



DESIGN BRUT | PHILIA & KIDS BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DESIGN AND CHILDREN

Galerie Philia is giving a much-anticipated injection of youth into the world of design with the upcoming inauguration of Design Brut. Creative, imaginative and innocent, the first-ever exhibition of *Design Brut / Philia & Kids* in Paris on the 10th of November, will showcase the artwork of children brought to life through furniture sculptures designed by Antoine Behaghel and Alexis Foiny.

GALERIE PHILIA ϕ

At the heart of the project is the objective to present the concept of design from the perspectives of children, without any previous artistic knowledge or cultural influence, only influenced by the creativeness of their imagination. *Design Brut / Philia & Kids* aims to push the boundaries of the discipline of design to connect design closer to children from all over the world – which they certainly achieve! The first exhibition will open first in France at the start of November and then in the Dominican Republic next year. In this interview, we speak to Ygaël Attali, the press coordinator of *Design Brut*, about the history, motivations, and inspirations behind the exhibition, and what outcomes they hope to achieve.



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Can you please start by telling us a little bit about Galerie Philia and its origins?

Galerie Philia is an international contemporary sculptural design and art gallery representing emerging and established designers and artists. The gallery is the brainchild of two brothers who share a lifetime passion for art, literature, and philosophy, hence its name Philia, the 'highest form of love' in Ancient Greek, also meaning 'friendship' or 'affection.' The concept of Philia was mainly inspired by Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Their distinct academic background sets them apart from their peers, as it sees them following a rhizomatic and transcultural approach in the way they select works. This involves combining elements from multiple cultures in what becomes a network of harmoniously interconnected roots, ultimately revealing the beauty of each unique creation.

Galerie Philia features many artists from all over the world with different artistic backgrounds. How are the artists chosen? Is there any particular approach that you use to find new artists?

The gallery's non-hierarchical curation sits apart from the ephemerality of trends and focuses instead on the true aesthetic quality of the piece – alluring and timeless. Unlike others, Galerie Philia does not focus on a single style – whether minimalist, organic or raw – but rather embraces heterogeneity. The artists are chosen for the aesthetic quality of their design artworks and the faculty to sublime any specific material. Originality as well as craftsmanship are always considered in our decision to welcome a new designer.

I do not have a particular approach, nevertheless besides the objective qualities of their creations, I need to feel a connection, or more precisely, a resonance with the artists and their creative universe to select them and represent them.

You have galleries in Geneva, New York, Mexico City and Singapore, but also use pop-up exhibitions to present your art. How do you choose which art is displayed in a permanent space, and which in a temporary exhibition? How are the locations of the exhibitions chosen?

That's an interesting question, and we do think about this quite a lot.

Our galleries tend to allow us to represent our long-time classic designers in a scenography focused on heterogeneous materials, tonalities and typologies. As for the pop up shows, we select interesting architectures (Jean Nouvel villas last summer, but also Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse in Marseille, the Walker Tower in New York City or the Palazzo Galli Tassi in Florence, among many others...), to dialogue with a specific philosophical topic. Around this theme, we commission pieces from our artists in order to create a scenography that dialog with the architecture and answer or question the main thematic of the exhibition.

For instance, in last Milan's edition, the title was *Temenos*, which means Sanctuary in Ancient Greek. It focused on the porosity of the border between the sacred and the profane in a contemporary object archeological exploration. Inspired by the circular dimensions of ancient sacral monuments, such as Stonehenge and the dome of the Pantheon, a stately temple-like cylindrical structure symbolising life, nature and cosmic renewal has been installed in the center of the exhibition space, creating a radical contrast as well as a dialogue with the surrounding industrial architecture.

As said, architecture has been considered to explore a philosophical question through an aesthetic selection of commissioned design artworks.

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The first exhibition of Design Brut | Philia & Kids will be inaugurated on November 10th in Paris. Can you tell us a little bit about the project and what we can expect from it?

Taking place in Paris, the inaugural exhibition of Design Brut | Philia & Kids will unveil new furniture designs imagined by children from Breil-sur-Roya primary school in France and brought to life by Antoine Behaghel and Alexis Foiny from Studio Behaghel Foiny, the designers selected for this first edition.

The project Design Brut is inspired by French artist Jean Dubuffet's notion of 'Art Brut,' commonly translated as 'raw art,' i.e. art created outside the academic tradition of fine art by children as well as marginal communities including prisoners and patients in psychiatric hospitals. 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, influenced and moulded by technical and academic knowledge. The philosophy behind 'Art Brut' inspired me to find ways to stimulate connections, reflections, and discourses on design beyond academic conventions through collective workshops and collaborations that would be sustainable.

The answer was *Design Brut | Philia & Kids*, an inaugural workshop introducing 6-7 years old children to the practice of sculptural design that took place earlier this summer in Breil-sur-Roya, a French village nestled in the Roya valley in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur.

And why were children ages 6-7 chosen, and why were they chosen from the village of Breil-sur-Roya, in Provence?

We had residencies before entitled *Transhumances*, the concept was simple: local materials, local work for a local exhibition; we wanted to adapt this concept in this Design Brut experience. This region is known for its beautiful olive trees, which could be the perfect material for its aesthetic intrinsic qualities as well as its malleability. We needed the children to be young for the cultural artistic influence to be as weak as possible, and consequently to get a spontaneous result, so this age seemed perfect.



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The project will showcase furniture designs by Antoine Behaghel and Alexis Foiny from BehaghelFoiny Studio. Why were these designers selected, had you worked with them before?

They were selected for their playful original creativity and their sensitivity to a colorful and joyful aesthetic as well as their capacity to share their passion. We needed them to be able to communicate a certain enthusiasm as well as 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!

What is it that makes children such fascinating artists? What is it about their young age that makes their perception of art stand out?

The filter of culture is less pronounced, which gives a wider space to spontaneous creativity. The notion of limits is still smoky, which is both fascinating and challenging.

France and the Dominican Republic have been chosen as the locations for the *Design Brut* exhibitions. Was there a particular reason for this?

France, for the reasons mentioned before; the Dominican Republic might be the next chapter of this adventure. The reason is again a specific local material, more precisely, a stone called Larimar. We want this project to support also a local school and its surrounding community.

How do you hope the new project will be received?

I hope people will be sensitive to the kids' creative dialogue with the sculptural designers.

Finally, why do you think it is important to engage young children with art and creation?

It is important at any age, each age has an interesting voice to add to the world's creation; and each age is able to hear and perceive another level or facet of the complex human creativity.



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