

< Wednesday, September 24, 2014 >



Martino Gamper's Stuff

The Many Wonders of the Italian Designer's Studio

Design takes on many forms in the studio of Martino Gamper. Behind a non-descript door on a residential block in east London, well-worn tools and packets of pasta, fanciful mirrors and ear defenders, knives of varying sharpness and countless chairs all live happily side by side in a studio space he shares with his wife, the artist Francis Upritchard. Photographer Alice Fischer took this series of triptychs that blur the line between design objects and tools of the trade. Celebrated for his work that spans from exhibition design to commercial furnishings, Gamper is perhaps best known for his *100 Chairs in 100 Days* project, and this past spring he curated *Design is a State of Mind* at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, an exhibition that challenged preconceptions about what design means by juxtaposing the likes of Charlotte Perriand and IKEA. In the studio, Gamper's latest collaboration—a series of magnificent, rough-hewn crystal glasses for J. Hill Standard—perfectly captures the designer's enduring interest in this question of high and low, as they sit in near proximity to a charming plastic shark. "I'm more of a hoarder than a collector really," says Gamper, "I used to be much worse, but I still can't really help myself. I bring back interesting elements that I might, someday use in my work, or draw inspiration from; things that create a spark." Here, some of the stuff in Gamper's studio, and the story behind it.

The Pasta:

The pasta is a brand called Monograno Felicetti, it comes from the Dolomites, my home region. A whole pallet of the stuff arrived with a truck full the of cross-laminated timber panels being used to build the new floors of my studio building. All sorts of dishes are cooked in the studio but most include the addition of root ginger. 'Ginger pasta' with a sauce made from tomato and grated ginger is the studio's specialty.

The Shark

This belongs to my wife, Francis. She likes dinosaurs and prehistoric animals.

The Crystal:

These are part of the collection I did for J. Hill Standard, a brand that is really trying to save the crystal craft in Ireland. I went over there and did some glass-cutting, to understand what was actually possible. I ended up taking material away from my designs, which is something that is quite common in my work – removal of material. It was an exciting change, working in crystal.

The Hoses:

They belong to the Festool dust extractors (basically big vacuums) used to extract the dust generated from cutting wood on table saws, circular saws: I have a lot of saws!

The Chair:

The chair is called Vigna and was designed for Magis in 2010. The chair has a vine-inspired detail twisting around the frame.

The Note:

Franny is the artist Francis Uprichard, my wife, whom I share the studio with. The plants are fine, thank you.

The Mirror:

The mirror was part of a vanity table I made in 2007. Yes it is a saw handle.

Kitchen Knives:

They are a mix of Japanese cooking knives, knives for scoring chestnuts, a knife for working lead for stain glass windows.

Ear Defenders:

The ear defenders are used in the workshop only. Some of them have radios inbuilt so you can listen to music while using noisy machinery. We play music in the studio but not all the time – often we listen to BBC radio programs on catch up.

The Chicken Skin:

This is a chicken foot that Gemma, who works in the studio, brought back from a recent trip to Iceland. I liked the ambiguousness of this skin. It's hard to determine what animal it comes from: it looks more like a lizard skin.

The Clamps:

The clamps are used to clamp parts in place as they are gluing or to hold items in place. Why are they organized so neatly? If you have order, you can create chaos.