

# MR PORTER

THE DAILY BITE-SIZED  
STYLE

## FIVE STYLISH DESKS CURATED BY MR THOM BROWNE

1 WEEK AGO | WORDS BY MR ADAM WELCH



Installation view at Design Miami/Basel, 13-18 June. Photograph courtesy Thom Browne

For the past three years, annual design fair Design Miami/ Basel has mounted a programme called “Design at Large”, in which an internationally recognised design talent curates an exhibition of large scale works – in a way that’s as much unlike the traditional exhibition format as possible. Previous editions have been curated by the likes of hotelier Mr André Balazs (the man behind The Standard hotel group) and Ms Martina Mondadori Sartogo (the founder and editor-in-chief of influential interiors magazine Cabana). But this year, for the first time, the talent in question is a fashion designer – menswear maverick Mr Thom Browne, no less.

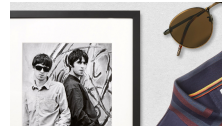
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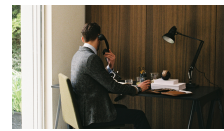


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1 DAY AGO

keen eye for design and his penchant for interrogating the format of the runway presentation in his own seasonal shows. This is the man, after all, who, for his SS11 show, held a Nasa-style press conference – replete with gilt-lipped astronauts – in Paris' Communist Party headquarters, designed by the visionary Brazilian modernist architect Mr Oscar Niemeyer. Given such pedigree, there was always going to be something a little spectacular about this particular exhibition. And yesterday, as it launched, it became clear that Mr Browne is not one for disappointing his fans.

For Mr Browne's curatorship of Design at Large 2017, he has reconstructed the set from his AW14 show – a woodland landscape populated with animals, all of it sewn together from classic menswear fabrics. Alongside this, he is curating an exhibition of great desks of the 20th century, in a nod to the show he mounted at Pitti Uomo in 2009 (this featured multiple models sitting at desks tapping away noisily at typewriters – the performance was recreated yesterday at the fair but with young design students instead).

Why desks? "I find their utilitarian purpose in relation to uniformity and true functionality inspiring," says Mr Browne, whose ongoing deconstruction of the grey suit in his design work tends to chew over similar themes. He chose these particular desks, he says, "purly



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century,” but he also enjoys the contrast between the rather austere landscape of desks and the wilder scene that, at the fair, it sits next to. What makes a great desk? Mr Browne himself has one by French modernist Mr Jacques Adnet in his office, which he prefers to keep “uncluttered” (unsurprisingly). But in general terms, he says, “a perfectly designed desk addresses both utility and simplicity in its design”. Consider this mantra as you peruse the below selection taken from Mr Browne’s Design at Large exhibition, which runs until 18 June.



Photograph by Circe. Courtesy Thom Browne

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**THE FOLLOWING DESKS ARE  
APPROVED BY MR THOM BROWNE**

**“DESK” BY MS JANINE  
ABRAHAM AND MR DIRK  
JAN ROL**



Photograph courtesy Galerie Pascal Cuisinier

The partnership (professional and personal) of Ms Janine Abraham and Mr Dirk Jan Rol, who launched their agency in 1957, was a particularly serendipitous one. To the spectacular furniture pieces they produced in the 1960s and 1970s – many of which were designed with mass production in mind – he brought his architectural nous, while she brought a certain element of appealing fantasy. This desk is a standout example of both qualities – its bold geometric structure appears to float above the ground, thanks to its transparent base made from criss-crossing sheets of glass.

## “BUREAU PRÉSIDENTE” BY MR JEAN PROUVÉ





Photograph courtesy of Jousse Entreprise

For all our readers currently thinking “oh, what a nice desk”, bear in mind that the 2016 auction price for this bad boy was something in the region of \$137,000. Yes, Mr Jean Prouvé is among the most in-demand of the modernists, and this is one of his most lovely and office-worthy creations. Constructed on a gentle curve, so you can pile it with many different piles of important papers, it utterly lives up to its presidential title. Probably not something to put on the tax return, though, if you don’t want to be impeached by anyone, that is.

## “PIGEONHOLE DESK” BY MR PIERRE JEANNERET



Photograph courtesy of Galerie Patrick Seguin

Talking of fashion designers and furniture – Mr Raf Simons is a particular fan of the work of Mr Pierre Jeanneret. In fact, the Belgian designer’s showroom is full of Jeanneret chairs. So consider this desk doubly endorsed. But beyond its style kudos, this is a supremely practical piece, equipped with front-facing pigeonholes to allow you to get all those pesky books off the writing surface so you can actually, well, do some work.

## “PRESIDENT DESK” BY MR PIERRE GUARICHE



Photograph courtesy of Galerie Pascal Cuisinier

CHAT TO AN EXPERT



Eames, made a name for himself by creating ingenious, simple designs perfectly suited to mass production in the somewhat tight conditions of postwar France. This desk testifies to the clarity and simplicity of his vision.

## “TABLE MAISON DU BRÉSIL” BY MS CHARLOTTE PERRIAND



Photograph courtesy of Galerie Patrick Seguin

This rather sweet-looking desk was created for the Maison du Brésil, an international residence for Brazilian graduate students at Paris' Cité Internationale Universitaire, which was built in the late 1950s. Le Corbusier was not the architect that was originally commissioned to work on this project – that was Mr Lúcio Costa, the man who planned Brasília – but Le Corbusier was certainly the architect that muscled in on it, changed the design, and completed the building, bringing

collaborator Ms Charlotte Perriand to work with him on the furniture and interiors. With respects and sympathy to the late Mr Costa, we can't help but like this simple, practical design. Sorry.

HOT DESK