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FRAME



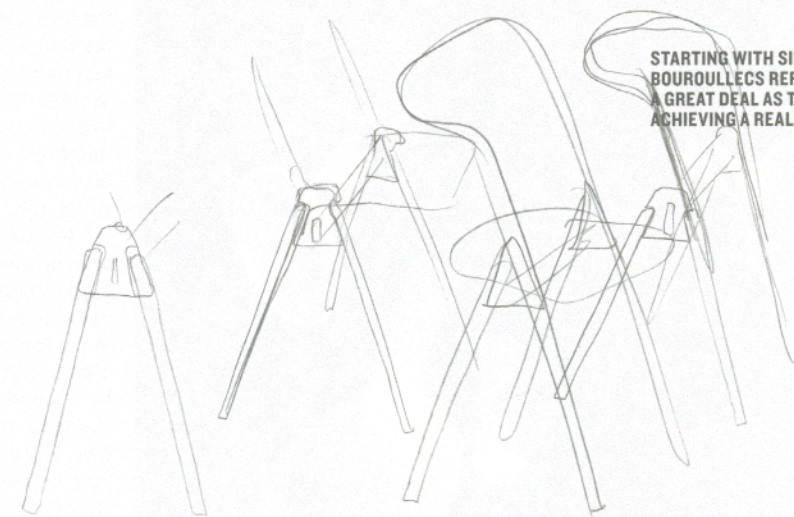
**WHO'S
AFRAID OF
COLOUR?
WHY NEW INTERIORS
BRAVE THE BRIGHTS**



THREE MATERIALS USED SPARINGLY – SOLID ASH, PLYWOOD AND ALUMINIUM – PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR BAGUETTE'S SLENDER PROFILE.



EVIDENCE OF BAGUETTE'S FINAL SHAPE AND CHARACTER IS CLEARLY VISIBLE IN THE BROTHERS' EARLIEST SKETCH.



STARTING WITH SIMPLE SKETCHES, THE BOUROULLECS REFINE THEIR INITIAL IDEAS A GREAT DEAL AS THEY WORK TOWARDS ACHIEVING A REALISTIC PRODUCT.

'CHARACTER IS SO IMPORTANT – IF OUR DESIGNS DON'T HAVE IT, THEY DON'T WORK'

FRENCH CRED

The unstoppable RONAN AND ERWAN BOUROULLEC shun sturdy plastic in favour of delicate wooden laths for Baguette, their latest industrially produced chair for Magis.

WORDS BECKY WOODS
PHOTOS COURTESY OF STUDIO BOUROULLEC

'We always try to pare things down,' Erwan Bouroullec explains, revealing his – and his brother Ronan's – preference for simplicity-driven product design. This goal has certainly been achieved with Baguette, the duo's latest chair for Magis which was launched at the 2011 Salone del Mobile in Milan. Reduced to within an inch of its life, the skeletal ash-framed chair is reinforced with an (almost) invisible aluminium support structure. 'We went a bit too far,' confesses Erwan.

Magis president Eugenio Perazza challenged the brothers to design an honest, mass-producible chair made from wood, not plastic. 'Although plastic is easy and cheap to manufacture, you can still create an affordable, industrial product with wood – as long as you don't use too much,' Erwan rationalizes. A small quantity of ash – sensibly cut into flat, straight laths – forms Baguette's legs, limiting the amount of waste generated during production. 'We are realistic,' Erwan reasons, when questioned about leftover material. 'We reduce three-dimensionality to cut waste, but there is a limit to how much [restriction] we are willing to accept.' Although they replaced curves with planar surfaces wherever possible, the

two made Baguette's seat and back from bent panels of plywood for comfort. The result is a strikingly simple chair which is characterized by its skinniness.

Baguette's design is not based on a particular concept or aesthetic desire. Its personality is derived purely from the use of authentic, high-quality materials to create an efficient and appropriate product that will stand the test of time.

Starting with an idealistic sketch, the pair regularly revisited three key terms: model making, testing and assessing. 'Design is a constant evolution,' says Erwan. 'We create a new prototype every time we change something – even if the amendment is minor.' The Bouroullecs scrutinize each revision, testing and adjusting the design as required. Criticized for 'imprisoning the arms', they hastily redesigned the uncomfortable backrest of the initial prototype. Keeping every prototype – even the mistakes – enables them to monitor the design's progression. 'We spend hours refining the design as far as possible,' says Erwan. 'We question everything, stopping only once we believe the product is pure.'

The busy Bouroullecs – whose Osso chair for Mattiazzi (see page 177) also launched at the

Salone del Mobile – spend a lot of time in the studio. 'Everyone is someone's brother, daughter or cousin at Mattiazzi,' recalls Erwan. Specialists in crafting wooden furniture, the family-run company asked the designers to create a sensual, aesthetically motivated product; the resulting chair is 'curvy, tactile and smooth as a pebble'. Inspecting each Osso for unsightly knots and grains in the material – oak, maple or ash – Mattiazzi prevents the chair from being mass-produced on the same scale as Baguette.

Although demanding entirely opposite approaches to design, the chairs for Magis and Mattiazzi manage to fulfil the requirements specified in each brief. Arguably the more practical of the two, Baguette – the third Bouroullec-designed chair for Magis – is the outcome of a long-standing, successful collaboration with the manufacturer. The brothers have spent – and will continue to spend – a great deal of time exploring new design directions with the Italian company. 'As our relationship deepens, we design stronger and stronger projects,' says Erwan. 'We won't part any time soon.'

bouroullec.com

EUGENIO PERAZZA OF MAGIS (PICTURED) DIDN'T PUSH FOR A PARTICULAR AESTHETIC; HIS ONLY REQUEST WAS A CHAIR MADE OUT OF WOOD.



PREFERRING TO RELY ON PHYSICALLY FUNCTIONING PROTOTYPES, THE BOUROULLECS ARE CAUTIOUS IN THEIR USE OF CAD AND 3D MODELLING SOFTWARE.



RESEARCH MODELS WERE USED TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF BAGUETTE'S ALUMINIUM FRAME AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.



BAGUETTE ILLUSTRATES RONAN AND ERWAN BOUROULLEC'S DESIRE TO CREATE AN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT CAPABLE OF OZZING SENSUALITY.