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GALERIE PHILIA LAUNCHES KID-FOCUSED DESIGN INITIATIVE

Design Brut | Philia & Kids looks to the creativity of children for its upcoming exhibition.



Kids are known for their curiosity and creativity—two traits that often get shoved aside as they grow into adolescents trying to conform to the societal expectations around them. Look at drawings, paintings, and art projects by the primary school set, and you'll notice a lack of inhibition, an embrace of fantasy, and a wealth of inspired ideas that any adult artist would envy. It was this notion of creative freedom that gallerist Ygaël Attali found attractive when he first started thinking about ideas that would lead to Design Brut | Philia & Kids: the first edition of a non-profit initiative launched through his international contemporary design gallery, [Galerie Philia](#). Opening on November 10 (and running through December 8), the exhibition will unveil furniture designs imagined by children from Breil-sur-Roya primary school in France and brought to life by Antoine Behaghel and Alexis Foiny of [BehaghelFoiny Studio](#).

"The project was imagined around two or three years ago when we were organizing our *Transhumances* residencies," Attali says. "Many times, children were observing the designer's sculptural work, and they seemed fascinated! I did not want to simply organize an event with kids, but to question the complex definition of sculptural design. This detour allowed us to rethink what sculptural design was about through the fundamental notions of limits and creativity."



A drawing from one of the workshop participants. Courtesy of Galerie Philia.

The initiative, which the gallery hopes to duplicate around the globe (Attali is looking to the Dominican Republic for 2023), is inspired by French artist Jean Dubuffet's notion of Art Brut, commonly translated as "raw art." "[This type of] art was created outside the academic tradition of fine art by children and marginal communities including prisoners and patients in psychiatric hospitals," Attali explains. "According to Dubuffet, these groups produced works that were more direct, emotional, truthful, and untrammelled by cultural conventions and norms, compared to those of trained artists [who are] influenced and molded by technical and academic knowledge."

For five months, Design Brut | Philia & Kids introduced a group of children aged six to seven to the practice of sculptural design. Under the supervision of their teacher Virgile Ganne, with artistic direction from Behaghel and Foiny, the children created drawings that were then realized as physical forms—sculptures made from local olive wood by BehaghelFoiny Studio together with a cabinetmaker from the region. The resulting designs were displayed in the chapel Notre-Dame-des-Monts and will be shown in Paris starting this week. The project was documented in a film that will debut at the Paris exhibition.



BehaghelFoiny Studio worked with local cabinetmakers to bring the children's furniture designs to life. Images by BehaghelFoiny Studio.

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"We selected BehaghelFoiny Studio for its playful original creativity and sensitivity to a colorful and joyful aesthetic as well as their capacity to share their passion," Attali explains. "We needed them to be able to communicate a certain enthusiasm and have the ability to listen carefully to the kids' ideas. We worked with them before, which is why I knew they could fit the role perfectly, and they did."

The finalized works include a stump-like table that appears to have two sets of horns protruding from its sides, a coat rack resembling a tall red cactus, and a blue chair with an organic, sculptural form. Each piece is unique and functional, capturing the children's creativity. Attali hopes that they continue to embrace it in the years to come. "It was a joyful adventure to watch them having fun while drawing or thinking about design," he says. "I hope most of all to inspire them. If even just one of them keeps these memories alive in the future and imagines himself as a creator—whatever the creation would look like—for us, it would be a victory."

