DAMN°

Language melts into summer

Rival or chance of Revival?

With the rise of 3D printing and robotic production a worldwide phenomenon, it is easy to regard digitalisation as an antagonistic bogeyman of handcrafts. Various materials are going through trials for their digital manufacturability. Yet, digital production has not surpassed the presence of handcrafts. Take Doppia Firma's *A Dialogue Between Design and Artisanal Excellence* exhibition. Presented by the Michelangelo Foundation for Creativity and Craftsmanship, Doppia Firma is an ongoing project by Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'arte with Living Corriere della Sera, and one in which you can see new sparks of creativity from the collaboration between designers and artisans. 'It is important to protect the know-how, the manufacturers, and the tradition. Without all these heritages, it is impossible to develop evolution,' is how Armand Louis, one of the three founders of atelier oï and participants in the project, expresses it.

'We often say that we are thinking with our hands. It is like when you are cooking: you need to taste before you cook. We do the same with materials. We need to understand with our hands, to feel the material, the structure, and what is possible to do with it. And after that, we can start to think about the context, the story, to develop a form, a product,' says Patrick Reymond, also a co-founder of atelier oï. 'When we play with our materials, they deform. With the leather we found at Louis Vuitton [atelier oï has produced a number of pieces for Louis Vuitton's Objets Nomades collection, also on show in Milan], the machine doesn't understand this moment of deformation. We often say we don't just de-

Histoire d'Eau
Atelier Oï in collaboration with Japanese glass artist
Masayuki Kajiwara for the Doppia Firma project

Hammock
atelier oï for Louis Vuitton's Objets Nomades collection
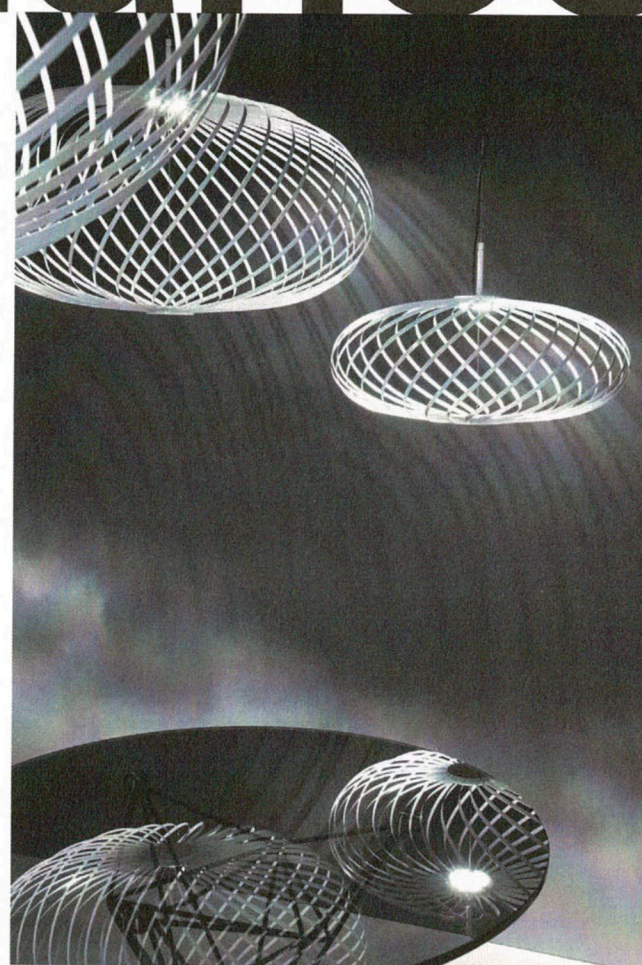

Sprig lamp
Tom Dixon

sign products, we design moments. We design the moments of the material before it breaks,' says Aurel Aebi, the third founding member of atelier oï. The importance of materiality can be seen from their latest glass collection, Histoire d'Eau, produced in collaboration with Japanese glass artist Masayuki Kajiwara for the Doppia Firma project. With the addition of resin to achieve a bi-coloured effect, Kajiwarato needed a year of training to produce a small vase – your archetypal labour of love.

British designer Tom Dixon reckons that materiality plays an important role in the continuity of handcraft. Speaking in Milan at the launch of his new restaurant concept, The Manzoni, he said, 'The interesting upcoming fields are biotech and the creation of other new materials. With digitalisation, it creates a new possibility of materiality. For instance Tony Fadell, the founder of Nest, is creating grown leather, which allows you to make 3D shapes that can be translated into a craft object very easily, but starting from a material that never even existed before. At the moment, we are using conventional materials that are being processed in a modern way. But the next step is new material processed in a modern way. And then new material processed in an old-fashioned way; that would also be interesting as well.' The combination of both handcraft and machine craft can be another option, as illustrated by Dixon's latest work, Spring lamp. The hub is digitally manufactured, but the strips of the lampshade are put on by hand. 'As things have become more synthetic and machine-made and digitalised, people crave handmade and unique objects. We live in a world where both are really important, and in fact crafts have become more cherished as everything else becomes digital. People want a human touch. They still want
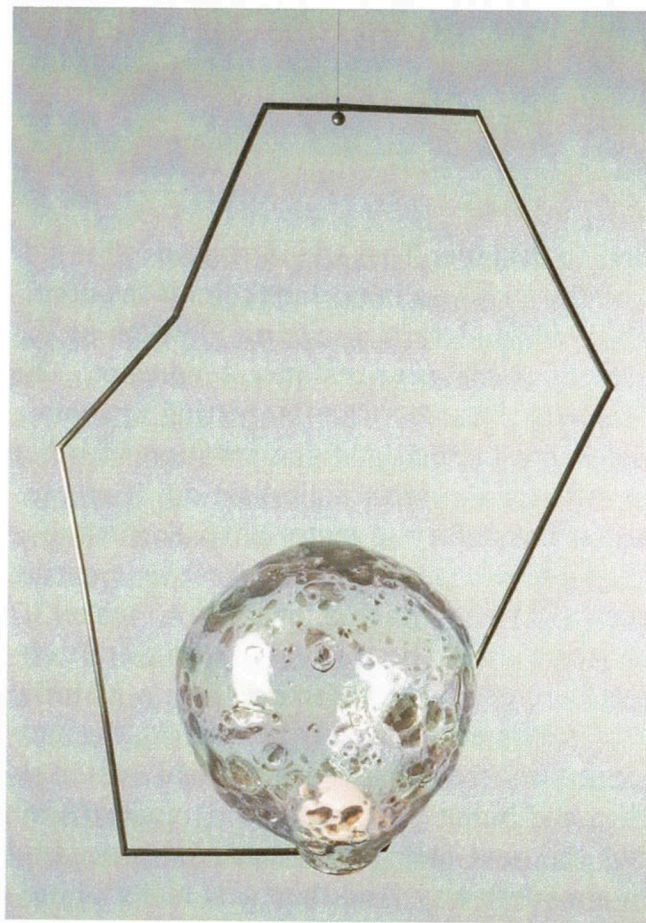
Polygone Lamp
Sophie Dries for Nilufar

Raw carpet collection
Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance

to have something that has a unique sensibility, created by humans. There can be a world where the two can live in a balance.'

The designer of the Polygone ceiling lamp, Sophie Dries, shares the same sentiments as Dixon. 'We can combine them to make something better than only computer-generated or only handcrafted. The future of design is to find a path between them. Handmade is very important, as now we live in a society that is consuming so many things and wasting a lot. Handwork still has great value for people and the objects are more important for them and so are kept longer.' Her Polygone lamp, made for Milan's Nilafur Gallery Editions, clearly reflects the value of traditional craft, adding soft mineral mica to prevent the glass from breaking during the blowing process.

Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance concurs that handcrafts can create a positive impact on the environment. Inspired by tectonic plates, his Raw carpet collection, produced in collaboration with Tai Ping and shown at its Milan showroom, explores the origins of our planet and reflects on its vital bonds with humans. 'We are going to reconnect with our close environment, so it means we have the opportunity to work with people around us.

I am now working in Portugal with different crafts and techniques. It is a human-oriented project, totally dependent on the human touch. I have to adapt my designs to accommodate the handwork. We are participating in local production and contributing to a better life, which is friendlier to the environment. On the other hand, we also need some tasks to be done by machines... When people discover new materials and techniques, they overuse them. And then people come back to something more focused on what they really needed.'

The combination of handcrafts and digital production allows British designer Bethan Laura Wood to give back to our endangered environment. Taking her latest work as an example, Lazy table (also shown at the Nilafur Gallery), hows her endeavours to be environmentally friendly using laminate offcuts. 'I really liked last year in Salone; there was a beautiful piece by Massimiliano Locatelli,

which was a 3D printed house. For me, this kind of weird placement somewhere between really digital with a real physical quality, is really interesting. I believe there is real craft in both mediums. I am more on the physical, hand-spectrum of craft, but I do interact with contemporary ways of cutting these kinds of things. The type of design I work with is very much to be physically interacted with. It's about something real for someone to touch, to sit on... That's how it is with the marquetry, lots of people are nervous to touch my marquetry. Then I say touch it, that is the point, because you can feel the different patterns and textures each laminate has... The marquetry that I do specifically uses a mix between what you get from being able to laser cut, which is a different form of cutting from traditional cutting with a blade. So I work a lot of ways with that language. I think there is a window on a particular genre of craft, that is having an interesting conversation with the digital. You can see some of that
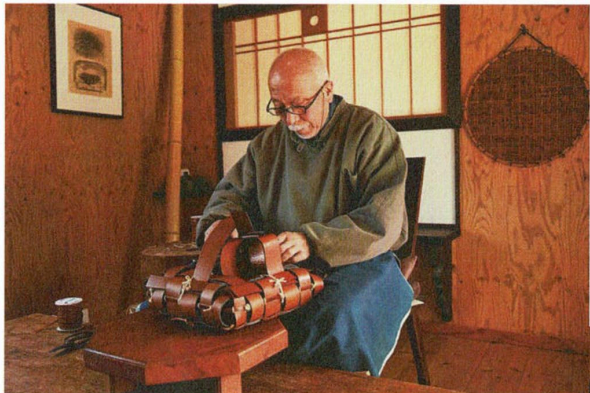

Low Lazy Table
Bethan Laura Wood
Photo © Nilufar

Jiro Yonezawa crafting kaseki
Courtesy of Loewe

Hafu Matsumoto working on Creel
Courtesy of Loewe

Ship and Dud, by Hafu Matsumoto
Courtesy of Loewe

Courtesy of Loewe

Griot, Three Days in Dakar
Gala Fernández for Moroso
Photo: Alessandro Paderni

Griot, Three Days in Dakar
Gala Fernández for Moroso
Photo: Alessandro Paderni

happening with the combination of hand and digital craft. We are just starting to see the possibilities. However, handcrafts remain the irreplaceable foundation of digital manufacturing. Gala Fernández, whose Griot Chair – produced by artisans from Dakar using African fish-netting and mask painting skills – was part of Moroso's M'Afrique Detached project, expounds on this view: '… if you are talking about Italian design, it has always been crafts and industrial production closely connected, which keep feeding off one another. Like Achille Castiglioni, he always worked with craftsmen. Now you do it with a C&C (Command and Control) process using a computer and programme, like digital printing, digital turning etc. Before it was done by hand and now with the aid of a computer, which is accelerating the process and making it super precise. It also gives the capability, for someone who doesn't have the hand skills, to produce something directly from their head to the thing. We are living in this transition period, in which there is a love story between craftsmanship and digitality.'

with Loewe's basket project [for Milan, the Spanish luxury brand, which runs an annual craft prize, invited 11 international artists and master weavers to create a leather objet d'art based on basketry]; I am pretty sure there is something like water jet-cut leather, which opens a certain type of possibilities, but there is a physicality of weaving and sensibility of weaving, adapting a form by hand. It is about understanding that medium, and then developing the skills and language to push it.'

It is an exciting time for manufacturing, with a kind of completely new industrial revolution