

# WWD

## Joris Laarman Lab Unveils First U.S. Exhibition at Cooper Hewitt

Laarman compared the Digital Age movement to the beginning of Modernism but one that is much more about organic form and gradients.

By Rosemary Feitelberg on September 27, 2017



Joris Laarman Lab relies on technology, design and engineering for its futuristic creations.  
photo: thijs wolzak amsterdam

In New York for the opening of “Joris Laarman Lab: Design in the Digital Age” at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, Joris Laarman thrives at the intersection of design, art and engineering.

The designer and inventor creates furniture using smart algorithms including the Bone Chair, which was designed to mimic bone growth. He is behind the first 3-D-printed steel bridge and a 3-D printable Maker chair that can be downloaded from the Internet. His group was started in 2004 with filmmaker and partner Anita Star, and now employs a network of engineers, programmers and craftspeople. The exhibition runs through Jan. 15 before moving on to the

Feitelberg, Rosemary. “Joris Laarman Lab Unveils First U.S. Exhibition at Cooper Hewitt,”

*Women’s Wear Daily*, September 27, 2017.

**FRIEDMAN BENDA** 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001  
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Laarman's work is featured in nine exhibitions this year.

"There is a movement that is going on that is beyond anybody, which is comparable to the beginning of Modernism. Where the Modernists were all inspired by standardization, primary colors, the limitations of industrial machines and geometric shapes, right now we are in a transition toward a digital time," Laarman said. "We can handle complex information and transform that into form and objects that make sense somehow. This is much more about organic form and gradients. The whole system is changing not just the aesthetics but the way that things are designed. It's much more like a program instead of a final design."

While fashion companies will definitely be hiring more coders, Laarman doesn't think coders will become more important than designers. "That's not the case. I never think that's the case," he said. "Creativity is always the key. If there's not a creative force behind it, it's basically robotics or artificial intelligence. Eventually cultural meaning is communication between two people and not through computers."

"Algorithms and coders are just new tools just as fashion designers have worked with highly skilled craftspeople who are good with sewing machines or whatever. In my workshop, I see how people, who are really good at woodworking or metal working, teach the coders the limitations of actual physical materials. But they also learn from the coders what is possible for the future. It's very much a collaborative thing. It's not that computers will take over. It's that we get new tools to create a whole new level of form," he said.

Iris van Herpen, whose studio is just across the river from his in Amsterdam, is already transforming fashion in a very radical way, he said. "It's not only about 3-D printing or digital fabrication. It's used as a tool to create new ways of expression," Laarman said.

Another Amsterdam-based designer, Anouk Wipprecht, is collaborating with Swarovski to develop a wearable necklace that will detect a person's heartbeat. That is expected to be released in December, Wipprecht said.

Given the chance, Laarman said he would use more computational tools to create new ways of expressing how our time is transforming into the digital age. He would use a lot of gradients as Joris Laarman Lab does with its furniture and cellular based objects. "We use 3-D printing, smart materials and 3-D-knitted upholstery for certain chairs, which is done with the help of someone who makes textiles for the fashion industry [whom he declined to identify]," he said. "In Holland, we have the Textile Museum in Tilburg where you can experiment in a really fun way with all kinds of new machinery that uses computers and textiles."

Joris Laarman Lab created a concept design for a dress that would be worn by someone who would serve drinks during an opening party. With augmented reality, guests would see the bubbles floating above her to know where the drinks were. While augmented reality and interactivity will only become more prevalent, the dress still remains a concept. But Laarman said he would love to do that one day.

Feitelberg, Rosemary. "Joris Laarman Lab Unveils First U.S. Exhibition at Cooper Hewitt," *Women's Wear Daily*, September 27, 2017.

**FRIEDMAN BENDA** 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001  
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760