

5 MINUTES *with...*

TOM DIXON

You've seen the S-Chair, the Mirror Ball lamps and the famous Offcut stools and tables. Tom Dixon tells *Style:Living* how he gets his ideas.

TUNISIA-BORN BRITISH DESIGNER TOM DIXON IS NOTORIOUS for being self-taught, whether in rock music (his first "job") or design (which he started while recovering from a broken arm that halted his musical career). In town to give a talk at LaSalle College of the Arts thanks to Xtra Living, which carries his products, Dixon is quiet, almost diffident. Until you get him talking about something he likes...

Do you start with the idea of an object in mind, or do you start with the function of it?

Usually... I often don't have an idea at all. I mean, I like processes, I like materials, I like shapes and I like particularly the means of production that a factory or craftsperson uses and I quite like a lot of shape and sculpturing and interiority. But I don't really go down the "functional" route at all. I mean sometimes, that's the point of the shape of an object, and sometimes I do like things like luminosity and surface. Functionality sort of comes along the way...



1 Spin table candelabra. 2 Jack lamps. 3 Void pendant lights.

You use the phrase "generosity" on materials. What does this mean to a non-designer?

Generally in objects, people try to use a bare minimum to reach a price. And I'm always concerned that things have a certain weight and a certain durability, so they'll last a bit longer. So some of my work is about trying to strip out "fashionability", to strip out obsolescence, if you like. So the things can exist for a long time. And then, I like things to have a certain weight to them — I'm quite clumsy as a person so I like things quite big, I'm not a mini/micro person.

So the microcassette recorder is not a thing you would design?

I can totally appreciate it, but it isn't something that I would be designing, yeah. I'd love to have a go, but mine wouldn't look like that...

Maybe something like an old-fashioned gramophone?

Not quite that big...

A mini-gramophone, then?

Possible.

How would you modify your famous Jack lamp design if you were to do something like this now?

Modify it? I'm more interested in my next project, really. I try and forget



about [past ones]. I can see all kinds of things that I might do slightly differently but, ultimately, I'm more interested in next year than last year.

Are you a strongly CAD/CAM sort of designer; a very visual one?

My introduction to design was sort of pre-computer [in the early '80s] and came through learning how to weld metal. My first business was very much about manufacturing, making things out of metal. So the production and design... the computer, I use a lot as a tool, now, but it's just one of many tools because the reality is my fingers are much happier when I have a full three-dimensional, full-sized object. Not even small models... I like to make a full-scale prototype very early on in the process. It's very important to me how things sit in space, how much they weigh, just the way they stand on the floor or hang off the ceiling. :

Read the full interview on the *Style:Living* app for iPad.





BARBARA BARRY

Barbara Barry on Asia, her brand and the importance of freshly ironed sheets.

BARBARA BARRY HAS AN AIR OF ELEGANCE ABOUT HER that few carry these days. We are seated on a plush couch, designed by her, of course, and served tea from a gorgeous tea set (also designed by her), in a room reminiscent of the glory days of Hollywood glamour. Fresh from an earlier interview, her hair is still immaculate, her mannerisms still poised, and she is ever eager to share her design philosophy with us.

1 Barry's signature piece, the Bracelet chair. **2** Lady's desk in ivory-paint finish, felt-lined top drawers, and nickel pulls and *sabots*. **3** Facet dining table in dark walnut, with Elegance side chair, Graceful armchair and Startelt settee.

How would you describe your journey to becoming a successful interior designer?

It's a lifetime, really. When you are gunning for success, it doesn't come overnight. I think the definition of success is when you love what you do.

I've always loved what I've done, and for me, the fact that it's now gone out to the larger public is a success story. I think success is about being able to be yourself, and about being recognised through the quality of your work.

Do you design from an idea or from materials?

Definitely an idea — that idea being soft, sensual living. It's about feeling good in a space, feeling grown-up, and feeling like my space is a reflection of who I am. If I want to be a movie star, then my space is my movie and I want it to feel glamorous. I love glamour, and I love elegance. I love the fineness of living. [*Gestures at refreshments*] Having a cup of tea and having a little napkin for it.

So it's about the whole picture, instead of the individual pieces?

After you leave today, you might not remember everything about this room we're sitting in right now, but you will definitely remember the feeling of sitting in it. There's something deeper at work here, it's not just about chasing the trends. It's something that Asia has taught me — that there is a

deeper wisdom at work in planning a successful space. Magazines tend to show a lot of "trend" pieces. They reduce them to little pictures floating on a page, and people begin objectifying them instead of seeing them as part of a picture. They become objects. I am not about the "objects"; I'm about the mood, the feeling and the picture in your head.

The key to a beautiful home is...

Confidence. If you are proud of your home and proud of welcoming people into it, your home will be beautiful.

What cheap changes can I make to a room, yet still make it look chic?

Good design is not about money these days. In fact, it has never been a better time to be poor, in some respects. Good design can be found for relatively little as it has begun to trickle down into the masses.

It's not about individual fixes, it's about cultivating an awareness. If I had nothing today, I would pick a polished wooden floor, a simple mattress on the floor and ironed sheets. You don't need a lot of stuff to feel luxurious; you just need to make the effort to understand what you already have. :

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PHILIPP MAINZER

The co-founder, creative and managing director of E15 Design, Philipp Mainzer, on creativity and the next big trend in furniture design.



1 Bess sofa, Nima cushions, Bessy lounge chair and stool, and Habibi tray with base. 2 Zehn table. 3 Jean stool.

to the entire home. We don't just do wooden tables; it's about creating a lifestyle, a look and a story for our customers.

What inspired you to form E15?

The pursuit of a better product. We start by selecting a material we want to showcase — and we build our design around it. Fifteen years ago, minimalism was all the rage and everyone was working with aluminium, plastic finishes, lacquers and laminates. I looked at the industry's outlook and it was cold and bleak. That was why E15 decided to work with solid woods; we wanted to bring everything back to life.

What drives your creativity?

Definitely the material. Construction, craftsmanship, functionality and form — all of these come secondary to selecting a really good material to tie everything together and build an idea from there.

What are the elements of good design? Do you think there should be rules, or should it be open to constant reinterpretation?

It should be open to constant reinterpretation. If you isolate each piece from our collection, you will realise that they are not screaming out that they are “designed”. Good design is very much about proportion, subtlety and quality. It should be able to make you look twice and surprise you. It should tell you a story about how the product is made and be able to blend into your life. :

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ARCHITECT PHILIPP MAINZER created the iconic Backenzahn stool and then the Bigfoot table in 1994, a year before he founded the company, E15, which received the “Best of the Best” Red Dot Award 2010 for the CH04 Houdini chair by Munich-based designer Stefan Diez. Today, Mainzer runs the company with shareholder Peter Wesner.

Does a national design identity exist?

There are some subtle differences, even though our goal as designers is to avoid being too specific or regional in our outlook. If you examine E15's collection, you will notice that the pieces share a “common language” of quality materials and design that we hope everyone will be able to relate to. Having said that, you would probably also be able to recognise a European or German influence in our designs.

You started E15 in London. Does the true heart of your design aesthetic lie in this city?

It's a combination of my experiences. I usually travel alone so I have



plenty of space to immerse myself in cultures that aren't my own. It's about experiencing different cultures, and drawing inspiration from them.

What aspect of a culture inspires you the most?

It's the habits of each particular culture that inspire me. Different cultural habits inspire different applications for a product. I enjoy transplanting those differences into other cultures, which brings exciting changes to the way people interact with and enjoy the product.

Which of your designs are you most proud of and why?

I'm most proud of our complete collection. It's consistent and caters

