

surface



The
ENDORSEMENTS

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SCOTT STRICKSTEIN

Architect and designer David Rockwell enjoys the perfect imperfections created by this New York dynamo.



Trained in fine art, but with a strong interest in function, Brooklyn-based designer Scott Daniel Strickstein has no qualms about blending seemingly disparate ingredients to create breathtaking new objects. Best known for Cmesh, a material he developed that encases cold metal wire with the visual warmth of a fired ceramic finish, he creates lighting and furniture that look like sculpture, but are practical enough for daily living. “I really enjoy the mix of the machine-made metal mesh, which presents this idea of perfection in its grid-like form, and the way”—

after being repeatedly dipped into liquid ceramic clay—“the finished pieces have a very imperfect and cracked finish,” says Strickstein, 36. “I’m drawn to the juxtaposition of those two qualities.”

So are interior designers and architects, who are increasingly turning to Strickstein for custom commissions. “Scott shares our passion for play and risk taking,” says New York-based designer and architect David Rockwell of Rockwell Group. “By experimenting with two ordinary substances, he created a truly innovative product.” The range of applications for Cmesh is broad, Rockwell notes, because it “can be sculpted into an endless number of beautiful shapes.”

In fact, Strickstein, who grew up in Michigan and now runs Scott Daniel Design studio in New York, is currently moving into larger architectural installations. In addition to furniture and lighting, his next Cmesh products will include a range of modular wall systems based on irregular clusters of crushed metal mesh, which can be built up to serve as room partitions or wall cladding. But even at that scale, the manufacturing process remains a laborious, handcrafted affair. “Even if I make a piece a hundred times, each one will have its own unique, subtle qualities,” depending on how the clay dries, he says. “That’s an aspect I really like—there’s a quality to this process that I can’t control.”—TIM MCKEOUGH



(TOP TO BOTTOM) Peristyle 1 lamp. Scott Strickstein in his Brooklyn studio. A metal wire form for a crushed Cmesh pendant. Portrait: Mark Mahaney. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Georgina Huljich and Marcelo Spina in their firm’s L.A. studio. The Jujuy Redux complex in Rosario, Argentina, completed last year. Chengdu Fluid Core-Yard in China, completed in 2010. Portrait: Michael Schmelling.

PHOTOS: PERISTYLE 1, VANESSA LENZ; CMESH FORM, MARK MAHANEY.

For Argentinian architects Marcelo Spina and Georgina Huljich of the Los Angeles-based firm Patterns, architecture is a family affair. That’s partly because Spina, 42, and Huljich, 39, share their studio with their two young daughters, who “have a space in the office as well,” Huljich says. It’s also because the firm’s newest project—the 13,500-square-foot Jujuy Redux housing complex in Rosario, Argentina, completed last year—was made in collaboration with Maxi Spina Architects, a practice led by Spina’s younger brother. Mostly, though, it’s because the firm thinks about its four built projects as family members, ones that have largely been influenced by many of L.A.’s elder, tech-savvy architects—yet another tight-knit tribe. Among Spina and Huljich’s mentors are Neil Denari and Thom Mayne; Huljich worked at Mayne’s firm, Morphosis, before joining forces with Spina in 2006. (They’re becoming mentors of their own, too: Spina teaches at SCI-Arc, Huljich at UCLA.)

So what, exactly, makes Patterns’ projects—one being L.A.’s three-story, 7,000-square-foot Prism Gallery on Sunset Boulevard, completed in 2009—siblings? “They share formal symmetric and material sensibilities,” Huljich says. Or, in Spina’s words, “a sort of DNA.” Each is made up of complex twists, unexpected turns, and plenty of torsion, all of which establishes the firm’s ultimate aim: tension. “We’re not interested in sameness,” Spina says. “We’re not interested in shaping a building like it’s a piece of sculpture or one monolithic object.” Instead, he says, Patterns seeks to create structures that “must be experienced at increments or distances to understand that they’re not shaped the same way throughout.”

Denari, who admires Patterns’ projects for their elegant yet aggressive qualities, says, “Elegance is too often only associated with the familiar tropes of simplicity and taste, whereas here the work’s near-baroque depth assertively challenges our usual expectations while remaining physically attractive.” He adds, “There’s a unity to the body of work, but a real sense that it is still open and vulnerable.” That sense of unity will continue this June with the opening of two pavilions in L.A. One of them, called Textile Room, will be installed for four months at the Museum of Contemporary Art; the other, a SCI-Arc-sponsored event structure called League of Shadows, will remain up for four years.—SPENCER BAILEY



This work-life couple brings to architecture the same sense of wonderment as one of their mentors, architect Neil Denari.

PATTERNS

PHOTOS: JUJUY REDUX, GUSTAVO FRITTEGOTTO; CHENGDU COURTESY PATTERNS.