



News



'MATERIA PERPETUA II' at PHILIA dialogues with philosophical themes through onyx

Galerie PHILIA's latest showcase offers a fresh perspective on how onyx can be both a historical artefact and a canvas for contemporary creativity.

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Published on : Jul 31, 2024

Imagine the elegance of a stone, steeped in history, transformed into contemporary masterpieces—this is the essence of the *MATERIA PERPETUA II* exhibition at Galerie PHILIA's new LA flagship showroom, where a collaboration with renowned interior designer Holly Hunt sets the stage for a profound exploration of time, materiality and artistic expression. The American designer, known for her clean lines and luxurious materials, brings her signature style to this collaboration, her involvement ensuring that the showcase is not just visually appealing but also deeply thoughtful in its presentation of onyx.

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True to the gallery's philosophical approach, the design exhibition serves as a platform for deep reflection and thematic exploration, resulting in unique works that blend artistic expression with an emotional response. The inaugural collection delves into the concept of eternity and its paradoxical origins. The title captures this exploration, with 'Materia' alluding to both, maternity and materiality and 'Perpetua' signifying eternity. This paradox is intricately woven into each work, fusing intuitive design with a rich historical lineage.



(L-R) *MATERIA PERPETUA II* showcases onyx's versatility and timeless appeal in innovative modern designs

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

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Onyx, the protagonist material, adds a significant historical layer to the design showcase. This semi-precious stone has been revered across various cultures and epochs such as in ancient Egypt, where it was a prized stone used for sculptures. In the Roman Empire, it was employed to craft *intaglios*—gemstones carved with intricate designs. It is also mentioned in the Bible as one of the stones found on Aaron's breastplate.

The geological formation of onyx itself is fascinating. Formed through the deposition of silica in gas cavities in lava, onyx is a variety of chalcedony, a type of quartz. Its banded appearance, often in black and white, adds to its allure and versatility. The stone's natural elegance and resilience make it an inspiring material for artistic exploration. *MATERIA PERPETUA II* highlights collections from various innovative artists and designers as they explore the tensions between tradition and contemporaneity, questioning whether one affiliates with the material's long history or liberates oneself through modern usage.

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(L-R) The *LACISTA* table by artist Andrés Monnier is a blend of rock and design; Monnier's *ILLUSIO* mirror showcases onyx's glass-like quality

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Mexican artist Andrés Monnier expresses stories through the synergy between art, design and sculpture. A self-taught sculptor, his journey with onyx began with a fascination for its translucent quality, which he describes as 'the glass of rock.' Pieces such as *ILLUSIO*, a mirror with a sculpted base and the *LACISTA* centre table reveal Monnier's passion for transforming raw materials such as rock, glass, concrete, wood and metal into functional art. Starting his first rock collection in 2020, he has made onyx his signature. His motivation is to innovate the world of conventional furniture design using different techniques and languages of creation.



Pietro Franceschini's *Sugar Daddy* is a fusion of reality and digital illusion

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Following Monnier's approach, Milan and New York- based designer Pietro Franceschini presents a delicately polished chair design known as *Sugar Daddy*, made from white onyx. He applies a contemporary design vocabulary to a classical Italian sensibility. Irreverent and emotionally impactful, the designs combine playful energy with sophisticated, timeless elements. As a 21st century furniture designer, he infuses his work with questions about reality, functionality and digital illusion.

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Henry Wilson's white alabaster side table merges elegance with simplicity

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Sydney-based designer Henry Wilson contributes to the exhibition with unique pieces of gravity and grace, including a white alabaster side table.

Wilson's small curvature table design exemplifies his ability to merge elegance with simplicity, creating pieces that resonate with quiet strength.

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With its smooth texture and vibrant tones, onyx transforms ordinary objects into works of art

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Adding unique lighting perspectives is the India-based lighting design studio Paul Matter with its *Monolith Lamp*, a tall, organically curved sculpture art piece that stands out for its smooth lines and minimalist design. An exercise in reduction, this lamp design is created from a single body with simple scores and folds.

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Stainless steel and white onyx combine in a refined and modern design by Studiopepe

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Building on the exhibition's exploration of diverse materials, the Italian design duo working as Studiopepe exhibit a crafted low console in stainless steel with a white onyx shelf. Their work exemplifies a blend of material experimentation and refined aesthetics, offering a modern twist on classic forms.



The *Axe Table* is Pierre de Valck's modern homage to the Paleolithic hand axe

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Belgian designer Pierre de Valck presents his *Axe Table*, a scaled-up version of an original Paleolithic hand axe, one of the longest-used tools in human history. Dating back around 1.6 million years, the hand axe reconnects us with our common heritage as a species. The product designer's work evokes a sense of historical continuity and the timeless utility of simple tools.

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(L-R) Giampiero Tagliaferri's three-panel onyx screen merges materials and textures in a narrative-driven design

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

Lastly, Italian designer Giampiero Tagliaferri debuts a three-panel onyx screen. His approach is deeply rooted in his passion for extraordinary craftsmanship and fine collectible furnishings. His projects are densely researched and

narrative-driven, placing a premium on multi-sensory experiences through orchestrating materials, textures, artworks and architectural details.



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(L-R) The design exhibition explores how age-old materials meet modern design sensibilities

Image: Courtesy of PHILIA

The ongoing show reflects PHILIA's commitment to exploring deep, philosophical themes through innovative product designs, each showcasing artistic skill while inviting viewers to explore concepts of time and material in new ways. The artist's work demonstrates how age-old materials can be reinterpreted to reflect modern design sensibilities.

MATERIA PERPETUA II is more than an exhibition; it's an invitation to reflect on our place in the narrative of art and design. As visitors engage with it, they are encouraged to consider the paradoxes and questions that these works seek to address and to ponder how these intersections shape our understanding of the world.