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VOGUE

**The Hot Seat: Designer Marc Newson Is Celebrated With a Gagosian Gallery Show**

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*Portrait of Marc Newson. Photo: Courtesy Gagosian*

Across Larry Gagosian's 16 galleries, you'll find the works of Alberto Giacometti, Roy Lichtenstein, Anselm Kiefer, Sally Mann, Jeff Koons, Pablo Picasso, and countless others seminal to the history of the arts, and beyond. On this famous list, you'll only find one designer—the Australian-born creator of aluminum surfboards, Apple watches (Jony Ive considers him a best friend), and impossibly slick lounge chairs—Marc Newson.

Last night, the celebrated designer enjoyed his first solo exhibition in over a decade; a showcase of his wide-ranging works that included cloisonné enamel armchairs, unweaponized samurai swords with lacquered sheaths, and vibrant Murrina desks. Though categorically disparate, Newson's oeuvre is unified by a severe dedication to craftsmanship, utilizing sometimes long-abandoned artisanal techniques in the most unorthodox of ways. He'll search the corners of the earth to find those artisans capable of carrying out his visions. In the Czech Republic, for example, he found, as Newson himself last night identified, "the only factory in the world that can cast a piece like this."



*MARC NEWSON. Chair, 2017. Cast Glass. 29 1/8 x 27 1/4 x 21 5/8 in. 74 x 69.1 x 54.9 cm. Photo: Jaroslav Kvíz / Courtesy Gagosian. © Marc Newson.*

He's referring to his curvaceous "Chair, 2017," which features a colored glass seat and frosted U-shaped base most people might deem plexiglass, but plastic it is not. Before this chair is ready for seats, it lives in a kiln for six months (three to heat up the glass of which it's made, and three more for the glass to set). Half a year later, there's a chance Newson will uncover a beautifully cracked chair beneath the mold and have to start the process anew. Six of these chairs greet you at the start of the show, colors ranging from beer-bottle green to Ikea blue.



*MARC NEWSON. Cloisonné Black Blossom Lounge, 2017. Cloisonne enamel, copper. 30 x 69 11/16 x 30 11/16 inches. 76 x 177 x 78 cm. Ed. of 3 plus 2Aps. Photo: Xiangzhe Kong / Courtesy Gagosian. © Marc Newson.*

Turn the corner and you'll find another grouping of patterned furniture, unsurprisingly the favorite of the fashion folk in last night's crowd. It has much to do with the fact that this collection, though technically furniture, winks to fashion in its construction. The lounge chairs and round-edged arm chairs flowered with cherry blossoms and shark skin-like gradations are crafted out of enamel cloisonné, which is a French term for an ancient Chinese craft that you'd most associate with jewelry. It's not such a stretch for Newson, who studied jewelry design at university, but it is a stretch for the technique itself, which has long been applied to smaller-scale decorative objects. (The process involves filling compartments, much like a mosaic, with specific colors of enamel powders, and applying extreme heat to harden to a glossy finish.) Made just outside Beijing, Newson explains he had to reinvigorate and reassemble the lone factory capable of the task. Even those without a knowing eye could still appreciate these resplendent furniture pieces. Their simplistic shapes belie their profound complexities; a limitation of sorts inherent to

cloisonné. “These are already pushing the boundaries of what cloisonné can achieve. The factory had no idea how, in fact. They were all adamant that this wasn’t possible,” says Newson, “but after six years, here they are.”

Feats of the impossible continue throughout the Gagosian show. An aluminum surfboard that floats, made in a factory outside of Santa Monica. And more glassware, also made in the Czech Republic, but following the historic Muranese technique of Murrina. It’s an arduous craft that involves tubes of multi-colored glass, heated and melded together to create psychedelic floral patterns. Like cloisonné, it's typical on smaller objects, but leave it to Newson conceive the world's only Murrina desk.

The show finishes out with exquisitely lacquered samurai swords, handmade in Japan, and video footage of surfer Garrett McNamara riding a wave on a Newson-designed board of Nickel metal. It’s a small but impactful show, and a reminder that extreme coups of engineering need not be limited to skyscrapers and algorithms—they can also be exceptionally beautiful.