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London Design Festival: this year's highlights and trends

By Serena Tarling

A round-up of the best designs and emerging trends at this month's art event, from origami and lighting to raw materials



Designs on show at Tent London

The London Design Festival has doubled in size geographically since it began 12 years ago, with more than 350,000 people attending the event earlier this month. Key to this has been the focus on making design more accessible to a wider public, be it through craft workshops and open discussions, or the creative use of social media by designers such as Grace Winteringham and Anna Murray at Patternity.

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Lighting

There was an extraordinary range of lighting this year, including innovative new styles such as UFO-esque illuminations from Design by Mai, or the kaleidoscopic marble lighting in Lee Broom's new collection "Nouveau Rebel" in Shoreditch. Jake Dyson is also paving the way for the next generation with his newest take on LED lighting – the Ariel light – which can last 37 years, thanks to the use of internal vacuums that prevent it from overheating.



Skybeamer light, by Mai Waelkens, £1,235, designbymai.com

Origami

There were many examples of the art form on show at the festival, from the origami workshop at the V&A and dramatic lighting designs seen at Designjunction by Foldability to the wallpaper at Tent London by Tracey Tubb. Kyla McCallum, of Foldability, worked with the Galápagos furniture company, utilising her new technique of folding fabric into origami-style shapes to adorn the chairs of the Kent-based designer.

Designer-makers



Nylon fibre rubber bowl, by Jane Norris, £68, studioviatopia.com

Shoreditch Design Triangle, the Saturday Market Project and Studio Viatopia at Designjunction were among those demonstrating the strength of the movement. The Saturday Market Project, in Shoreditch, was full of innovative and interactive workshops that celebrated the use of raw materials, tools and technology. Katherine Pogson demonstrated the art of leather moulding, while Formlabs designer Yoav Reches led a masterclass on 3D printing.

One of the great proponents of this movement is Sebastian Cox, whose passion for the material he uses – coppiced hazelwood – and his skill in making furniture has been on display both at the Wish List project at the V&A and in his new furniture collection at Tent London.

Raw materials

This trend came to the fore at the festival and included Wood-Mood, launched by the kitchen designer Valcucine, which celebrated the versatility of wood; an exhibition by Italian design duo Alcarol, featuring a stool made of Dolomite rock; and James Price, a blacksmith/designer at Tent London.

International scope

Estonian designers took the festival by storm this year with a pop-up shop in Hoxton Gallery, including a range of products from ceramics (Raili Keiv) and vintage sofas (Oot-oot). The look is clean, functional and vibrant.

The “Simplified Beauty” exhibition at design store SCP in east London, co-curated by Sheridan Coakley and the British-Japanese designer Reiko Kaneko, featured specially commissioned Japanese objects, including furniture by Ishinomaki Lab, a DIY workshop that opened in 2011 following the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.

The festival rolled into its second week with Focus/14 at the Design Centre in Chelsea Harbour, with displays by the Singapore-based, high-end furniture designer Christopher Guy.

Use of technology/social media

Designers today are proving adept not only at using technology in innovative ways as part of their craft but also using social media to both build collaborations with like-minded designers and to raise their profile. The Patternity installation at Trafalgar Square, for example, transmitted images of the public looking into a giant kaleidoscope on to an online gallery, while Ilse Crawford, of Studioilse, used technology to project multiple images of associations with home, as well as manufacturing scent and tailoring audio to engage with visitors.

Serena Tarling is a commissioning editor on House & Home

Top photograph: Sophie Mutevelian

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Leah pendant, by Kyla McCallum, £495, foldability.co.uk



Wrap fire tools, by James Price, £790, blacksmithdesigner.com



Happiness table, £465, and bench, £320, fabiencappello.com

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