

# Gazette Drouot

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WHAT'S UP?

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# CONTENTS

**UPCOMING** ..... 6  
Belfond collection, Matarasso library...

**RESULTS** ..... 46  
Coins, furniture and drawings...

**EXHIBITIONS** ..... 54  
Feininger on the crest of the wave

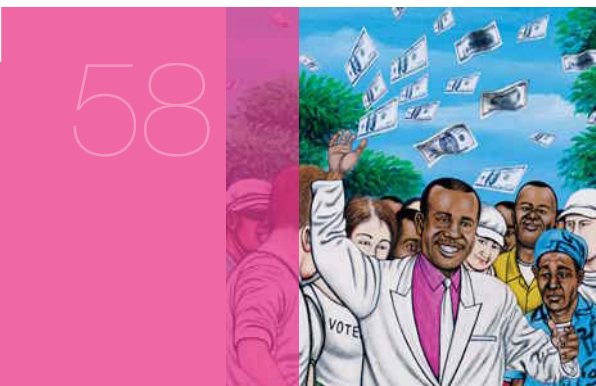
**TRENDS** ..... 58  
When Africa awakes...

**LUXURY** ..... 68  
Bruno Légeron says it with flowers...

**MEETING** ..... 72  
Michael Darling from MCA Chicago

**DESIGN** ..... 78  
Portrait of Hervé Van der Straeten

**THE IMAGINARY** INTERVIEW ..... 82  
Rendez-vous with Edward Burne-Jones



## DESIGN

**Hervé Van der Straeten** multiple inspirations

**H**ervé Van der Straeten is about to unveil the new opus in his exclusive world, which perpetuates the great French tradition of using precious materials in new forms. Throughout his collections, Hervé Van der Straeten has taken the most prestigious route, marked by strong contrasts and an easily identifiable stylistic fingerprint. The precious quality and originality of the materials he uses are combined with a formal diversity that pairs ellipses with cubes, and meticulously geometric shapes with telluric cascades of asymmetric blocks. The career of this designer, however, has never been chaotic: quite the opposite. He started out

studying painting at the Ecole des Beaux-arts in Paris. At the same time, he took an interest in jewellery. Not gold and precious gems: simply gilt brass beaten by hand. Bingo! His bracelets, cufflinks, necklaces, rings and earrings caught the eye of some of the top names in fashion, enabling him to start up his own business at the age of only 19, while his African-style, baroque, minimalist and fantastical jewellery paraded the catwalks of Thierry Mugler, Yves Saint Laurent, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Christian Lacroix. Faithful to his first love, Hervé continued to design jewellery. And it was only a short step from the world of fashion to the perfume industry. Remember the bottle for "J'adore" by Christian Dior? That's him! Shaped like an elongated raindrop, its long slender neck sported a real gold necklace, like the giraffe women of the Pa Dong tribes. We also owe him the design of the "L'Or de Torrente" bottle and the line of lipstick tubes for "Kiss Kiss" by Guerlain. A real all-rounder, he then moved into Table art and began to work with Bernardaud in 1992, notably creating "Bacchanal" – vases mingling porcelain and gilt bronze – and "Parure" table accessories. In 1998, he designed his first collection of Limoges porcelain jewellery. For the Design Miami/Basel edition from last June, he designed a series of five limited edition centre-table candleholders for the Parisian gallery Perimeter. Skilfully "deconstructivist", these combine silver-plated brass, blue anodised aluminium, patinated brass and glass. But the designer mainly focuses on furniture, mirrors and lighting, as witness the gallery especially dedicated to them



Photo Cécil Mathieu

Hervé Van der Straeten "Pastilles", lamps, 2010.

HD

Hervé Van der Straeten,  
"Particules", cupboard 2008, unique item.



Photo Cécil Mathieu

Hervé Van der Straeten, Twist candleholders, 2011, edition of 36.



which opened in the Marais quarter in Paris in 1999. The Van der Straeten style features precious materials, a love of bronze and gold and harmonious proportions as a common denominator. He then adds rare materials like obsidian and iridescent or coloured glass, and others with less flattering reputations like fibreglass, Plexiglass and aluminium. All these make play with different inspirations borrowed from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but they are readapted with skill and imagination, thus standing as creations in their own right. The next collection, made up of twenty-four new pieces, is based on the theme of the oblique. The out-of-true, the slanting, feet positioned askew and movement form the grammar of this collection. As for materials, we note the appearance of

meteorus, a schistose stone containing garnet. A table's up-ended base introduces a touch of fragility into its massive aspect; an elegant writing table with a fibreglass shell and bronze feet holds a precious writing case in parchment. Alabaster appears in the catalogue, making play on a transparency combined with bronze in two lamps and a wall light. A precious ebony jewellery casket encased in brass lattice work provides a contemporary variation on Boulle marquetry, while modern architecture, notably that of Oscar Niemeyer and Pier Luigi Nervi, provides the inspiration for an out-of-true dining room table. Meanwhile, the structure of a console is revealed by its colourful arrangement of Plexiglas plaques. Further on, we see the sharp profile of a



Photo Cécil Mathieu

zig-zag shaped lamp. The furniture items possess massive forms enlivened by the dynamic character of the objects.

### Hervé's sketchbooks

Drawing is the basis of Hervé Van der Straeten's work. His sketchbooks teem with ideas, and are as distinct and meticulous as his creations. The idea, the starting point, might come to him in a phone conversation, during which it comes to life, a little like the automatic writing style of the Surrealists, as a scribbled sketch on a scrap of paper. Later, the piece of furniture blossoms into three dimensions in the form of a prototype. In the designer's

office, drawings, notebooks, models and samples of colours and materials create a permanent work in progress. On the shelves, a book on French 18th century seating stands next to monographs on Dupré-Lafon, Fio Ponti and Gilbert Poillerat. Moreover, Hervé Van der Straeten's timeless creations harmonise particularly well with furniture and objects from the Thirties and Forties. In order to achieve his goals, this demanding designer, whose furniture features a sophistication and a precision of construction and production worthy of a watchmaker, gave himself the means to realise his ambitions by setting up his own bronze and cabinet-making workshops. Previously annexed to the gallery in the Marais, the former joined up with the latter after the acquisition of Ilex, a cabinet-making business experienced in resolving the most difficult combination problems, such as pairing stainless steel with wood. For the design process, avant-garde methods are used such as cutting by laser, water jet or electro-erosion: expertise acclaimed in the certification awarded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment: "Entreprise du patrimoine vivant" (living heritage company). "I like playing with materials and using them in an offbeat way," says Hervé Van der Straeten. "My production manager is very open to these mixes and very up-to-date with new technologies - for example, using honeycomb panels to make doors lighter." Uniting the creative section with the workshops in the same place has led to a new dynamic. "My staff can consult me straight away, and problems are sorted out more quickly. In addition, the cross-pollination between aesthetic and technical questions help to fertilise my imagination." Another key to understanding the world of an extraordinary designer.

Sylvain Alliod

From February to April, various pieces are on show at the Karsten Greve gallery, Via Maistra, 4, in Saint Moritz.

From 16 to 25 March, TEFAF Maastricht, Flore gallery: selection of iconic pieces and presentation of the Ikebana cabinet, a unique piece using ancient Chinese lacquer work provided by Nicole Brugier

Starting on 26 April: new collection presented at the Van der Straeten gallery, 11, rue Ferdinand Duval. 75004 Paris.

[www.vanderstraeten.fr](http://www.vanderstraeten.fr)

