

# Designers

All interviews by Anny Shaw

## Chairman of the boards

**Jonathan Monk, *Mari Thirteen*, 2011, edition of 2, one edition sold by the chair €9,000 each, one edition sold as a set €110,000, D&A Lab (Design Miami/Basel, G17)**

Berlin-based artist Jonathan Monk often appropriates images, creating tongue-in-cheek t-shirts printed with photographs of himself alongside works by other artists, such as Richard Prince, and silkscreen paintings dedicated almost reverentially to Sol LeWitt. His work undermines the notion of originality, so for his presentation at D&A Lab, he has designed 13 chairs (edition of 2, one edition sold by the chair, priced at €9,000 each; one edition sold as a set priced at €110,000) based on an Enzo Mari design, *Sedia 1*, which was part of a 1974 project by the Italian called "Autoprogettazione". This loosely translates as "self-made". The idea was that



anybody could make Mari's furniture using wood and a hammer. "It was very much an anti-design statement, like taking Ikea to the extreme," said Isolde Pringiers, the Brussels gallery's co-director.

Monk has taken Mari's desire to make design choices accessible, albeit limited to collectors with a budget for expensive chairs made of oak, padouk and koto. The owner is meant to rebuild each chair, rearranging its constituent parts, 13 planks of wood—each from 13 different types of tree—so the pattern varies each time. Monk's venture into functional design follows a project seen at last year's Design Miami/Basel: *Low Table 1984*. The work was inspired by Donald Judd's *Bookshelf*, 1984. "Monk's approach to design is exactly the same as his intellectual and conceptual approach to art," said Pringiers. "It's just that he has found a different archive to mine—a design archive." ■



## Roaming gnomes of Basel

**Beth Katleman, *Folly*, 2010, edition of 12, \$200,000 each, Todd Merrill Studio Contemporary (Design Miami/Basel, G22)**

New York-based ceramicist Beth Katleman has recently turned her attention to cheaply manufactured plastic toys, casting them in porcelain and arranging

tableaux that echo—in three dimensions—the pastoral scenes found in 18th-century wallpaper and fabric. *Folly*, 2010, (edition of 12, \$200,000 each), consists of 50 miniature ghost-white landscape sculptures installed on a deep blue wall. At first glance, the work appears to reference Wedgwood or French toile, but when viewed up close, these

allusions dissolve. For example, one can spot a gnome riding a grinning snail past a miniature *Sacré Coeur*. "There's a play between the mass produced and the handmade, the high-end production of royal collections and that particular kind of tacky porcelain," said Katleman. "The work contains these historical references," said

gallerist Todd Merrill, "but all the figures are found, 1950s-style kitsch objects, and when you get up close the scenes are sarcastic or cheeky or naughty."

Katleman spends hours creating the intricate moulds from which the porcelain figures are hand cast, elevating the mass produced toys to the status of rarefied design objects. Unlike

most porcelain, Katleman leaves her figures unglazed, which she says is a deliberate reference to 18th-century Sevres biscuit porcelain. "When you transform the plastic into porcelain, the figures become a little unsettling or surreal," she said, referring to their matt surfaces. *Folly* will be exhibited at New York's Museum of Arts & Design this autumn. ■

## L'esprit de l'escalier

**Le Corbusier, *Escalier*, around 1952, €38,000, Galerie Downtown-François Laffanour (Design Miami/Basel, G16)**

Galerie Downtown-François Laffanour is exhibiting several pieces by Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier. The rooms at the *Maison du Brésil*—the housing block designed by the Swiss architect for Brazilian students in Paris—are evoked on the stand, which includes a set of dining chairs by Prouvé, with whom Le Corbusier collaborated on several projects, and



an elegantly simple daybed by Charlotte Perriand, who worked in Le Corbusier's studio in the late 1920s and 1930s. The wood, steel and lacquered metal staircase (*Escalier*, 1952, €38,000) and a room divider (1959, €22,000) are by Le Corbusier. The staircase was built for *Cité Radieuse*, the architect's modernist housing complex in the south of France, which is credited with inspiring the brutalist style of architecture. "The staircase is quite a difficult piece to sell, as it would need to be installed in a space with very similar dimensions," said Sébastien Cambray-Pellegrin, the director of the Parisian gallery. ■



## Dressed to kill

**Ted Noten, *Uzi Mon Amour*, 2010, edition of 5, \$92,000, Ornamentum Gallery (G23)**

Bringing literal meaning to the term "war paint", Ornamentum Gallery is showing two gun pieces by Dutch jewellery designer Ted Noten—*Dior 001*, 2011 (edition of 3, €8,800 each), and *Chanel 001*, 2011 (edition of 3, €13,000 each)—two nylon pistols loaded with the contents of a woman's handbag, such as Dior lip gloss, an antique hairpin, a bottle of Chanel perfume, a USB stick—and a Viagra pill. The first two pieces to be made in Noten's series, "7 Necessities for a Woman (to Feel Like a Woman through the Eyes of a Man)", 2011-ongoing, the works play on gender stereotypes, questioning the fantasies men

project onto women. "It has been said that a handbag is a metaphor for the woman who owns it. [The works] are almost like comic book alter egos of women," said Stefan Friedemann, the co-director of the Hudson, upstate New York, gallery.

Also on the stand is Noten's 24-carat gold-plated Uzi set in a transparent resin briefcase. Entitled *Uzi Mon Amour*, 2010, (edition of 5, \$92,000 each), the butt of the golden gun is engraved with flowers and around the silencer is inscribed a 16th-century Chinese love poem that includes the line: "My handsome fatal foe, Why are you gone so long?"

"Guns can be beautiful objects in themselves. It's a powerful mix of beauty, aggression and sex," said Friedemann, but added that: "It's definitely a phallic object." ■

## Flat-pack Prouvé

**Jean Prouvé, *6x6 Demountable House*, 1944, €600,000, Galerie Patrick Seguin (G01)**

Jean Prouvé once declared: "There is no difference between a piece of furniture and a house." To hammer home that point,

Paris's Galerie Patrick Seguin is presenting for the first time a live performance of the construction and dismantling of one of the French designer's wartime prefabricated bungalows during Design Miami/Basel. "I wanted to show how easy it is to construct one of these houses," said Patrick Seguin. "You and I could do

it...you don't even need a ladder."

The hut, *6x6 Demountable House*, made of steel and wood, is one of 160 commissioned by the French ministry of reconstruction and town planning in 1944. Very few survive today. Seguin estimates he has sold around 20 in the past 25 years. Despite winning the

government's support—Prouvé won an award for emergency housing from the ministry in 1947—his project was cut short owing to a shortage of materials. An emergency measure after the war, today his bungalows are highly prized items, transformed into tea houses or garages by private collectors. ■



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