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christmas unwrapped

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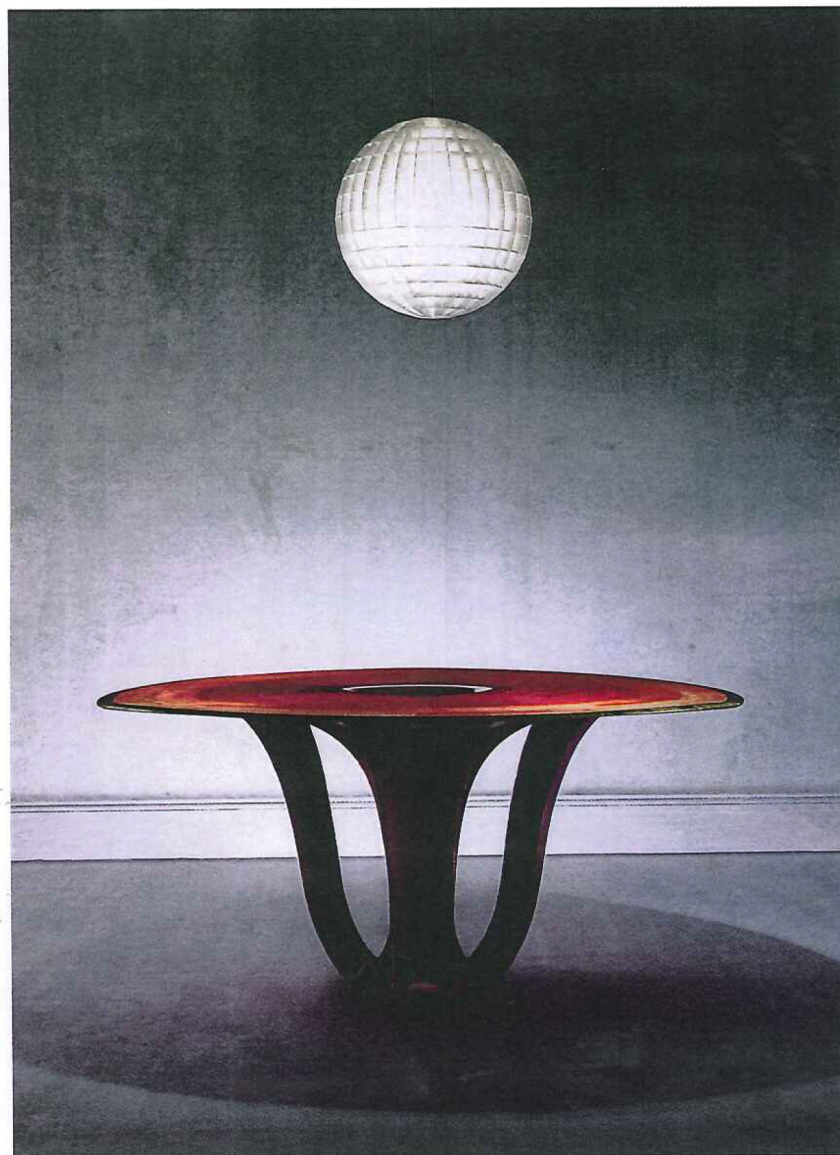


how to spend it
special christmas edition

TRUE COVETABLES

The conversation piece this Christmas is part table, part artwork that uses an interesting mix of organic and composite materials to make the functional sculptural, says Charlotte Abrahams





L I first became aware of a new trend in conversation-piece coffee tables at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile in April, when the Italian furniture maker Moroso unveiled a beautifully ethereal take on the nesting table called Clouds (from about £685, pictured on final page). Moroso has a long-held reputation for creating pieces that go beyond the purely functional (in the 1990s it launched Ron Arad's extraordinary Spring Collection of easy chairs) and Japanese design company Nendo's delicate-looking statement tables, conceived by abstracting photographs of clouds into a dotted pattern, then laser cutting the result into the table itself, continues this tradition.

By September, the trend was in full swing and the London Design Festival was fizzing with coffee tables of various shapes, heights and sizes that blurred the boundaries between form and function. At the Superbrands show, for example, new Portuguese company Ginger & Jagger launched the playful Pebble, which, with its ultra-smooth spheres of chestnut, hammered metal and Brazilian cedar, is as much a strokeable installation as it is handy side table (£665, pictured on next page). Over at 100% Design, another Portuguese design brand, Boca do Lobo showed a solid block of mahogany wrapped in polished brass – a piece the designers describe as “jewellery for the home” (from £5,480, pictured on final page) – while London-based designer Constanze Schweda presented her sculptural Infinity Curl tables (from £543; example pictured on next page, £576). Inspired by the Japanese art of Kirigami, in which paper is cut and folded into three-dimensional forms, Schweda cut and “drew” sheets of 3mm steel into shape using both industrial manufacturing techniques and traditional craftsmanship.

“The hand ‘drawing’ of the tables into shape is a sculpting process and each piece is fashioned as a one-off,” Schweda says. “Thin sheet metal behaves like paper during forming, becoming rigid in the final stages. It’s like teasing a new form out of flat material.”

Left: Laurameroni for Keir Townsend brass coffee table, from £2,500.

Above: Studio Silverlining sycamore, lacquer and laminated composite Infinity table, £66,000

All these pieces function perfectly well as tables, but it is their visual impact that really matters. “Collectors do want functionality,” says Ian Stallard, one half of design duo Fredrikson