Top dog
Cock your ears and wag your tail.
It’s our biggest issue of the year.
Down boy!

William Wegman
King of canine conceptualism

Liz Diller
First Lady of US architecture

Partying the Smallpaper* way

2 Guest Editors

Ettore Sottsass before Memphis

Mario Bellini’s photographic odyssey

Renzo Piano on the up in Athens

THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU

OC TOBER 2015

WPR15OCT903.pgs 20.08.2015 13:58
Rule breakers

Catch Alex Rasmussen's digitalised ocean wave plus all that’s set to make a splash at the London Design Festival

As the London Design Festival broadens its scope to become a major public event, it is also expanding its physical presence in the city, giving historical spaces a new lease of life through exhibitions and installations. This year’s main event includes a residency over ten rooms of Somerset House’s West Wing, with ten international designers given carte blanche to get creative with their spaces.

Featured projects will include installations with a technological bent, such as the work of German director Tino Schaedler and architecture studio United Realities, exploring the links between the physical and the digital, and Jasper Morrison’s designs for Punkt (W*193), which feature in an exhibition focusing on our relationship with technology. There will be more purely aesthetic exercises, such as Arik Levy and Tabanlioglu Architects’ installation exploring the theme of transparency; practical displays, including Paperless Post and Patternity’s series of digital invitations; and two reading rooms, one by Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby in collaboration with Knoll, and another by London designer Faye Toogood, whose project recreates a derelict country house.

New products on show will include Nendo’s ‘Next’ carbon-fibre shelves, Luca Nichetto’s playful lamps for Swedish design company...
Hem, and British designer Ross Lovegrove’s installation of speakers for Kef, produced in collaboration with anodised aluminium specialist Neal Feay Company. The brand’s director, Alex Rasmussen, is also on the list of participatory designers, presenting The Wave, a 2.90m-tall anodised aluminum installation, which marks the California firm’s first project in London.

Founded in 1945 by Rasmussen’s grandfather, Neal Feay Company is a global leader in creative anodised aluminium, with a portfolio that includes commissions for Louis Vuitton and Design Miami, products for Holly Hunt and Opening Ceremony, and collaborations with artists through a residency programme at the firm’s Santa Barbara HQ. Although Rasmussen has been the design motor behind the company’s output, this will be the first time he has been billed as a designer in his own right.

‘He’s different from the other contributors in that he is a manufacturer and fabricator,’ explains Ben Evans, director of London Design Festival, who invited Rasmussen to take part in the project and suggested he contribute as a designer. ‘I was inspired by the fact that he has worked with many of the world’s leading designers as a preferred supplier of aluminium,’ says Evans.

For a long time, Rasmussen had planned to use his company’s expertise with the material to produce something on a large, architectural scale. ‘One of our major constraints at Neal Feay is that we can’t build single enormous pieces,’ he explains; each piece of aluminium the firm produces has to fit into CNC machines and anodising tanks, meaning that anything large scale would have to be modular.

So when Evans’ invitation arrived, Rasmussen decided it was time to fulfill his ambition: ‘The only option was to go big.’ This resulted in what the designer describes as ‘a big blue ocean wave; a slightly abstract, kind of pixelated, digitalised wave; yet’.

‘I want to be known as the guy who redefined what people can expect aluminium to do’
something pretty close to the exact form of what water does.’ And Rasmussen and his studio are very familiar with that, being a team of 70 surfers. ‘The Pacific Ocean is a constant source of inspiration,’ he says, which is why the scope of his project is ‘to bring a dose of California culture and Pacific Rim technology to London.’

As the only American in Somerset House’s West Wing, Rasmussen also tasked himself with a challenge: to bring a new point of view on American design, different from the craft-centric work coming out of Brooklyn, and closer to Silicon Valley’s technological approach. ‘Those Brooklyn guys are doing very high craft, but almost all of it is very much low-tech, and we are at the other end of it,’ he notes. ‘We are very much a Pacific Rim company, and we use cutting-edge technology all the time.’

The creation of each piece of The Wave, he says, requires 360 computer programmes. The structure and aesthetics of the piece are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry, while some of the technology are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry, while some of the technology are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry, while some of the technology are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry, while some of the technology are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry, while some of the technology are inspired by the work of Richard Serra and Frank Gehry are going to be interested in how the hell it stands up,’ says Rasmussen. ‘There is a beauty to the installation’s mechanism itself that I think will be really interesting.’

His work blurs the boundaries of art, design and engineering, meeting somewhere in-between: ‘You could call it an object, you could call it architecture, or you could call it a sculpture.’ The Wave is a new creative chapter for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.

‘What’s different about it from other design festivals is that it’s about ideas,’ says Evans, and this project is illustrative of that positioning: it’s an experimental project and very much about ideas rather than commerciality. So in a way it typifies what the LDF is about: experimentation and seeing new things you haven’t seen before.’

Contributing to the festival is a new creative for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.

‘What’s different about it from other design festivals is that it’s about ideas,’ says Evans, and this project is illustrative of that positioning: it’s an experimental project and very much about ideas rather than commerciality. So in a way it typifies what the LDF is about: experimentation and seeing new things you haven’t seen before.’

Contributing to the festival is a new creative for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.

‘What’s different about it from other design festivals is that it’s about ideas,’ says Evans, and this project is illustrative of that positioning: it’s an experimental project and very much about ideas rather than commerciality. So in a way it typifies what the LDF is about: experimentation and seeing new things you haven’t seen before.’

Contributing to the festival is a new creative for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.

‘What’s different about it from other design festivals is that it’s about ideas,’ says Evans, and this project is illustrative of that positioning: it’s an experimental project and very much about ideas rather than commerciality. So in a way it typifies what the LDF is about: experimentation and seeing new things you haven’t seen before.’

Contributing to the festival is a new creative for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.

‘What’s different about it from other design festivals is that it’s about ideas,’ says Evans, and this project is illustrative of that positioning: it’s an experimental project and very much about ideas rather than commerciality. So in a way it typifies what the LDF is about: experimentation and seeing new things you haven’t seen before.’

Contributing to the festival is a new creative for Neal Feay Company, a further confirmation that what makes Rasmussen and his studio unique is their restless attitude to manufacturing, and to discovering innovative ways to make things.