

the describer.

— ON KYNANCE BY ALI ROBINSON —

How does Kynance starts, and what moved you into creating such a collection?

I've been designing bespoke one-off pieces of furniture and joinery for Robinson van Noort clients for many years. The creative process in designing this collection has been a continuation of that work and fortunately, I am collaborating with the same makers that I have always worked with. The decision to launch the collection now is two-fold: firstly our design practice has matured enough to give me more time to work on the collection, and secondly it coincides with me painting and making more art again. I was moved to create the collection after I had completed my first vitrine for a client commission, which gave me the confidence to continue. In general, I feel I'm in a creative space and I'm very much looking forward in designing the next collection.



Ashorn and Symonds Vitrines



Ashorn Vitrine



Barnsbury Vitrine

What's the inspiration behind these pieces? Do you have a favorite one?

The initial inspiration came from my increasing love of black patinated steel. On one hand it is a 'no-nonsense' tough material but on the other it picks up beautiful and gentle variegated marks after it has been patinated. Furthermore, when this type of steel is polished it shows subtle imperfections and warm tones that compliment the dark and moody patination. I first began using the patinated steel with my vitrine series. The idea for the vitrines came from reading 'The Hare With The Amber Eyes - A Hidden Inheritance', by Edmund de Waal. This tragic story centres on an object of desire and keepsake; it touches on love, pleasure and exquisite craftsmanship. It describes the glazed cabinets that housed Japanese netsukes or keepsakes that moved around the world from owner to owner over the last 200 years. It made me consider how people spent their time discovering, sourcing, owning, inheriting and cherishing artefacts, and how the examination of the making process itself would affect their opinions on how they value and measure things.



Chilworth Table

I looked at a variety of vitrines, from medicinal cabinets to meshed kitchen larder units, and enjoyed looking at the play of light through the glass and the reflections that bounced off polished surfaces and through perforated metal and enamel. I experimented in the workshop with the patination of many types of metals, polishing and dipping, and worked with enamel specialists to mix unusual portions of pigment to achieve a delicate ceramic-like surface quality. The process involved balancing a desire to maintain a handmade feel with subtle imperfections, notches and variable patination in the metalwork, with the functional necessities to produce a simple, elegant piece that could be used daily.



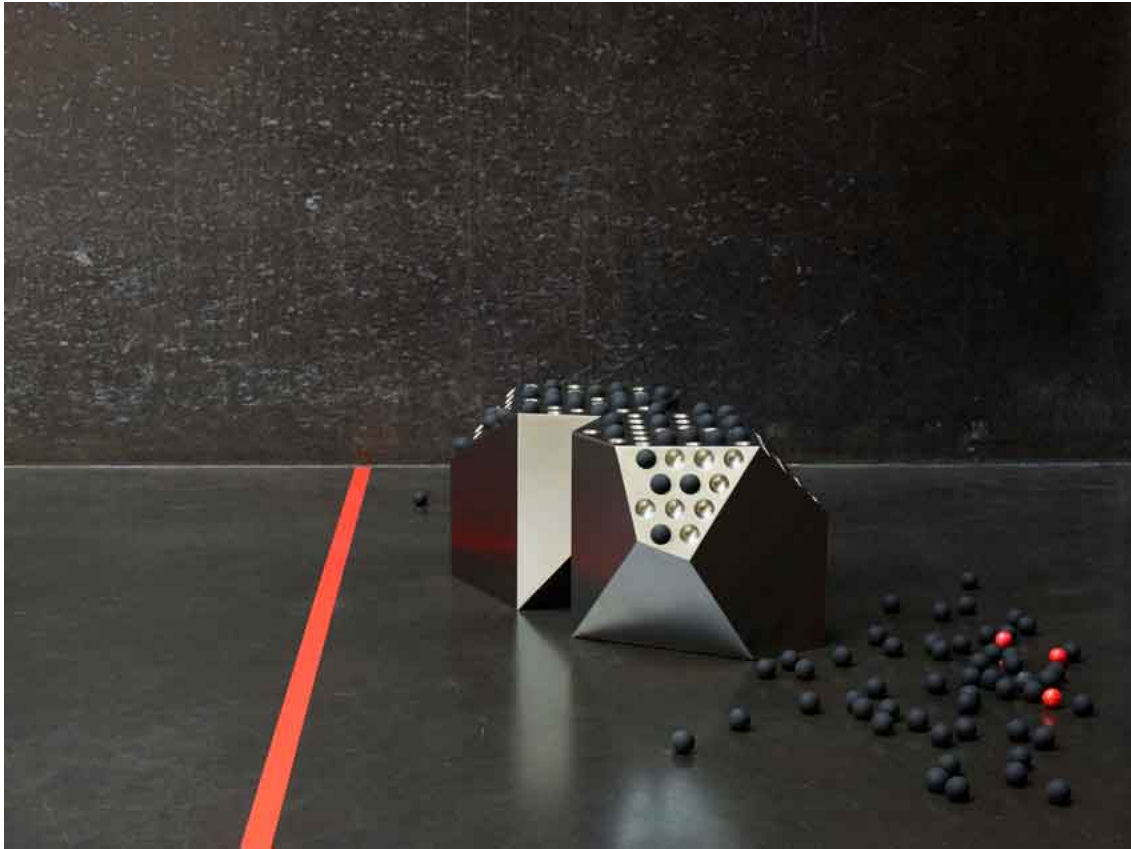
Clarendon Vitrine

There is a general concept that links the pieces in this collection. I wanted to produce a collection of objects that shared a common feeling and touched on ideas that were still open enough to develop in forthcoming work. I am interested in combining material and form in ways to produce surprising feelings. On one hand, I enjoy the orthogonal, solid and strong sensation one gets from the vitrines and on the other, I like the delicate, serpentine and playful feeling from the mirror, tables and ruler. I want the pieces to be used daily and have chosen materials with a natural patina and variation that will happily take the knocks and wear and tear of regular usage and in doing so improve and embellish the pieces over time.



Constantine Steel Ruler

I think my favourite piece is the Constantine Totem – a measuring stick to record the height of growing children. My family had a chair that was passed down from generation to generation with the carved names and dates of marriages and birthdays but also with children's height and weight at certain ages. Further to that, my father was adamant that everyone who stayed the night should sign the visitor's book. These two things resonated with me. One often sees a record of children's height on the edge of kitchen doors or on bedroom walls, and it is also fun to see the parents' heights logged as markers for children to aim for. I thought it was a shame that these special things are lost as people move house, and so the bronze totem ruler was my solution to make a moveable family heirloom-cum-visitors book.



Drove Acre Stool



Harrow Fields Mirror



Hugon Sideboard

— PROCESS —

Can you lead us through your design/work process? Please describe the relation with the “specialist makers” and the importance they have for you on the final result.

I am drawing continuously and these designs begin in my sketchbook. I may work on the general form of something or jump onto some kind of junction that takes my interest, such as a neat way for a welded hinge to connect a door with a very slim frame. Often the form in the sketch has no relation to a finished object, which is why there may be motifs running through a variety of work. I will then work up three-dimensional sketches. Thereafter I resist continuing with details until I have met up the maker. I send the sketches and organise a meeting. The first thing we look at are any tricky details or the use of a new material and will make 1:1 mockups to work things out. From here we make a series of refinements until the new and difficult elements are resolved. Only then do I produce working production drawings. All our specialist makers are based in the UK and working with them gives me a great deal of pleasure as this is where designer and maker come together to experiment, test and push standard practices and processes together. Sometimes it is a blessing not to fully understand the maker's constraints as it gives you a certain freedom to ask them to do things they would never have considered before. The mutual respect of having differing skills is what true collaboration is about.



Kynance Table white



Kynance Table



Lillian Console

— MATERIALITY —

What were you going for with the materials you chose?

I often look for complimentary materials that offset an adjacent surface in a surprising way. Even better when a single material has a variety of feelings depending on the form of the object or how you finish the surface.

Do you have a favorite material you like to work with in furniture and why?

On this collection the enamel panels on the vitrines are quite special, can you share with us a bit more about the importance of this material in your work.

My favourite material at the moment is enamel. I have been working with enamel specialists to mix unusual portions of pigment, white and thinners to achieve a delicate ceramic-like surface quality. Its form has a sense of strength, inherent of course in metal, but the surface is delicate. This juxtaposition is exaggerated if you enamel a curved metal form, as the firing process spreads the variegation unevenly as it passes over rounded surfaces.

How as the collection been received, and can we expect a new one? If so, when?

It is early days but so far it has been thankfully well received. I've been working on variations to Kynance, the existing collection, such as a small patinated steel mirror with a convex central element and have also added two new pieces: a book shelf with sea green enamel fins and various timber dowels; and a cylindrical and tapered pedestal bathroom sink in two tone enamel. Further to this, I am working on more sculptural and conceptual pieces that sit between fine art and furniture. The new work, whether as a separate collection or as an addition to Kynance, will be launched at the end of 2018.



Norham Stool



Symonds Vitrine



Tranquil Vale Console

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