

[UNITED BY DESIGN]

Galerie Philia Doesn't Just Discover Fresh Design Talent — It Grows It



With an impressive slate of international exhibitions, the Geneva-based gallery raises the profiles of emerging designers.

[OCTOBER 29, 2023] In our increasingly interconnected world, GALERIE PHILIA relishes demonstrating how intriguing it can be for a gallery to break out of the typical white box. Brothers Ygaël and Yaïr Attali founded their enterprise in 2015 with a focus on EMERGING CONTEMPORARY DESIGN and art, but rather than pouring all their energy into a single location, they have made it their mission to mount diverse exhibitions and installations around the globe.

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Launched by brothers Ygaël and Yair Attali in 2015, [GALERIE PHILIA](#) specializes in contemporary design and has become known for organizing exhibitions and residencies around the world. During Milan Design Week 2023, the gallery welcomed visitors to “Desacralized,” staged in a deconsecrated church. The show included pieces like [BOLDIZAR SENTESKI'S VOID FLOOR MIRROR](#) (left) and [ELSA FOULON's](#) Nautilie floor lamps (right). Top: [MORGHEN STUDIO's](#) dramatic [CASCADE OF LIGHT CHANDELIER](#) takes center stage at the Milan show. Photos throughout courtesy of Galerie Philia and Maison Mouton Noir

This past April, they took over San Vittore e 40 Martiri, a deconsecrated church in Milan dating to the 11th century, and filled it with contemporary works, including a monumental chandelier of ropy lights by [MORGHEN STUDIO](#). A month earlier, they commandeered the Monumento a Fray Antonio de Montesino in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, for a breathtaking open-air exhibition on the beach of pieces like a [FINNED COPPER LOUNGE CHAIR](#) by the Mexican designer [MANU BAÑÓ](#). Last year, for the show “Hometown,” they furnished all five floors of a landmark townhouse in Manhattan’s Chelsea neighborhood with works by artists like [LUCAS MORTEN](#), [PIETRO FRANCESCHINI](#) and [RICK OWENS](#).

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The 2022 exhibition "Hometown" was set in a Manhattan townhouse. A room arranged like a home office featured a side table and CHAIR by LUKE MALANEY, a NANA LURE CHANDELIER by PELLE, an ATTUNE DESIGN DESK and a METROPOLIS TABLE LAMP by IAN GARNCAREK.

"Our specialty is nomadic exhibitions," says Paris-born, Geneva-based Ygaël, who serves as the gallery's lead curator, while his brother manages the business. "We do shows everywhere: a palazzo in Florence, a castle in France and WALKER TOWER IN NEW YORK. We really like to link aesthetics with an architectural context."

But Galerie Philia's peripatetic exhibition program hasn't stopped it from putting down roots. Starting with an outpost in Geneva, the brothers went on to establish additional locations in New York, Singapore and Mexico City, which seems only fitting for such a globe-trotting operation. It's also proof that Ygaël, who has a Ph.D. in philosophy, and Yaïr, who studied archeology and history, were onto something when they decided to follow their passion for collecting by launching the gallery. Ygaël's love of philosophy still informs the business, however. "The name, Philia, is a concept from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics" that translates loosely as "friendship," he says.



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Always looking to nurture new developments in art and design, the gallery has begun hosting a series of residencies for its artists and craftspeople in inspiring locales that it calls Transhumances, named for the seasonal movements of farmers and livestock between different pastures. Previous residencies have been in France and Italy; the next will take place this November, with artists ELSA FOULON, ANDRÉS MONNIER, LAURA PASQUINO and Morghen Studio's Roberto Tarter and Rodolfo Viola visiting Cappadocia, Turkey. The gallery also periodically organizes workshops that invite children to create their own objects in partnership with international designers.



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Left: STUDIOPEPE's OSSI MORI MIRROR and TEMU LAMP were part of the exhibition "Tomenos," during Milan Design Week 2022. Right: Mexican furniture designer ANDRÉS MONNIER's ILLUSIO DOUBLE MIRROR

With its knack for discovering under-the-radar talent, Galerie Philia has attracted clients like top interior designers KEN FULK, NICOLE HOLLIS, JAKE ARNOLD and KELLY BEHUN. One recent addition to the gallery's roster is Milan-based STUDIOPEPE, which produces such enticingly muscular pieces as MONOLITHIC CHAIRS with soft concrete and marble edges reminiscent of river stone and TEMU ELECTRIFIED LAMPS that resemble altar candelabras. The gallery has also been championing the work of Mexico's Andrés Monnier, who DESIGNS STONE-BASED PIECES displaying dramatic tension, like ILLUSIO and NARCISO mirrors, which pair fragile glass with rough-hewn rock bases.

Ygaël recently spoke with *Introspective* about the gallery's latest projects, discoveries and intentions.



Could you single out one of them?

Morphen Studio. In 2016, they were doing flexible lights that nobody had thought of before. It was weird and original. In the beginning, it was hard for us to sell and promote them because people didn't understand their aesthetic. But little by little, show after show, their work became more known and respected. And now, they are super-successful. The CASCADE OF LIGHT CHANDELIER they did for our "Desacralized" show in Milan is six meters high and very emotional. They started out doing small pieces, and now, they're doing monumental works.

Who's one of the newest talents you're excited about?

Elsa Foulon. She's a Parisian ceramist who works in Montmartre. Her work is very feminine, very delicate, very soft. She does chandeliers, sconces and lamps. It's quite different, actually, from what we usually do, because we often focus on things that are dark and rough. So, she's bringing something new to the gallery, and she's someone to follow, I think.



What trends have you seen develop since starting the gallery?

When we started, what we were doing was original and new. We were representing ORGANIC DESIGN when people were more into NINETEEN SIXTIES and ART DECO. Instead of ANTIQUES, we were bringing in very rough pieces. Nowadays, that's not as new as it was, and many galleries are showing this kind of work. Now, collectible CONTEMPORARY DESIGN is the trend, and it's what people are buying. But because it's the new trend, I feel like we need to escape from it. We need to find something different, because it's boring to do the same thing. What we did over the past ten years has been done by other galleries now, so we need to renew ourselves.

What advice would you have for a new collector getting into contemporary design?

Don't be intimidated. Some people try to make others feel like art can't be part of their lives, or that it has to be abstract and intellectual, but that's not the case. Of course, it's always interesting to know the intellectual and historical background of a piece. But to understand art, you simply need to try to feel something when you see it. Just go see things, and if you feel a kind of attraction to something, try to understand why. Follow what you feel. ■