

# FRAME

109

MAR / APR  
2016

€19.95 EU  
€14.95 Italy  
CHF 30 Switzerland  
\$19.95 USA  
\$29.50 Canada  
£14 UK  
\$28.99 Australia  
¥3,570 Japan  
WON 40,000 Korea

THE GREAT INDOORS



**Chromatic spaces  
to boost wellbeing**



BP 817109661441145



# Four Hands Make Light Work

**From learning to sew to discovering American design: the Bouroullec brothers reflect on the encounters and influences that shaped their collaborative careers.**

WORDS *Melanie Mendelewitsch* PORTRAITS *Valentin Fougeray*

## **RONAN BOUROULLEC :**

'Our grandparents were farmers from northern Finistère. DIY - home improvements and repairs - was part of their daily routine. Our parents weren't into manual labour, but they taught us a lot about things like making repairs and gardening. Ever since we were young, we've been tinkering away - it's something we taught ourselves to do.'

ERWAN BOUROULLEC: 'Ronan originally studied applied arts - first at Olivier de Serres [École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Appliqués et des Métiers d'Arts] and then at Ensad [École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs]. Given our family background, it was easier to study design than to go to art school. It was a more recognized discipline, which had a clear purpose, while art was not as easy for some family members to understand. A few years later I went on to study fine arts at Cergy-Pontoise.'

'There are few women with whom we've developed products; engineers are most often men. When it comes to *textile*-related techniques, though, there are generally many female engineers, prototypers and so on. This echoes our family background: our father would look at a project from a structural perspective - he was doing heavy physical work with materials like wood and metal - whereas our mother taught us sewing and finer handicrafts. Women and men have a different approach to making, and I personally love the subtlety of the feminine way. It's linked with a better ability to concentrate.'

RB: 'Our four-handed approach began after we joined forces in 1999. Our relationship has evolved over the course of various projects. We've developed a greater maturity in our work. We've also managed to establish some sort of freedom. We used to confer and analyse our designs at every step of the way. Nowadays we work more independently, allowing things to grow before questioning ourselves.'

'We currently have a team of ten in our workshop. Erwan and I facilitate projects in much the same way as a conductor directs an orchestra. When one of us is hesitant about doing a project, that moment of doubt may lead to a more critical examination. Techniques and constraints are reassuring and form guidelines of sorts, but these are parameters that concern the maker rather than the user. Sometimes one of us is very much inside the project while the other maintains some distance, which allows him to see more clearly, because he doesn't get confused by the details.' ↵

## THE BOUROULLEC BROTHERS

1971

Ronan Bouroullec born  
in Quimper, Brittany

1976

Erwan Bouroullec born  
in Quimper, Brittany

1997

Spotted by Cappellini and  
commissioned for their first  
industrial-design projects

1999

Begin working together  
in Paris

2001

Hold first solo show  
at Galerie Kreo  
Meet Rolf Fehlbaum,  
president of Vitra, and work  
on new office system Joyn

2002

Stage the Ronan & Erwan  
Bouroullec exhibition at  
London's Design Museum

2003

Publish their first  
monograph with Phaidon

2011

Mount the Bivouac  
exhibition at Centre  
Pompidou Metz and  
Chicago's Museum of  
Contemporary Art

2013

Hold Momentané exhibition  
at Musée des Arts  
Décoratifs in Paris  
Unveil the Gabriel  
Chandelier, the first  
permanent contemporary  
piece installed in the Palace  
of Versailles

2015

Present 17 Screens  
installation at Tel Aviv  
Museum of Art  
Release Serif TV for  
Samsung

EB: 'The real challenge of design is to learn how to distance oneself while maintaining control. The fact that we're a duo brings an almost schizophrenic dimension to our work.'

'We learned a lot from Giulio Cappellini. He's one of the first people who really listened to us and entrusted us with projects. I'm inspired by his intuition and by the way he's wrapped himself up in the Italian industry while maintaining a bold vision. He once told us that he never has bestsellers but *long* sellers. Many of his products weren't quick to sell but would find their "customer" later and establish themselves over a longer period. We've never forgotten this example.'

'Rolf Fehlbaum of Vitra also taught us a lot. In a way, you could compare him to a football coach; he helped us to improve and develop. When we started working together, he asked us to conceive office furniture, even though we'd never worked in a large office before. We were able to research an unfamiliar environment with an almost naive state of mind. As soon as we completed Joyn, our first product for Vitra, Rolf emphasized the need to maintain ingenuity. We continually try to follow his advice and keep a certain "unprofessionalism" and naivety in our practice. Everyone at our studio is young; it's often their first job.'

'Prototypers, technicians and engineers have taught me a lot - but you have to collaborate with them in a subtle way. Some of them can be reluctant to oppose our vision or to tell us what they *really* think. They can be closed off and hard to move. I recently understood the need to envision a part of our work as a harvest of knowledge, techniques and flavours. If we can't hear or broaden a technician's opinions, the "harvest" idea is lost. There are many ways to do this, but simple handmade prototypes and sketches often open up the discussion more than technical documents or 3D models can do.'

'It's impossible to work without an awareness of history. The older we get, the more we see design as a Darwinian phenomenon.'

'Because I studied fine arts, real design influences came to me later on. In a way, I have a polar view of design. I was impressed by the Americans, who had a joyful and positive way of addressing the largest audience through industrial production. Examples are Hans and Florence Knoll, George Nelson, Eero Saarinen and, of course, Charles and Ray Eames. Their work was typical of the American optimism of the '60s. Italian designers came later: Ettore Sottsass, Alessandro Mendini, Andrea Branzi and so on. Their punk approach was a real provocation against bourgeois common sense.'

RB: 'We're fascinated by the structure of vegetation. The organic - the logic and performance of the living - is so compelling. Plants often provide inspiration for structural research, although the results never try to mimic nature. But sometimes we seek some sort of opposition to constructed space - to the flat, orthogonal, monochromatic environment. We look for an almost animistic presence.'

EB: 'The French culture was not quite ready for the emergence of design as a practice. It remains very marked by the *mobilier de style*, and for many design is just another contemporary "style". French manufacturers and craftsmen have begun to understand the purpose of designers and to see designers as people who conceive products *with* and *for* them. We're facing quite a terrifying no-man's-land here. In places like Italy and the Nordic countries, however, design is inherently part of the culture.'

'The fundamental role of design is to give shape to culture. When you visit a museum devoted to ancient civilization, design - more specifically: the shape of everyday tools, weapons, jewellery and the like - is often the only thing that remains. Being able to stand the test of time means that those tools are technically perfect and were useful, but on top of that you see the people *behind* them. You see their humanity and can determine, therefore, the shape of their culture.'

# 'For many, design is



‘The challenge is to re-establish a common understanding between manufacturers and users, as these two parties are becoming increasingly detached from each other.’

‘Most of the companies we work with share a 1970s vision. It’s home-oriented, based on sustainable domestic environments that barely change. When it comes to ecology, the idea of indestructible pieces of furniture that will last forever is essential. We don’t want our objects to grow old or to be tied to a particular time period. The design of the ’90s focused on screaming about deep change and a new aesthetic: a conception that gave birth to noisy objects that were too specific to age in harmony.’

‘Alcove, a sofa for Vitra [2007], is one of our most successful projects, because it goes beyond the idea of a simple piece of furniture; it also organizes space. Alcove is the best summary of our Lit Clos [a sleeping cabin manufactured by Cappellini in 2000]; the concept is almost the same. But Lit Clos didn’t sell at the time.’

‘In our opinion, design can be shown in galleries, too. The gallery is an interesting place to remove oneself from the extremely rational framework of industrial production, to look for new paths or simply to express approaches that are too radical for large-scale production. Of course, since we’re in a time of hyper velocity and the “starification” of designers, the legitimacy of the gallery can be questioned. In our case, though, we feel that the gallery is a necessary place to work – it goes hand in hand with the more traditional practice of product design.’

‘For us, art feels like a surgical operation. Design, on the other hand, is akin to a form of homeopathy.’ ✕

[bouroullec.com](http://bouroullec.com)

just another “style”

# Screen Play

Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec play with proverbial fire and ice in France

RENNES — 'In a way, we could compare design to cooking. The challenge is to get the most out of pre-existing flavours, to reveal them. Those flavours are often found in materials and techniques,' says Erwan Bouroullec from the studio he shares with his brother in Paris, just a stone's throw away from the location of recent attacks on the city. 'Our approach to 17 Screens was quite similar: it's a quest for sensations stemming from the deliberately extreme mix of materials such as glass, ceramic, textile and aluminium. What we tried to emphasize is the elasticity between materials, between things that don't necessarily fit together.'

After a stop at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 17 Screens was transported to Rennes, Brittany, the region that Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec call home. The installation is part of a vast threefold exhibition in which three venues – Frac Bretagne, Les Champs Libres and the Parliament of Bretagne – are uniting to celebrate *les enfants du pays*.

The modular wall systems featured in 17 Screens form a meandering path, a sort of urban dreamscape whose composition suggests the abstracted geometry produced by a prism. Individual partitions seem to meld together in a fluidly poetic way, and sound and light add to the atmosphere. 'Once again, we stress the importance of the screens, of their psychological influence on those who are confronted with them, on those who have to deal with their permeability,' says Erwan. 'It's fascinating to imagine lying on either side of such heavy and imposing elements, which could be torn apart within a few seconds.' — MM

As part of a wider exhibition of the Bouroullecs' work, 17 Screens will appear at Frac Bretagne in Rennes, France, from 25 March through 28 August 2016

[bouroullec.com](http://bouroullec.com)



# Press,

Weighing less than 5 kg, Stampa has a delicate aluminium shell resting on slender legs. The design is a clever combination of high and low tech.



# Puncture,

**Kettal's Stampa reveals the latest in aluminium technology: the transformation of sheet metal into a cool perforated 'textile' for warm days.**

WORDS *Adrian Madlener*

# Perch

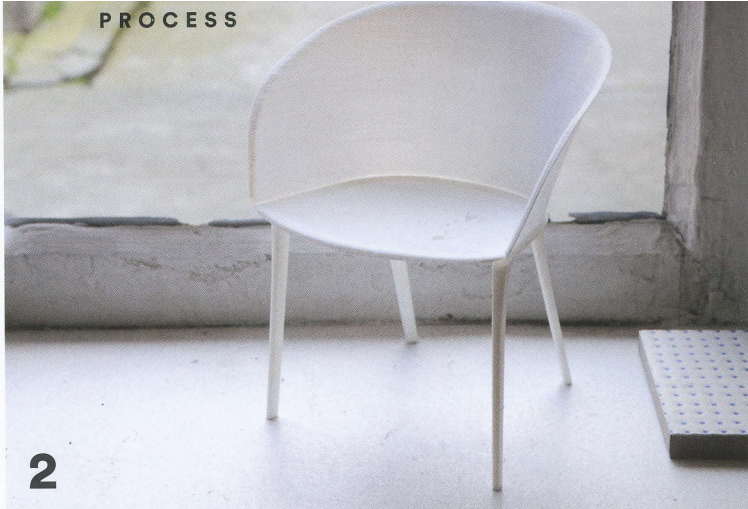
**WITH** its mind set on producing a design classic, Spanish outdoor-furniture brand Kettal joined forces with French duo Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for the company's latest offering: Stampa. The outdoor chair pushes the properties of aluminium, thanks to a cutting-edge technology that transforms sheet metal into a material with an openwork design. Durable yet delicate, the chair has a duality that doesn't stop there. 'The idea was to make a comfortable, long-lasting chair that couldn't be copied,' says Ronan Bouroullec. 'Stampa had to be both charming and calm.' With a vote of confidence from Kettal, the



1



Early concept sketches of Kettal's Stampa emphasize the chair's fluid form. Charged with the task of creating a 'classic', Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec set out to design an aluminium chair that could not be copied.



2

The result of a five-year collaboration between Kettal and the Bouroullec brothers, Stampa has a delicate sturdiness born of their exploration of material constraints. A miniature model displays Stampa's distinctive openwork design.

**'The idea was to make a comfortable, long-lasting chair that couldn't be copied'**

3



Stampa's calyx-shaped aluminium shell features a regular pattern of perforations.

brothers discovered the Barcelona brand's willingness to face new obstacles. Their five-year collaboration involved countless tests and experiments. 'Our in-house team gave 120 per cent to the development of Stampa,' says second-generation Kettal director Alex Alorda. 'Every modification was a challenge that we loved.' The family-run company's expertise in aluminium reaches back five decades: 'My father started working with the material in 1966. It has since become part of our DNA.'

The chair's unified aesthetic arises from the exploration of material

constraints. Consisting of a combination of skilled craftsmanship and sophisticated manufacturing techniques, Stampa involves six procedures. 'It may not seem like it,' says Ronan, 'but the chair is a pressed, punched piece of flat metal, stamped and welded to form a calyx-shaped shell.' Stampa's core is held in place by an injection-moulded seat ring that is attached to hydroformed legs. A laser cutter punctures the sheet metal, and matching holes drilled by hand connect the perforated shell to the outer edge of the seat. A clever mix of high and low tech, Stampa's pierced shell not only helps keep it

– and the sitter – cool on warm days, but also makes the chair extremely lightweight.

Both the Bouroullecs and Kettal hope that the chair will gain value with use, stand the test of time, and become a classic. 'In 20 years, we'd like to find Stampa for sale at flea markets,' says Ronan. By opting for aluminium over plastic, the brothers aimed to extend the life of the outdoor chair. 'We wanted to emulate the longevity of repainted cast-iron garden furniture. We grew up in the countryside, and a harmonious landscape is very important to us.' X

kettal.com

4



An injection-moulded ring connects Stampa's seat to its back and armrests, and hydroformed legs support the shell.