

**PLATFORM:  
BETHAN LAURA WOOD**

Large Print Guide

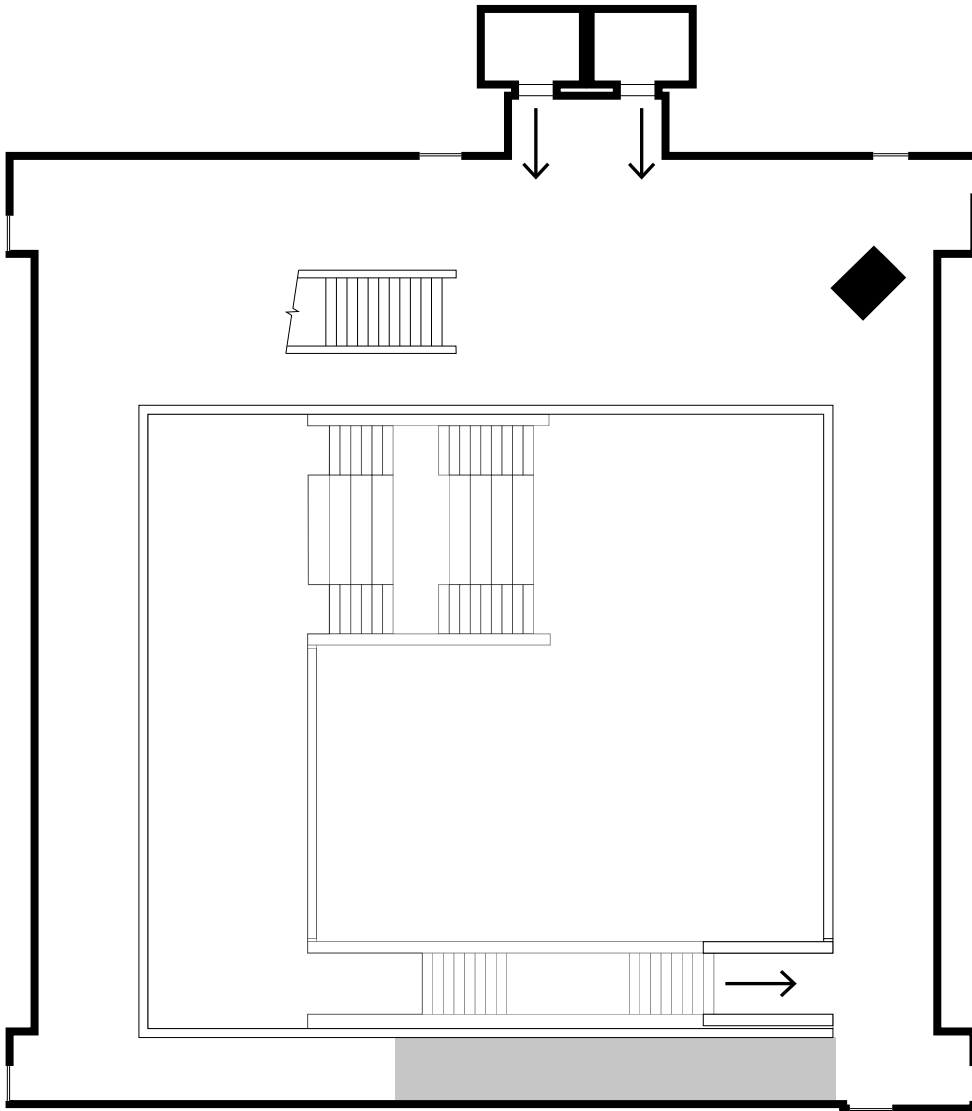
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# PLATFORM: BETHAN LAURA WOOD

‘I always hope that my objects bring enjoyment to someone’s life... I love when other people’s imaginations take over connected to my works. If I can spark curiosity within my work and create spaces for dreaming... I think that’s a nice thing to bring into someone’s life.’

— Bethan Laura Wood

The world of designer Bethan Laura Wood is a sumptuous explosion of colour, pattern and texture. Her vibrant and varied work nods to different cultures and time periods, celebrating individuality and maximalism. Wood is passionate about collaboration and learning from artisans and specialist craftspeople, and her pieces prove that design can be decorative and fun yet functional.

Wood's interest in artistic movements, materials and other designers' work steep her creations in meaning. Themes recur in her projects, blurring the boundaries between one collection and another. Whether subverting ideas about femininity and ornamentation, questioning our perception of reality in an increasingly digital world, or seeking to understand the connections we make with everyday objects, Wood's work invites us to look beyond the surface.

**Bethan and Wilma in their home**

2024

Photography by David Sierra

Courtesy of David Sierra

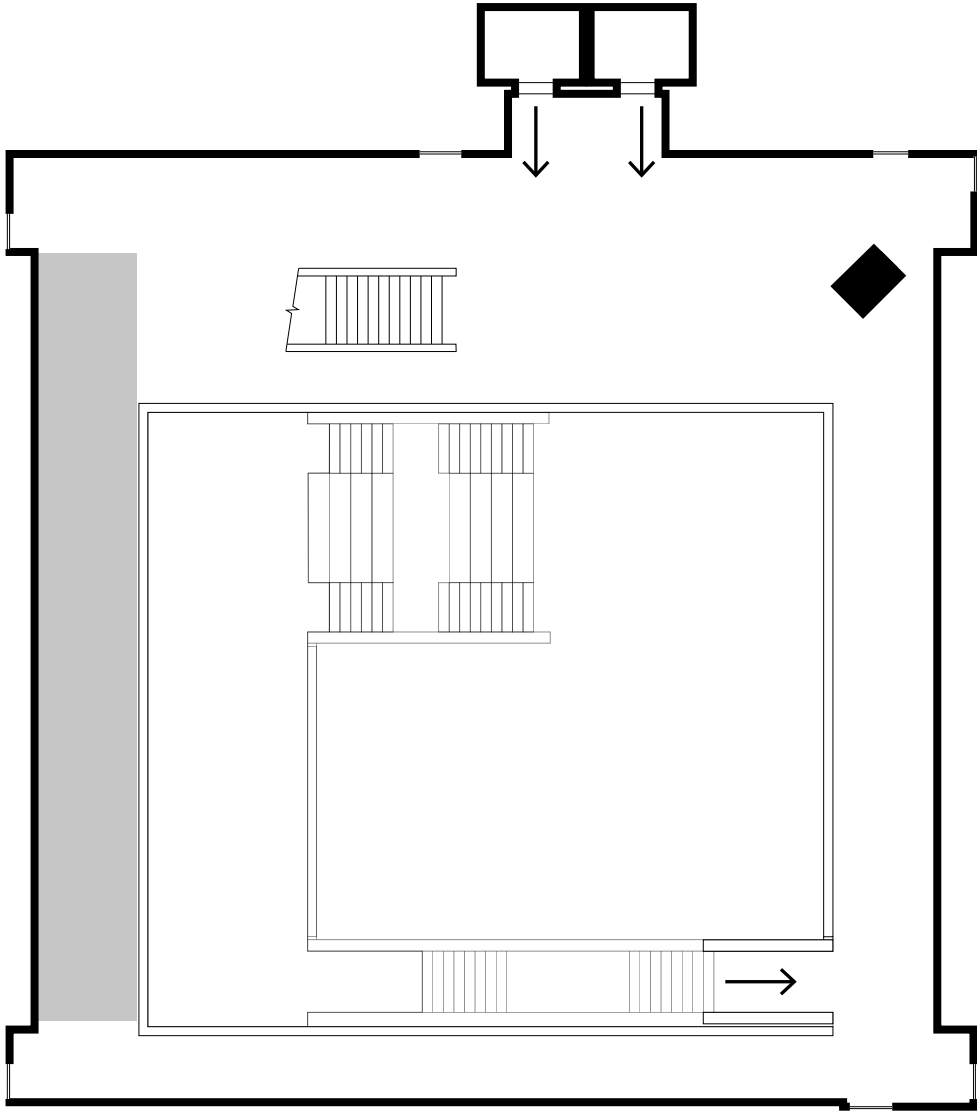
**In the Studio with Bethan Laura Wood**

2024

Directed by ModusBPCM

Produced by the Design Museum and ModusBPCM

Duration: 3 minutes, 6 seconds



# DESIRE

‘ I enjoy making pieces that have connections with the everyday. The spoon you use to eat your soup with should be an object you desire and love, just as much as a ring that you wear on special occasions. I find it odd that the objects we have the most interaction with are the ones that sometimes we care least about.’

— Bethan Laura Wood

What makes us pick one object over another? Bethan Laura Wood is fascinated by how we connect with everyday objects. As an avid collector herself, Wood’s work delves into how and why we covet certain pieces. She aims to imbue the pieces she designs with history, meaning, personality and nostalgia. By exploring objects that become integral to our daily routines, Wood seeks to design things that people want to keep, and which give a sense of ceremony every time they are used.

Sometimes we hold onto objects not because they have obvious value, but because they have integrated themselves into our daily routines. For years, Wood has kept this mug in her studio and continued to use it for tea breaks, as is evident in its tea-stained interior.

**Tea-stained studio mug**

Year unknown

Designer unknown

Ceramic

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood



# Stain

We often assume that use is damaging to a product and decreases its value, but usage can make an object more personal. Wood has treated the inside of these teacups to stain more in predetermined places, so the more the cups are used, the more the pattern reveals itself. Every pattern will be different depending on how the users drink their tea.

### **Stain teacups in Spot pattern**

2006

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Porcelain

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **Stain teacups in Flock pattern**

2012

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Porcelain

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Stains tend to be unwelcome on objects we use for eating and drinking. To ensure that these cups were hygienic to use, Wood undertook extensive research into the chemical composition of the tea stains and found that they are not harmful.

# Tongue

When Wood was commissioned by the German porcelain manufacturer Rosenthal to design a tea set, she wanted to pay tribute to the brand and its history. The hot pink colourway references the flamingos that once resided in the company's factory, while the tea set's name, 'Tongue', refers to the flat ribbons on the vessels that create the handles and spouts.

## **Tongue tea set in Pelican colourway**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced by Rosenthal

Porcelain

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

In Wood's design for the Tongue tea set, she was inspired by this teapot designed by Walter Gropius for Rosenthal in 1969, specifically the design of the lid and handle, and the way they join in a single flowing curve.

## **TAC teapot**

1969

Designed by Walter Gropius

Produced by Rosenthal

Porcelain

Design Museum Collection

In the early design phase of a project, Wood often begins by making paper models to figure out the design and how the object will be used. For the Tongue tea set, Rosenthal then created 3D printed models with interchangeable spouts, handles and lids to play around with the combination of shapes.

### **Paper model for Tongue teapot**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **3D-printed models for Tongue teapot**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Plastic

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **3D-printed spouts, handles and lids**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Plastic

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

For Wood, colour is ‘a dominant partner from the beginning’. She made these colour samples for the Tongue tea set by combining different coloured liquid clay, known as ‘slip’, components. The tea set comes in two colourways, ‘Pelican’ and ‘Peacock’.

### **Porcelain colour samples for Tongue teapot**

2019

Produced by Rosenthal

Porcelain

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

As well as making physical models, Wood used the 3D modelling software, Rhinoceros 3D, to develop her ideas. To ensure that the teapot poured well, she designed various spouts with the help of Rosenthal, finally settling on a sunken approach.

### **3D models of spouts for Tongue teapot**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Rhinoceros 3D

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Moulds for the Tongue tea set**

2019

Designed by Rosenthal

Photography by Rosenthal

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio



# After Party — Sweet Dreams

During a residency in Amsterdam's Bijenkorf department store, Wood was inspired by still-life scenes and portraits in the Rijksmuseum, and the brightly coloured tourist orientated bakeries that she passed every day. In response, she created a hypnotic, sickly-sweet installation of desserts. Wood embroidered and adorned each piece with pins and beads to echo the cheese and pineapple party classic. To complete this indulgent scene, she added intricately-folded cotton to represent both cream and millstone ruffs — a prominent feature in late 16th-century portraits.

**After Party — Sweet Dreams, Cream Stack**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg, with special thanks to Henderson McCue

Cotton, plastic beads, metal dress pins

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams, Melon**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg, with special thanks to Henderson McCue

Cotton, plastic beads, metal dress pins

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams, Banana Split**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg, with special thanks to Henderson McCue

Cotton, plastic beads, metal dress pins

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams, Full Melon Stack**  
2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg, with special thanks to Henderson Mccue

Photography by Angus Mill

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Wood created these woven tablecloths and tea towels to add delight and intrigue to the table decoration of the Sweet Dreams installation. They transform the dull duty of an after party clean-up into a late night disco room.

**After Party — Sweet Dreams tablecloth banners, aubergine, melon, banana, pineapple, cucumber**  
2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg

Jacquard weave polyester, lurex

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams thread samples  
for embroidery**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced in collaboration with TextielMuseum,  
Tilburg

Embroidered cotton

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams embroidery samples**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Embroidered cotton

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Wood collaborated with different experts to make her designs 3D. She learnt embroidery techniques from staff at the Textile Museum in Tilburg, the Netherlands. Working with the pattern cutter specialist Henderson McCue, she turned cotton fabric into 'cream' ruffs and developed the flat pattern to make the 3D pillow forms.

**After Party — Sweet Dreams sketchbooks**

2017

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Pencil on paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**After Party — Sweet Dreams paper model of ruff**

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio, with special thanks to Henderson McCue

Paper, dress pins

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio



# Bloom

For this special commission, involving a trip to Mexico to develop a new body of work, Wood was asked to consider: ‘What happens when local is global and global is local?’. Inspired by Mexican architecture, chilli-sugar treats ‘cachetadas’ and flower displays, she designed these wall-mounted flower lights. The milky and neon glass, which was blown by Mexican glass specialists Nouvel Studio, is combined with the hand-blown Pyrex of the Italian artisan Pierto Viero, who Wood met during a residency in Vincenza, Italy.

**Floreria Mercado Jamaica, Mexico City**

2017

Photography by Bethan Laura Wood

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Bloom wall lights and components/fittings**

2013

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio in  
collaboration with Pietro Viero and Nouvel Studio

Commissioned by Designer of the Future award  
2013, Design Miami Basel, sponsored by W Hotels

Hand-blown Pyrex glass, kiln glass, brass and  
electrical fittings

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

The Bloom wall lights are part of Wood's Criss-Cross collection. Each hand-blown light acts as a component to create a layering system of floating flowers that criss-cross to create a colourful grid arrangement of glass and light.

**Criss-Cross, Kite chandelier**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio in collaboration with Pietro Viero

Photography by Emanuele Tortora

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Model for Criss-Cross, Square chandelier**

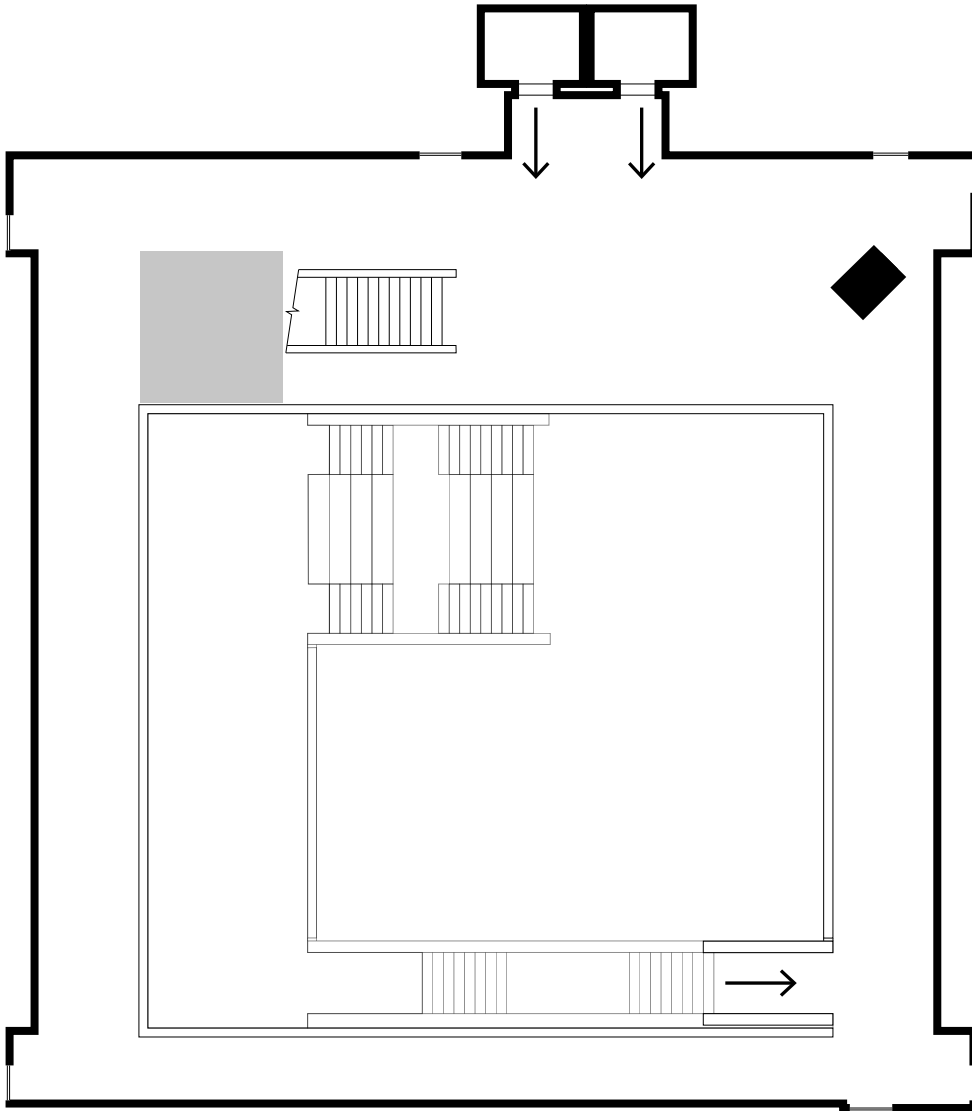
2013

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Plastic, nylon string

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio





Wood designed these soft, interactive sculptures especially for this display. The three giant rock shapes with 'super fake' precious stones showcase her terrazzo pattern that she created for the design company Poltrona, inspired by the psychedelia of many of their creations.

### **Terrazzo Quarry (installation of three units)**

2024

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio in collaboration with Poltrona

Internal filling: polyurethane foam, PVC panel.

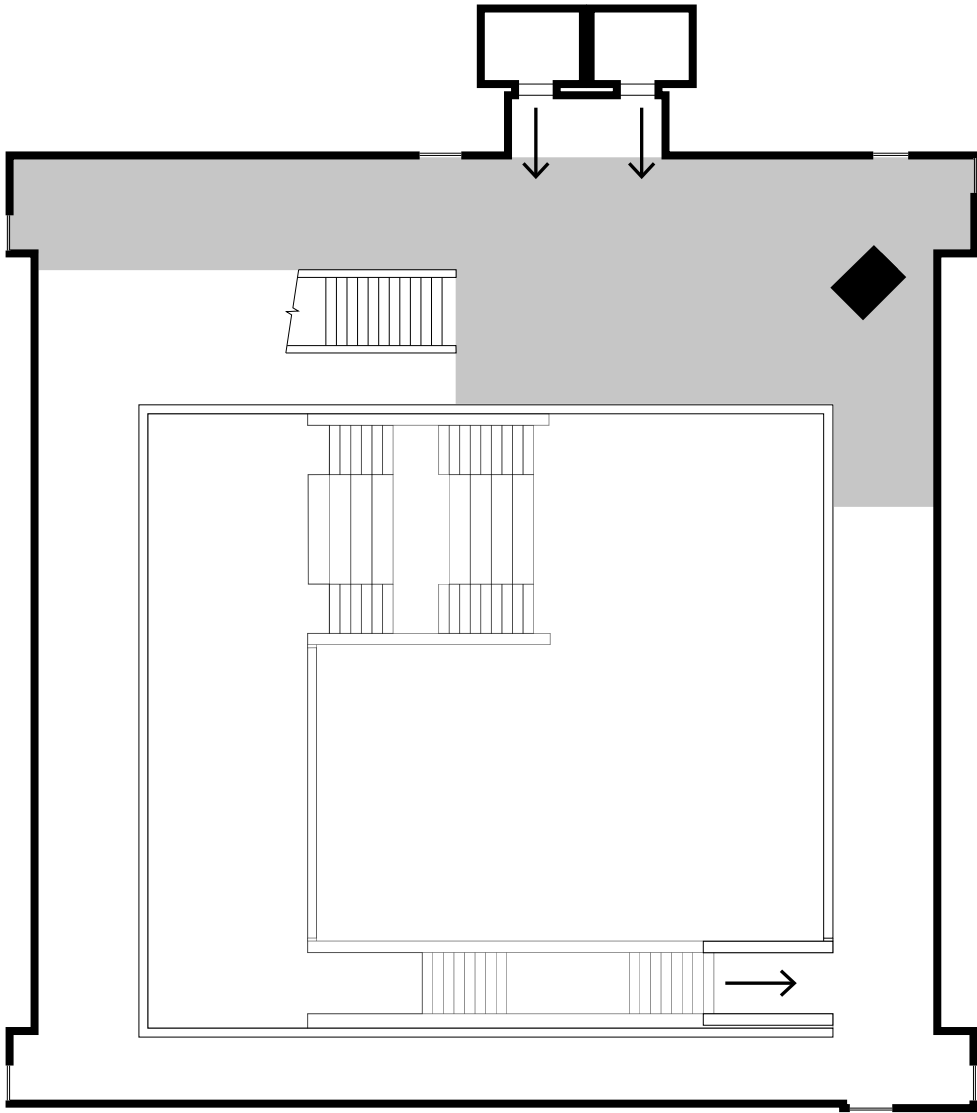
Textile: Digital printed (polyamide and elastane fabric, polyurethane mid layer)

Courtesy of Poltrona and Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Feel free to sit on or lean against these sculptures.

Please note:

- Interact with this sculpture at your own risk.
- Children must be supervised by an adult.
- This sculpture may be challenging to get up from. Please do not interact if you have any issues with mobility or reduced upper or lower body strength and/or are pregnant.



# HYPERREALITY

‘Often things are not what they seem, and there is a negative side to only understanding them at face value. And then, of course, there’s another side, where you can discover a lot of depth at surface level. Often, I like to be quite tongue-in-cheek or play around with big ideas of hyperreality. We live in a world where the digital landscape has become more “real” than the physical — to some people it’s their chosen reality... If it’s not online, did it happen? What is a “natural” material when everything is connected by layers and layers of mass consumption, systems of standardisation and industrialisation?’

— Bethan Laura Wood

Materials and their properties are important to Bethan Laura Wood’s practice. By understanding the strengths, limitations and characteristics of each material she works with, Wood plays with our understanding of what is natural versus what is man-made.

She is interested in creating illusions by layering materials and pattern to force us to question what we are looking at. In a post-Instagram world, where fleeting, glossy and often edited two-dimensional images are commonplace, Wood's work challenges our perception of reality.

This book sits on a shelf in Wood's studio and has provided her with inspiration since she was a child. It shows how to transform a flat piece of paper into different shapes and 3D forms using curving, cutting, folding and bending techniques.

**One Piece of Paper**

1963

Michael Grater

Published by Mills & Boon

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood

# Particle-Stack

Wood created the Particle-Stack collection during her 2010 Design Museum residency. Investigating the history of the building — then located at Butler’s Wharf, east London — she discovered that it was once a banana warehouse. In response, she developed a modular furniture system based on the visual aesthetic of crates and packaging materials. From afar, the material looks like OSB engineered wood, but it is actually made of intricately interwoven faux-wood laminates. Wood combined marquetry techniques with repeat pattern blocking to seamlessly blend individual tiles.

## **Particle-Stack**

2010

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Materials sponsored by Abet Laminati

Faux-wood laminates

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

For Wood, laminates are ‘the chameleon of the surface world’. Using differently sized offcuts and samples of faux wood laminate, she created an eye-catching surface pattern inspired by OSB board, a material that is often considered low quality and mundane.

## **Particle-Stack models**

2010

Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

## **Particle-Stack marquetry parts**

2010

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Materials sponsored by Abet Laminati

**Teaser: The Making of Particle-Stack Marquetry**

2013

Directed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio and  
Fernando Laposse

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

1 minute and 30 seconds



# Kaleidoscope-o-rama

Wood first developed her Kaleidoscopeo-rama project in Melbourne for the MECCA x NGV [National Gallery of Victoria] Women in Design Commission. Inspired by the gallery's British Regency room, she created an installation with kaleidoscopic patterns and colours that references London's 18th-century Bluestocking Society, which encouraged women to discuss the arts and current affairs in public, at an equal level to men. Wood has since established Travelling Bluestocking Salons, for which she creates a new design for each location.

Based on Wood's tessellated wood veneer, she designed a collection of carpets that nod to the popular painting method of 'graining', a decorative technique that imitates the look of expensive and rare hardwoods. The carpets create semi-domestic spaces to gather, share and discuss.

**Kaleidoscope-o-rama – Fancy Woods  
carpet collection**

2024

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio for  
the Travelling Bluestocking Salon in Milan

Produced by cc-tapis

Hand-tufted and hand-dyed coloured Himalayan  
wool

Courtesy of cc-tapis

The Kaleidoscope-o-rama carpets are Wood's contemporary take on highly decorative rugs that were popular during the Regency period in Britain (1811–20), which, through industrial weaving, became available to a wider market. Each rug is inspired by 'book matching' different wood veneers — folding out each veneer leaf with its mirror image, like the centre pages of a book.

**The making of Kaleidoscope-o-rama —  
Fancy Woods carpet collection**

2023

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Produced by cc-tapis

Photography by cc-tapis

Courtesy of cc-tapis

Wood designs and develops new elements for each of her Travelling Bluestocking Salons, building on the visual language of her first Kaleidoscope-o-rama collection created for the National Gallery Victoria, Melbourne. Each new Bluestocking Salon event has a different theme which Wood decides in collaboration with curator and writer Libby Sellers.

### **Sample materials and colours for the Kaleidoscope-o-rama project**

2024

Hexagon sample, veneer colour swatches and edge ribbon test blocks by ALPI, yarn samples from cc-tapis, card models courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Inspired by shrine and altar displays, Wood designed this shelf to highlight the deeply personal objects it holds. Loaned from different creatives, they represent items instrumental to shaping their practice. The shelf featured in Wood's most recent Travelling Bluestocking Salon in London.

### **Kaleidoscope-o-rama shrine shelf**

2024

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio for the Travelling Bluestocking Salon in London themed 'Mother Tongue'

Bespoke ALPI veneer, wood board, glass and brass  
Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio, with thanks to Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation



# HyperNature

In 2018, the champagne house Perrier-Jouët commissioned Wood to design an immersive experience for their brand. She created HyperNature — a full-sized psychedelic tree that can hold champagne flutes. With branches made from aluminium, and leaves and petals made from PVC, Wood's design blurs the boundaries between the natural and man-made. By delicately dyeing and working the PVC petals and leaves by hand, Wood elevates PVC from an everyday material into an artisan object.

As with many of Wood's projects, her process began with a paper model. Wood sees herself as a tactile person and likes to work in a hands-on way to understand the construction of her work from the start. Paper is a material she feels comfortable with and it works well for scale models.

**HyperNature, Wisteria tree paper model reproduction**

2024

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio for Perrier-Jouët

Paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Wisteria sketchbook**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

After Wood developed the cutting pattern for each branch, anodised aluminium specialists cut, dyed and bolted together the flat elements ready for shipping. Wood then gently bent each branch to achieve the desired shape and for the wall lights she added small lights to the structure. Finally, she dressed each tree with hand-dyed PVC petals, leaves and blossom.

### **Wisteria branch**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio for  
Nilufar Gallery

Anodized aluminium made in collaboration  
with Neal Feay, hand-dyed PVC, brass,  
electrical cables, LED

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

## **Wisteria**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio for Nilufar  
Gallery

Hand-dyed PVC

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

## **Wisteria colour samples**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Hand-dyed PVC

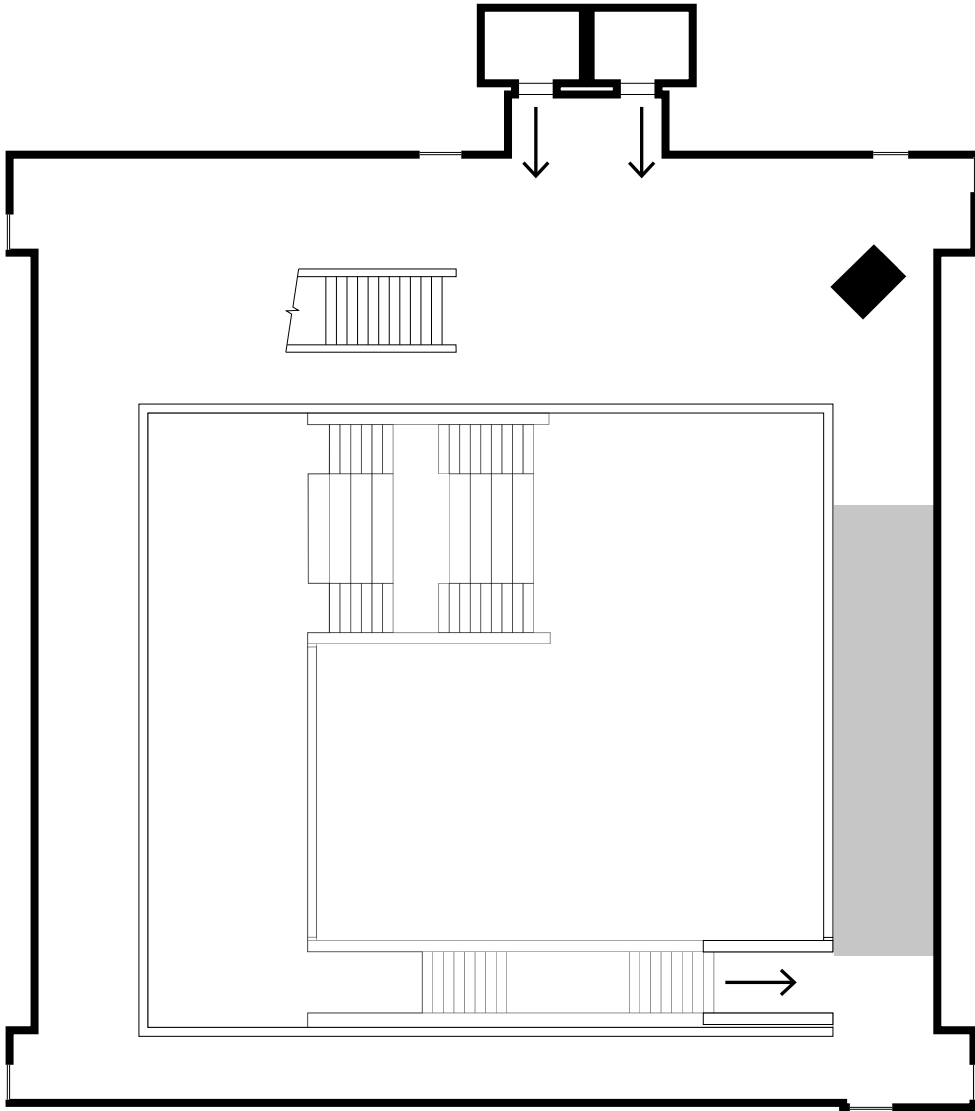
Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

## **HyperNature anodizing guide and flat pattern development**

2019

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio



# ADORNMENT

‘I like the idea of using ornamentation as the starting point rather than it being the end point. It’s a common ethos in design that you strip back to get to a ‘pure’ version of a piece. I wanted to subvert that.’

— Bethan Laura Wood

Bethan Laura Wood’s work is a fusion of ornamentation, decoration and pattern. At a time when adornment is viewed as superfluous, Wood richly embellishes the surfaces of her work to challenge connotations of decoration as silly, vain and without meaning. She creates structure and form from the ornament up, making the pattern intrinsic to the design. Wood considers how objects can be functional whilst also being highly ornate, using adornment to imbue an object with intricate, crossreferenced details and meaning.

Wood collects kimonos, and this is one of her favourites. Made from a woven, patterned silk fabric called Meisen (a Japanese form of the dyeing technique ikat), the kimono's bold print is inspired by western Modernist art but its fabric and shape are traditionally Japanese.

**Meisen kimono**

About 1950

Designer unknown

Silk

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio



# Maria Chaise A—Tolix

In 2015 Wood was invited to reinterpret Tolix's Model A chair, a ubiquitous seat in public spaces. She says of its design, 'what I like about it is its femininity. Its success was [in part] due to ... a certain softness, particularly in the curved back rest.' Wood's redesign was inspired by the robot Maschinenmensch Maria from the film 'Metropolis' (1927), suggested in the chair's industrial metal frame, and Queen Elizabeth I, whose 16th-century bodice is mimicked in the shape of chair's back.

## **Maria Chaise A – Tolix**

2015

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Laser-cut pressed steel, copper rivets, leather

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Wood covered the seat and back of the chair with a perforated pattern, then embellished it with coloured leather and copper rivets. Her design subverts the original chair's simplicity, combining two apparent opposites – the feminine form and industrial power.

**Maria Chaise A – Tolix sketchbook**

2015

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Maria Chaise A – Tolix template**

2015

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

**Leather rivets and punching tool**

2015

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Leather, metal

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Each a perfect stranger but for each a perfect partner

Stacked chairs like Virgin Queen  
can't get no satisfaction

So long live the short gammed darb, now and ever after

And bray at her hardboiled and uncankering perfection

Give me all four, for I am a leg man after all

Leather clad with spivy rivet and cabbies bead recline

Tis bliss to sit with you a while and simply pass the time

I take great comfort in the knowing that  
your back has mine

With your build that bears the masses and  
yet can bear butt one

Punch pressed and laser cut at best au natural

Birthday girl in Bethan frock no wonder you're up done

Half hundred colours upon you all sit well

For makers can afford to rest on hard laurels when

the future has come early and is sitting amongst them.

To accompany the chair, Wood commissioned this sonnet by the musician and artist Orlando Weeks. It subtly hints at the inspirations and construction of Wood's version of the Tolix Model A chair.

**'La Grande Dame'**

2015

Written by Orlando Weeks

# Meisen Cabinets

The Meisen Cabinets began with Wood focusing on the handles, which for her are ‘the jewellery of furniture’. She then collaborated with ALPI, Italian wood veneer specialists, to choose sheets of wood veneer mid-process to retain their ripples and waves of colour. These had a serendipitous similarity to Japanese kimonos made from patterned Meisen fabric popular throughout the 1920s and 1950s, giving the project its name. What started as an exploration into the humble handle exploded into a striking visual language and collection of works.

### **3D renders of handles**

2020

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Rhinoceros 3D

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

To start her exploration into handles, Wood began by making these foam and card models. The curved handles reference the handrails on Milan's metro system and the frame of the Tre Pezzi armchair by the Italian designers Franco Albini and Franca Helg.

### **Models of handles**

2020

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Card, foam

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **Pair of handles**

2020

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Powder coated metal

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

Wood was fascinated with the undulating colourful texture of ALPI's veneers when they were mid-process. 'They aren't usually commercially available', she explains. 'Every couple of sheets the whole colour balance changes. It's a mix between the uncontrollable nature of the sheet and intense industrial production.'

### **Mid-process veneer sheet**

2021

Produced by ALPI, selected by Bethan Laura Wood

Wood veneer

Courtesy of ALPI

### **Scale print outs of mid-process veneer sheets**

2021

Paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

For the form of the Meisen cabinets, Wood took inspiration from entomology. The scalloped hinges and scooped desk handles allude to crickets' legs and antennae and beetles' wings, while the trays on the top reference traditional lacquered cabinets from East Asia.

### **Meisen Cabinets sketchbook**

2021

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Pen on paper

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **Model for a Cabinet**

2021

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Commissioned by Nilufar Gallery

Photography by Bethan Laura Wood

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

### **Render of the Meisen Caterpillar Cabinet**

2022

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio

From Wood's Meisen collection, this cabinet references the caterpillar in Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland'. The cabinet's multiple drawers mimic the caterpillar's long, segmented body while the bespoke ALPI veneer evokes the colourful swirls and curls of smoke from his hookah.

### **Meisen Caterpillar Cabinet**

2022

Designed by Bethan Laura Wood with bespoke veneers from ALPI

ALPI wood veneer, brass, cellulose acetate

Courtesy of Bethan Laura Wood Studio



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The Design Museum is committed to reducing the environmental impact of exhibitions and displays. For this project, the team has reused exhibition furniture, reduced the transport distance of objects on view and worked closely with contractors and designers to find materials and production processes with as low environmental impact as possible.

For more information on the Design Museum's approach, and to download a guide to reducing the environmental impact of exhibitions, follow the QR code.

Explore the collection, discover events and browse the shop at



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