



DESIGN DAYS 2023

14th edition
16 - 25.11.2023
Geneva

Domesticity

Exhibition co-curated by
Laura Gowen and Patricia Lunghi



GOWEN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

ESPACES
CONTEMPORAINS

DOMESTICITY

November 16 to 25, 2023.

In collaboration with Design Days and Espaces contemporains.

Xavier Aymon, John Currin, Luciano Dell'Orefice, Fabio Hendry, Ayana V. Jackson, Donald Judd, Sylvie Lambert, Sébastien Mettraux, Martin Parr, Antonio Riello, Juri Roemmel, Gino Sabatini Odoardi, Annelies Štrba, Joana Vasconcelos, Marta Zgierska

November 23 artist talk with Luciano Dell'Orefice & Xavier Aymon
and Sébastien Mettraux

On the occasion of the 14th edition of *Design Days*, GOWEN is delighted to present **DOMESTICITY**, a group exhibition which unites the disciplines of art and design with a focus on elements synonymous with the residential environment. Co-curated by Laura Gowen and Patricia Lunghi, the show considers the role and status of furniture and home aesthetics, from lighting to clothes hanging to the ubiquitous cafetière.

Central to the theme is the chair, once seen as a symbol of power and recurrent throughout the history of art, it's mutable form a testing ground for contemporary designers. Showcasing selected works by fifteen Swiss and international artists and designers whose practices combine traditional mediums such as painting and drawing with highly experimental methods, the works counter Arts and Crafts with minimalism and innovative 21st century technologies. The chair's hybridized purpose as functional entity and unique objet d'art is thoroughly examined.

Various photographic works are included in the show which reveal more metaphorical aspects of the chair and its myriad guises: as a vantage point, as provider of reassurance or comfort, as a stage for black, female identity, or as corporeal protector. The works are defined by solitude, intimacy, and fragility.

The portraits of Swiss multimedia artist **Annelies Štrba** (b. 1947) evoke familiarity of place. In her compositions, family members are seated or positioned with a chair, a daily prop evoking presence or absence, anticipation and belonging, or perhaps of loss and remembrance. Experimenting with analog and digital photography on canvas, these moments of everyday life, in saturated or overexposed colours, populate a universe with both real subjects and archetypes, converging into vibrant and timeless images.

In a scene from a service station in England in 1994, British photographer and photojournalist **Martin Parr** CBE (b. 1952) assembles the typical accoutrements normally associated with breakfast on the table in the home. **Antonio Riello's** (Italian, b. 1958) cafetière complements the culinary inventory.

Taken from her debut series *Post* (2016), a powerful photographic record of states of anxiety, Polish artist **Marta Zgierska** (b. 1987) constructs a scaffold of chairs around her naked body. Referencing the looming memory of a serious car accident, the chair becomes a physical barrier to, or refuge for the artist's traumatic realities. In contrast, **Ayana V. Jackson** (American, b. 1977) as Saffronia displays herself on a couch. Taken from her earlier series '*Intimate Justice*', her persona evokes the societal injustices of colonial racism and critiques the representation of the black body amongst dominant white culture.

A preparatory study by American painter **John Currin** (b.1962) for his large, portrait format oil painting *Thanksgiving*, 2003 depicts three young women around a table, surrounded by marble columns, a chandelier, mirror, and several gastronomic items. Currin's strange and exaggerated composition is an uneasy retelling of a traditional family ritual.

The work of **Gino Sabatini Odoardi** (Italian, b. 1968) is a research-based and in-depth study of life and art. Often beginning with simple forms and everyday objects, he follows a broad and complex iconographic path that has led him to engage with the sinuous and ancient artform of drapery or il panneggio. Developing a singular form of expression, he creates his works using the industrial process of 'Polystyrene thermoforming'. His sculptural *Untitled with Chair* rests upon a fragile point of stability.

French-Portuguese artist **Joana Vasconcelos** (b. 1971) offers an unconventional, extravagant, and avant-garde artistic universe. Using diverse materials, shapes and colours, she turns to the ready-made, New Realism and Pop Art, humorously questioning contemporary society and its collective identities, particularly those concerning women's condition, class distinction or national identity. Integrating ceramics, textiles, crochet, light, cement, installations, or decorated tiles (azulejos), her practice makes extensive reference to her Portuguese heritage. Playing as much with the codes of luxury and design as with the potential of elements drawn from the domestic universe, *Delirium*, (2022), from her *Stupid Furniture* series refers to feminine identity and women's dress. Other references to the history of art abound, thus allowing crafts and industry, tradition and modernity, popular culture, and erudition to coexist.

Juri Roemmel (Swiss, b. 1993) melds traditional design principles with contemporary sensibilities. Driven by technological innovation and aesthetic refinement, his analytical approach to tools, materials and production techniques characterizes his output of distinctive products and visual concepts. Part of his ongoing research project '*Series of Sights*', Roemmel's raw, hand-cast aluminium hooks highlight the elemental material properties, celebrated in the fluidic forms and rounded edges which adhere to the metal's natural surface tension as each unique piece is cast.

Exploration, collaboration, and sustainability are at the heart of **Fabio Hendry's** (Swiss, b. 1986) design philosophy. Created using nylon powder, a waste product of 3D printing and sand, his tubular stools in pop hues push the boundaries of material innovation and experimental engineering. The show brings the designer's works into dialogue with the compositions of French-Canadian artist **Sylvie Lambert** (b. 1984) which combine improbable elements to create surreal narratives with messages rooted in reality. Integrated into imaginary landscapes, her subjects touch on habitat, food, artificial and disfigured nature, themes all painted with a flamboyant, chromatic range. In this figmental world, the boundaries between decor, reality, fantasy and fiction intertwine, exemplified in *N'y voir que du feu*, 2023.

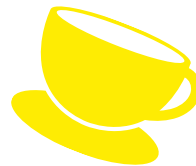
As an extension of his broader pictorial cycle entitled '*Derniers Paysages*' (Last Landscapes), **Sébastien Mettraux's** (Swiss b. 1984) extensive research for *Dernier paysage III (visions du paradis)* on the representation of paradise since the Renaissance observed that the sources currently closest to these codes of representation are the visuals in the promotional brochures of luxury real estate. Placed within a pictorial tradition of paradise in line with, for example, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch (1504), these synthetic images of aspirational villas are brought into question in Mettraux's clinical repainting. Overly blue skies, green lawns, abundant plants, swimming pools full of reflections, teak terraces with lounge furniture and architectural lines inherited from Le Corbusier are elements still omnipresent in the representations of these high-end projects. Located in the Swiss countryside, they are places defined by the need for security as well as the notion of happiness and are devoid of human presence.

Mettraux's idealistic homes are juxtaposed with the ground-breaking design icons of American visual artist **Donald Judd** (1928-1994). Two chair examples in primary colours produced by Swiss manufacturer Lehnir are legitimate both as functional furniture for living and working and as desirable works of art.

The exhibition includes a site-specific, moving light installation by Swiss creative duo **Luciano Dell'Orefice & Xavier Aymon** (b. 1976 and 1969) of the studio R2D2. The designers will address the technological aspects of home automation, elaborating on their OBLO energy systems.

A special thank you to Lehnir AG for their kind support and cooperation with this project. Since 1984, in collaboration with the Donald Judd Furniture and Judd Foundation, Lehnir is in the world the sole, approved manufacturer of Donald Judd metal furniture.

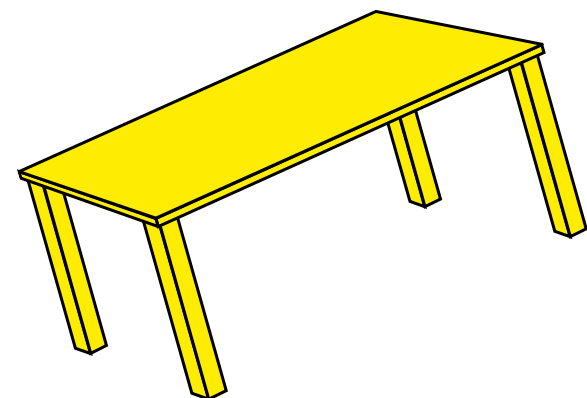
The exhibition takes place in collaboration with *Design Days*, the largest design and contemporary creation event in French-speaking Switzerland. Committed to culture for many years, the festival, organized by the *Design Days* association in partnership with Espaces Contemporains celebrates a plural and transdisciplinary approach to design. Bringing together both young creators and experienced professionals around installations, furniture exhibitions, debates and conferences, the festival offers a unique insight into current international issues as well as new Swiss creativity. The initiative extends across Geneva, Romandy and Switzerland.



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