

MONOCLE

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Meet the new kids on the block

INSIDE: *Designs to delight, architects to admire and projects to inspire.*

Building Better + Global Fixes

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Fifty Design Awards

Instructions:

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Benchmark: Our annual pick of the best in buildings, brands and products.

STEP 2

Read up: People we admire on the books they adore.

STEP 3

Take action: Meet the city-shapers at Mipim – the property world's premier fair.

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 SGD \$19.90 (est)
 FIN €12
 BENELUX €12
 CAD \$20.00 (est)
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 DE/AT €12
 CHF 14





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TOP DINING CHAIR
Villetta by De Padova
 Italy

Too often, dining chairs prioritise looks over comfort. The Villetta chair sacrifices neither, instead balancing both of these crucial elements. The charcoal-coloured frame is sourced from solid aniline-dyed ash formed into sleek legs and armrests, plus a generous seat, making for an excellent place from which to relish long meals. And while the form might seem simple, it has been in development since 2016, when the Italian furniture powerhouse De Padova began collaborating with its Milan-based designer, Keiji Takeuchi. That the project has taken eight years is a testament to the brand's commitment to unhurried processes that uphold quality above all else. — HPH
depadova.com; keijitakeuchi.com



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TOP GAME
Uno × Kartell
 USA

Design collaborations don't get much more playful than this: the popular US card game Uno has united with Italian furniture company Kartell to create a design-inspired deck. The cards feature images of Kartell's most recognisable designs, including the Bookworm shelf by British-Israeli industrial designer Ron Arad and the Louis Ghost chairs and gnome-shaped Attila side table by French designer Philippe Starck. With its clean graphics, simple sans-serif typeface and subdued pastel tones, the deck is a creative reimagining of the iconic game. Also on the cards though? Beyond the deck, Kartell is releasing a version of its Componibili plastic storage unit – created by Italian modern designer Anna Castelli Ferrieri – with four tiers that echo the four categories of the Uno cards. — GCH
kartell.com; creations.mattel.com



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BEST STORAGE SOLUTION
Tylko
 Poland

Launched by Benjamin Kuna and Jacek Majewski in 2015, Warsaw-based furniture brand Tylko creates custom-built shelves and wardrobes. “We wanted to do things differently from the outset,” says Majewski. “We identified the main sticking point that many people have with furniture: everyone’s home is built differently.” Expanding from the initial idea of creating customised products, Tylko has set up an online system that allows customers to construct their shelving and storage units digitally, picking out colours and dimensions that suit their home. “This allows people to use the products for a long time,” says Majewski. “We have been around for 10 years now and people aren’t throwing the shelves away.” He credits Tylko’s longevity to its recognition of the realities of modern lifestyles. “People are very mobile,” says Kuna. “We have designed the furniture so that it can be disassembled when they are moving house and reassembled multiple times over.” That trait underscores the appeal of Tylko and its refreshing offering of an antidote to the flat-packed furniture industry. — JLA
tylko.com



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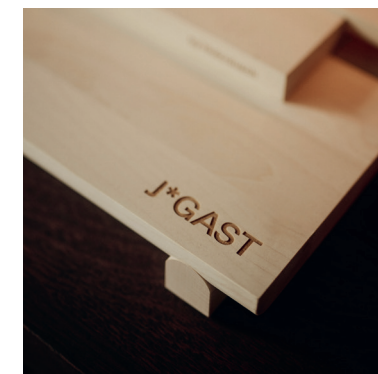
WORKSHOP OF CHOICE
La Metropolitana
 Mexico

“When we started La Metropolitana, we found that we didn’t have a strong woodworking tradition in Mexico,” says Rodrigo Escobedo, who established the Mexico City-based studio and workshop in 2010 with Alejandro Gutiérrez and Mauricio Guerrero. “We decided to fill that gap.” The company is known for wooden pieces and bespoke timber projects. Its off-the-shelf chairs can be found around the world, while restaurateurs and retailers from Copenhagen to Chicago are commissioning bespoke pieces. This international presence allows the trio to focus on growing in a more socially responsible way. “The studio and factory has become what we call *fabrica escuela*,” says Escobedo. “It’s like a factory school, where we teach people how to produce using our methods and technology.” The studio is also integrating more women into its work processes in a business that is historically male-dominated – about 30 per cent of its workforce is now female. It’s a company that takes a holistic approach to trying to be better – one that other workshops would be wise to follow. — MHO
lametropolitana.com

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BEST IN THE KITCHEN
J*Gast
 Germany

Tobias Petri and Sven Petzold, founders of interior design firm Holzrausch, had long dreamt about better built-in kitchens. When they realised three of their friends from product design and carpentry backgrounds shared the same opinion, they established J*Gast. “The kitchen market is a bit old-school,” says Petri. “You can change worktops and panels but there’s nothing new in the construction.” Working from J*Gast’s Munich showroom, the nimble team is now upending the way they are built. Traditional built-in kitchens are made with morbidly named “carcasses”, cabinets installed box by box, often with cheap MDF crammed inside. To counter this, J*Gast has patented a lightweight wooden frame that’s fitted to the back wall, with the sides and shelves simply slotted in. It’s an approach that reduces material usage and makes the operation more economical and sustainable. The kitchens look the part too. Designer Mike Meiré, hired as art director, created the brand identity and selected the colours and materials. Eschewing the standard faux finishes, the worktops come in solid marble, timber or stainless steel. — SRO
jgast.com



PHOTOGRAPHER: Lara Freiburger, Ana Hop