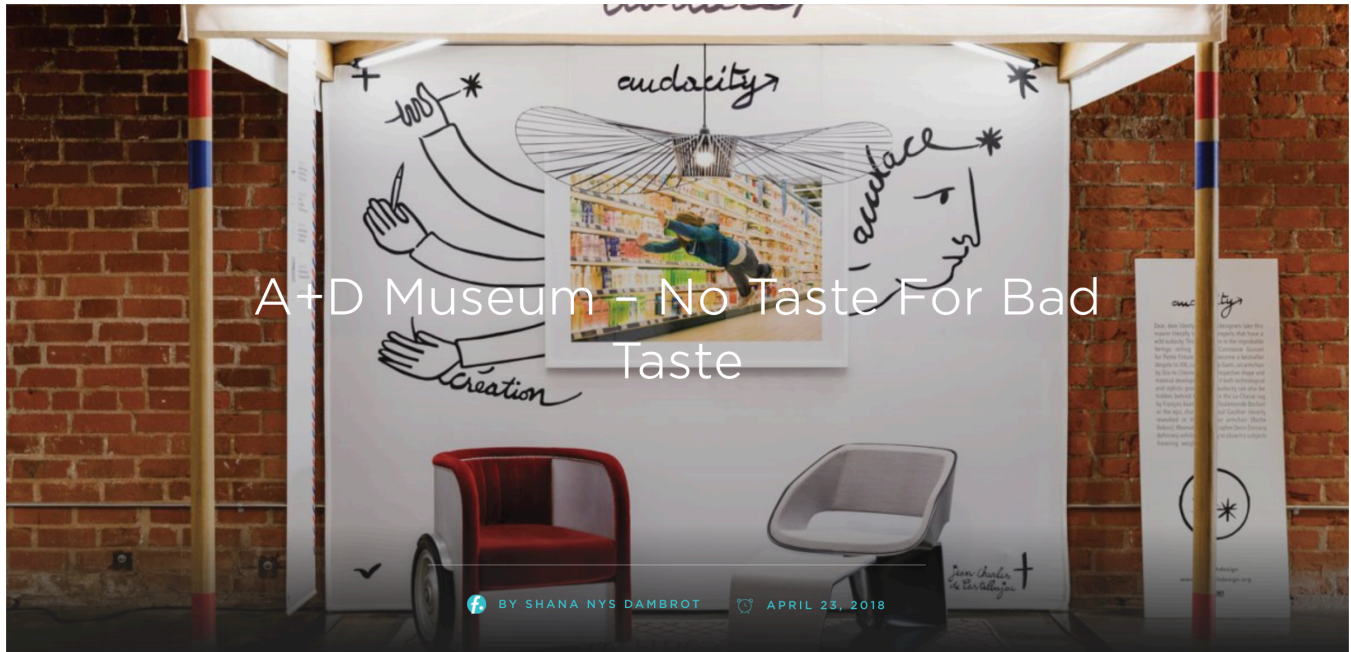


FABRIK

CONTEMPORARY ART & DESIGN

April 2018

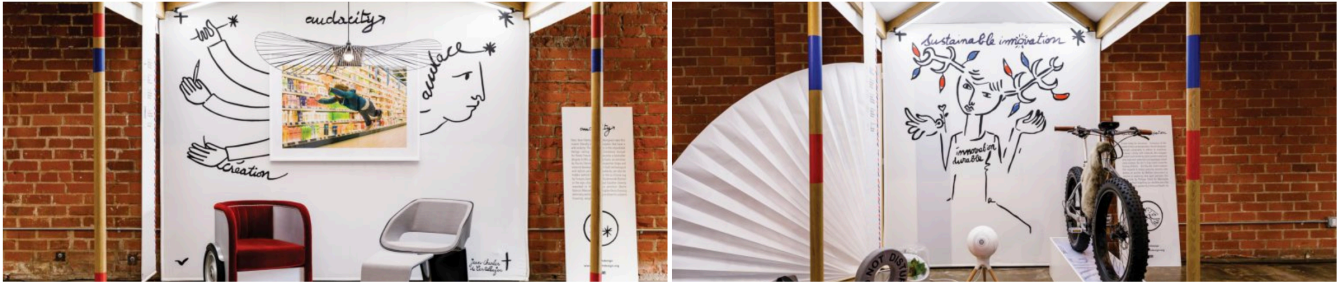


February 23-April 29, 2018

You see the red couch from across the room, right away. Its curves and contours and large-bore tufting combine with saturated color and warm organic texture, and there's nothing for you to do but to go have a seat. From your luxurious, insanely cozy and ultra-hip new perch, the rest of the installation unfolds in every direction—a small sea of utterly unique chairs, settees, credenzas, lighting rigs and sundry design confections arranged in a rhythmic pageant of masterful vignettes. Ten miniature pavilions each expressing in immersive sculptural haiku one of the main tenets in the exhibition's modern French design doctrine. It's a riff on both contemporary art fairs and design showrooms, done with theatrical flair and cozy sophistication.

A think tank of 40 design luminaries including makers, artists, critics, gallerists and photographers were tasked with identifying a central core of what became 40 "cult objects" and contextualizing them within the ten pillars they identified as essential values of "le French Design," not all of which require translation: Art de Vivre, Creativity and Industry, Elegance and a Hint of Luxury, Sustainable Innovation, Audacity, Savoir-Faire, Balance, Heritage, Cultural Openness and Panache. The exuberance

of the overall exhibition design and poignant branding is itself an exercise in perfect fabulousness, telegraphing in its own aspects the tone of cheeky reverence that infuses the whole.



For this internationally touring exhibition, which will have been on the road from 2017 to 2020 in Asia, Europe, North America and the Middle East, the organizers commissioned creative polymath Jean-Charles de Castelbajac to devise an umbrella concept, including everything from key graphics to publications, merchandise and installation design. De Castelbajac calls what he did “an ephemeral palace,” not a bad way to describe the whole thing. A bit of Picasso’s delicately hefty Greco-Roman line-drawings, an iconic tricolor motif and the ebullience of Matisse’s cutouts and wall painting, all visually and emotionally tie the whole field of micro-pavilions together in something like a story, making the whole room feel like a life-size pop-up book.

You’ll want—and you’re allowed—to go ahead and sit in every chair like Goldilocks, starting with that seductive red couch in the Art de Vivre tent, *Ploum*(2011) by Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec for Ligne Roset. Savoir-Faire has the most surprising ottoman, the luscious “seating square” in milky coffee leather, *Carre’ d’assise* (2013) by Philippe Nigro for Hermès. As the Panache offerings beckon, the idea begins to settle in that, though these be functional objects, the sculptural, painterly and illustrative sensibility belongs in a fine art context. Panache’s red and white wrought iron chairs featuring wings and poetry, *Anges*(2008) by Jean-Charles de Castelbajac for Fermob; and the astonishing chaise d’arbre (tree sofa) *Borghese* (2012) by Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance for La Chance introduce wit and conceptual seduction into the discourse. Audacity hangs a photo by Denis Darzacq, of a young person floating in a supermarket aisle as if in a dream, behind the *Ben Hur* (2010) velvet chariot chair by Jean-Paul Gaultier for Roche Bobois, a modest but profound bit of adaptive reuse and post-industrial whimsy. In the Heritage tent, a regal dresser exudes the frolic and fancy of very old-school French design legends with *Commode Louis XV 570* (1997) by Moissonnier. Sustainable Innovation breaks the mold with the fur-draped bicycle *S+ARCKBIKE Snow* (2012) by Philippe Starck for Moustache Bikes, speaking to the challenge of ameliorating resource pressures without ceding one inch of material luxury.

WRITTEN BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Shana Nys Dambrot is an art critic, curator, and author based in Los Angeles. She is currently LA Editor for Whitehot Magazine, Arts Editor for Vs. Magazine, Contributing Editor to artltd., and a contributor to Flaunt, Huffington Post, Montage, Desert Magazine, Porter & Sail and KCET's Artbound. She studied Art History at Vassar College, writes loads of essays for art books and exhibition catalogs, curates and/or juries a few exhibitions each year, and speaks in public every chance she gets.

<http://thisisfabrik.com/ad-museum-no-taste-for-bad-taste/>