

FINANCIAL TIMES

how to spend it



OCTOBER 4, 2014

THE LAST SWAN
THE SUBLIME TASTE
OF MARELLA AGNELLI



Zoé Ouvrier's wish is to take plywood and restore to it something of its sublime origin – gouging and carving it to release the tree



From left: Vincent Dubourg cast-aluminum and wicker Buisson Aluminium chair, about €75,000, Iron Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Zoé Ouvrier plywood screen, from €18,000, Iron Gallery Fumi

one tree, with the beautiful markings of the wood displayed to powerful effect. The dynamism of that single plant is still present, even though the wood has been precisely engineered. The piece almost carries the tree to its own natural apothecosis, evoking not

tension between an irregular, organic inner shape and a smooth outer skin. Although the source is primitive, he says, "the treatment is very sophisticated".

Emerging Australian designer Charles Trevelyan, at Carpenters Workshop Gallery, is similarly interested in the "interplay between structure and surface". His latest work includes a series of limited-edition, tree-inspired pieces, including the almost animate, patinated-bronze table, *Supine* (from €40,000), and the *BiParite* lamp (from €10,000, pictured on opening pages). Portuguese design company Gingier & Jagger has cast branches in different metals for its Earth to Earth collection, which includes the *Magnolia* sideboard (from €10,700), *Fig Tree* console (from €4,870) and *Rosebush* dining table (from €13,530, pictured on opening pages).

Meanwhile, the Carpenters Workshop Gallery also shows the stylings of French designer Vincent Dubourg, including his branch-inspired chairs, *Buisson Aluminium* (about €75,000, pictured above) and *Deambule* (from €15,000). Of his relationship with branches – cast in steel, aluminium or bronze – he once said it is like "each trying to tame the other: a young branch, inflexible, me, demanding. And this led us to create a harmonious whole". On a more humorous note, the maverick artist-designer Richard Woods, who has transformed art dealer Michael Hue-Williams's country pad for an exhibition entitled *Country Life*, has created a series of large ceramic tree-trunk vases in cheerful colours (price on request).

And finally, there are two projects where the tree as idea, rather than its literal depiction, is predominant.

The first is French designer maker Zoé Ouvrier, represented by Gallery Fumi in London, who has produced a series of remarkable folded screens (from €18,000, example pictured above right) made from painted plywood, onto which she has then painstakingly engraved the most vivid and beautiful trees. As she puts it, her wish is to take plywood, the most banal of industrially produced materials, and "restore to it something of its sublime origin, the tree". The screen is effectively a wood engraving on a vast scale – but rather than being used to create art prints, it is the artwork itself – and every screen is different. In another reversal, it is the gouges into the plywood, the carving out of the wood that release the trees. Ouvrier reports the strong emotion she felt at the idea of providing a space of privacy, as if within a forest, for someone to address.

It is pure emotion, too, that one feels when confronted with the latest creation by internationally renowned Irish designer, Joseph Walsh. Commissioned for an exhibition curated by Sarah Griffin at the New Art Centre, Salisbury, Walsh's *Magnus Celestis* (€234,000, pictured on opening pages), with its lying shell, is a virtuoso demonstration of the sculptural potential of his technique. A country boy from Cork, who taught himself to make furniture through experimentation, Walsh closely guards his method of splitting ash wood, working with its flexibility to create dramatic, sophisticated pieces that retain nature's original energy. This extraordinary desk that stands on one foot, with its left side spiralling upwards into the ceiling, is created from

only its lostiest reaching upwards in life, but also the circles of smoke that would arise from a fire created from it, once dead. Walsh's most famous series of furniture is entitled *Enigma* – a combination of the Latin words *enigma* (mystery) and *lignum* (wood). As with all these designers, by experimenting with his material, he produces work that digs deeply, and imaginatively, into its mysterious origins. ➔

THREE SPIRITS

Andrea Branzi, www.andreabranzi.it and see Carpenters Workshop Gallery, **Carpenters Workshop Gallery**, 1 Albenarle St, London W1 (020 3051 5939; www.carpentersworkshopgallery.com) and branch

Charles Trevelyan, www.charles-trevelyan.com and see Carpenters Workshop Gallery, **David Gill Galleries**, 2-4 King St, London SW1 (020 2315 6600; www.davidgillgalleries.com), **Gallery Fumi**, by appointment, 16 Heaton Square, London N1 (020 7490 2366; www.galleriefumi.com) and branch, **Laurie Goszorec**, 3 Rue Debelleyme, 75003 Paris, (+33-1229 9040; www.galeriegoszorec.com), **Ginger & Jagger**, +353 220 465 787; www.gingerandjagger.com, **Joseph Walsh**

Studio, 76 The Waterside, County Cork (+353 23 477 1759; www.josephwalshstudio.com) and **Stokloss**, **Studio Floris Webber**, Daalderweg 2-4, 5641 BA, Eindhoven (+31 40 267 1762; www.floriswebber.nl), **Mattia Bonetti**, see David Gill Galleries, **Max Lamb**, www.maxlamb.org and see Gallery Fumi, **Richard Woods**, Albion Barn, Church Hill, Little Milton, Oxford OX44 7DB (01244 277 962; www.richardwoods.com), **Valentin Louvainne**, www.valentinlouvainne.com and see Galerie Goszorec, **Vincent Dubourg**, www.vincentdubourg.com and see Carpenters Workshop Gallery, **Zoé Ouvrier**, www.zoeouvrier.com and see Gallery Fumi and stokloss.com.