

Art World

A Jean Dubuffet-Inspired Exhibition in France, 'Design Brut' Features Furniture Imagined by Children

The exhibition brings the furniture sketches of six- and seven-year-olds to life.

Anthony Stephinson, December 5, 2022



To engage the imagination of children, Galerie Philia in France recently launched the non-profit initiative "Design Brut," which pairs schoolchildren with furniture design studios to create gallery-worthy pieces.

The project takes its name from the term Art Brut (loosely translated from French as 'raw art'), coined in the 1940s by artist Jean Dubuffet, who looked to marginalized communities in an effort to discover the 'new' and not settle for studied art and design practices.

About Art Brut, Dubuffet wrote, "Those works created from solitude and from pure and authentic creative impulses—where the worries of competition, acclaim, and social promotion do not interfere—are, because of these very facts, more precious than the productions of professionals." In current times, we are able to understand Dubuffet's desire to step outside the grip of academia and look to the work of cultural outsiders, including children, to find exciting new ideas.

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To create “Design Brut,” Galerie Philia’s founder Ygaël Attali took Dubuffet’s philosophy as inspiration “to find ways to stimulate connections, reflections, and discourses on design beyond academic conventions through collective workshops and collaborations that would be sustainable.”

For the initiative’s inaugural edition, a workshop was held over the summer with schoolchildren aged six and seven from Breil-sur Roya, a French village in Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, to introduce them to the concepts of furniture design, form, and sculpture.



Coat hanger. Olive wood. Courtesy of Galerie Philia.

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Under the guidance of their teacher, Virgile Ganne, as well as the artistic direction of contemporary designers Antoine Behaghel and Alexis Foiny from Studio Behaghel Foiny, the children began by drawing shapes and writing down their own ideas for functional, sculptural designs. They imagined chairs, side tables, pedestal tables, coat racks, and more in drawings free from technical restrictions and cultural markers. The designers then used those drawings as blueprints to create physical designs with a cabinet maker from the region in locally sourced olive wood.



Chair. Olive wood. Courtesy of Galerie Philia.

The exhibition “Design Brut” presents the beguiling furniture items together, emphasizing the possibilities of sculpture and design that come from untrained, unrestrained, open minds coupled with the mastery of contemporary designers and skilled artisans.

Following the exhibition, the works will be available for purchase online at [Galerie Philia](https://www.galerie-phia.com). All funds raised will be invested in the second iteration of the project, slated to take place in the Dominican Republic in 2023.



Design brut, Galerie Philia furniture

Achille Castiglioni amava ripetere che essere curiosi come un bambino è una qualità indispensabile per un designer

Ci sono immagini che lo ritraggono mentre esplora oggetti e tenta loro utilizzi alternativi che chiariscono il suo modo di lavorare meglio di mille saggi critici. Uno sguardo divertito, curioso, ironico. E una presenza nel fare che è davvero tipica dei bambini. Uno sguardo che è immediatamente progetto. La stessa attitudine che ha Enzo Mari quando si inventa la "Proposta per un'autoprogettazione" nel 1974, un invito a pensare e a costruire da soli come fanno i bambini quando giocano con oggetti di fortuna trasformandoli, adeguandoli, ripensandoli. E per i bambini e la loro meraviglia, Mari ha sempre un pensiero di rispetto e stupore. I "Sedici Animali", un'arca di Noè realizzata con un taglio continuo in un parallelepipedo di legno, è un progetto nato dandosi delle regole e dei limiti, come si fa quando si gioca a "facciamo finta che...".

