

bulthaup culture

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Welcome to bulthaup culture

Founding a new tradition

You may be familiar with the saying "Tradition is not about guarding the ash but keeping the flame alive." This expresses the notion that thinking about tradition does not mean holding onto the past but forging a direct connection to a new cultural source of inspiration. Even more satisfying than being part of an existing tradition is creating a new one.

The family-owned business bulthaup is now in its third generation and continuing its tradition of combining high quality with excellent taste. Quality is born of respect and one's own creative and technological skill. Good taste does not look back but concentrates on the essential. It takes inspiration from the innovative spirit.

Founding a new tradition means thinking of others, of tomorrow. And this is precisely what unites bulthaup enthusiasts and the kind of people we are profiling in this magazine. They are people who apply creativity and passion to something that they, perhaps, were the first to recognize as important and necessary. Dan Lerner from Israel is continuing the culinary tradition his mother started in Tel Aviv by adding new and upbeat recipes. Tyler Hays from Oregon invites customers to experience traditional Pennsylvanian craftsmanship in his showroom in New York. Sometimes innovations become traditions – it's a natural progression. Traditions also develop into a culture that is a source of new beginnings.

We hope you enjoy reading bulthaup culture.

Marc O. Eckert

CEO, bulthaup



"If you attach the right value to items and show them due respect, enjoyment of them becomes important. It is not about the kind of enjoyment we know today – the kind that is more closely related to status symbols and luxury – but about true well-being and the veritable skill of enjoying life to the full."

*Carlo Petrini, Founder of the Slow Food movement
From the Slow Food magazine, 5/2011*





In the name of the mother – how Dan Lerner is continuing the tradition that his mother began

Dan Lerner dedicated his tenure at bulthaup Culinary Academy in Tel Aviv to the culinary legacy of his mother, a food writer whose enthusiasm for food was contagious, not just in the family but in an entire country hungry for the good life. Her son goes out of his way to pass on her legacy to a new generation.

March 2011, in a fine-dining restaurant in Ramat Gan, east of Tel Aviv. Gastronomic food critic and writer Dalia Penn-Lerner was awarded the highest decoration by the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs's Israeli Chapter. With her typical modesty, surrounded by family, friends and members of the order, she said: "I am thrilled to be here, it really is fun. I'm not a woman of speeches, I will only say thank you."

For 30 years Penn-Lerner, known as "The First Lady of the Israeli Culinary World", served as Culinary Director of the order. She was responsible for checking, approving and selecting the dishes to be served at the Chaîne's culinary gatherings. With her vast amount of knowledge, her exquisite palate, a highly developed sense of taste and her strong passion for food, no one could have done it better. Now, at the age of 75, she is stepping down. "I have done my share," she continued, with some emotion. "It's time to leave the stage." A year later, in September 2012, she passed away.

July 2014, south Tel Aviv. Dan Lerner, Penn-Lerner's youngest son, opens the door to his gorgeous loft workshop on the 11th floor of an industrial building; this is where he writes, cooks and lives. Throughout the loft the walls are lined with hundreds of cook-books, evidence of his mother's long illustrious culinary career. Dalia Penn-Lerner lives and breathes in every corner of this loft – from her book collection to the hundreds of recipes and articles she published during her long career in Israeli culinary journalism. All of the items are now arranged in binders and cartons by her son, who dedicated his tenure at the bulthaup Culinary Academy in Israel to the enormous legacy left to him by his mother.

In order to comprehend that legacy, one must go back decades to London and a time when Penn-Lerner was a young actress who married Dr. Alec Lerner, a member of the board of directors of Marks & Spencer. As a young lady, Penn-Lerner enjoyed the good life filled with extensive culinary travel and frequent visits to wineries and restaurants with or without Michelin stars. In the late 1960s, as the Six-Day War broke out, the Lerner's immigrated to Israel – they wanted to contribute to the war effort.

When the war ended, they stayed and Penn-Lerner decided to study at "Le Cordon

Bleu" cooking school both in Paris and London. She was tired of her housekeepers' cooking. The combination of personal ties with international master chefs, the enormous amounts of culinary information she collected and her natural talent turned her into a food authority. "She possessed a vast amount of knowledge and devoted her time to research and study," says Chef Erez Komarovsky, a pioneer of the new Israeli kitchen and a close personal friend. "She had such a precise sense of taste, and an ability to decipher flavors and give them historical perspective, actually analyzing the pedigree of every dish. She could identify, out of all my dishes, what was the newest, the best, the most interesting – and she always got it right."

"Mom loved good ingredients and insisted that food should taste natural," says Dan Lerner. "She liked simplicity in cooking. She loved to discover chefs who were just starting out and helped promote them. She would call the greatest chefs around the world, who were her friends, and arrange internships for them, never asking for a thing in return." In the 1980s, Penn-Lerner started writing. It was the first time non-kosher food appeared in any Israeli newspaper or magazine, and her weekly columns brought the message of the international culinary world to the Israeli

Left:
Dan Lerner in front of
his mother's collection of
cookery books.

Next pages:
Photographs of Dalia
Penn-Lerner from her time
as an actress in the BBC's
The Forsyte Saga. – At home
in his loft apartment, Dan
Lerner prepares hamburgers
using organic ingredients –
his modern version of his
mother's simple cooking.

"Like mom, I believe simple food, simple and precise cooking methods, good raw materials and instructions and a glass of wine make up the ingredients for a good meal."

Dan Lerner, Tel Aviv

cuisine. "I'll never be able to step into mom's shoes," Lerner says humbly, adding "Those are very big shoes."

Maybe he won't be able to fill her shoes, but his involvement in the field is definitely connected to and affected by her. Perhaps it's because from a very young age he absorbed food and authentic culinary culture directly into his bloodstream. "While my sister played soccer outside, I cooked with mother," he says with a laugh. "At first I would watch her. As time passed she allowed me to cook. In effect, for many years I was her sous chef."

"She taught me everything, from the foundation up: sauces, vinaigrettes, how to hold a knife and use it, how to taste food and how to evaluate a dish. Despite smoking three packs a day, mom had an excellent, precise palate, like a computer. She could uncover secret ingredients in dishes."

In his family's home, food was everything. "We talked about it during the meal, we got lectures on what we were eating, we knew where every raw ingredient came from," says Lerner. "At school I would breezily tell my friends that I had eaten sushi, or lobster, or Wiener Schnitzel the day before. They didn't know what I was talking about. When friends would come over, and they'd open the refrigerator to get some cold water, they would be taken aback because there'd be a

bunch of live lobsters, or oysters. It was exotic. Even as kids, we would join our parents on culinary tours abroad, including Italy, France and Spain."

With that kind of childhood, it's not surprising that at the age of 21, Lerner opened his first bar and restaurant, B Square in Jaffa. The menu was built around his mother's recipes. In the early 1990s, he moved to Switzerland to earn a Bachelor's of Science in hospitality management and business administration. When he returned to Israel, he managed a few restaurants before going back to Europe for the Marks & Spencer managerial training program in London. From there Lerner went to New York, where he opened Azafran, a Spanish tapas restaurant. "The Spanish kitchen is my favorite, and in fact it's the only cuisine in which I am more of an expert than mom was," he says. When Azafran closed, Lerner became the Assistant General Manager and Wine Director at New York's legendary Brasserie restaurant. After 10 years in New York, he returned to Israel to be near his mother, who was already ill, and served as CEO of the Catit group (by top chef Meir Adoni) and as New York City project manager of Breads Bakery, a highly regarded Tel Aviv bakery. Earlier in 2014, he took the reigns at the first bulthaup Culinary Academy. Moreover, he served as

a judge in the Kansas City Barbeque Society world BBQ championship, an annual event.

Your mother left behind a rich culinary tradition. In what way are you continuing it? Her legacy is part of me, everything I do in my personal or professional life is influenced by it. She always told me, 'Follow your heart, don't cut corners, and don't sell your soul to the devil, stay honest'. On the professional level, if I look back at my work at the Academy, mom's spirit is expressed in my attempt to position the institution as a food authority, a place that is a stage for younger, less experienced, less famous chefs. I try to include them in our educational programs. I approach restaurants with leading chefs and ask them to allow their sous chefs to participate. It doesn't always work.

What marks your own influence in this tradition? My uncompromising insistence on the finest ingredients, within the bounds of kashrut, of course. While it is true that in the end it's market forces that decide which workshops will be held and which ones won't, it's important to me to expose the Israeli audience to cuisines that for whatever reason are less popular here. Israelis love the meat, Italian and Mediterranean food workshops, but are less into Indian, Chinese or Korean





**Dalia Penn-Lerner's
Artichoke with Vinaigrette**

Ingredients (for 6 portions):

6 globe artichokes
1 lemon, cut in half
4 tablespoons white wine vinegar or lemon juice
salt

For the dressing:

2 tablespoons wine vinegar
coarse-ground salt and pepper
6 tablespoons olive oil
yolks of two hard-cooked eggs, coarsely chopped
2 green onions or scallions, chopped
1 tablespoon capers, chopped

Preparation:

Dissolve salt in the vinegar and add pepper. Slowly pour in the olive oil, stirring constantly. Pour into jar with closely fitting lid, close tightly and shake well. Taste, and correct seasoning as needed.

For each artichoke, cut off the stem, close to the base, and slice 3 to 4 centimeters from the crown. Rub the cut edges with lemon to prevent browning. Boil water in a large pot, add salt and the white wine vinegar or lemon juice, place the artichokes in the pot stem-side down and simmer for 30-40 minutes. Toward the end of the cooking time, check occasionally for doneness: The artichokes are ready when the leaves detach easily. When they're done, remove from pot, drain and refrigerate briefly.

Place the artichoke on its base, reach into the center of the artichoke from the top, grab the group of thin leaves and with a twisting motion pull it out. Using a spoon, scrape out the fuzzy center that is the "beard," or choke.

The dressing:

Mix the egg yolks, the scallions and the capers into the vinaigrette. Pour about 2 tablespoons of the dressing into the hollowed center of each artichoke and pour the remainder into a gravy boat to serve alongside. To eat, simply tear off a leaf and dip it in the dressing.

From Dalia Penn-Lerner's "Sun, Sea and Food" / Modan Publishing House, Photo: Shay Afqin



Avner Laskin, a celebrated Artisan Chef and Baker is now at the helm of the bulthaup Culinary Academy. Just as Dan Lerner's mother, has been educated at the renowned Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in Paris. He also holds a diploma from the Ecole Lenôtre Bakery School in Paris and is the author of many popular books on cooking and baking.



food, for example. Like mom, I believe simple food, simple and precise cooking methods, good raw materials and instructions and a glass of wine make up the ingredients for a good meal.

What is your vision for the academy? At the end of the day, it's an experiential center. It is not really a classic cooking school, the academy isn't going to produce Israel's next top chef, but it is absolutely a center for serious foodies, for people who have seen the world, who've had a taste and want to know more about cooking and cooking techniques. Mom always told me: 'Make it simple, don't be pompous.' And so, considering that bulthaup is selling high-end kitchens, it is important to communicate with the academy's clients at their level, to have them make things they can do at home. It's important they leave with added value, for them to be able to distinguish different varieties of spices, oils and herbs. How to read a recipe, to understand its ingredients, to learn new techniques. Let's give them the tools to understand the whole picture.

If your mother were to teach a course at the academy, what would it be? That's a good question... I think Indian food. She always said that Indian food was what kept her

warm in winter, and she was an excellent Indian cook.

Do you miss her cooking? Every day, especially for its simplicity and precision, which I can't find anywhere unless I reconstruct her recipes. At family events we often make her curry, her artichokes in vinaigrette (see recipe) and other dishes, which eases the cravings.

You're aware that without the groundwork laid by your mother this conversation wouldn't have taken place. Without her, an institution like the bulthaup Culinary Academy in Tel-Aviv wouldn't exist. Absolutely, and that saddens me. When young chefs, food writers and bloggers don't know who she was and who started it all, it pains me. Mom never leveraged herself; money and fame never interested her. She did it all out of the love for cooking and for food, and unfortunately she never gained the wide recognition that she truly deserved.

Did she feel that way too? I don't think she thought about it, I think about it now.

In order to change the situation, if only a little, Lerner is currently working on a cookbook and website that will collect and docu-

ment his mother's life long work and all her recipes – the ones that were published in newspapers and magazines and the ones that only her friends and family had the opportunity to enjoy. With the exception of "Sun, Sea and Food" a mediterranean cookbook she wrote with two colleagues, Penn-Lerner did not publish any other cookbooks. To be able to focus on this project, her son has handed over his position as head of the Academy to his successor Avner Laskin. "I decided to prepare her recipes and photograph the dishes, as a homage to her and to make her articles more accessible – to others and myself," says Lerner.

*Copy: Merav Sarig
Photos: Michal Chelbin/INSTITUTE*



“An object's soul lies in its naturalness” – Veneer expert Johann Paintmeier on emotion and perfect craftsmanship

Johann Paintmeier knew from a very early age that he wanted to work with wood. Today, the veneer expert selects the materials used in bulthaup kitchens – from 2,000-year-old bog oak to rough-sawn timber.

Laughter floats on the summer breeze. It's Friday and the employees at bulthaup's plant in Aich, Bavaria are on their way home to their families. But in one of the production halls, someone is still hard at work. It's Johann Paintmeier, whose job it is to select veneers for the premium kitchen manufacturer.

He is a master of his trade, passionate about his work and passionate about wood. After we say our hellos, he proudly presents his timber, lightly caressing each piece. “You have to touch this,” he enthuses, handing me a heavily grained but completely black specimen. “Do you feel it? Just smell it!”

It really does have a distinctive smell. What is it? And why is it so black? It's a very special wood, bog wood, from an oak. It's around 2,000 years old. Recently, we received a quote for bog oak that, according to carbon analysis, was 2,970 years old.

Does wood from a bog oak have special properties? The first thing you notice, of course, is its color. But the most fascinating thing is its

incredible history. We have just 14 customers who can say they have bog oak in their kitchen. You have to be very lucky to find wood that is still usable after so long in a bog. It has to have been preserved in an airtight environment. Otherwise it will rot. This specimen is from near Linz in Austria.

Is it just oaks that survive in these conditions for so long? I have only ever heard of oaks. They are the most robust.

So which bog is this wood from? It's not. This one is smoked, which is the manmade version of bog oak. Of course, it is still a unique natural product. Do you see how different the grains are? This tree was close to water so it grew slower. The one the other wood is from had better soil and grew faster. Over there, we have a freshly smoked larch. It needs to rest a while. The wood is steam-treated with ammonia for four weeks, and the tannic acid in the larch reacts with it. Afterwards, it needs to be aired for a while. Smell it, it's not quite ready yet.

He's right: it still has a rather potent smell. To be able to tell just by looking at a piece of wood where the tree it came from requires extensive experience and a unique affinity with the material. Paintmeier is to the point: he simply likes it. At age five, his favorite place was his tree house. He learned about carpentry from a childhood book and decided it was the ideal career for him. Many five-year-olds have a clear idea of what they want to do later in life. But Paintmeier never changed his mind. He puts it down to childlike intuition.

How can we best understand the process job? The tree trunk is heated, right? Exactly. Whatever type of wood you're using, it is submerged in a basin at 50 or 60 degrees Centigrade and left for several days. This ensures the wood is not damaged when it is cut. And we use special cutting equipment.

Do you know each tree personally before this happens? Not all of them. I look at each tree after it has been cut, and I do mean every single one. I travel to the supplier to see how the wood is stored, and I inspect everything very carefully.

What is important when the wood arrives here in production as a veneer? What do you look for then? This is a critical stage for us,

because it's time to select the right wood. We build our kitchens individually for each customer so we need to find the best wood for each one and purchase the lengths that will help achieve the right result. It's an exciting task and one we complete with great care.

What kind of life should the tree have had? It needs to have had a good life, ideally growing in a quiet place and north-facing. The best trees grow in these conditions.

The art of veneer lost its good reputation in the so-called “Gelsenkirchen Baroque” era when it was overused by mass producers of cheap furniture. From Louis XVI right through to Biedermeier, many pieces would have been unthinkable without veneer. Did you have to re-invent the craft? I'd say redefine. Veneering has been around since ancient Egyptian times, and back then it was used for similar reasons: it has always been about conserving resources. The Egyptians favored ebony. But because it was only available in small quantities, they used veneers.

In the 1970s, many mistakes were made. People seemed to lose sight of the notion that you need to recognize the wood in the veneer and that it's important to know how it grew. We want to reclaim this concept. Veneer had become a mass-produced commodity and we wanted to rekindle its inner soul. Its soul lies in its naturalness.

bulthaup also uses solid wood. Is that better? Not always. In many cases, our solution of using a base and a veneer is ideal because we deliver kitchens all over the world and climatic conditions have no impact on the base. The wood does not change shape. Solid wood alters depending on humidity, which can be a problem in Singapore.

Even as a layman, it is easy to recognize how the Swiss pear tree Paintmeier is showing us grew. Using this high-quality material as a veneer and not in its solid form means conserving resources. It is a rare specimen, particularly in the quality required by bulthaup. To achieve the perfect grain effect, the veneer sheets are joined seamlessly together using a special gluing machine. This means bulthaup's veneered fronts all have the same appearance. If you've ever inherited older furniture, you know this isn't always the case.

What is the most important skill of a veneer expert? You need a good eye so you can



recognize the right kind of wood. Experience is also very important. You need to be passionate but grounded and have a real understanding of the material.

How do you create the rough-sawn wood? After sawing, the surface is not planed. Brushing creates the distinctive, natural texture. To ensure a good result, we brush it multiple times.

So how does one uncover the modern potential and uses of a coarse, rough material such as wood? In addition to working with veneers, Paintmeier trained in carving and still practices it from time to time. It has a calming effect on him. In both cases, uncovering the modern aesthetic and functional potential of wood is always a creative process. It requires having a vision of what you would like to accomplish, but also "listening" to the unique qualities of the material. Paintmeier also applies this thinking to the woodland area he purchased 20 years ago. He has a vision of preserving the trees forever – a very modern undertaking – and knows that creativity and being tuned-in to the unique needs of the land are necessary to accomplish this goal.

Do you have favorite types of wood? Of course. Each wood has its own character. I love olive because of its unique grain patterns. And the olive tree is a favorite of mine because it lives so long. It would be impossible to work with such large quantities of olive as we do oak and walnut, which remain the most popular. There simply wouldn't be enough trees and we don't want to be faced with deforestation.

What kind of people choose bog oak? I visited a customer who has a bog oak kitchen. He lives in Berlin and was exactly the kind of person I would have imagined. Someone who wants to be unique, who is looking for something out-of-the-ordinary.

Back in 1995 when you joined bulthaup, did you envisage working so closely with veneers? It developed over time. My past experience was important: my love of wood and the fact that I am versatile in my work. You can never know everything about wood and you're learning all the time. You have to realize that every tree is different and to treat its wood accordingly.

What was your carpentry teacher like? He was a carpenter with a few rough edges that you couldn't just sand away. He showed me how to select wood properly and taught me how to respect it as a natural, unique material with its own history. I have never simply discarded wood without thinking. And he very much encouraged this attitude.

And did you have other teachers? Yes, a cabinetmaker. He lives near Milan and has worked for designers such as Ettore Sottsass, as well as for popes. In fact, he is like a pope of his craft himself. There is a true art to what he does. He is over 90 now.

Would his kind of work appeal to you? I do find it appealing, yes, because I am very interested in art history. I once held a real Stradivarius in my hands and I could really sense the artful transformation of the wood. Essentially, what we do is not dissimilar to the work of violin-makers and cabinet-makers. We are in awe of wood and its many possibilities and committed to getting the best from it.

Do you think trees have souls? Not in the same way we do. But we have to remember that trees are living things. In its own way, wood is too.

You have vast knowledge of forests and wood. What would you most like to pass on to younger generations? Respect. Each forest is its own cosmos and there are endless things to discover there.

Copy: David Baum
Photos: Heji Shin

Previous pages:
Finding the right wood takes a keen eye, a careful touch, and more than a little passion. — A good piece of wood is one-of-a-kind; its grain indicates a unique beauty.

Right:
The perfect veneer is carefully chosen for each kitchen.





Tyler Hays BDDW New York The room reader

He's not a designer, nor an expert on interiors, nor a craftsman – yet he combines elements of all three. Tyler Hays and his BDDW showroom in New York have influenced some of the world's greatest interior designers. His concept: a room, and the items in it, have to be there for the owners. And he's not afraid to take risks to make that reality.

On the table lies the result of a failed technical experiment: Tyler Hays' first and only attempt at making a lightbulb. Where most people shy away, he goes ahead and tries his hand. When he switched the bulb on, the filament smoldered for a whole two seconds. And then? "It was like a big bomb going off," recalls Hays.

But that no longer matters; the glass object now serves another purpose. At the entrance to the American design guru's showroom, it can be found as a sculpture on a white-stained oak table. It's an eye-catcher, and one day perhaps a valuable collector's item. Anything is possible.

But Tyler Hays is not one to speculate. He is always busy trying new things and turning them into reality. He says he is driven by a

"real curiosity and desire," and more importantly, "the scary amount of energy I have for something I love." At only 45 years old, he can look back on works that others could only dream of creating in a much longer period of time.

Hays doesn't only make furniture, he plays with many different objects. These are items other designers would only ever see on paper before tasking someone else with their production.

But today, Hays doesn't do everything himself as he once did when he was crafting wood by hand and experimenting with painting in his Brooklyn studio. During that time he was becoming the all-round craftsman he is today, mastering techniques he now employs to create furniture, lamps and many other objects. "I did everything but glass blowing," he says. He can turn his hand to many things: "With something like metal work, within an hour I can have the concept down, and within a week I can be a pro."

These days, Hays' employees are the ones involved in production. "It's like having a thousand hands and being able to make anything, even just a plug for a lamp," he comments.

Left:
Tyler Hays with his home-made lightbulb in front of a monumental riverside landscape he discovered in an old Pennsylvania hunting lodge. From the ceiling hangs 'Bubbles' – a chandelier by Lindsey Adelman.



Left: Ceramic ornaments hung on the wall from leather straps. — Handmade clay ceiling lamps from Natalie Page. Speakers and a wooden chest of drawers standing before imposing, solid wood tops for 'slab' tables. — A bronze chest of drawers covered in leather, in front of a second painting from the hunting lodge. — A Chesterfield sofa from Hays' own range; behind it, a captain's mirror.

Next pages: A six-meter-long table made from scorched plane wood with dovetail joints and a right-angled, bleached maple inlay. The gold, silver and bronze candle holders were designed by Ted Muehling.



Hays is not only the master of individual components; he styles entire rooms with an ease that awakens envy in many of his interior designer clients – not least, Peter Marino. "I never think too much and I immediately feel how everything should fit together," Hays describes, going on to explain his dislike of rooms that look "too designed". Every time he visits his showroom, Hays brings a new, old object with him, and positions it in such a way, and with such simplicity, that he astounds his visitors. Hays evokes emotion. "To make a room people can live in (and not be intimidated by), you have to create something you can sit on and won't feel like a jerk if you cry or laugh."

Everything Hays sinks his teeth into is as unconventional as his own self-perception. One example is a dining table made from a rare type of walnut only found in northern California and with dovetail joints designed in a butterfly pattern. If Hays finds a crack in a piece of wood, he fills it with a material that no carpenter normally would: polished bronze. He likes the shine and the contrast it affords. Most striking of all, however, is the patina he creates using a blowtorch. It's a

technique he developed himself and keeps close to his chest: an in-house secret. "Burnt and oiled" is how he refers to the patina – with such pieces of art carrying a princely price tag. How much an item costs depends on its length. A 10-meter long table will set you back 140,000 dollars.

Few people would have the guts to take a flame to such a precious piece of wood. But Hays loves to take risks, and he loves the results. This becomes even clearer as we delve into his broad interests – both at work and at play. He builds machines, collects motorbikes, brews beer (sometimes with home-grown hops), keeps bees, and practices the art of Zen in archery – on occasions in his showroom – with friends after hours.

Growing up off the beaten track in the Oregon mountains, physical labor was part of Hays' daily life. A tree needed felling? No problem. This is a man who can take care of himself. "You had to know how to kill a chicken if you wanted to survive," he says. Back then, however, "craftmanship" was something of a bad word.

Money was tight, so you learned to improvise with what you had. Hays sewed his

own clothes, learned to hunt and he built his own toy potato gun to fire at pumpkins. He drew up plans for the log cabin he planned to build one day. But at the same time, he knew that he "wanted out." France topped his list of destinations – "even though I didn't have the slightest idea where it was."

At the age of 16 he moved to Portland where he dived into the music scene, playing guitar in a band. Many of his then idols are now his customers – among them Bono, although Hays himself would never give this away. He studied physics and chemistry at the University of Oregon, as well as painting and sculpture, and became the envy of fellow students and teachers alike when he sold his first oil paintings – inspired by Giorgio Morandi, Modigliani and Frank Auerbach – to a gallery for a handsome sum. From there he moved to New York, where he paid his way by renovating apartments. Even then, he found an outlet for his creativity by building made-to-measure furniture.

Hays' first studio was in Brooklyn, with a view of an old chimney with the letters EDDW. Dreaming of a factory and mass production, he misread "BDDW" and named his



business accordingly. By the time he realized his mistake, the invoice books had already been printed. That was back in 1994.

On Valentine's Day 2002, he opened his current showroom on Crosby Street, one block north of Chinatown. He put down the deposit only a few days before September 11, 2001. "There was no turning back," he says. But there was a change of course due to the economic downturn. At a time when only the elite could afford new furniture, Hays' works became luxury objects produced in small quantities.

Today, BDDW employs almost 100 people at the site of a former cardboard factory in Philadelphia. It is here that wood takes shape, crafted into unique pieces with deliberately mismatched grains. Grandfather clocks are cast in bronze and then perfected using digital technology. Credenzas are covered in turquoise leather, and drawers given cedar-wood veneers. Mattresses with cotton covers, from Hays' own collection, done in traditional Native American patterns, receive leather handles. "My company is sort of an art project," explains Hays, "a lifelong performance that keeps me interested."

Hays, feeling most at home in checked shirts and hand-sewn Feit boots, admits to being "a really good business person but a really bad accountant." He hates paperwork and leaves that to others. Instead, he focuses on tasks he is better suited to: such as installing a geothermal heating system on the factory site, first studying the plans and then driving the excavator himself. He delights in turning the clay he digs up into various vessels – from cups to watering cans. He pickles gherkins in clay jars, painted, of course, with his own designs. This is the sustainability Hays grew up with, even if one of his coffee cups would now sell for 150 dollars.

Hays has begun to spend his summer in Oregon again. "I want my son to learn those values," he comments: to feel connected to nature, and understand the tradition of the settlers. Last year, he saved the old general store from ruin, renovated it, and reopened it as M. Crow. His next project is to sell the clothes, toys, bodycare products and silverware he designs online. It will be "an outlet for my hobbies."

Pencil drawings of the virtual store and new pieces of furniture fill sketchbook upon

sketchbook. Hays wants to reinvent "the iconic furniture with which we spend most of our time" – the toilet, the coffee machine, the bed. And that despite only sleeping four or five hours a day, and having long since cut back his coffee consumption.

Hays' own bed – made from old wooden boards – was recently moved to a Philadelphia townhouse. "I have some expensive things and some worthless things that are made beautiful by their age, patina, and color," he relates.

He fits loud speakers and record players into dining tables made from rare woods. "We spend money and time making materials useful that would be garbage elsewhere." Everything is in transition: "I want to make something that matches the people living and moving in the space." Old meets new; antique meets junk. Recently, Hays shot an arrow through one of his floor lamps that had been a bestseller for years. It now rests decoratively in the lampshade – a unique piece sure to be snapped up soon.

Somewhere between grunge and elegance, Hays' irreverent style has become a status symbol. "For me, Tyler is one of the

Right:
Hand-painted ceramic kitchenware, made from clay taken from below the BDDW production facility in Frankford, Philadelphia. – Dovetail joints with a striking, butterfly pattern are a distinguishing feature of BDDW designs.





Left: TG15 lounge chair in leather and bronze designed in the 50s by William Katavolos and produced by Gratz on Long Island. — Tyler Hays with his New Hampshire, Walt Siegl motorbike, in front of the posters he uses as targets for archery in his showroom. — Bronze handle on leather. — Bed crafted from oiled walnut; to the left, a bronze bedside table covered in leather; on top, a lamp with a leather base and a hand-sawn dimmer switch.



best contemporary sculptors working with wood," says New York interior designer Amy Lau, who combined BDDW products with furniture from George Nakashima in a Chelsea loft.

Lau was one of the guests present at the opening of Hays' Milan showroom, during April 2014's Salone del Mobile. The visitors dined at a table tennis table with leather nets that sold for 15,000 dollars. Cases for the bats cost extra.

For Hays, Milan was a logical choice. "I love Italy, and now I have a good reason to go there," he remarks. He also liked the fact that everyone tried to talk him out of it – out of opening a second showroom during a drawn-out economic crisis. But Hays is simply someone who goes against the flow.

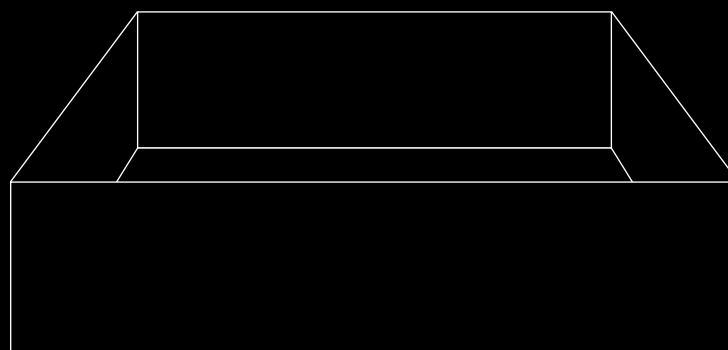
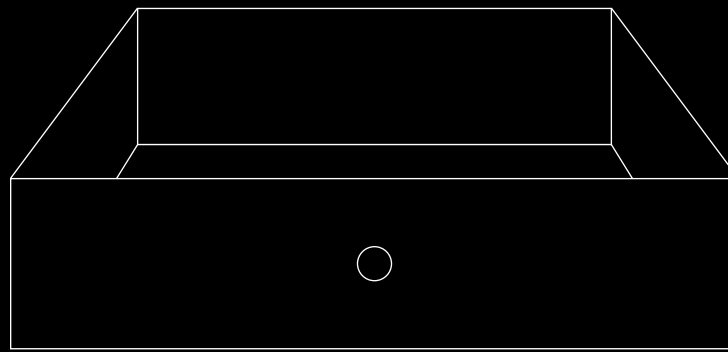
He is also someone who puts quality first. "Hand-made," says Hays, pointing at a three-legged footstool from Kieran Kinsella – a friend whose products are sold at BDDW, is not that cool. "It can be pretty bad when someone's sitting at a sewing machine making bags all day long." At BDDW, they use computers. "But we still know how to use our hands," Hays adds. His theory is when socie-

ties lose contact with materials, and the knowledge of where things come from, that's when they go down. Hays rediscovered his own roots on his mother's 60th birthday, when he took her back to her native Ulm, in southwest Germany.

Day in, day out, Hays continues to experiment. "I am willing to fail," he says. "I kind of enjoy it, and just keep moving forward. I always think that if for every 10 mistakes you make, you do one brilliant thing, that's good."

*Text: Doris Chevron
Photos: Stefan Falke*

Pull, push or slide? – Product semiotics in a culture of sustainability, and of experience and enjoyment. An essay by Kai Rosenstein



New technologies and styles change the way products communicate – or don't. Some thoughts on the language of objects.

A friend has a cupboard in his home that conceals his family's collection of crockery behind its doors. The cabinet doors are "push-to-open": simply give them a gentle nudge anywhere on their surface and they open just far enough for you to grasp the edge of the door and open the cupboard fully.

Once upon a time, all cupboards had locks and handles. For obvious reasons, they were installed on the side opposite the hinge so that opening the cabinet couldn't have been easier. It was clear to the user what he or she had to do. Holding the handle and pulling the door open was a single fluid movement.

As time went by, furniture makers began to extend handles across the full width of the cupboard door, achieving a formal tranquility. In the process, the *message* telling the user from which side the door opens became quieter – a notch in the handle indicated, visibly and to the touch, where the hand should reach. Today, the minimalist "push-to-open" cupboard fronts, completely free of handles, have made this message completely unnecessary. Thanks to this sophisticated technology, dispensing with external indicators has created a whole new experience. The cupboard pops open no matter where on the door you press; no matter whether you use

your hand, hip or elbow to do so. However, if the mechanism is not up to scratch, not precise enough, the cupboard remains closed and silent.

By observing that an object is now silent, the implication is that it was once able to speak. In fact, coming to grips with the "language of objects," with *product language* and *product semiotics*, is a fundamental aspect of design.

This language can be separated into a formal aesthetic dimension (syntax), on the one hand, and a symbolic dimension (semantics) on the other. The first aspect refers to how we experience objects through our senses – the texture of surfaces, the materials; their color, form and composition. You could call this the vocabulary and grammar of our product language.

In the example of the cupboard door, however, we are more interested in the second aspect – the semantic dimension. This communicates more than just functional and formal information: it reveals something about the substance and meaning of objects. A key point in this regard is the signifier function, which – through the structuring of form, color and material – indicates whether a handle should be pulled or pushed, whether a switch needs to be turned or pressed, or where the best place is to securely grasp a tool.

Whether or not we can *understand* what this function is telling us is closely related to our cultural environment and prior technical knowledge. If the settings on a drill are marked with a picture of a tortoise and a hare, one can only correctly interpret these symbols if he or she already knows that one of the animals is slow and the other is fast. The depth of information required to do this could be described as *literacy* – a term that has made its way into the designer's vocabulary in the form of *design literacy*.

Up to this point, we have been discussing the information communicated by the object that is primarily of importance to the user. But as design theorist Erik Schmidt writes, "once function is no longer apparent, [...] you enter the realm of idleness." If something is just *standing idle* without communicating its use, Schmidt calls this a "crime in terms of material and semiotics." Our cupboard would commit a *semiotic crime* if its lack of handles were to make it less usable. This would mean its message would no longer be relevant for the *user* but only for the *owner*.

And that brings us on nicely to the second aspect of the semantic dimension: the symbolic function, which is primarily experienced and makes itself felt through social interaction. Its impact becomes apparent when looking at objects from the perspective of ownership. What does a chair tell us about its owner? What do a person's car, home decor or clothing choices reveal about their social standing, education, standards and values – about their lifestyle and preferences as a whole, their 'habitus'?

SILENCE

Over time, our ideas regarding how a cupboard should be opened have changed. And needless to say, we learn how to open a new cabinet just as quickly as our children learn to swipe the surface of a smartphone – as if it were second nature.

What will make all the difference in the future is whether or not we understand each other. This does not just mean that we must master language – but language itself must also adapt to changing requirements. Otl Aicher, a pioneer and champion of functional design for many German companies including bulthaup, viewed the constant evolution of language as central to the success of the corresponding processes of give and take (something he notes using his signature lower case lettering): "language is never finished. it evolves. words constantly gain new meanings. just like in a game, meanings are tested for their efficacy and words are correctly assigned to them. [...] in use and in the rules of a shared practice, understanding emerges." Language is created through use and these *linguistic games* are something designers must respond to.

Against this background, the maxim of the 'repair movement' – "If you can't open it, you don't own it" – applies not only to our cupboard, but also to engines, bicycle brakes and shower fittings. Once objects can no longer be understood with everyday knowledge, they become silent products with a short shelf life. If it is not crystal clear how a tap works, it is destined for the trash at the first sign of limescale on the screw fittings.

HOLLERING

What the Ulm School of Design (HfG) set out to do with its rational design approach – to fight against the irrationality and symbolism of the Nazi era – has today become almost the opposite: if the signifier function of a product is silent, its symbolic function shouts

all the louder. By arranging objects to suit our own needs and taste, we set ourselves apart from the crowd. Yet when objects are reduced to the symbolic alone, they become transient and fleeting; they come and go with fashions and fads.

There was a time when making our morning coffee involved popping a filter on top of a cup and adding hot water. Espresso came from Italy or from a machine that forces the water through the coffee at high pressure, creating an unmistakable flavor. The idea is as simple as it is easy to understand. The technology is uncomplicated, long-lasting and no trouble to repair. Today, our coffee often comes at the touch of a button. Filled with capsules or beans, these fully automatic coffee makers serve up any caffeinated creation we can imagine, including the milk. But the complex, often failure-prone, technology behind it all stays hidden from us.

"At the same time as design has exploded in popularity and conquered the world, we have witnessed an implosion on the semantic level," observes curator Max Borka. The concept of functional, long-lasting and sustainable design has been completely undermined, in his opinion. Today, design only has one function: "to sell no matter what to no matter who – no matter how."

Strolling through the aisles of an electrical goods store, we are overwhelmed by the array of plastic and chrome models that leave the coffee machine we bought last year already looking like an antique. Critic Thomas Edelmann calls this empty hollering "disaster by design": "some of the appliances look as though they have [...] become overheated. Their form [...] crumbles away, matter dissolves."

STORYTELLING

Design begins with the simple question: Why? This 'why' refers not only to symbolic phrases, but to an object's useful value. As such, it is an inquiry into the ecological, economic and social responsibility of a product. Design must make sense.

We need a design that will speak to our senses; that will outlast the short-lived roar of the superficial. Honest materials and intelligible products are key, products that can withstand day-to-day use.

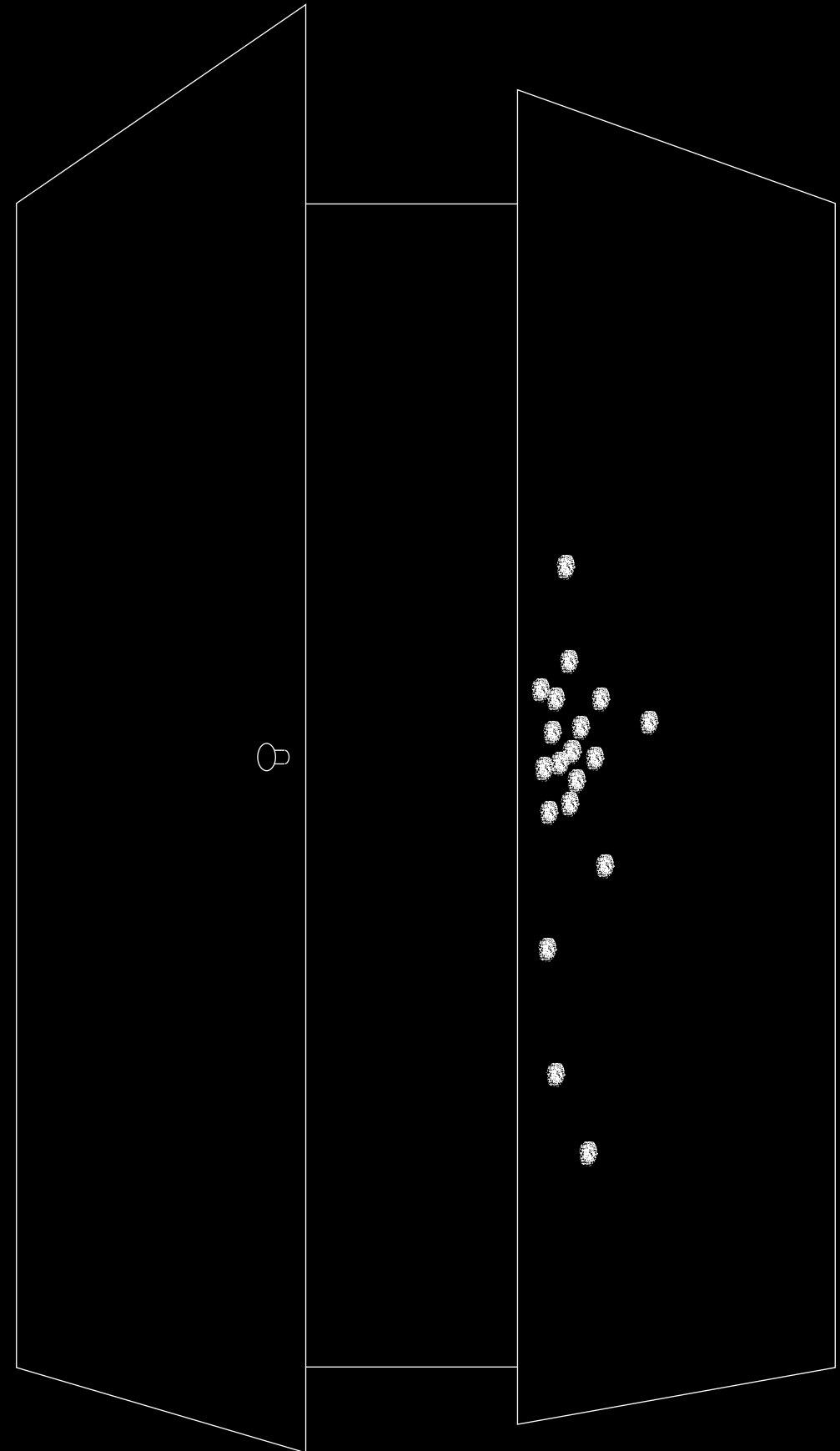
We have come to pay close attention to the ingredients in our food and whether they are locally sourced. Why should we not also want to know which materials are used in our coffee machines, bicycles and home

furnishings; where they came from and who made them? The same is true for the hands-on D.I.Y. trend – after all, urban gardening projects and repair cafés do more than make a simple statement about unfettered economic growth. With some objects, we can forge a mental connection, developing memories and telling stories – the tale of the first successful repair on a treasured handbag that has been a constant companion, or a recollection of a memorable evening sitting at a particular table. We establish a relationship that grows from our sensory experience and is therefore far more meaningful than one based on mere *consumption*.

We think of the counter in our favorite bar, or recall the weather-beaten wooden tables of a mountain lodge. We can sense that these objects have experienced a great deal in their time. The patina tells of the countless times a material has been used and touched and of the unique character of its location. Sure, we can get rid of the handle on a cupboard – but wouldn't it be interesting to see how an untreated wooden door changes over time, if we constantly press on the same area to open it? And with the patina, the signifier function returns. American bicycle guru Grant Petersen has described this type of beauty gained through use, characteristic of natural materials in particular, as *beausage*. *Beausage* is where beauty meets usage, involving the user in the history of objects.

Perhaps in the future we should talk about *product stories* rather than *product language*. To quote Erik Schmidt once more: "We need more cosmetic surgery for objects, and less for people. People have dignity, which is beautiful because it inherently has soul. But we have to breathe soul into objects ourselves."

Illustrations: Gerwin Schmidt





Ville Kokkonen – Cooking grounds you. “Cooking is better than eating”

Ville Kokkonen enjoys taking his time when he's in the kitchen. The Helsinki based designer spends much of his life on the fast track, so in the following commentary he explains how cooking makes him slow down and relax.

“My kitchen isn't really a kitchen at all. It's more of a workshop, a studio. Sometimes I work from home; I sit at the kitchen table with my tools. I like to sit there leafing through cookbooks and planning the feast. I have always planned my apartments around the kitchen. You have to, when you consider it's the most important room in the house.

The kitchen should open itself up to other living areas. In my home, there are no limits to where the space begins and ends – it must be integrated into all aspects of life. The kitchen is where I begin the day every morning, where I think about my work, where I spend my weekends. And of course it is the room where I cook with my wife Florencia almost every evening. I am more traditional and I don't need a quick fix when it comes to food. Cooking is better than eating and if a meal takes a while to prepare, that's a sign of quality.

It does me good to work with my hands, to see things come instantly together, and to gradually clear everything from my head that I have been concentrating on during the day. The stress just falls away and the change of focus to the task at hand is rewarding. I prefer to work alone in the kitchen and improvise. I start with something I am familiar with and then change, depending on the seasons and fridge stock situation, by adding a new component, experimenting and testing a little.

For me, fish is the quintessential Finnish food. It isn't particularly refined or sophisticated – it's simple. I like that preparing fish involves a fair amount of work. Unfortunately, we are increasingly living in a supermarket culture where our food is bought almost

ready-to-eat and just needs to be heated up. Fish fillets are already deboned and cut into portions, so there's nothing left to do. But that's not my thing. I prefer to buy whole fish from the shortest primary source. I want to chop the heads off and gut them myself. This reminds me where our food comes from: not from the supermarket, but from nature. I also enjoy to smoke fish using juniper, salt and lemon.

Until recently, I was away travelling for nearly a quarter of the year. Although I've now cut that down, during the week I still often have to leave the house very early. I make my morning coffee with an old espresso maker that Richard Sapper designed for Alessi in the late 70s. I am captivated with unique kitchen utensils and try to find them whenever I have the chance. The latest addition came from Argentina: a gadget that lets me make toasted sandwiches on top of a gas stove burner.

In Tokyo, there is one district where chefs go to buy their equipment. That's where I get my kitchen knives. I am fascinated by how different cultures prepare their food and how this is expressed in the utensils they use. I can say I collect unique earthenware and vegetable steamers, and I treasure my old blender from Switzerland. Equipment must be robust and long lasting; I want to be able to use it for many years. In my kitchen, every item is assigned a place in our large cupboards. Perhaps you could compare it to a laboratory: it is where I investigate and put to the test all the things I have found on my travels.

I grow rosemary, mint, olives and sage in pots on the window ledge. And wine plays a big role in my kitchen, especially wine from northern Italy. I'm involved with a wine & culinary club with friends. We take turns hosting and pick a theme for the evening – and it cannot be work-related!”

Photos: Florian Böhm

Left and on next pages:
Even when travelling,
Ville Kokkonen is drawn
to the kitchen. Here, he
is cooking a delicious meal
for his wife and friends
in Munich after a leisurely
visit to the market.





"He brought cooking for pleasure to our family"

Florian and Julian Aicher on their father, Otl Aicher, and his love of cooking.

The kitchen is for cooking. Design great Otl Aicher brought this maxime to the fore in his book of the same name: *Die Küche zum Kochen*. Aicher's published work was not written to be a bestseller. Instead, it aimed to delight and inspire like-minded individuals. It was this approach that secured the book's longevity and formed the foundation of Aicher's collaboration with Gerd Bulthaup.

Otl Aicher's name is immortalized in his groundbreaking pictograms for the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. But this was just one of his many design projects that shaped the iconography of the Republic of Germany from the 1960s through to the 1980s. Reminders of his works are ever-present, even if they have now become part of history – just like WestLB bank and other companies whose corporate image he helped shape. Today, Aicher is remembered for the serenity of his designs, their straightforward simplicity, and his bold minimalism rather than the passion with which he went about his work. His holistic approach, too – his desire to truly understand his subject matter, to live and breathe it before he transformed it, creating an expression of social modernity – has faded from people's minds.

When Gerd Bulthaup thinks back to his initial meeting with Otl Aicher, at a time when the bulthaup tradition as we now know it was first being established, you can detect the pleasure in his voice. He describes his own

"aha" moment: "Otl Aicher asked me if I could cook. And when I replied that no, I could not, he said I needed to learn before I set about changing the kitchen."

But how did Aicher himself feel about the kitchen and cooking? In books on Aicher and his mill in Rotis in the town of Leutkirch in the Allgäu region – in Eva Moser's biography or the In Rotis series – black-and-white photos depict a rural workshop. Shaped and designed by his friends (and frequent guests), the mill was a place where customers became companions, and architects as close as family. Otl Aicher is seen in his garden, struggling with a colossal crop of pumpkins; sitting on a veranda with a group of guests as they barbecued over a roaring fire; and under the barrel-vaulted ceiling of his renovated cow shed. It was here that people gathered around the table, soaking in the joyous atmosphere still so vivid in the photos today. Aicher's home was somewhere you met for what the ancient Greeks might have called a symposium: a convivial discussion with a banquet for all to enjoy.

Rotis is where Aicher lived with his family and had his graphic design studio. His two sons, Julian and Florian, still live there with their families. They relate their first-hand accounts of their father's life.

"Our father loved a good celebration," explains Julian Aicher. "He put his heart and soul into his cooking and was always improving. He was the one who brought cooking for

pleasure to our family. It wasn't the glamorous cooking we see on television today, though; it was simple, hearty fare."

The perfectionism that epitomized Aicher in the workplace pervaded his kitchen, too. The potatoes for his salad had to be sliced so finely that you could read a newspaper through them. And he always had to have someone standing by, waiting to wash and dry the bowls and pans immediately after use, so that when the food was ready the kitchen was left perfectly tidy.

"My mother wasn't cut out for being a housewife," recalls Julian Aicher. "As head of the local adult education center, she was a busy woman. She took care of the teachers and guests, even after the events were over, by going out to eat with them. She didn't really like to cook. If you came home late and she said, 'Alright then, I'll fry you a couple of eggs,' you could be grateful. As children we were assigned household chores to do. There was a clock-style rota with two pieces of cardboard indicating whose week it was to wash up and who was responsible for other tasks. She also made a menu of the meals we would eat. For her, housekeeping was an administrative task; one that she mastered with great efficiency – although my father often threw a spanner in the works. She did develop a few specialties later in life, however, such as her much-loved nettle soup."

On Saturday evenings, Aicher would prepare his pièce de résistance: Sauerbraten mit Knöpfle, a marinated pot roast accompanied

Left:
An excellent summer's crop: Otl Aicher harvesting pumpkins in his garden in Rotis. Before long, they had been turned into his beloved soup.

Next pages:
Gathered around the garden table with friends and colleagues.



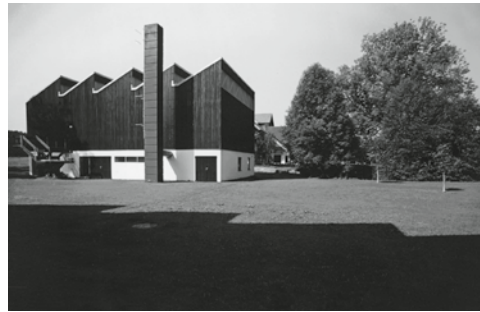


by a local variety of pasta, which he shaved into strips by hand. The knives he used, stored in a bulthaup knife block, are now the treasured possession of Julian's wife Christine.

On Sundays, the family sometimes went to church and sometimes they didn't. They ate "Aischa" for breakfast – a dish that Aicher had discovered while trekking through the Algerian desert. "It was a type of scrambled egg with tomatoes and onions and spices from the Maghreb," explains Julian Aicher. "It literally melted in the mouth."

Sitting at the table every day for lunch was not always easy for us children. "If my father was truly immersed in a subject, he might not say a single word for 14 days straight. One of our household staff, who often ate with us, later said to me that it was so quiet that she could hear herself swallow. It was much more pleasant when guests were there. Then my father would talk a lot and tell stories."

At work, Aicher didn't miss a single opportunity for a party, recalls graphic designer and former employee Hans Neudecker. For a time, there was the four o'clock beer on a Thursday afternoon in the old cow shed in Rotis. On May 1 he put up a maypole; in November his architect friends were invited to share in the St. Martin's Day goose; and when the first snow fell, we celebrated with a glass of champagne. There was wine, too, says Julian Aicher looking back: "Red and white, and sometimes a lot of it. The wine came from Heilbronn and from a winery close to Schaffhausen – my



father had designed their bottle labels, and they paid him in kind."

In Otl Aicher's later years, he valued his garden more and more. It consisted of raised beds that were so high you didn't need to bend over to harvest them. That made watering harder though, as you had to lift up the watering can to reach them. "In fall, the pumpkins were ready to be dug up, and my father would cook as much soup as there were pumpkins," recalls Julian Aicher. "Sometimes that really was a huge amount. He allowed it to reduce and froze it. We were eating the soup for a long time after my father passed away; soup he had prepared for us in years when the crop was particularly strong."

*Copy: Anne Urbauer
Photos: Pg. 40–44 Hans Neudecker; pg. 45/pg. 46 top Karsten de Riese; pg. 46 bottom/pg. 47 top Timm Rautert, courtesy of Parrotta Contemporary Art gallery; pg. 47 bottom Frieder Blickle*

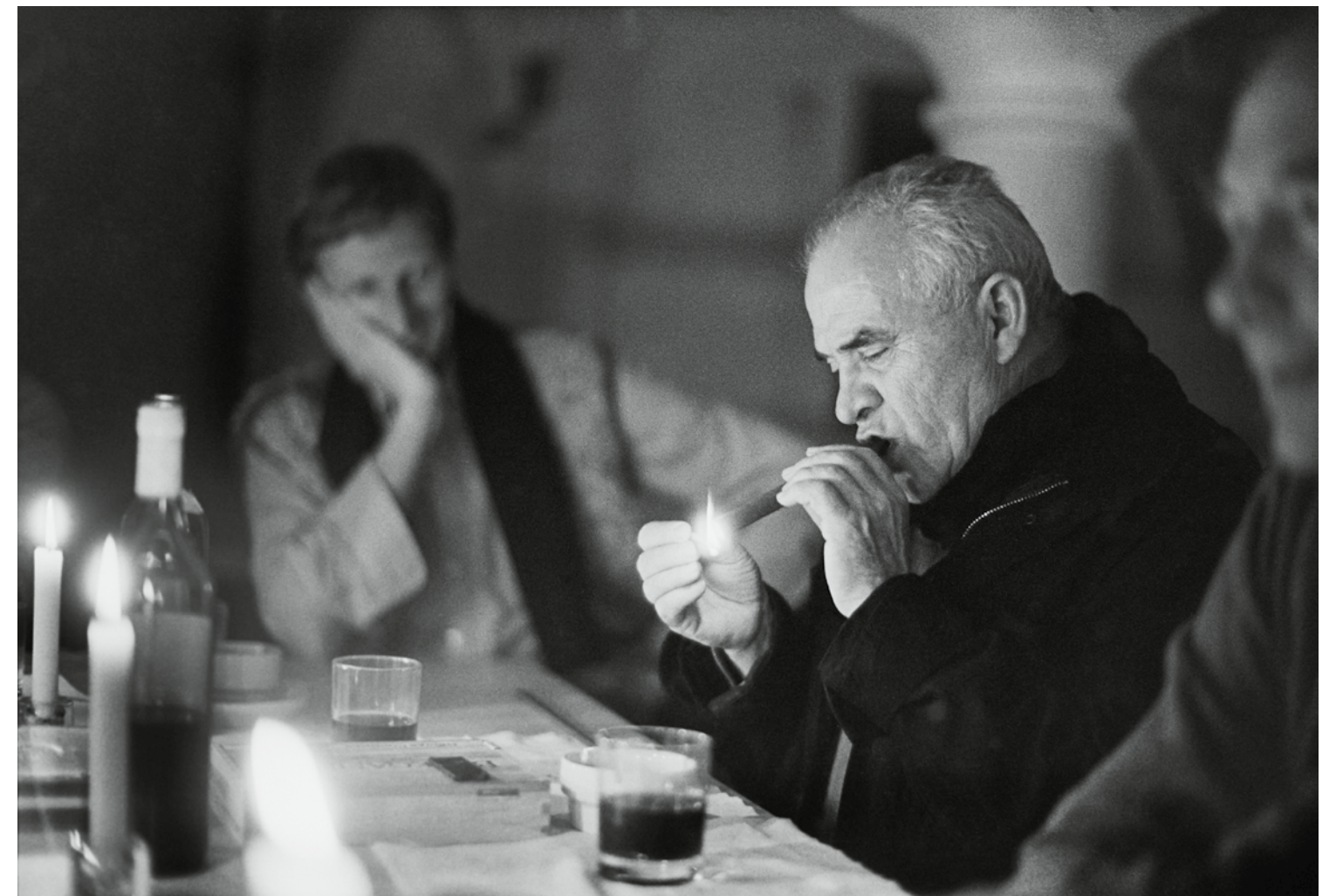


The designer working on a pumpkin on his veranda. — Aicher's studio in Rotis. — The roofed garden dining table with built-in fire.

Right: Otl Aicher picking herbs from his raised beds. — Business partners at lunch.

Next two pages: In the kitchen with Inge Aicher-Scholl. — Guests enjoy a convivial gathering with Otl Aicher, under the vaulted ceilings of the 'Rotisserie'. — At the end of a long day: Otl Aicher in his apron at one of his many dinner parties. — After dinner, Aicher enjoys his customary cigar.





Delving deeper About the people; about this magazine

About the people

Otl Aicher, together with his wife Inge Aicher-Scholl and Max Bill, founded the Ulm School of Design, which had a significant impact on design in postwar Germany. Born Otto Aicher in Ulm in 1922, he laid the foundations of modern corporate design with works for Lufthansa, broadcasters ZDF, and bulthaup. His pictograms for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich were groundbreaking. Until his death in 1991, Aicher lived and worked in his studios in Rotis im Allgäu. For this issue, we interviewed his sons on what it meant to cook and to celebrate in the Aicher household.

Tyler Hays

is the man behind the BDDW design showroom in SoHo, New York. Born in Oregon, he completed a degree in art before moving to the Big Apple at age 25, where he planned to work as a painter and artist. Instead, he became the craftsman he is today, with a keen eye for design and a distinctive style – which seamlessly combines old and new, kitsch and avant-garde. He produces his furniture and tableware in Pennsylvania, counting well-known designers and rockstars among his customers. Christened BDDW after Hays misread EDDW, BDDW is now a must-know name. In this issue, Doris Chevron explores Tyler Hays' signature touch.

Ville Kokkonen

is Design Director at legendary Finnish furniture house Artek, founded by Alvar Aalto and colleagues in 1935. Kokkonen's work for the brand includes the 'Bright Light 1' table lamp – a beautiful and unforgettable piece characterized by clean lines and an uplifting glow.

Dan Lerner

works as a chef and culinary columnist in Tel Aviv where he has incorporated the principles of his mother, Dalia Penn-Lerner, into the bulthaup Culinary Academy. In the 70s, she introduced Israelis to the delights of world cooking, combining straightforward family-friendly dishes with unique flavors. She used her network of international celebrity chef contacts to nurture young talent. In this issue, Dan Lerner recalls the tradition his mother began in Israel and explains how he plans to continue developing it.

Johann Paintmeier

is the veneer expert responsible for selecting and shaping the materials used in bulthaup kitchens. He trained as a carpenter and went on to complete a further course in 1993, attaining the title 'master carpenter'. He subsequently worked in a small company with three staff, before joining bulthaup in 1995. He is the proud owner of an area of mixed woodland which he plans to return to its former glory. In this issue, Munich author David Baum interviews him on the principles of his work.

Kai Rosenstein

studied design in Darmstadt, Manchester, and at the Zurich University of the Arts, and now teaches at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences. His concept of 'concerned design' critically evaluates the relationship between society and modern design and the corresponding creative processes, as well as the tension between sustainability and a culture of experience and enjoyment. He is particularly interested in semiotics in product design, in current practice and approaches – the focus of his essay in this issue.

About this Magazine

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