

MILAN DESIGN WEEK

HOMAGE

A reimagined rocking chair

David Raffoul and Nicolas Moussallem's Loulou rocking chair was originally presented in 2014 as part of "Loulou/Hoda," an exhibition in the designers' native Beirut, Lebanon. The show was named after their respective grandmothers and featured pieces that, Mr. Raffoul noted, "would be found in any Lebanese grandmother's home," albeit reimagined for their generation. Meaning the rocking chair, Mr. Moussallem said, was "lower and a bit more loungey than a traditional rocking chair."

"It holds your back in a relaxed position," he continued, "you're not sitting straight up."

The founders of david/nicolas, who have a second studio in Milan, initially offered the upholstered rocker in an edition of 12. Two years ago, Mr. Raffoul posted a picture on Instagram of the chair in their Beirut office. The post caught the attention of Silvia Gallotti, the chief executive of the furniture company Gallotti & Radice, with whom they had previously collaborated.

The rocker, she said, "felt like more than just a piece of furniture — it had a strong personality and a unique presence that resonated with me instantly." It is being introduced at



The Loulou rocking chair, from 2014, is being reintroduced at Salone del Mobile.

Salone del Mobile under the assumption that it will resonate with others, too.

"Ten years ago our reach was very small," Mr. Moussallem said. "I'm very curious to see how the public

will react to it now."

The Loulou rocking chair is on view Tuesday through Sunday at Salone del Mobile, Pavilion 9, stands E11/F10; gallottiradice.it. RIMA SUQI

SPACES

Creating 'quiet witnesses'

"I don't know if you've ever had that feeling when you walk into a really old home, and you just sort of feel a soul in the space," said Whitney Krieger, an interior and product designer based in New York City and Florence, Italy. "Or if you go vintage shopping and you touch things, and you can just tell they've lived a thousand lives."

Ms. Krieger was explaining why she named her two-year-old design studio Soft Witness. In this case, "soft" means hushed, and "witness" means that the objects surrounding us in our homes aren't just sitting there but have some kind of animating force of their own.

"So everything we create in a space are quiet witnesses to our lives," she said.

As with many people, the Covid pandemic shook Ms. Krieger out of one of those lives and deposited her into another. Formerly a senior designer at the New York City interiors company AvroKO, she decided to return to school to study product design in Italy and then to open a business in that epicenter of high-end furniture making.

This week at the Acciaia fair, she is exhibiting a mix of production goods and prototypes, including the Cono chair covered in baby alpaca mohair ("soft" as in fuzzy), which was inspired by a head of a romanesc cauliflower.

Cone, which Ms. Krieger designed a few years ago while still in graduate school (and then parked the first prototype in her living room), origi-



The Cono chair from Soft Witness was inspired by a head of romanesc cauliflower.

nally evoked a kind of slogan in her mind: "Look spiky, sit soft." The idea was to defeat the beholder's expectations. "When you sit in it, it's almost like a little massage," she said.

Soft Witness products can be seen Monday through Sunday at the Acciaia exhibition at the Villa Borsani, 148 Via Umberto I, Varese, Italy; softwitness.com. JULIE LASKY

METALWORK

Inspired home furnishings

Furrowed and pebbly beach sand, the rotating torsos of modern dancers, flame reflections shimmering in polished metal — these are some phenomena that the designer and sculptor Gregory Beson observes meditatively and incorporates into his inventory. His latest furniture in this vein for the metalwork company Mingardo will debut at Milan Design Week.

Brass candlesticks (named Eva, to evoke evening) have looped handles that foster portability and hark back to a time when people carried candles in holders to their bedside at night. Coffee tables (named William, in homage to the choreographer William Forsythe's geometric experiments) have bronze polygonal tops with walnut slab legs peering through and recalling carpenters' tenon joints.

"It was a way to tip the cap to woodworking techniques," Mr. Beson said during an interview at his Brooklyn studio, which overlooks the Newtown Creek's rocky shoreline and is lined in raw lumber.

Mr. Beson's one-armed Mingardo armchairs (named Pina, after the choreographer Pina Bausch) have bronze petals that encourage swiv-



The designer Gregory Beson's William table for the metalwork company Mingardo.

eling around the walnut slab seats. He has enjoyed watching people pivoting in the Pina prototype, leaning from side to side, "finding their way in it," he said. Mingardo galvanizes the bronze, resulting in subtle bubbling that seems to shift when

viewed from different angles. "It's almost like the ocean lapping on it," Mr. Beson said.

The collection will be shown Monday through Sunday at Mingardo's new gallery at 42 Corso di Porta Nuova; mingardo.com. EVE M. KAHN

TAPESTRY

A blanket for your wild side

Liucija Kostiva's Secret Garden blanket does indeed contain a secret. At a glance, it seems like a lovely cotton jacquard throw, with a pattern inspired by Persian carpet motifs and composed of various geometric shapes meant to evoke the topiaries of European gardens.

The secret is cleverly hidden behind the larger shapes — but users will have to disfigure the blanket in order to experience it as intended. Simply put: They will have to use scissors to cut a vertical line through the center of each topiary to reveal the "secret animal" hidden beneath, which will be surrounded by a fringe after the surgery. The creatures include chickens, roosters, snakes, pigs, foxes, crows and rabbits; instructions on how to customize the blanket are included in the packaging.

According to Ms. Kostiva, a textile designer who currently lives in Moli-alnaitis, a village in Lithuania, gardens play a crucial role in Persian carpets. They are a "symbol of a place where you can come to reconnect with yourself," she said.

Her seemingly complicated, multi-layered design is woven in one pass through a loom. It took her about 10 months to create the program and weaving technique, as well as to develop the technology to ensure that the severing of the yarns wouldn't leave holes or messy places. (The blanket is machine washable and, Ms. Kostiva said, the yarns will not fall off or stretch.)

She expressed a hope that buyers wouldn't overthink cutting it up. "You shouldn't take it seriously. It's reconnecting with the wild side of your-



Scissor snips reveal animal shapes hidden within the Secret Garden blanket.

self," she said. "But yes, if you don't like snakes, it could be a problem." The Secret Garden blanket will be displayed Monday through Sunday

at the "Tactile Baltics" exhibition at the Palazzo Litta, 24 Corso Magenta; kostiva.com, tactilebaltics.com. RIMA SUQI

INSPIRED

Handcrafted, with personality

These home furnishings come with their own personalities, free of charge. The designer Lara Bohinc has partnered with Uniqa, an Istanbul-based leather design brand, to create her five-piece Betsy collection — with a round coffee table, a side table, a console, a bench and a standing mirror.

Each object is handcrafted by layering small panels of leather, piece by piece, onto wooden frames to create a featherlike effect. Ms. Bohinc was inspired by flora and fauna, birds not exempted, and she wanted to translate these ideas into hide. Tactility is a prominent feature in the collection; the pieces almost beg to be touched. "Same as you want to touch animals," Ms. Bohinc said. "Whenever you see a cute animal, you want to stroke it, you want to touch it, and this one's not going to run away, so you can play with it."

The collection gets its name from the dancing Muppet Betsy Bird, who, Ms. Bohinc recalled, always made her laugh when she was growing up. "When items become something that almost seems alive, something



A piece from the Betsy collection by Lara Bohinc, who partnered with Uniqa.

that you want to play with, it's got its own personality," she said, adding, "I think that's quite important to me." The collection is on view Monday

through Sunday at Acciaia, Villa Bagatti Valsecchi, 48 Via Vittorio Emanuele II; acciaia.vxyz. MORGAN MARGIT

TECHNIQUES

Family portraits in glass

Kiki Goti alluded to women in her own family when she designed her Graces vase collection, being shown at the Acciaia fair during Milan Design Week.

"The Muses embrace the arts more straightforwardly," said the architect and designer, who was born in Thessaloniki, Greece, and lives and works in New York City. "But the Graces represent beauty, charm, and joy in a way that is fluid and ethereal, allowing for all kinds of femininity to exist within them."

That diversity can be seen in the shape and ornamentation of the objects, which are connected to the qualities of a few close relatives. The narrowest vase embodies one of Ms. Goti's aunts, a tall, career-driven businesswoman who loves fashion and jewelry. The rotund vase represents a grandmother whom Ms. Goti described as well-rounded and "empathetic but in a very loud way." And the four-legged vase with its elaborate crown pays tribute to her mother's exuberant personality.

To create the jewel-like encrustations at the tops of the vases, Ms. Goti employed rosato, a technique developed on the Venetian island of Mura-



In her Graces vase collection, Kiki Goti connected to the qualities of female relatives.

no, in which molten glass is pinched and then peppered with small bits of ruby- or amber-colored glass.

The Graces collection is part of "A Human Touch," an installation about the happy marriage of industry and artistry, which also includes the Os-

valdo furniture collection by the Office of Tangible Space, a New York architectural studio.

The exhibition is on view Monday through Sunday at the Villa Borsani, 148 Via Umberto I, Varese, Italy; kikigoti.com. YELENA MOROZ ALPERT