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Duchaufour-Lawrance started out designing interiors with Sketch, a London restaurant that debuted in 2002. Situated in the Royal Institute of British Architects' neoclassical former digs, it features an egg-shaped white plaster bar surrounded by stairs that lead up to fibreglass washroom pods.



Designed for Ligne Roset, the Roseau ceramic vase, with its brilliant-white slip, adds drama to any tabletop or floor. ligne-roset.com

Vitals

Born in Mende, France, in 1974

Occupation

Product and interior designer

Education

DMA (diplôme des métiers d'art) in furniture, École nationale supérieure des arts appliqués et des métiers d'art, Paris (1997)

Location

Paris

Selected awards

Elle Deco International Design Award, Buonanotte Valentina bed (2009)

Designer of the Year, Maison & Object, Paris (2007)

Fooding 2005 du meilleur avant l'amour, Senderens restaurant, Paris (2005)

Selected exhibitions

Marée noire au clair de lune (solo exhibition), La Galerie de Pierre Bergé et associés, Brussels (2008)

Cinq sens, une matière – Corlan, Designer's Days, Paris (2004)

ExperimentalDesign, Lisbon (2003)

Selected clients

Zanotta, Ceccotti, Baccarat, Ligne Roset, Bernhardt, Swarovski, Paco Rabanne, L'Oréal



The designer conceived Ottoman while working on a hotel project in Marrakesh. Manufactured by Ligne Roset, the line includes an all-foam loveseat and armchair covered in a quilted upholstery that comes in bold solids or two-toned versions. ligne-roset.com

Sculpting shapes

I studied sculpture in school first because I really wanted to touch the materials and work with shapes. The computer was coming on strong then, and you could feel that three-dimensional digital drawings were going to be the way of the future. But I thought it was important to understand the objects and shapes in another way, beyond the computer. I specialized in metal, but as soon as you understand the possibilities of one material you can learn them for others. Today I still draw lines and write ideas on paper before going to 3-D renderings. My first drawings are often simple sketches; I want to express object, proportion, comfort and shape. Sometimes, when construction techniques are at the centre of the project, we go directly to materials to test ideas before doing renderings.

Adding function

In the end, I didn't want to make objects without function. If there's no interaction, objects don't mean anything. I wanted to focus on things that we live with, but that have another dimension or trigger an emotion – simple things that you

can't fully understand in a single glance. That can happen from a philosophy, a material, a shape or sheer craftsmanship, but it can also be due to a beautiful industrial technique.

It was hard switching to furniture design. My education up to that point was about how to take a pure idea and get to something in three dimensions. But I struggled with industrial processes and functionality. My first table was made from a soft material stretched over a frame; it was springy like a drum, but you couldn't place anything on it. The good thing, however, was that I didn't have any limits. For me, design was really open to any kind of expression.

Student project to real product

I did the Manta desk at the end of my degree. Originally, it was carbon fibre, even though it's now made in wood. I took it to Ceccotti, along with other drawings, about five years after finishing school, and they decided to produce it.

Manta is a hedonist's table. The best kind of desk is actually just a flat table – a square or a rectangle – and that's all. But I really wanted to create another relation with one's way of working,

With Manta, you're in the centre of the work, in your own world. I like how an object can change your perception of a space. The idea was to translate the beauty and fluidity of the manta ray, which sort of flies in the water, into furniture. But it's a desk for working, not a desk for receiving people. The top has two levels, and would be very intimidating for people sitting on the other side, because it's so high.

Lucky break

My first big project was the Sketch restaurant in London. The interior designer who was supposed to do it had a bad experience with the client – they were friends, and they decided to keep the friendship but not work together anymore. So they asked me to complete the project. I didn't actually know anything about interior design, but I'd done some cinema set decoration. Over six months, I designed everything in the studio.

Sketch is a bit futuristic. The client was so open to unusual ideas, and I was also younger, so I think I was a little more unconscious and free, even if it was long and hard work. Now I

The woodworked feel of Luna, a console for Ceccotti, is wrought in solid American walnut. The Corian top gives way to a soft dip on one side. ceccotticollezioni.it



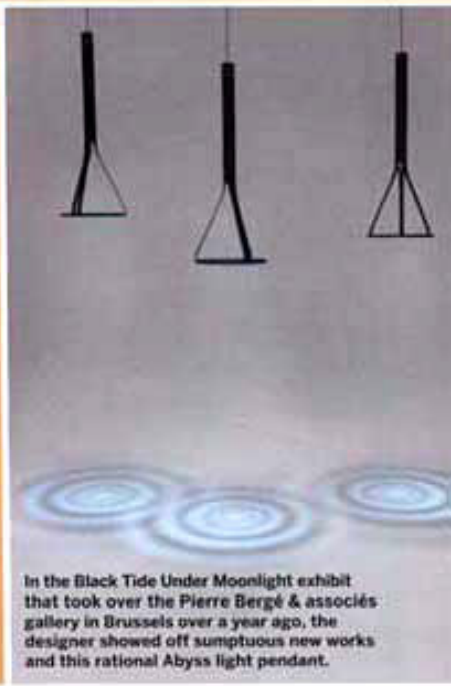
The subtly curvaceous headboard of Buonanotte Valentina, a bed for Ceccotti, is constructed of slats made from solid American walnut. ceccotticollezioni.it



Working in another historical setting, Duchaufour-Lawrance created the Parisian restaurant Senderens. Its cocoon-like lighting and reflective surfaces contrast with Louis Majorelle's sycamore carvings from 1910.



The grandly luxurious Derby, created by Duchaufour-Lawrance for Zanotta, has a sculpted polyurethane foam body upholstered in leather or fabric (front) and cowhide or ecopelle (back). zanotta.it



In the Black Tide Under Moonlight exhibit that took over the Pierre Bergé & associés gallery in Brussels over a year ago, the designer showed off sumptuous new works and this rational Abyss light pendant.

feel that my interior design projects are closer to who I am, perhaps because I have more experience and the tools and materials to express myself. But every time I begin a project, I first have a discussion with my clients. I don't want to impose my vision; I want to share it. With Maya Bar, my client wanted an Asiatic place, so we mixed in references from my travels in Tokyo and Kyoto.

Slow design

I worked with Bernhardt Design on the Corvo chair, launched at the 2010 Salone del Mobile. When I met Jerry Helling, the brand's creative director, we talked about there being too many objects in the world already and how to slow down. With my products, I want to tell a story, so that became the project's key point.

Designing furniture for the American market is very hard, because it has to stand up to so much abuse. Machines test the objects in a kind of torture chamber; Helling said the challenge was to pass those tests, but also to produce something thin and elegant. While the company employs industrial production systems, we chose

to make Corvo by hand, from wood. It's impossible to make it in any other way, and I like that. You slow down and make fewer chairs, but make them with evidence of the human hand. Each one is slightly different, because you can't control the exact movements of the craftsmen.

More materials

I've been working mainly with wood and leather, but I'm really open to other materials. I want to do a plastic chair or something like that. I need to put myself out there in terms of production processes, even though I've had experience with mass production while designing for L'Oréal and Paco Rabanne. Materials help to express an idea, and everything I've designed so far has been supported by traditional materials.

Gaining speed

So many jobs are coming up now. I'm already at work on furniture for Milan for 2011, a business lounge for Air France that will be the largest they've ever built, and a chalet in the French Alps. I've also just completed the interior of a furniture gallery in Paris, named BSL, and

the new architectural guidelines for Yves Saint Laurent Beauty. It's a broad range of projects. TIMMCKEUGH.COM

The Corvo chair for Bernhardt Design, hand shaped and polished in American walnut or maple, speaks to Duchaufour-Lawrance's emphasis on emotional design. bernhardtdesign.com

