

# THE SKIN

MANUFATURA AT CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY, PARIS

“Manufatura,” an exhibition devoted to the Campana brothers at Carpenters Workshop Gallery in Paris, centers on the artisanal techniques contained within a creative process that runs from the design of prototypes to their transformation into fully developed works. Paying homage to the revival of traditional materials and know-how from Brazil and France, the works offer a subtle yet playful take on the urgent challenges of sustainable development.

To enable the creative universe of Fernando and Humberto Campana to become a perfect reality: that is how Julien Lombrail, co-founder of Carpenters Workshop Gallery, explains the goal of “Manufatura.” Transforming prototypes into works designed to evolve, adapt, and serve a purpose in everyday life – such is the goal of the gallery’s new space dedicated to artistic research and development: a platform for innovation, preservation, and transmission of artisanal techniques based in Roissy, France. Presented over an area of more than 8,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the technical know-how of artisans working with bronze, aluminum, brass, tapestry, wax molds, and other media has allowed the Campana brothers to expand their field of action like never before.



1. FERNANDO & HUMBERTO CAMPANA — PIRARUCU SOFA, 2014 - PIRARUCU LEATHER, STEEL, WOOD, FOAM — COURTESY CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY ©ADRIEN MILLOT  
2. FENDI AND FERNANDO & HUMBERTO CAMPANA — THE ARMCHAIR OF THOUSAND EYES — GILDED BRASS, FENDI “BAG BUGS” IN SHEARLING, KIDASSIA, MONGOLIA, RABBIT FUR — UNIQUE — COURTESY OF FENDI

Shown at the world’s most prestigious sites for design, their works may be perceived as somewhat “banal” by Brazilians, but they become “something special” in other countries like France, as the designer observes. “We try to show a different approach to artisanal know-how and arts in Brazil through our sophisticated creations.” Mission accomplished: as evidenced by the Comité Colbert awarding its Prix Création et Patrimoine to the duo in 2012, as well as the pair’s frequent collaborations with major fashion and design labels. Some of their works were notably shown by Rome’s Galleria O. at Design Miami/Basel with support from Fendi. That same year, the Roman fashion house sponsored the exhibition “Fernando and Humberto Campana: Dangerous Luxury” in Monte Carlo. This year, Fendi also sponsors “Manufatura,” and exhibits a work by the Campana brothers for the first time: the infamous “Armchair of a Thousand Eyes,” made by stitching together a horde of Fendi’s signature bag bugs and inspired by the House’s legendary expertise in dyed fur. Fernando explains all of these collaborations by pointing to the brands’ taste for “Brazilian naivety, naturalness, a certain state of mind, and a shared taste for materials.” “What we all appreciate,” adds Julien Lombrail, “is their personality, sincerity, and spontaneity. Humberto and Fernando Campana bring fresh oxygen, a basic and essential element.” As he concludes: “They bring us back down to earth.”

The centerpiece of “Manufatura” is a sofa in piarucu (the Amazon’s largest freshwater fish), which perfectly illustrates the immensely successful collaboration between the Roissy studio and the designers: the sofa in yellow fish leather was produced by the studio based on a prototype created by the duo. Fabricating the exotic piece meant solving a complex challenge: the brothers had to find a way to transform fish leather into a material as fine as crocodile skin. That meant tracking down Brazil’s top suppliers of piarucu leathers, developing a finely specialized treatment process in Italy, and finally entrusting the leathers to the Roissy studio’s skilled artisans, who removed the scales and treated the scale pockets. The trick is to keep the scale pockets from bending while achieving a supple quality in the leather. Next, the team developed the steel structure of the sofa and adapted its original proportions. Finally, they worked hard to reach a high standard of quality: “So that our wonderful prototype would become a functional finished piece,” explains the gallerist. All the other pieces in the collections were also produced at the Roissy studio. Animal Center Table reinterprets a traditional straw marquetry technique reminiscent of designer Jean-Michel Frank’s work from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For this rounded low table, the challenge was to mount the straw marquetry on a structure made not in wood, but in brass. Fashioned in two Brazilian woods, sucupira and freijo, the Detonado collection includes a modular shelf, console table, and sideboard which feature the tennis racket pattern and



caning technique typical of Portuguese and Brazilian furniture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, the collection's pieces update a rattan caning technique that the duo reclaimed from Thonet chairs, icons of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial furniture design. Also figuring in the works is a unique rose motif originating in the Amazon. Other collections are also on display, such as Ofidia ("snake" in Portuguese), made in cast bronze rope that suggests the reptile's slithering movement, as well as Bolotas, produced in natural Brazilian wood and sheepskin, which is bundled to create a "nest" effect – as well as an irresistible urge to kick back and relax.

Exploring production challenges in this way enables the duo to shed light on the exciting atmosphere of innovation created by bringing together a diverse set of talent and expertise. All throughout the process, the Campana brothers and the artisan teams at Roissy met frequently to flesh out the prototypes. For their part, the artisans appreciated the designers' perspective, work methods, and the way they give form to ideas, explains Julien Lombrail. Especially in light of the fact that they work as a duo: they both design, and they explore their ideas before joining heads to make each decision. All that in a spirit of complicity and simplicity, as the pair never hesitates to ask each other for help and advice.

It's a way of living the creative process that reverberates all the way back to the pervasive atmosphere of the Campana design studio in São Paulo: a site that has remained amazingly simple, and where "there is stuff everywhere!" recalls Julien Lombrail. Long motivated by a desire to promote local Brazilian craftsmanship, the Campana brothers have scoured every corner of the country to learn traditional techniques from the artisans themselves, just as they passionately learn new crafts through their encounters and collaborations around the globe: from Rome, where they immersed themselves in Fendi's fur studios, to the Carpenters Workshop Gallery research studio in Roissy, where they discovered the French tapestry and straw marquetry techniques they put to work in "Manufatura." Their enthusiasm for initiating cooperative projects with studios of all types remains intact: "We always learn from other artisans," explains Fernando Campana, "and through our ideas, we open new avenues that the artisans can follow. We broaden their practices, and they broaden our ideas."

With simplicity, talent, and passion, the brothers inspire us to reflect on ecology in a positive light – something we desperately need to do – by reinventing existing materials and traditional crafts. Which have lately become the object of much infatuation in our societies: "I think artisanal crafts appeal to a generation that is struggling to find work in the industry. Crafts are in fashion. And the more young people we see working with their hands, the happier we are," affirms Fernando Campana. In this way, the designers' international success and creative vision, rooted in the sustainability issues that are now at the center of societal debate, have imbued Humberto and Fernando Campana's work with a sense of fundamental importance. STÉPHANIE BUI

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