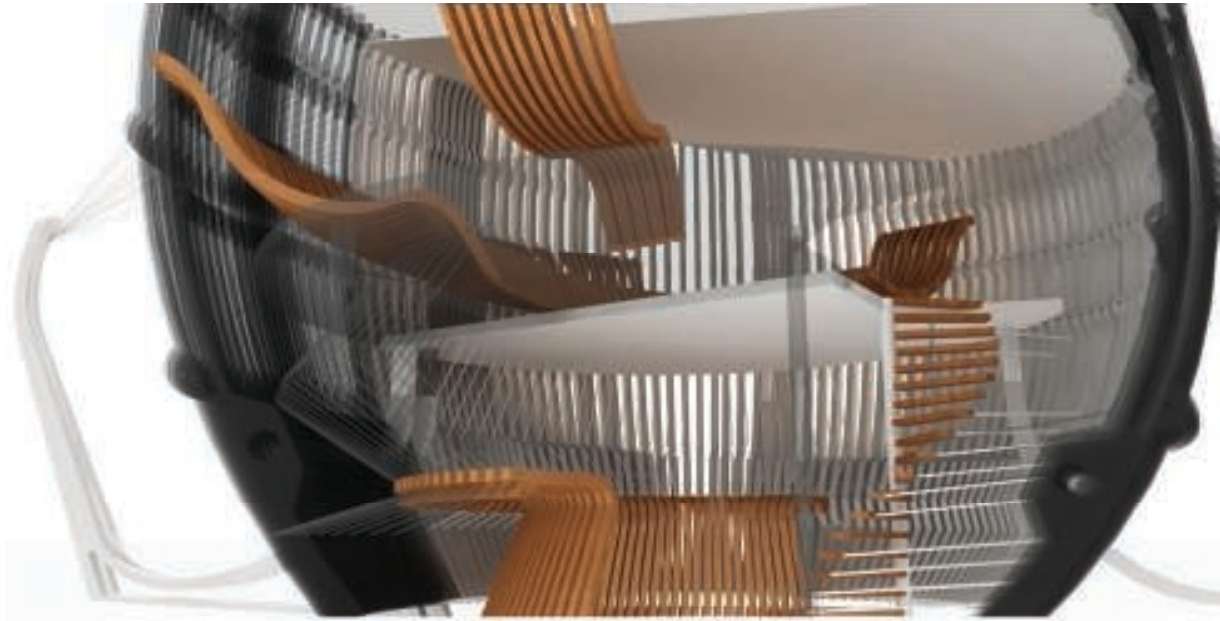
Oh, and Anna particularly liked the intriguing touch-sensitive musical paper from Novalia.

The award for the most lively stand had to go to Armstrong Atelier, who were launching their new portfolio of bespoke solutions to help designers create their visions for walls and ceilings. They have recruited a special team of experts, including CAD designers and project managers, to deliver this new service.

Morgan's outstanding recent performance has been built on a strong design point of view and fastidious attention to detail, as exemplified by their new Lima chair which was deservedly recognised as an Editors Choice.

No News Is Good News stools and tables, designed by Suzie Button, use natural rubber to cover stacks of newspapers and create furniture pieces from waste products. But, rather disappointingly, we didn't find many more products that took forward the issue of real sustainability.

However, it's not just about the exhibits and installations, it is also about the people you get to meet and talk to at these gatherings. Take Tyron Stephen-Smith, who we met on the Morgan stand, where he told us about his graduate show. He has created a machine for living with



sustainability at its heart. But rather than just paying lip service to the concept, his building imposes sustainability on its inhabitants, forcing them to be sustainable, designing their home in such a way that it is reliant on them growing enough of their own food to survive. The house is in a constant tension, with the weight of the food, compost and water needed to grow it tensioning the structure. This means you need to keep a constant balance of the correct weight of food to survive and enable you to inhabit the structure or it will simply implode – extreme, but it makes the

point about the possible future for our species.

In conclusion, I feel that the Design Festival tells the world that we are open for business on an international stage. And if we are going to emerge from this economic black hole and continue to take on the world, then we need to decide what we want our country to stand for in the world. I believe we can continue to be successful if we create a persona of Britain as a nation of creatives that the world can aspire to. And quality manufacturers producing desirable British products that people want to own ●