

FINANCIAL TIMES

How to S10 t

SEPTEMBER 7 2019

RANK AND STYLE



PERSONAL, BEST





This picture: André Fu's 2014 L'Appartement Louis Vuitton in Hong Kong was a "secret" pop-up residence for the fashion designer. Top right: André Fu oak screen, \$12,905, and oak desk, \$5,360, from Lane Crawford



Stars of interior design are putting their names to furniture collections, translating their signature aesthetic into statement pieces for all.

Lucia van der Post reports

The world's emporia are not short of sofas and chairs, lighting and coffee tables, cushions and candlesticks. And yet some will always fail to find anything pleasing among the munificence on offer. They want something, well, different; a piece that stands out from the crowd and speaks to them on a more personal level – which is why a host of interior designers are creating collections of their own. Many now offer small ranges of tableware and accessories, but others have created more substantial alternatives to the fare found in the usual furniture stores. These experts in interiors, after all, know exactly what sort of pieces are hard to find, precisely where the gaps in the market are – and very often are driven to create designs from scratch to realise their vision of beauty and function in a space.

One of these is André Fu, who launched his lifestyle collection to much fanfare at Milan Design Week in April. For the architect behind the interiors of high-end hotels, such as the Waldorf Astoria Bangkok and several suites at The Berkeley in London, as well as L'Appartement Louis Vuitton in Hong Kong (pictured left), presenting individual pieces bearing his name was a new departure. He thought about every aspect of the home, from furniture to tableware.

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL WEBER PHOTOGRAPHY



From far left: Taylor Howes fabric Dusk chair from the Love at Dusk collection, £7,100. This Taylor Howes-designed drawing-room for a townhouse in London's Hampstead features the Love at Dusk mahogany and silver-leaf Horizon console, £9,000

As a result, his offering is a means of embracing the lifestyle found in the five-star hotels he's designed – the pieces defined by craftsmanship and his ethos that luxury is to be found in experience as well as aesthetics. "I wanted to create a holistic range of things that could co-exist," he says. "Many were born of semi-prototypes I'd made for myself – I designed the desk [\$5,360, pictured on previous pages], for example, for my own apartment."

Karen Howes, co-founder and CEO of interior design studio Taylor Howes, found herself dreaming up furniture

designs when she failed to find the pieces she wanted for a project. "There wasn't a single console table I liked – they were too harsh or had too much metal and the proportions weren't right," she says. Howes produced her own in an ombré lacquer finish and tailored the design (£9,000) so it would fit effortlessly within a hall, behind a sofa or on either side of a fireplace. "Finding a suitable coffee table for a capacious room was also difficult – large ones can look monolithic so I came up with a version, the Indigo Skies coffee table [from £10,700], that is two tables in one," she

says. "One is a rectangle and made from ebonised timber with a parchment finish and blue and gold detailing, while the other, on wheels, is ebonised timber with a pewter-leaf finish and fits underneath, so it can be stowed away neatly or wheeled out easily when needed. Clients want carefully considered pieces with an unexpected edge, but ones that will last forever. The fad for fast fashion in interiors is over."

There are 13 pieces in Howes' inaugural Love at Dusk series (chair, £7,100; console, £9,000; both pictured top). "Everything is about fine materials and a timeless aura,"

From near right: Pierre Yovanovitch's design for a chalet in Andermatt, Switzerland, features his Donut bench, \$45,000. Yovanovitch's ceramic and glass Marsha floor lamp, and ceramic and glass James floor lamp, both price on request





From far left: Katharine Pooley marble and bronze tables from the Chatsworth collection, £2,500. An elegant Katharine Pooley-designed interior for an apartment in London's St James's Street

she says. "It includes chairs and sofas, which is all about getting the proportions right; we'll be launching new designs next spring based on pieces I needed for my new house. This time there will be a lot of soft timbers."

Howes' uncompromising approach is shared by many of the creatives who have ventured into furniture design, including British interior designer Katharine Pooley, who launched the Chatsworth collection last autumn. "I discovered there were what I call shadow gaps – the hard-to-find pieces, such as the right coffee table," she

says. "So when [bespoke furniture maker] Adam Williams asked me to work on a range with him, I decided to create it myself, using luxurious materials. As I've always loved the art deco period, that became the major influence."

Like Howes, Pooley found suitable console tables difficult to source and in response envisaged two versions, both in bronze with marble tops. One has a curving V-shaped base (£12,000) and the other stands on a solid column (£8,000). The art of serving tea and coffee is central to the lives of her Middle Eastern clients, so she's

also produced a small drinks table (£1,100) that holds a single teacup. Add to this a grey wood- and marble-framed mirror (£2,950), a circular table (£1,800) and a nest of two circular side tables (£2,500, pictured top left), all in marble and bronze, and you have the start of a collection that Pooley finds customers are increasingly demanding.

What designer Rose Uniacke's clients want instead is a touch of the refined simplicity she is synonymous with – she was famously called upon by the Beckhams to refurbish their Holland Park villa, and her interior

From near right: Rose Uniacke's Pimlico House showroom in southwest London, where her own pieces are mixed with decorative antiques. Rose Uniacke poplar-burr cabinet, £3,300, and marble Cone lamp, £3,120 (excluding lampshade)





Clockwise from far left: David Collins Studio for Promemoria leather and bronze Bramham chair, £3,950. A David Collins Studio-designed space for The Sky Residence at the Ritz-Carlton Residences in Bangkok. David Collins Studio for Promemoria Brazilian marble, bronze and gold leaf Cadogan dining table, £20,770

concept for Jo Malone's Marylebone headquarters is much admired. Uniacke likes her interiors to be light, airy and elegant; those who love her style can now buy into it through RU Editions, a selection that is contemporary but with classical roots. She loves to combine the old with the new, which a visit to her shop (pictured on previous page) on London's Pimlico Road, where her own pieces are mixed with decorative antiques, quickly reveals. "My first design was a cashmere blanket of a quality and with the detailing I wanted but couldn't find anywhere else. I followed that with a floating cabinet created for a specific project. I didn't want a typical classical commode but something with storage and a contemporary feel – it had to be made of wood and have a simplicity about it," she says. "Many of the other pieces were designed for my own home. For example, I needed a wall light with a simple, classical aesthetic [there is now an entire series, from £225] and I've produced chairs and sofas [chairs from £3,960, sofas from £8,400] using traditional techniques but with deep seating, comfortable for watching TV."

Her range is now enormous – everything from lighting (there are some beautiful glass lanterns, from £2,160) to dining tables (a lovely oval one in oak is £3,960) and coffee tables (from £2,370). She is particularly fond of her bronze stool (£3,750) as "it captures a moment in time" and is versatile enough to be used as a seat ("my son sits on it") or as a small table. But what she's most proud of, she says, is that "nothing is launched unless I love it".

The same is true of Pierre Yovanovitch, who has starry clientele for whom he designs very glamorous interiors – including Kering founder François Pinault's office and a 17th-century Provençal château. Yovanovitch began his career in menswear at Pierre Cardin, but today is known for blending contemporary art, architectural elements, vintage furniture (especially Scandinavian and American) and now his own custom-made pieces, which can be bought through R & Company in New York. Yovanovitch sees his own work as representing a dialogue between 20th- and 21st-century design, but he also brings other periods into the mélange. "I have a passion for contemporary works, but feel that paying homage to historical design disciplines is an act of respect," he says. Each piece in his extensive range is stamped with his own "PY" emblem and much of it is made in collaboration with skilled artisans – specialists in ceramics, glassblowing, weaving and metalwork. His



ceramic and glass lights (pictured on third page) start at around \$8,500, and the furniture collection includes the circular Donut bench (\$45,000, pictured on third page in a Yovanovitch-designed Swiss chalet), juxtaposing textural upholstery with a blackened-oak base. The designer's commitment to specialist crafts is particularly evident in his latest design – the characterful Monsieur and Madame Oops chairs (\$9,000 each) – which were realised in collaboration with the Parisian embroidery house Lesage and feature hand embroidery using threads of cotton and wool, metal wire, chenille and metal beads.

An equally intriguing collaboration was responsible for the creation of David Collins Studio's London collection of furniture. As the story goes, it came about when Romeo Sozzi, owner of Italian furniture brand Promemoria, sat on a chair with a T-shaped back at London's Wolseley restaurant and thought it such a perfect example of a dining chair that he asked who had designed it. When he discovered it was the David Collins Studio, well-known for having overseen the creation of Mayfair's Nobu, the Blue Bar at The Berkeley and a host of other discreetly glossy interiors, he decided to commission the studio to design a collection of furniture for him. The resulting ensemble is sleekly sophisticated, echoing the late David Collins' special flair for urbane glamour. There is, of course, a T-shaped

chair – the Bramham (£3,950, pictured top left), which subtly references the ancient Greek Klismos chair with its curved back and splayed legs. There are some 20 pieces in all, ranging from a sofa (from £15,220), a love seat (from £18,380), a dining table (£20,770, pictured above) in Brazilian marble, lighting and much, much more. There is nothing ostentatious or showy about the designs – their charm resides in their perfect proportions and curated materials: a mix of leather, velvet and bronze.

What these collections all do brilliantly is to offer their designers' unique aesthetic to those who want an element of the look without going in for a total overhaul. Many cleverly solve little design problems – the perfectly proportioned table or a sofa for a large room, or a versatile angled light for a dark corner – and since most are produced in limited editions, they offer an element of individuality and uniqueness not easily found on the high street. ♦

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

André Fu, afso.net and see Lane Crawford. **David Collins Studio**, davidcollins.studio. **Katharine Pooley**, katharinepooley.com. **Lane Crawford**, lanecrawford.com. **Pierre Yovanovitch**, pierre-yovanovitch.com and see R & Company. **Promemoria**, promemoria.com. **R & Company**, r-and-company.com. **Rose Uniacke**, roseuniacke.com. **Taylor Howes**, taylorhowes.co.uk.