

PRESS RELEASE

NENDO / STATIC BUBBLES

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Bearable lightness and other thoughts on nendo on the occasion of 'Static Bubbles',
Carpenters Workshop Gallery, Paris, January 2012

This year, Tokyo-based design firm nendo, who has been awarded Designer of the year 2012 by Wallpaper Magazine, is celebrating its tenth anniversary by doing what nendo does best : quietly but surely going about their work. This may not sound like a way to mark a successful decade, but the fruits of nendo's labour were anything but ordinary. For nendo, simply 'getting things done' means a bevy of significant exhibitions this year and last, including a retrospective at flagship Tokyo design space Axis Gallery, museum acquisitions (the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago), new products for Milan, a major Canadian museum exhibition design and interiors in Japan, China, Italy and the UK. All of these are testing the firm's distinctive sensibility in new areas, against new constraints.

In other words, nendo is doing something exciting, and the world is taking note. But would you know this from founder Sato Oki and team's quiet demeanour, or from the deceptive simplicity of their work ? Perhaps not, but again, that is entirely the point. It is this combination of thoughtfulness and caprice, hidden within minimalism of form and an unusual attention to process and detail, that make nendo what they are, and that characterizes the new work shown here at Carpenters Workshop Gallery.

One keyword for understanding nendo's work is 'lightness'. Of the new work shown in this exhibition, the farming-net objects (2012) play with the visual perception of physicality. They claim space for their strange geometric forms but hover between perceptibility and imperceptibility, materiality and immateriality. Stronger than organically but lighter and more flexible than wire mesh, the farming-net objects merge structure and form, object and shadow. They are absolutely functional yet prefer to suggest in their three-dimensional clouds the space that a container or vase might occupy.

As the farming-net objects indicate, the lightness in nendo's work is of spirit as well. A subtle, sotto voce sense of play provides viewers with unexpected encounters, punctuating the everyday with small delights like the ingeniously carved inro and netsuke decorative accessories of the Edo period. The work is conceptual yet approachable, minimalist yet warm, and almost delicious in its understated refusal of the ordinary. The object dependencies series (2012) seem to hover between sculpture and object, folly and function, yet upon close inspection show a hyper-rationality of structure and thought, developed from close consideration of the relationship between thing and support. The pieces are structurally dependent upon objects placed on them: a book on the bookshelf, a cup on the lamp, etc. Use completes the piece in a move reminiscent perhaps of relational aesthetics' emphasis on the viewer, but with a resolutely practical undertone.



Such unassuming presence and the subtle conceptual amusements belie nendo's absolute seriousness in one area: an old-fashioned, almost artisanal attention to detail, materials and process. This stems, I think, from the endless curiosity of Oki and his team: a fundamental desire to explore the properties of materials and processes, and to see how modifying them might create unexpected beauty and functionality in an ordinary environment. Both the innerblow tables (2012) and overflow tables (2012) experiment with the properties of molten glass as blown and poured respectively. Derived from nendo's close observation of glass-blowers and created in collaboration with them, the innerblow tables are massive blocks of glass, blown into metal frames and finished differently through a series of experiments into the limits of glass-blowing. Lasvit creates all their art pieces in Bohemian traditional glass works with using a combination of traditional know how living for centuries and brand new techniques. All Lasvit lighting pieces are hand blown and made with absolute perfection.

The overflow tables play with the instant at which glass goes from molten to solid, again using frames to create and modify shapes based on the physical properties of the material. The results are practical yet beautiful, and with the inimitable nendo touch inspire viewers with a similar curiosity into material and process.

Congratulations, nendo, on a decade of success and on beginning the next decade in such style. May it too be marked by lightness of being and subtle, sheer delight.

Sarah Teasley, Royal College of Art



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Montreal Museum of Fine Arts / Montreal
Design Museum Holon / Holon
Israel Museum / Jerusalem
High Museum of Art / Atlanta
Victoria and Albert Museum / London
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