
7-11 SEPT. 2023

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MULLER VAN
SEVEREN
DESIGNER(S)
OF
THE YEAR

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Fien Muller and Hannes Van Severen
Studio Muller Van Severen

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Chair and cabinet, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen

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Muller Van Severen, designer(s) of the year

Maison&Objet distinguishes Muller Van Severen as “Designer(s) of the Year” 2023. The Belgian couple, a significant signature in international design and furniture, will be awarded the prestigious prize at the upcoming edition of the show, September 7-11.

On this occasion, Muller Van Severen will offer an unprecedented “cocoon exhibition”, deploying an intimate and joyful panorama of more than a decade of creation.

Fien Muller and Hannes Van Severen began their collaboration from photography and sculpture backgrounds in 2011. Nourished by the visual and plastic arts, the fusional Belgian duo based in Ghent, dubbed “Muller Van Severen”, parted ways from their two original fields to better invest in the territory of design with the well-crafted idea of shaking up the codes and uses of interior furniture.

Their unique stylistic language, based on the juxtaposition of materials and colours in an astonishing formal purity, quickly placed them among the important figures of contemporary design. Their avant-garde pieces, anticipating trends as much as societal changes and market transformations, enrich their collection and delight the many brands they forge innovative collaborations with.

For Maison&Objet, rather than a simple chronological frieze retracing nearly twelve years of creation, Muller Van Severen curates an actual exhibition full of colour to create a dialogue between the different eras of their already impressive career. Each project is the place of a unique sensory experience, a continuously renewed and singular exploration.

The exhibition will reflect their creative territory, combining pieces from their iconic “Future Primitive”, “Wire”, or “ALLTUBES” series. It will also be an opportunity to present new productions and commissions, including a series of vases for Bitossi, a luxurious rug imagined for the furnishing textile leader Kvadrat, or a floor lamp developed for Valerie Objects.



“Installation S”, FUTURE PRIMITIVE series
Muller Van Severen



Cabinet, collection WIRE C #1
Muller Van Severen



Cabinet, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen



Cabinet, collection WIRE C #1
Muller Van Severen

An intimate walk

As much as they work in perfect symbiosis – with each other, their environment, the materials or their collaborators – it is also with the same voice that Fien Muller and Hannes Van Severen express themselves to tell their story with Maison&Objet and reveal what they have in store for this upcoming edition.

“We have participated in Maison&Objet on several occasions in the past with certain brands we work for. Presenting our own objects this year will therefore be a first. The Paris show is a well-known and very anticipated event. We are very proud to be entirely associated with it this year, and even more so being appointed Designer(s) of the Year!” says Fien Muller.

“Most players in the design world are familiar with our work, but in reality, very few get to interact with our pieces. The exhibition we envision for the fair will be the opportunity to create this encounter and present our objects' large family to all,” continues Hannes Van Severen.

Thought of as an intimate walk through their creative landscape, the exhibition will bring together a selection of iconic works from their catalogue as so many memories of travels and fruitful encounters:

“Following our retrospective last year at the Design Museum in Ghent, Maison&Objet allows us here to invent a new way of presenting our work. We will bring pieces developed for different brands, placed alongside some of our founding works,” the couple reveals.



Cabinets, collection WIRE C #2
Muller Van Severen

A cocoon-like exhibition

Based in Evergem, in what they describe as a “No man’s land” on the outskirts of Ghent, Fien Muller and Hannes Van Severen live and work in the form of serene insularity. Their little archipelago comprises a sizeable 19th-century brick house, majestically erected in a park planted with hundred-year-old trees, and an adjoining studio.

For the 2017 edition of Design Miami Basel, the couple already invited visitors to glimpse the intimacy of their home by offering a replica of their living room for a stand designed with Airbnb. For Maison&Objet this year, it is the doors of their whole universe the designers are keen to open to the visitors.

“We wanted to recreate a landscape representing the main elements of our daily life: our house, workshop and garden. Three islands will recompose, in the middle of the fair, our little oasis in the Evergem desert,” explains Fien Muller.

The three components of this decor are reassembled in the same room at the heart of Maison&Objet, connected by paths allowing a triangular wandering in the couple’s cocoon and through their imagination.

A scenography that imprints on the plastic arts and architecture as much as it enables an excellent exercise in creative psychology:

“The exhibition will act as a global and immersive installation where our pieces will exist as so many small autonomous architectural entities. It will be a mirror of our interior but also our mind,” says Hannes Van Severen.



Seats, cabinets and benches, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen

A land of colours

Approaching the exhibition, the visitor's eye will first be guided by the delicate, fluid lines of some sketches from Muller Van Severen's iconic pieces. Like the pages of a black and white sketchbook reproduced on the tall exterior picture rails, these preparatory drawings guide us to one of the three entrances to the "Land of Muller Van Severen".

"We see design as a territory with marked boundaries. The arts field can seem scary as it is vast and rich in possibilities. It is within limits imposed by the object and its need to respond to a function that our creativity is best expressed," says Hannes.

Fien continues: *"The walls erected around the exhibition will symbolise this border: inside, our objects can coexist as part of the same world, in the same space, suspended in time."*

Once crossed, the walls reveal a colourful territory. These bright blues, reds, greens, and yellows are characteristic of the designers' work, inspired by the joyful neoplasticism of the De Stijl movement.

This palette dresses the picture rails and the podiums presenting creations. A festive chromatic explosion and an invitation to "Enjoy!", echoing the theme of this edition of Maison&Objet.



The Muller Van Severen studio



Seats and cabinet, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen



"Strangled rack", FUTURE PRIMITIVE series
Muller Van Severen

A breath of joy

The couple thus invites us to breathe, taking a break from the bustling fair to experience a playful and joyful design. The notion of pleasure is at the basis of Muller Van Severen's creative practice:

"We have a primitive relationship with objects. Our approach, resolutely playful, lies between simplistic lines and bright colours. The contrast between the will to control the form and to impose minimalist conditions while letting the colours express themselves freely is a great source of amusement," explains Fien.

"This binary conjunction, this tension between two forces, two sorts of masculine and feminine entities, expresses how our design interacts with people, with the present and with life," adds Hannes.

This principle is reflected in the "Color Cabinet" series developed for the Danish brand HAY, with which Muller Van Severen has collaborated since 2021.

Made of organically dyed Valchromat in different variants, these wall and floor cabinets highlight this contradiction between a sleek yet minimalist design with the colours' brilliance and originality.

Exclusively for Maison&Objet, Muller Van Severen will present new productions developed for HAY, enriching an already prolific and highly acclaimed collaboration.



The "Duo seat+ lamp" encourages people to sit very close to each other without seeing each other.
Muller Van Severen

Formal and timeless purity

Since establishing their studio in 2011, Muller Van Severen has offered a design that one would believe is divinatorial as it predicts the transformations of our modes of consumption and interaction with the furniture world. If the recent periods of lockdowns have forced us into retrenchment in our interiors, encouraging us to reassess our relationship with objects, Muller Van Severen questioned as early as 2012, with the "Future Primitive" collection, the idea of radical minimalism, combining simplicity, functionality and collectible design.

The pieces of this founding series, now considered a benchmark in the contemporary furniture landscape, already expressed this desire for a virtuous design that focuses on the essentials. For Maison&Objet, the couple will present shelves of different heights and configurations, incorporating deckchairs or worktops into their frames, with floor or hanging lamps. Assemblies of simplistic forms and rudimentary materials combining different essential functions, these timeless furniture sculptures act as many

small autonomous and survivalist architectures that resonate strongly with market changes and consumer desires.

"When we thought of these shapes and objects in 2012, we were already projecting ourselves into a future where interior spaces would shrink," Fien explains.

"The question at the starting point for this collection was: how will we live in the future? It seemed obvious people would inhabit smaller spaces, so the desire to create furniture combining several uses in one piece was obvious."

The "Wire" series is also symptomatic of this need to return to a form of naive and spontaneous purity. The wall cabinets of the collection, in stainless steel, sometimes enhanced with powder-coated colours, impress with their simplicity and lightness. The gaze pierces through the structure, which does not lose its architectural presence.

Transparency then makes the object present and absent simultaneously: it does not impose itself on the eye but continues to inhabit the space with all its sculptural dimensions. *"While the approach may seem simplistic, the details are complex. These see-through pieces make it possible to grasp the architecture of the furniture while marrying the objects. They offer a symbiosis between their function and environment,"* adds Fien.

The designer duo extended this quest for minimalistic transparency with curved metal mesh lounge chairs. The result of a furniture commission for one of the "Solo Houses" located in Spain conceived by the Belgian architect's office, OFFICE KGDVS, these seats in stainless steel net presented on the booth will act as an invitation to rest, seemingly floating in the air.



Green seat, collection WIRE S #1
Muller Van Severen



Cabinets and bench, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen

An unconditional love of materials

The relationship with materials is essential in Muller Van Severen's creative process. Those used for "Future Primitive" are simple, solid, and durable: natural leather and untreated tubular steel to preserve their light reflection properties. For this series, as for all the others, in addition to the primary material, the measurements are dictated by the existing. This formal primitivism of the material, coupled with functionalism designed to stand the test of time, is a founding principle of Muller Van Severen's approach, whose objects survive fashions.

Comprising a chair, a bench and various cabinets, the "ALLTUBES" collection consists of the repetition of round aluminium tubes. The show will present some of these tubular constructions, which systematise another recurring creative principle of Muller Van Severen: starting from a single material to exploit its full potential. In the case of "ALLTUBES" cabinets, the repetitive rhythm of the pipes placed next to each other, like so many undulations, makes us forget the austerity of aluminium and reconciles us with this material inherited from the industrial world, suffering from a reputation for coldness and harshness.

Here again, the notion of joy dictates the gesture of the designers who operate, like alchemists, a transmutation of matter and emotions:

"We are creators but above all 'manufacturers'. Our need to make, grasp, act and transform materials gives us the most pleasure. It's a matter of sensation: interacting with matter awakens our senses and gives us ultimate joy. It is this pleasure of making that we wish to convey to the visitors," they conclude together.



"Crossed double seat", FUTURE PRIMITIVE series
Muller Van Severen



Cabinet, collection ALLTUBES
Muller Van Severen

About Maison&Objet

Since 1995, Maison&Objet (SAFI Organization, a subsidiary of Ateliers d'Art de France and RX France) has been animating and federating the international community of decoration, design, and art of living. Its trademark? The ability to provoke fertile international encounters, to accelerate the visibility of the brands that join its shows or its digital platform, but also a singular instinct to promote the trends that will make the heart of the decoration planet beat. Maison&Objet's mission is to reveal talents, offer opportunities for online and offline exchanges and inspiration, and facilitate the development of companies.

With two annual trade shows for professionals and Paris Design Week, which takes place in September, Maison&Objet is an essential industry barometer. Online and year-round since 2016, MOM (Maison&Objet and More) allows buyers and brands to continue their exchanges, launch new collections, or make contacts beyond physical meetings. In 2023, Maison&Objet will deploy new digital services and MOM becomes a marketplace.

To take things further, Maison&Objet Academy now offers professionals an exclusive monthly web channel dedicated to training and market analysis.

On social networks, discoveries continue on a daily basis for a community of nearly one million active participants on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Xing, WeChat and now TikTok.

As the spearhead of Paris Capitale de la Création, Maison&Objet is a catalyst for positioning Paris as one of the world's leading design centres.



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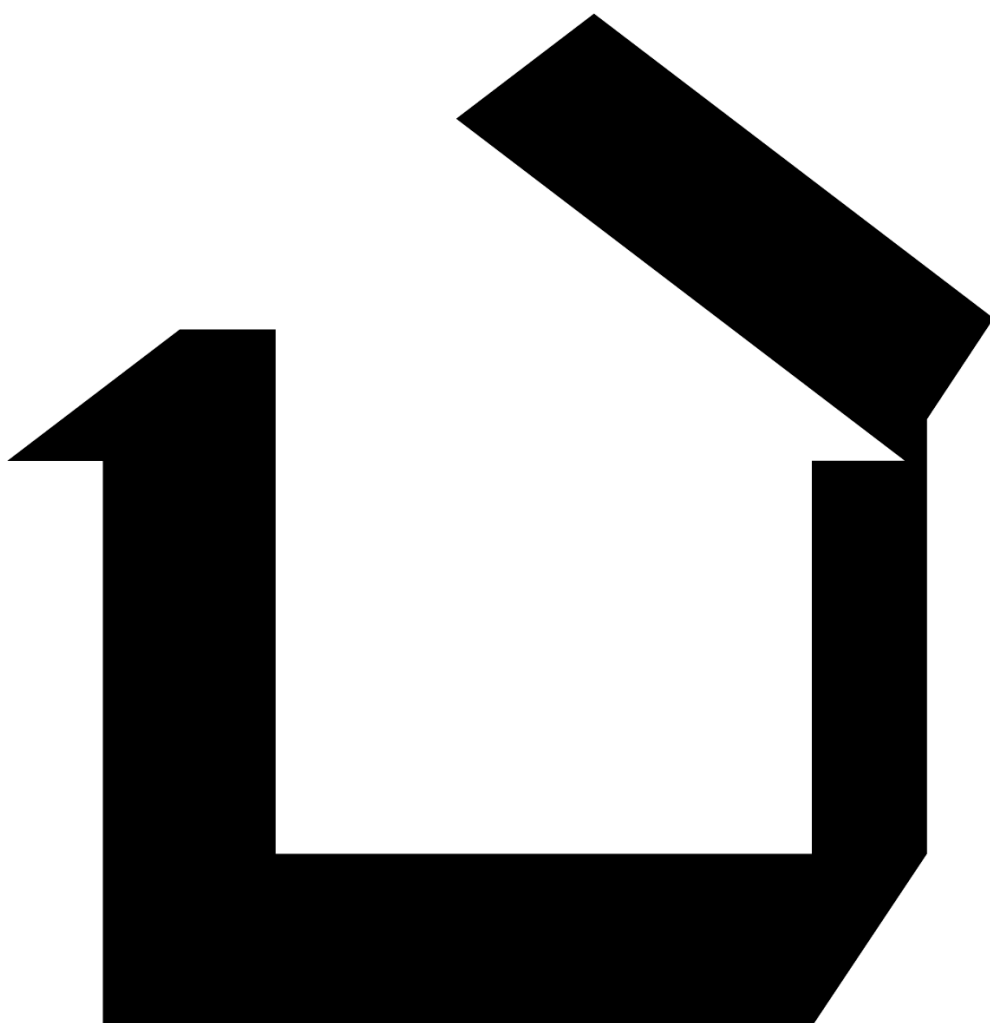
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