

The Campana Brothers, Barroco Rococó

Fernando and Humberto Campana, the Brazilian design duo famous for transforming and recycling objects in unexpected ways, found international acclaim thanks to European manufacturers like Edra for their furniture, Fontana Arte for lighting, and Alessi for domestic appliances. In the space of just a few years, they became the undisputed ambassadors of Brazilian design.

Fernando Campana (born in 1961) and Humberto Campana (born in 1953) trained as an architect and a lawyer respectively before joining forces in 1983 to create unconventional works that made use of materials and techniques that were a priori unusual within the world of design. Their studio in São Paulo resembles an artisanal laboratory where they dream up a form of design “drawn from the street”, half-way between Arte Povera and design, created, for the most part, from salvaged objects. Their main source of inspiration comes from Brazil’s own culture, diversity of influence, economy of means, recycling and craftsmanship all clearly present in their work. Humberto was the first to create artisanal pieces like mirror frames made of wood and shells, and bamboo baskets, using shapes and techniques that were intentionally imperfect and imprecise. Their first joint collection, a group of relatively unusable chairs called “Uncomfortable”, was presented in a gallery in São Paulo in 1989. Their work also draws freely upon nature, as seen, for example, in their repeated use of shell motifs, a decorative element found equally in Baroque art and traditional Brazilian Indian crafts. References to the animal world are also numerous: the Boa sofa (2002, Edra), for example, or the Corallo armchair (woven coral-coloured metal thread, 2004, Edra) and the Anémone armchair (2000, Estudio Campana) evoking the marine world. Fernando and Humberto start out by collecting bits of wood, metal, plastic, textiles and other unusual elements like toys, and then put them to completely different uses in compositions that sometimes employ artisanal methods and other times the very latest technology. They readily describe their universe as bordering on the

kitsch or “regionalism”, as well as being at the forefront of design, the applied arts and contemporary art. For Fernando and Humberto Campana, the functionality of an object or a piece of furniture is derived from its form which, itself, is dictated by its materials. Their Favela chair, made from pieces of salvaged wood reassembled in an artisanal fashion (marketed by Edra from 2003) caused a great sensation when it first appeared in 1991. Their Banquete Chair (2002, Estudio Campana), made of piled up soft toys, and the Sushi seat (2002, Edra), composed of strips of fabric, are examples of their non-conformist design. Both brothers are fascinated by French culture, and have collaborated on a number of occasions with French companies: in 2009, they designed a line of polo shirts for Lacoste, teaming up with the porcelain manufacturer Bernardaud that same year to produce the Nazareth collection followed by the Euro Tropiques plate collection two years later. They have also undertaken various high-profile refurbishment projects in different parts of France, some of the most recent including the Gloriette for Veuve-Cliquot’s Hôtel du Marc in Reims in 2010, the renovation of the Café de l’Horloge at the Musée d’Orsay in 2011 and their recent design for a suite at the Hôtel Lutetia in Paris.

Barroco Rococó is their first exhibition in a French museum. The exhibition’s scenography, designed by Humberto and Fernando, is based on coconut fibre, a sustainably-grown material that is widely used in their native country. Within this natural setting, they have chosen to present new work created for the Galleria O in Rome. In conjunction with the Italian curator Emanuela Nobile Mino, the gallery invited the Campana brothers to explore the theme of “private Roman interiors” with a view to designing objects relating to a particular place representative of the major architectural periods of Rome (Antiquity, Renaissance, Baroque etc). The aim was to draw a parallel between design and architecture. In 2011, the first pieces were presented at the Brazilian Embassy in Rome’s Palazzo Pamphilj. Within this jewel of Roman architecture, Humberto and Fernando sought to pay

tribute, among other things, to Brazil’s own Baroque art. These pieces were made of gilded bronze moulded from a repertoire of mainly 17th- and 18th-century decorative elements. The moulded elements were then “perverted”, to use the Campana’s own expression, to produce unusual creations in noble materials such as Carrara marble and bronze. “Reconstituting archeology” in this way produces highly personal collages that are, on occasion, intentionally imperfect. The pieces are moulded in a Roman workshop specialised in bronze and marble work, and each design is produced in a limited edition. After this first show, the Campana brothers decided to continue working with the Galleria O, introducing other materials (bamboos) and other references (elements drawn from nature). These new creations are presented here for the first time – utilitarian pieces that are real works of sculpture, but devoid of all surface decoration. Baroque art, in all its abundance and virtuosity, remains the main thread of this project which, for the Campana brothers, is a further opportunity to make their native culture their own. Creating these works in Rome rather than in Brazil proved to be particularly stimulating, the city’s architecture providing the cohesive element for the project. Through unexpected alliances of diverse materials and references, Fernando and Humberto Campana remain faithful to their baroque, poetic nature.



Lacrime di cocodrillo
Candelabrum, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, red alabaster
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 12 and 1 prototype,
Alessandra and Paolo Barillari’s
collection, Rome



Tritone Candelabrum, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, Carrara marble
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Ouro Preto Lamp, 2011
Prototype
Gilt bronze, Carrara marble
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 12 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Aurora Mirror, 2012
Prototype
Gold-coloured mirror
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Caetés Cabinet, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, Mongolian fur
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Calina Ceiling Light, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 25 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Anhanguera Sofa, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, Mongolian fur
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Tarquinio Sofa, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze and eco fur
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Settimio Cabinet, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, bamboo
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Saturnia Ceiling Light, 2012
Prototype
Gilt bronze, bamboo
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome



Chica Coffee Table, 2012
Prototype
Gold-plated brass,
white and black marble
from an extinguished
quarry in Aquitaine
Galleria O. Project, Rome,
limited edition of 3 and 1 prototype,
Galleria O. collection, Rome