

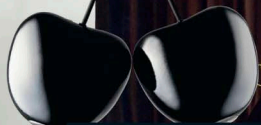
RIGHT NOW WHO

Words by HARRY ROBERTS



Nika Zupanc

Designs with a provocative feminine edge.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Designer Nika Zupanc. La Femme et la maison 'Black Cherry' lamp. Nika with pieces from the Selfdiscipline collection. Gorenje 'Mrs Dalloway' mini hotplate. 'The Doll House' installation. Moooi '5 o'clock' chair. 'Homework' table. 'Modesty' bench.

Selfdiscipline
NIKA ZUPANC



NIKA ZUPANC IS DESIGN'S FEMME FATALE, oozing noirish glamour, the Slovenian creative subverts the iconography of female domestication. With an electric hotplate resembling a compact mirror, contained in a giant polka dot doll house and titled as an homage to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, the 2009 exhibition 'I Will Buy Flowers Myself' at Milan's Superstudio Più ignited the design world with its surreal wit. This year's darkly seductive Selfdiscipline collection continues to challenge the sociological value of design, exploring man's carnal impulses.

What inspired you to become a designer? Design, especially furniture design, has always been my biggest love and challenge. It was an urge which just got stronger.

What other influences - designers, artists, musicians - have helped forge your philosophy as a designer? Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Marina Abramovic, Sophie Calle, Scarlett O'Hara, Mrs Dalloway ... and all those strong men who laid the foundations for design today. I am driven by the desire to change things and question what seems to be most obvious; to challenge taboos and push the meaning of the things that surround us. I've always had a kind of rebellious soul.

How would you describe your approach to design? I believe storytelling is a very important part of contemporary design. In my opinion the phrase 'form follows function' still holds true, only the meaning has been stretched. The emotive value of a product in mass production is something that I consider a necessary function.

The international design establishment is still seen as somewhat of a 'boys' club'.

How does your work respond to this? I see contemporary design as an exceptional tool for translating everyday objects into an intelligible commentary on society.

With my selection of topics and objects, I hopefully offer a provocative commentary on the generally accepted existential practices dominating furniture design, where the predominantly male designers produce primarily aestheticised technicism.

In the past four years you've collaborated with some big names including powerhouses Moroso and Moooi. Could you describe this experience? Meeting Marcel Wanders and Patrizia Moroso was absolutely important for my career and I feel privileged to have my first products made by such cutting-edge companies.

How do you resolve your own point of view with the aesthetic codes of the manufacturer? One of the most challenging and enjoyable aspects of my work is adapting my design ethos to the philosophy of the company, which can actually serve as both an inspiration and a limitation. I think an excellent product can only be born from the teamwork of an excellent designer and an excellent company.

The '5 o'clock' table and chair were hailed as instant classics at last year's Fuorisalone. What is the story behind these pieces? I wanted to create a chair for Moooi that could radiate the beauty and irreversibility of time. I was looking for simple technology with a strong emotional impact and a hint of rebelliousness.

Can you describe your concept for the Selfdiscipline collection, unveiled this year in Milan? My designs are here to question self-discipline or the lack of it. The collection flirts with monastic asceticism with the installation of a chandelier, desk and chair provoking thoughts on our values, and the limitations of our life choices.

For more go to nikazupanc.com. Some designs are available at Space and Hub.