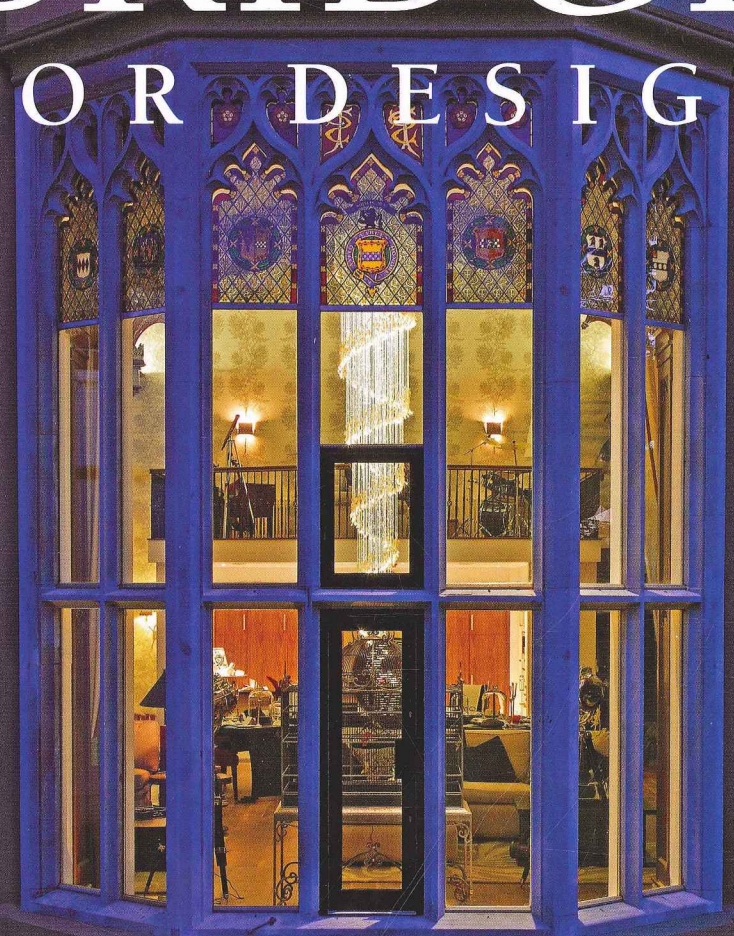


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THE NEW MEASURE OF VALUE FOR A CHANGING WORLD

by Giovanni Corrado of Mediterraneo

“THE EMERGING TREND IN DESIGN IS perhaps the most interesting for some time. For the last decade our homes have been designed for external validation. A buoyant property market and a general culture of conformist consumption had driven us to limit our choices to the lowest common denominator. Encouraged to make design choices which could be easily referenced and said as little as possible about us, we forgot the emotional connection required to turn a house into a home.

Now, with shrinking prospects of ‘flipping’ them for profit, our homes have become, once again, our haven from the brewing storms. More inward looking references are resulting in interesting and individual design. This new trend moves away from the ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions encouraged by industrial design, and asks: if we can no longer buy everything we want and replace it next year when we are bored, then how do we choose a piece which continues to be relevant to us after the euphoria of the purchase passes?

During times of stress our desire to surround ourselves with personal, relevant and beautiful things becomes more intense. Our measure of value is changing and the enduring qualities of craftsmanship and materials are gaining new momentum. Creating an heirloom piece which has the potential to stay with us for a lifetime is becoming a powerful motivator. Unique and individual pieces declare something special about us and our place in the world. Whether in found objects, artworks or commissioning bespoke pieces, we are finding voices which speak intimately of personal style.

Design, by its very nature, treads a fine line between leading and reacting to popular demand. It cannot afford to challenge like art, and yet cannot restrain its impulse to innovate.



Interestingly, the perception between art and design pieces as collectible is becoming blurred. The Gagosian Gallery's show of Marc Newson's work in 2007 was an early indicator of a new trend in design for individual pieces. This year Design Miami/Basel, with its affiliation to the pre-eminent art fair Art Basel, has seen growing public interest in designers' efforts to create pieces of merit outside of their functional context. The superbly curated web gallery 201td.com, which offers only limited edition designs, is encouraging affordable diversity for all of us. Most important, however, is our changing perception of ourselves as collectors of our personal histories. Souvenirs and mementos, once relegated to the attic, can now be dusted off and proudly displayed.

I marvel at the increasing universal boldness of our clients to let themselves be inspired by their interests, their hobbies and their passions. As design professionals we were initially surprised and always delighted to be confronted by clients who are embracing their eclectic tastes and demanding more involvement in the design process. Firms who make every piece to order know that some customisation is always involved, but increasingly, clients are asking them to stretch their design muscles and apply craftsmanship and creativity to entirely bespoke ideas.

At heart, all firms in our design world are well poised to face the changes required from this shifting trend. In essence, all of us got into the business because we loved the idea of creating something exceptional. Our challenge is now to create that exceptional experience for every customer. Some of us may be lucky enough to create a design icon, recognised by our peers and sought after as a genuine collectible; but if we can create a piece which our client feels connected to and brings true warmth to their home, such that they would never part with it, I think we will have done more than we ever hoped to.”

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