

NEW TALENT

THE ART OF
STORYTELLING

Anastasia Nysten's *design objects examine new ways of functionality for contemporary furniture*

In the first edition of the Beirut Design Fair, held from 20-24 September, a particular armchair is generating much attention. Out from the seat's structured wooden base splurges colorful cushions in hot orange, mossy velvet and a more subdued grey. Found in a variety of fabric – the plush velvet is coupled cotton for the cushions, almost bed pillows in their overflowing appeal. Titled Troll, the chair is at once generous and comforting. Akin to a chair-cum-bed, passersby were quick to try out the chair's gracious structure. Troll grabbed the attention of the fairs judges, consisting of Aline Asmar d'Amman, Marc Baroud, Marianne Brabant, India Mahdavi, and Mathias Ohrel, who awarded Nysten the Beirut Design Fair Talent prize. "It incarnates an orientalist approach far from orientalist archetypes," they said in a joint statement. "Troll recalls traditional yet contemporary uses and scenarios and reinvents the spirit of the oriental seat in its sensual aesthetic, tamed by the singularity of its lines and its masterful mix of materials."

On the act of creating a design object the Lebanese-Finnish designer notes how it is "a lengthy and emotional process." After growing up in

France, Finland and Lebanon, Nysten obtained her Master's degree in Industrial Design from ALBA (Academie Libanese des Beaux-Arts) in Beirut during which time she worked at Karen Chekerdjian's design studio. After graduating she moved to London to be part of lighting designer Michael Anastasiades's team where she worked for over three years. From 2015, in addition to her ongoing design work, Nysten is editor of arts and culture magazine *Selections*, based in Dubai. "Being in Dubai has allowed me to start working independently on design, and to be more involved in the art world is a great source of inspiration," she says.

In January 2016 Nysten participated in Lebanese non-profit organisation House of Today's exhibition *Jungle Protocol* with the Cloak Chair. An adaptable chair made to suit a variety of spaces and environments, its cloak-like covering is interchangeable between three distinct materials. It is "a chameleon able to blend seamlessly into multiple contexts," she says. "I related it to transient lifestyles and the way we quickly learn to adapt to different environments. The idea is that you are living in an environment that is not yours, but you intuitively adapt to it."

Growing up all over the world, travel has been a staple of Nysten's life. And it is from daily life in various places that the designer amasses her inspiration. "Each piece comes from a multitude of different stories I put together; it could be a memory, a trip, nature, a novel or a picture – I couldn't bring it down to just one thing," she says. "I am very interested in the undefined and unfinished side of things, those that give you the possibility to create your own story." For Nysten it's about provoking an emotional response and generating a personal connection through her design. "That's what I like to have in the pieces I create, even in a very subtle way," she adds. "That small something that will make it yours and no one else's." ■

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Snowflake candles.
Photography by
George Zouein.

Photography by Ethan Mann



Anastasia Nysten