

## GAGOSIAN Wallpaper\*

### Marc Newson on design, reviving crafts and his solo show at Gagosian New York

Carly Ayres



*Left, 'Chair,' by Marc Newson, 2017. © Marc Newson. Photography: Jaroslav Kvíz. Courtesy Gagosian. Right, 'Cloisonné Yellow Chair' by Marc Newson, 2017. © Marc Newson. Courtesy Gagosian*

British designer Marc Newson has built a career taking traditional manufacturing techniques and applying them to create unexpected silhouettes for products ranging from watches to transport. The approach has yielded pioneering works such as the Lockheed Lounge (1986) and the Embryo Chair (1988), tastefully blurring the line between design and art. His latest exhibition is no exception, bringing together colossal cast-glass chairs, Murrina glass consoles, cloisonné enameled desks, aluminium surfboards, and an Aikuchi sword. The show, which opens today at Gagosian in New York City, marks the first showcase of the designer's work in over a decade.

**Wallpaper\*:** For someone not familiar with your body of work, and the range within it, it this might seem like a pretty eclectic collection of objects.

**MN:** To someone that is familiar with my work it would seem fairly understandable in the sense that they're all mediums that I've worked through. Take the surfboard; there's a history there because when I had my first show [with Gagosian] back in 2007, I designed a surfboard in nickel for the exhibition. From that perspective, this show is an evolution of that work. My work deals with the boundary between what we think design is and what we think art might be.



*'Cloisonné Black Blossom Lounge', 2017. © Marc Newson. Photography: Xiangzhe Kong. Courtesy Gagosian*

**W\*: Which comes first, the technique or the concept?**

**MN:** In all of my work I'm always looking for processes and techniques that are completely anachronistic. I love recontextualising these things in a modern time. They're completely old but they're sort of new and nearly impossible. There's never a dull moment – culminating with having to transport an eight-foot-long glass piece from the Czech Republic to the gallery here in New York.

**W\*: You've taken materials that tend to be very delicate or fragile, yet these pieces appear substantial, both in stature and in durability.**

**MN:** All of the techniques that I've utilised are designed to produce desktop-scale objects. By contrast, these are the biggest Murrina glass objects known to exist by an order of magnitude. This cast-glass chair takes six months just to sit in the kiln. It takes three months to heat up to the right temperature and then it takes another three months for the thing to cool down. They're then cut and finished by hand. They're deeply, deeply labour intensive. It took three years to find people that could even begin to understand what I wanted to do. We had to develop the techniques, the factories to build them. We now own a kiln and furnace in the Czech Republic so large that you can fit a car inside it.



*'Cloisonné White Magnolia Chair', 2017. © Marc Newson. Photography: Xiangzhe Kong. Courtesy Gagosian*

**W\*: Tell me about the sword.**

**MN:** The sword speaks to a significant part of what I do, which is dealing with crafts, in particular, dying crafts from various parts of the world. I was approached by the Japanese government in the wake of the tsunami that hit a handful of years ago. It wiped out part of a region known as Tōhoku that was heavily populated with craftspeople. The government set up a programme to help and, through it, I was paired with a swordsmith they refer to in Japan as a Living National Treasure.

The project took around five years to result in a final product, designed by me and utilising a blade manufactured by this National Living Treasure. I jumped at the opportunity because it's everything I love. In a very real sense, it straddles the border between art and design in very much the same way that the furniture does. It does it in a far more esoteric and profound way from an art and cultural point of view