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BY RIMA SUQI

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The New York Times

THE DETAILS



THOMAS DIXON

All that brass: Tom Dixon's Cell lamps at the new Eclectic restaurant in Paris.

Global Design Du Jour

At Maison et Objet, an emphasis on the young, as designers and customers.

By JULIE LASKY

PARIS — On Sunday, the British designer Tom Dixon was a guest of honor at a cocktail party at Eclectic, a new restaurant in the 15th Arrondissement here. Mr. Dixon had designed the space, with his usual flair for muscular materials (in this case, concrete warmed by splashes of gleaming metal). He was being feted by Maison et Objet, a trade fair held every January and September, which had anointed him, along with Philippe Nigro of Paris and Dimore Studio of Milan, a “designer of the year.”

Maison et Objet, a five-day event that ended on Tuesday, is the pre-eminent design show in France and results in a billion euros a year worth of sales, said its managing director, Philippe Brocart. It began 19 years ago with a focus on tabletop goods — teapots, cutlery, vases — but has expanded to fill eight pavilions at a fairground near Charles de Gaulle Airport with many other kinds of objects for the home.

Sitting beneath a chandelier he had assembled for the restaurant from an enormous cluster of his perforated brass Cell lamps, Mr. Dixon responded to a question about whether he was responsible for what appeared to be an international design fixation on brass and copper. Every pavilion at the fair, including “Ethnic Chic” and “Now!” (the more experimental work), was rife with rosy and golden metals, beaten, punctured and woven.

Those materials are seen as “an alternative to stainless steel,” Mr. Dixon said, adding that people are rebelling against the coldness of steel, just as they

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WHO LIVES THERE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TREVOR TONDRO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A Mystery at the Bend

Clinging to a hill is a little-known architect's masterwork that looks as if it were designed for a Bond villain.

By STEVEN KURUTZ

LOS ANGELES — New arrivals to this city are often told by locals to hop in the car and take Sunset Boulevard to the Pacific Ocean. It is a beautiful drive, world famous. It is also an initiation into the California myth without the downsides: you glide past the traffic-clogged 405 freeway, wind through rustic canyons where movie stars live and breathe in the ocean breezes west of Brentwood, as if nature had provided Angelenos with free air-conditioning.

On this same stretch of road, the newcomer is sure to encounter some of the city's daring architecture. Just before Pacific Palisades proper, there is a curved hill, and clinging to it, a house gingerly balanced on massive concrete stilts. The two-story, redwood-sheathed home appears to hover dangerously above the road. It is architecture that broadcasts, This is not Cleveland. The out-of-towner looks up, considers earthquakes and shudders.

Thomas Carson, a Los Angeles architect who admires the home's engineering bravado, said it has become part of the scenery of this famous route. “Everybody



knows about it,” Mr. Carson said. “It's one of those iconic houses you first see when you're driving west on Sunset.”

J. Scott Carter, a fellow architect, likened it to another familiar Southern California sight. “It's like a freeway overpass with those concrete pillars,” he said, adding, “From below, you don't get any sense of somebody being in the house.”

The home does have an air of mystery.

The brutalist home cantilevered over Sunset Boulevard has become a landmark. “Everybody knows about it,” one architect said, but “very few people know who did it.”

Its dramatic form and remote perch suggest the lair of a Bond villain or an aging Hollywood producer-turned-recluse. It is a striking example of brutalism, yet it isn't the work of a renowned architect and doesn't appear on greatest-hit lists of the city's modernist masterworks.

While many are familiar it, Mr. Carson said, “very few people know who did it. Even fewer know that the guy who lives in it designed it.”

ONE AFTERNOON LAST FALL, Robert Bridges sat in his kitchen high above Sunset Boulevard, reflecting on his life and career. The room was bisected by a heavy Corbusian column and was man-cave-dark, and as he talked the faint whoosh of traffic could be heard 100 feet below.

Mr. Bridges, 60, is a professor of real estate finance at the University of Southern California, in the Marshall School of Business. But 30 years ago, he was a builder and architect who designed several homes around Southern California, including this one sited so precariously.

“I prefer ‘carefully,’” Mr. Bridges said. CONTINUED ON PAGE D6



DAVID BARBOUR

The Lure Of the Hebrides

Drawn by the beaches and ethereal light, a family builds an offbeat island home. Page 4.

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scorn other features of industrial modernism considered bland or anonymous. Steel will always be hard and gray, but brass and copper are malleable and take on a patina making them more distinctive with age.

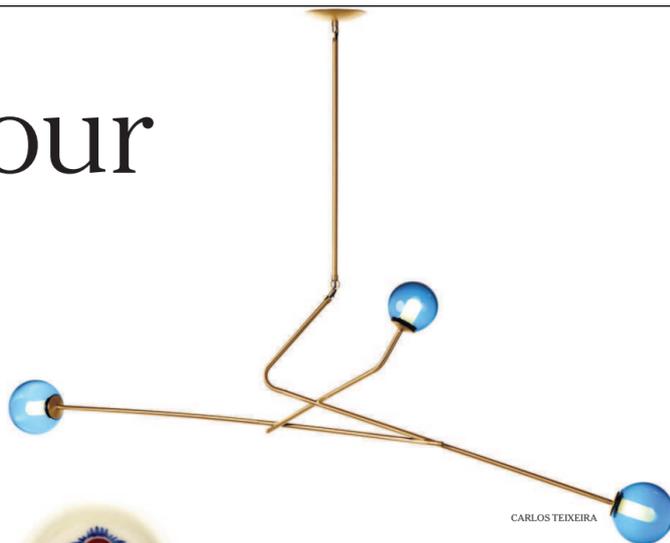
They also mix well with new technology, he said. Incandescent bulbs make brass lamps uncomfortably hot, but LEDs lower the temperature. And the color of the metal improves any harsh quality still found in LED light.

In his way, Mr. Dixon, through his musings about metal, answered another question that this reporter had left unvoiced: Why go to France to see design trends that are visible everywhere?

For one thing, you never know where you are going to find fresh ideas. Among the many copper objects at the fair was a lamp called Light Drop, designed by Tim Brauns of e27 studio in Berlin for Pulpco, a German company. The metal-mesh-and-glass lamp, Mr. Brauns said, is meant as a companion for communing with our screens. "You don't need much light with hand-held devices and TV," he said, but neither do most of us want to sit in the glow of our electronics, so Light Drop provides atmosphere. New technology has given rise to a new typology.

Similarly, Prado, a sofa bed by Christian Werner for the French company Ligne Ro-

At the Maison et Objet design show in Paris, clockwise from right: Patrick Jouin's Grass table for Coédit; Lattice pendant light by Neri & Hu for De La Espada; Wrap objects by SkLO; bone china teapot by Richard Brendon with Paternity; porcelain spoon by Iittala designed for the East Asian market; Hooka hookah by Karim Rashid for Gaia & Gino; and Big Light Drop lamp by e27 for Pulpco.



'We still don't have an industry, which is problematic.'

set, is one of several recent designs promoting the idea that the family that surfs together on individual devices needs a new style of furniture. The traditional couch that is placed against a wall facing a television may now be less practical than this big, armless, backless surface punctuated with movable but stable backrests. Family members can sit or lounge on it, facing different directions. Remove the cushions and it becomes a bed.

And context is always instructive. Even as design fairs grow more global (more than half of Maison et Objet's exhibitors are international, and the show just announced plans to travel to Singapore in March and to Miami next year), each fair has its own character. This one offered a view of French designers who are mired in a depressed economy and searching for ways to translate their elegance, rationality and humor into sellable objects.

"We still don't have an industry, which is problematic," said the Paris designer Patrick Jouin. "Ligne Roset and Fermob," he added, referring to the outdoor furniture company. "That's it."

It is a tribute to Mr. Jouin's stature that commissions for him, at least, pour in from around the world. He recently introduced a chair for the Italian company Pedrali, renovated the lounge and restaurant of the Bayerischer Hof hotel in Munich and redid the Van Cleef & Arpels boutique in New York. At the same time, he is designing the restaurant and all the furniture for the new headquarters of France's Ministry of Defense, a three-million-square-foot building in Paris that will house 10,000 workers when it opens next year.

Arik Levy, another French designer with a large international clientele, has been collaborating with small companies in countries with developing design interests, like Turkey and the Czech Republic. Historically, he said, France has paid more attention to fashion, perfume and wine than industrial design, and the neglect has turned corrosive in the long economic malaise. "Design is based on entrepreneurial energy," he said. "We are all micro companies. Financially, the situation in France is killing every entrepreneurial initiative."

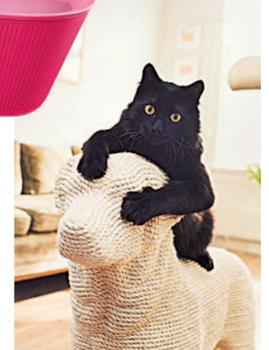
But a lack of government support does not seem to have discouraged a growing

number of French designers, fresh out of school, from entrepreneurship. Young companies with names like the Y'a Pas Le Feu Au Lac, slang for "no need to rush," and Petite Friture, or "small fry," showed pieces like cylindrical wooden containers with architectural tops and a giant skeletal chandelier that rotated gently overhead.

This youthful independence is new, Mr. Jouin said. More typically, designers here apprentice with established ones before going out on their own. Mr. Jouin started in the studio of Philippe Starck. "To create your own company is normal for Americans," he said. "Not for the French."

And what of the giants? Pierre Roset, chief executive of Ligne Roset, described a practice, common among international design producers, of spreading goods out onto a giant virtual carpet. The company has showrooms and distributors through-

Above, Botti floor lamp from Delightfull; left, cup and 1894 saucer from Richard Brendon's Reflect group; right, Dog scratching post by Erik Stehmann for Soonsalon; top right, Pet Nic basket with food and water dishes by Miriam Mirri for Alessi.



Counterclockwise from above: Borosilicate glass table and chandelier by Studio deForm with Kavalier Design; radio by Mathieu Lehanneur for Lexon; My China! Ca' d'Oro dishes by Sieger by Fürstenberg; iteration of Patrick E. Naggar's popular Drop light for Veronese; Influence silvered glass candleholders by Arik Levy for the Prague-based Verreum; and the Ploum love seat by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for Ligne Roset.

ucts," Mr. Roset said. "The problem for them is the price." He estimated that it would cost less than \$6,000 to outfit a room with Tarmac, and the buyers, he added, would be able to take the system with them when they moved.

In the end, Maison et Objet was worth the visit if only for the pleasure of its surprises: antique saucers paired with gilded teacups that reflected the patterns (by Richard Brendon of London), a life-size sisal dog sculpture designed as a scratching post for cats (by Erik Stehmann for the Dutch studio Soonsalon), a table and chandelier made of borosilicate laboratory glass (by Studio deForm of Prague) and a hookah that is a stylized whirling dervish (by Karim Rashid for the Istanbul-based Gaia & Gino).

There was no shortage of vitality in the fairgrounds, much of it evident in the ferment of various styles. "I have two visions: the French and the Italian," said Mr. Nigro, the much-lauded designer, who was born in France but spent 12 years in the Milanese studio of Michele De Lucchi, a founder of Memphis. Mr. Nigro characterized his Italian side as spontaneous, artistic and experimental, and his French side as quiet and determined.

The enthusiasm of many of the other French designers struck a similar note. That can-do spirit. That mix of influences. It felt almost . . . American.

out the world, and it is adapting popular products to the small-scaled homes of cities like New York and San Francisco. (It recently introduced the luxuriant Ploum sofa, by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, as a love seat with the adorable presence of a baby hippo.)

And as it sees the age of its core consumer rising well above 40, it is trying to lure intimidated younger consumers into the store with furniture like the new Tarmac storage system, by Dieter Zimmer and Burkhard Hess, which sells for less than its usual fare.

"More and more, the young generation appreciates design and interiors prod-