



EXQUISITE IN FORM

Annabelle Filer continues to discover new and exciting materials, with this month's selection being so extraordinarily delicate looking and beautiful that only 'exquisite' is good enough to describe them

In today's language certain words take on such popularity, become so ubiquitous, that they become almost meaningless, words such as fabulous, innovation, quality, even sustainability for example. Exquisite should always be an exception. Like the beauty it describes, this word should be treated with reverence. This month we explore some materials that are truly exquisite, bringing joy to architecture and design and, in contrast to the structures that underpin them, requiring the lightest of touches.



DIAMOND-FACETED GUNMETAL STEEL

Defining 'exquisite' is not esoteric. There seems to be a general conception that delicacy and detail are involved. This does not preclude simple shapes and forms but the senses do gravitate towards designs that are more complex. The material gunmetal steel, and its underlying characteristics are such that it lends itself to intricate carving and high polishing. When polished the final finish has a subtle blue tone. While with this material delicacy, in core terms, has been relegated to the sidelines, it remains undeniably exquisite. It was originally designed and crafted as a coffee table (becoming the IVO_03) for Meta by the versatile and influential architecture practice Asymptote. This particular surface is an 'asymmetric topography of 2,000 mathematically delineated diamond-shaped facets, each one different', so its description goes. The steel has been carved out of a 5.2 tonne billet and then repeatedly polished to produce a material with a smooth and reflective eurhythmy. This is true eye candy – edgy, taut and irresistible.

Manufacturer/distributor: UK. **Size:** Ivo_03 1.53m x 0.92m x 0.48m. **Colour and range:** Single pieces but available on a bespoke basis. **Applications:** Interior furniture and bespoke pieces, screens, panels, sculpture, architectural features. www.madebymeta.com



ETHEREAL

When considering exquisite, the raw material is certainly important but the skill and vision of the designer and the detail in the manufacture play equally leading roles. Ethereal is a fine example of this collaborative process. The rug shown above has a luxurious filigree decoupage design in hand-tufted fine wool. Esti Barnes, an award-winning designer, is the owner and design director of Top Floor, the company behind this work. Barnes uses a combination of formal training in graphic design with an almost encyclopaedia store of visual images based on passion and observation.

Her designs pick up the subtleties of the dance between light and shadow, the rich hues in everyday life and the textural imprint that surrounds us. Part of this rug's intrinsic beauty is the tension between the whole and the voids, the balance of colour, weave and the sculptured elements. The notion of carving something soft is possibly contradictory, but as far as Barnes is concerned this is of no consequence. Her rugs are the equivalent of a pampered pooch – if we could carry them with us, we would.

Manufacturer/distributor: UK. **Size:** Bespoke. **Colour and range:** More than 150 rugs available, with customisation. **Applications:** Internal commercial and domestic flooring. www.topfloorrugs.com



GLASS PILLOWS

This is fairytale glass. It is the sort of thing you might expect Cinderella's lost shoe to have arrived on from the palace. Verreum, the Czech Glass company that manufactures these glass pillows, is keen to draw on the traditional Czech glass-making processes while uniting them with the contemporary thinking of some of the most prominent Czech glass designers, in this case Dagmar Pánková.

His pillows are created using a silvered glass process, in effect a double-walled glassware into which the silvering liquid is poured. The liquid adheres to the glass and the vestigial pours out, after which the hole is plugged. Over time this particular liquid has varied and included tin, lead and the earliest pieces of mercury amalgams, though these proved unstable.

The Glass Pillow design could be used for lighting elements or as other decorative features and there is potential to explore other shapes. Verreum is one of the few companies still creating silvered glass.

Manufacturer/distributor: Czech Republic. **Size:** 30cmx30cm but could be larger. **Colour and range:** Clear and amber coloured 'silvered glass'. **Applications:** Current use is for product but potential for other decorative interior elements. www.verreum.cz



IMPRESSIONS 3D RESIN FLOOR

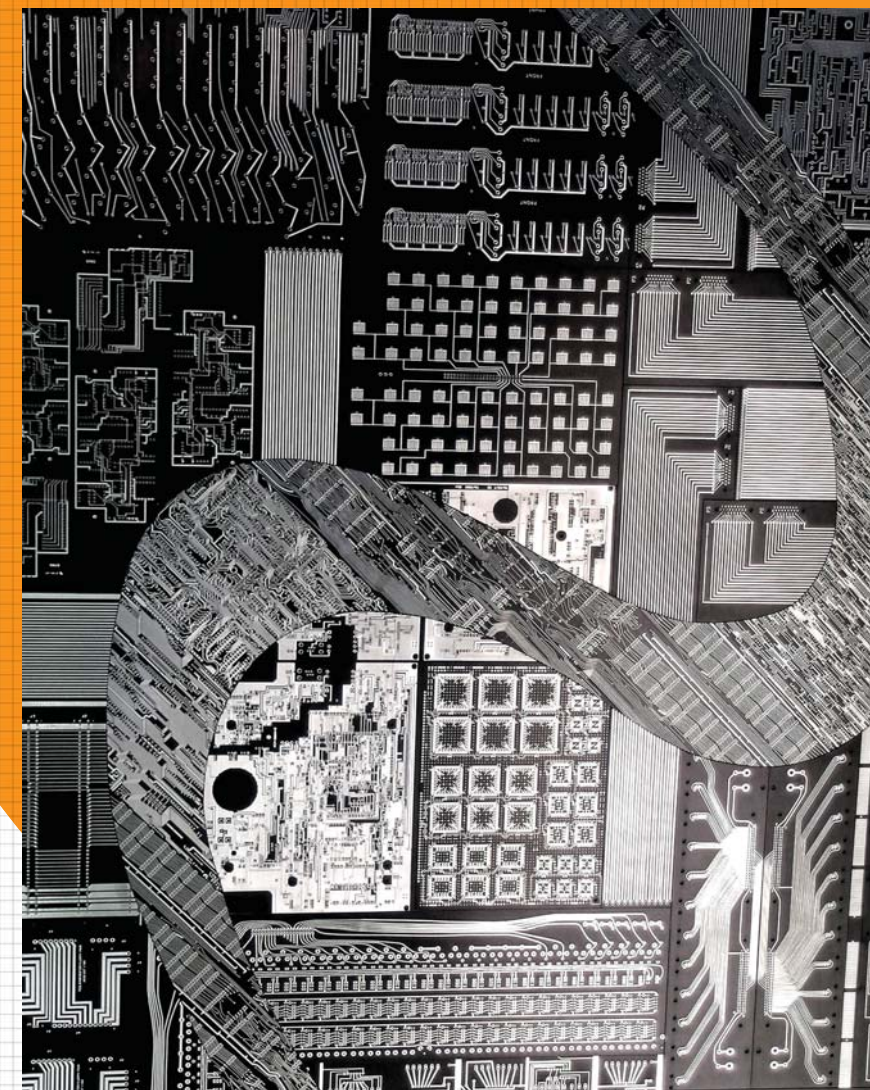
It is hard to disassociate floor pattern from the tile or carpet that carries it so this new resin floor from Senso in collaboration with Marcel Wanders is unusual to say the least.

Impressions is the name of the collection created using the company's Freeze technology involving crystal-clear polymers. The seamless resin floor with its modern motif designs in trompe l'oeil effect creates three dimensions in a two-dimensional floor.

The exquisite element is as much as anything in the optical surprise generated by these patterns. In addition Senso's resin floors are free from heavy metals, solvents and VOCs, produced as they are from bipolymers and plant-based resins.

Technically, their bonding strength is 50 per cent greater than other resin-floor systems, and they are tenacious, firmly retaining their adhesion to wall edges. Colour saturation is greater and the specially developed final coating has both a higher wear and UV resistance. This material is beautiful to walk on – and definitely hard to walk away from.

Manufacturer/distributor: Netherlands. **Size:** Any size floor from 100 sq m upwards. **Colour and range:** 8 colours, four styles. **Applications:** Internal flooring for both commercial and domestic use. www.sensofloors.co.uk



VINTAGE CIRCUIT BOARD

Originally an award-winning documentary film maker Theo Kamecke stumbled upon old circuit boards as a form from which to create sculptural and functional pieces in the early Eighties. While technology has moved on from the soldered board to the printed silicon chip, he feels that his work is helping preserve what will become technology 'fossils'. Creatively he sees the boards as being as natural in their form as sea shells and wood grains. Like nature's algorithms, the circuit-board repetitions become 'characters' or hieroglyphs that inspire Kamecke's work, usually in some form of historical reference, be it Ancient Egyptian or Aztec. He crafts his pieces using marquetry techniques using circuit boards in place of wood veneers. The boards are vintage Sixties through to the mid-Nineties. They are metal (occasionally gold) laminated on to a substrate epoxy fibreglass which has been dyed black, polished and protected with a fine, hard wax. The finished works have the look of bright metal over polished black stone. Unusual and sublime.

Manufacturer/Distributor: USA. **Size:** Pieces available but also to commission. **Colour and range:** Metal, occasionally gold, many circuit board types. **Applications:** Furniture, wall pieces, panels, screens. www.theokamecke.com