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URBAN OUTFITTERS

DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO galvanize the west
side of Manhattan with their plans for the High Line

SEASON PREMIERE

JUAN CARLOS OBANDO takes L.A. style
beyond the red carpet and into fashion's front row

FREE FORM

Fashion designer MARIA CORNEJO
cuts her line from a different cloth

FINE BALANCE: JESSICA
MILLER GETS A LEG UP







Photography: JASON MADARA

Diplomats of Design

Whether advancing the product pantheon outside of the cultural mainstream, or championing more obscure work in brand-savvy American cities, these four furniture showrooms are reshaping the geography of design one community at a time.

Story: EVA STEILLE-SACCIO

OUT ON A LIMN

With over 44,000 square feet of high-end furniture from 1,200 brands as diverse as Moroso, Moris and Moooi, San Francisco showroom Limn is universally recognized as an influential force in the design world. Dan Friedlander, CEO and founder of the 25-year-old enterprise, has built a veritable West Coast empire with three full-service locations — in addition to the San Francisco outpost, the former architect brought the store to his hometown of Sacramento and is opening a third space in Seattle in November.

Navigating through Limn's labyrinthine showroom can be a bit overwhelming to say the least. So thought Friedlander, who recently came up with the idea for the Courtyard, a 2,300-square-foot boutique carved out of the existing San Francisco space. He enlisted the help of former Moss store manager Tim Daly (pictured left) to carefully curate a collection of in-stock furniture and accessories geared toward the general public. "We figured out which pieces were the best sellers and made them available in the Courtyard," says Daly. "Then I focused on accessories — Tobias Wang, Citizen Citizen, Veris and Sansonite — that I thought worked well with Limn's overall atmosphere."

Upon entering Limn, one walks directly into the boutique, which is sectioned off from the main floor, receiving a quick and concentrated preview of the type of products the showroom has to offer. "The Courtyard provides instant gratification to our customers," says Friedlander. "Because the rest of the shop is in a separate area," adds Daly, "you spend much more time looking in here. It's the perfect solution to the juggle and struggle for store coverage." And, should customers be interested in a more comprehensive review of the goods, Limn also offers a concierge service, which assigns a designated specialist to give an informational tour of desired merchandise in the main showroom.

But Friedlander's nuanced design philosophy does not stop here. In yet another of many special projects — from an exclusive line of Limn furniture to his first collaborative collection of rugs — Friedlander has designed a log cabin, inspired by the Finnish tradition of retiring to your own personal lodge to ruminate and take respite. Composed of 450 individually numbered pieces, the cabin comes with two Finnish construction experts who assemble the structure on site. The hideaway is made of Nordic pine and measures 20' x 20' with an ample front deck and comfortable sleeping loft. Prospective buyers with concerns or those who are merely curious can amble up to the showroom roof, where a model of the cabin sits regally — replete with interior furnishings from the floors below.

The project dovetails with how Friedlander positions Limn within the context of the West Coast design scene. "When you look at Milan, you are looking at creation. Out here, you are looking at the art of distribution," he says. Limn is out to change that. "We are trying to create more products. What we have underway is a whole new wave of our own designs." >



THE COMMISSAIRES IN TOWN

A dark yet inviting boutique sits on St. Laurent boulevard in the Mile End section of Montreal – what co-owners Pierra Laramée and Josée Lepage (pictured right) describe as the budding Williamsburg of their home city, a relatively under-the-radar convergence point of artists, students and locals. The partners, hoping to enliven the small and somewhat confined Montreal design community, opened Commissaires in October 2005. “The design scene in Montreal is not big,” says Laramée, former owner and creative director of Canadian advertising boutique Tam-Tam. “Right now it’s still struggling to emerge. People have trouble manufacturing and distributing their pieces, and beyond SDCIM [Montreal International Interior Design Show], there is little publicity or means of exposure.” Laramée and Lepage realized that a store that featured both international and local talent was the perfect way to capture public interest. They decided on a curatorial “gallery” concept for Commissaires. “Every three months, we select merchandise according to specific guidelines or organizational criteria,” explains Laramée. “Gathering merchandise based on themes makes our selection process less predictable. It inspires us to look farther afield and more deeply, which only strengthens the retail experience.”

Since opening, the shop has worked its way through five themes. This past winter, Laramée and Lepage chose *The Color of Shadow* as their motif. Among the all black merchandise was a blanket by Tobias Wong that appeared in MoMA’s “Safe: Design Takes on Risk” exhibit. For the Spring ‘06 collection, *Resuscitation*, Commissaires recruited 5.5 Designers, Rescuing broken or abandoned furniture from the Salvation Army, the French collective created an in-store “Hospital for Objects.” They dressed as doctors and “fixed” chairs in front of a live audience using an operating table set up in the showroom. The current collection, *Madame Chose*, gathers an assortment of high-end and more moderately-priced products by female designers. “We decided to tone it down a little. We want to make the shop more accessible, to have both conceptual pieces and things that you can go home with,” says Laramée. “In some of our past exhibitions, that was not the case.”

As the store continues to build a permanent and profitable client base – a slow and arduous process in the relatively unsaturated Canadian terrain – the partners have found it necessary to boost their income by expanding into other disciplines with what has turned out to be a lucrative consulting branch. Laramée and Lepage visit other Montreal businesses (a high-end restaurant chain and museum and clothing boutiques), serving as brand “stylists” and providing suggestions on products that will sell well in the window.

Commissaires also has a hand in the production and exclusive Canadian distribution of the *Indulgence* Collection by Just Another Rich Kid and Tobias Wong, who has worked closely with Lepage for many years. “We would like to become a place that initiates larger undertakings,” says Laramée, “be it on our own, with local designers or with international ones.” >





Stylist ISABELLE LONG

Photography assistants

MARTIN LAUROUX

and GABRIEL PAQUET

Digital assistant OLIVIER BACHIS

THE CHILE FACTOR

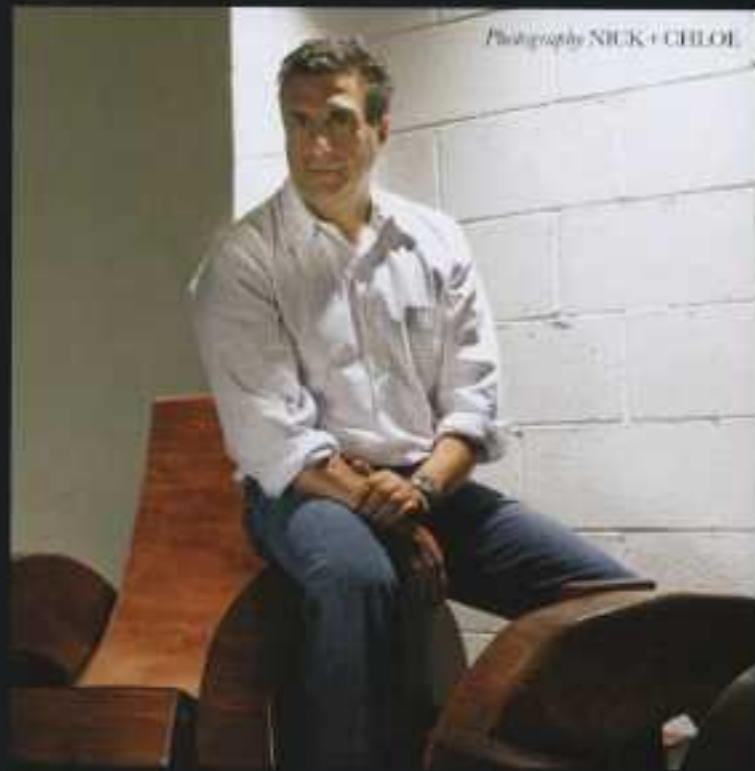
Eduardo Godoy started off as a young hippy living in Brussels, painting, making leather wallets, and singing the Chilean national anthem in the main square. As a larger number of passersby took an interest in his work, the wallets began to grow into quite a hot commodity, which enabled Godoy to buy his first apartment. "I suddenly discovered the modern art world and started paying attention to furniture made by architects. Those things didn't exist in Chile at that time, and I thought it would be a big challenge to bring them to my country," he explains. And so began Interdesign, the first Chilean venue to showcase high-end European furniture.

Much to his surprise, Godoy found a receptive and enthusiastic audience for even the limited number of products he initially brought back to Santiago, where the store is based. Soon after its founding in 1981, Interdesign gained recognition as a linchpin of the Chilean furniture business. Establishing exclusive representation for brands like Cassina, Artemide, Zanotta and Droide, Godoy created a market for European design at a time when most residential interiors were filled with locally-made, wood-based pieces. By the time his daughter, Carolina, and her husband, Sebastián Núñez (both pictured below), inherited the business in 2005, Godoy had acquired an impressive archive of classic works. "Interdesign has always been a part of residence," says 34-year-old Núñez. "And now it is accorded the reverence usually reserved for museums because you can see the whole story of design unfold in 2,000 square meters - from classics by Le Corbusier to Achille Castiglioni to Joe Colombo."

While they value Interdesign's rich history, Núñez and his wife are also excited about the future. "We are planning to reach out to younger clients by keeping the prices in check, bringing in more affordable product lines, and even playing different music," says Núñez. The couple has also teamed up with the elder Godoy for a special project, *Grhohotubo*. Godoy hand-picked eight Chilean architects to build groups of homes in various parts of Chile; Interdesign furnishes the interiors with pieces from the showroom before the houses are put on the market. The project strengthens local connections and lends the store a youthful energy - a fitting endeavor for an embassy of design that was born out of a sense of discovery.



Photography NIUK + CHLOE



TRIPLE ESPASSO

Identify a void and fill it. So goes the philosophy of Carlos Junqueira (pictured above), founder and owner of Espasso, the first gallery in the US devoted to vintage, contemporary and artisan reproductions of Brazilian furniture. After 10 years in the US, the São Paulo native, a veteran of the import business, noticed that Brazilian designers were not well-represented in the States. So he returned to his home country in 2001 and compiled a representative catalogue of pieces by emerging and established talent.

Junqueira first set up shop in Long Island City and began by presenting pieces in a small booth at JOFF. The responses varied; people were enthusiastic about the product but not about the inter-borough commute to the showroom. "When we first started out, a lot of people didn't have a clue that our pieces were coming from Brazil. They thought they were European." But, the gallery owner was intent on creating a distinct view of his country. "Every time you say Brazil, people think of carnival or soccer. I wanted to show that there is a sophisticated and intellectual side."

Five years later, the perseverant Junqueira has established a large, loyal clientele of interior designers, architects and collectors who enjoy browsing through the geometric forms of Ricardo Fassanello, polished-wood Gregory Warchavchik reproductions, and classic pieces from Oscar Niemeyer. Junqueira has also solved the location problem: in September, he opened a new showroom in Tribeca built by the emerging, New York-based Architecture in Formation (his well-established gallery in L.A. has also moved from its original Melrose location to the prestigious Pacific Design Center). "This is going to be the flagship for the company," the store owner says of the new space. "The idea is to link the furniture with architecture in a way that makes it easier to appreciate the clean lines and beauty of each piece."

To celebrate the opening, Junqueira enlisted the help of independent curator Lane Kurta-Kielbaso to organize a vibrant exhibition of Brazilian artists. The pieces, which adorn the walls of the new gallery, provide a fitting counterpart to the carefully chosen chairs and tables. "I wanted to evoke the true creative spirit of Brazil by combining its best art and best design in one exhibition," says Junqueira. "Today most art collectors also collect furniture." And even if they don't, one visit to the new showroom will surely land them on Espasso's already impressive client list. **ESS**