



Starck Contrast

Designing within the framework

For better or for worse, Philippe Starck is certainly a well-known designer of objects. According to him, not only is there a Starck tribe but his name is even used as an adjective. For those of us who are familiar with the man only through his products, this interview reveals some curious insights - not in the way that it counters preconceived notions but in the way that it banishes the benefit of the doubt that one might have generously afforded him beforehand.



text YVES MIRANDE
images © PHILIPPE STARCK

The ever-hilarious Starck, who simply cannot and will not be ignored! But look deeper, past the character, the great and fascinating communicator, and you will find a man with real design values. Currently the designer is working on an electric car, restyling the second-generation public transport travel pass, starting on the construction of a chic eatery at Les Puces de Saint-Ouen... Design should be "intelligent and available to all". Back to basics!

DAMN°: What about design in these times of crisis?
Philippe Starck: You know me, I don't know much about contemporary design. However, I do know what it should become and which pitfalls it should avoid. Today, design is fashionable. This is a good thing, to the extent that if people are becoming interested in design again, they are also taking an interest in their homes again. Which means that they are interested in life again. For several generations, clothes were the only expression of our 'self'. We were projecting ourselves and showing others what we aspired to be through our clothes. But in doing so, one gives a fake image. While an interior - a house, a home - in which you live, reveals so much more. It is a lot truer. It's quite

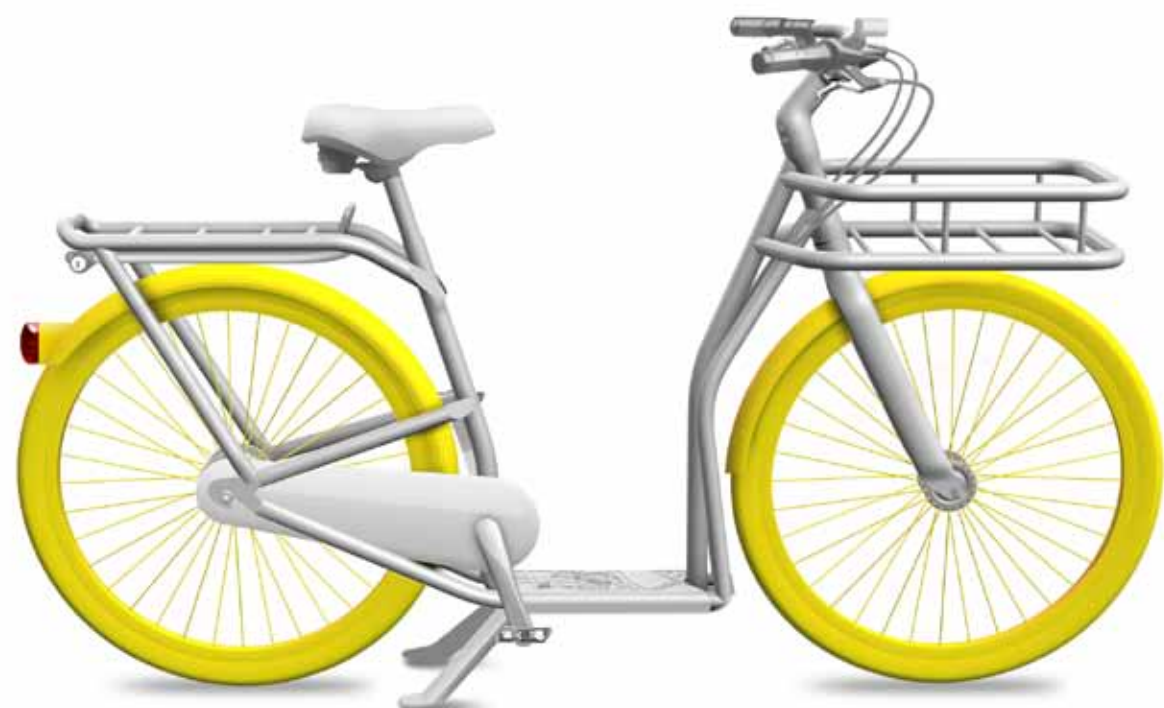
easy to identify a person's ostentation, his appearance. But it is much more complicated to create a cocoon, a home, a nest for yourself. The fact is that when you are fashionable, you have to contend with qualities and defects. The quality aspect is that fashion becomes a tool capable of communicating ideas, or very nice proposals. The defect is that fashion goes out of style. And these days the unfashionable aspect of design happens to be its artistic side. It's a pity that some people think design should become more artistic, given that the artistic bubble will soon burst. And it's also a pity that we should relinquish good values to hop on a sinking boat. The second thing is that design thinks it is fashion, that it is quite similar. And here again, it's a shame that we will end up losing the value of honesty, of the rhythm of design itself, to hop on the boat that will sink, or in any event, change.

DAMN°: Should design rest on its laurels without changing?

PS: I didn't say that design shouldn't change. It has to, but not in the direction of art or fashion. It has to become what it used to be, what it forgot to be: a real, fair, creative, intelligent tool for the population and, above

Net or D'E-Light for Flos
Table lamp. Entirely in polished aluminium.
Light source: 14 3000K Top LEDs
This lamp satisfies our daily need for information, entertainment and always-on connectivity. Net has a radical, extremely functional design, with a USB socket above the light diffuser for an iPod, iPhone and iPad.
"When the iPad, a source of information, becomes a source of light". *Philippe Starck*

Facing page:
Philippe Starck
Photo by Nicolas Guerin



City bike for Bordeaux
Philippe Starck and the bordelais have conceived a totally new city bike with Peugeot.
"This is from the analyze of many clever answers of the Citizen of Bordeaux which the new idea of a new means of transport started. This revolutionary ergonomics seems to be an inventive and just answer to the new questions asked for the pedestrian zone".
Philippe Starck

all, for those who really need it. Because several changes are taking place at the moment. Some are positive, some are catastrophic, and there are urgent needs to be met. Today there are questions that have no answers. And I think that design that is oriented towards the future, towards politics, society, responsibility... is a good thing. Design cannot come up with all the solutions, but it can provide some small services and contribute a creative mindset in terms of service, honesty, scruples and vigilance.

"A design oriented towards politics, society and responsibility."

DAMN°: Your ideas are becoming increasingly political. You are quite committed, in fact!

PS: Oh, but I have always been political. I've been saying stuff that is more or less progressive for the last 30 years and I will continue to do so. But it needs to become more generalised. Now a large part of the design on the market only thinks about the immediate aspect. Whereas we need to consider the next few hundred years, the next few thousand years, even, and extend our field of vision, raise the level. Without this, design, which already held a secondary function in society, will become of tertiary importance. In fact, it may even become useless and dangerous to the extent that it produces matter at a time when that is no longer the purpose. In the past I had less clout, I didn't have the

strength to speak my mind and, above all, there was a lesser sense of urgency. But the times have changed quite a bit. If you compare the last 20 or 30 years, the state of emergency has crept up on us with such extraordinary force and speed, and in a huge number of territories simultaneously. We are facing a heap of emergencies that are imperative to deal with. And wanting to handle topics relating to society, to humanity, always requires some political vision, even if the issues are different. You don't need ministers to make political decisions. As a creator, a designer, simply designing, in one way or another, marks your political commitment. When you do this in function of a part of the population, that is a political choice. Creating objects that cost a certain price involves a political choice. Using one material instead of another involves a political choice. In the past it was not so important, but today this has become a vital aspect of design.

DAMN°: Do you think we have reached saturation point?

PS: We need to be very careful. We spent centuries creating a democratic system, a republican system. Like any other, it has its defects, but we need to think very carefully before we decide to destroy something that works pretty well. Democracy is doing what it can. We need to be careful not to play the sorcerer's apprentice. Likewise, the binary system of left and right is widely disparaged, with people saying that it is useless. That's not true, as the more we advance toward a globalised economy, the more real technical choices will no longer be choices. Meaning that the only thing standing be-



V + Volteis (below)
Less and more: two words to describe this unidentified rolling object, designed by Starck and conceived by Volteis, a French brand whose philosophy and know-how pleased the designer. The V+ is an alternative, a first test to provide a light response, desirable, minimal for those looking to move correctly, differently.
www.volteisbystarck.com

Kawasaki W800 (left)
Since the rebirth of the W in the early 2011 in a 800cm³ version, Starck got the envy of realize a new dream.
"Since my young age, I have two wheels under my foot. I am a biomechanical human being, half man, half two wheels. The moto is a body extension for me".
Philippe Starck





Photomaton (top)
Young booster for Photomaton cabin by Starck. Tactil screen, graphic interface, easy going, sober. Trendy for this added reality !
"What would be without this national héritage ? Would we have identity trouble ? Today just re-dressed up with a new quality, our Photomaton is still there to stay up on the identity of our life".
Phillipe Starck

??? (top right)

??? (middle left)

??? (middle right)

Freebox Revolution (right)
Free is a french mobile phone and web operateur.
"This is the first time I create a interactive box for the house. It was an évidence to create it with Free". This box is of course revolutionnary and democratic. I spent my life to do democratic design. Increase the quality, fall the price et push it accessible to the everyone".
Phillipe Starck



LOG (top)
For the 25th anniversary of the Forge Laguiole, Starck created a knife. Handle in stainless steel printed as a piece of wood. The blade prolongs the handle. Reinterpretation of the codes of this knife.

Feuille d'eau (bottom)
Phillipe Starck create this Water Leaf for the Fondation of Danièle Mitterand, Starck would like to create a totally new container for water. "Common good of the humanity, water has no price". Collected funds by the sell of this Water Leaf help to finance actions of the Fondation al over the world.



tween opting for the left or for the right is the width of the line between them. That's no use. So all that remains are the humanistic decisions. Our level of thinking, which will naturally continue to evolve, means that we are incapable of questioning this right and left reference framework.

DAMN°: You often refer to eco-citizenship.

PS: This is no longer an issue today. Maybe it was 20 years ago. Then, you had the choice. Now it's normal. It has to be integrated into the parameters of the things we cherish, of society and of civilisation. The proof is that nowadays there are so many laws with which you have to comply. Everything is usually done too late, but if you look closely, you can see that the legislators – the people who make the laws – did a good job. There are a lot of frameworks in place that force you to be responsible, to be an eco-citizen. It would be quite extraordinary and wonderful if people lived by the law. We can... we have to do better, we will go still further, but in the meantime, it would already be great if we adhered to the legislation. Today, any irresponsible act is essentially outlawed.

DAMN°: Is the issue of lightness also crucial for you?

PS: It is fundamental. The intelligent part of human production always focuses on reducing materiality. The main lines tend towards dematerialisation, which in itself implies lightness and invisibility. The future is not the production of matter. Intelligence lies in the

creation of ideas and actions. Think of computers. Initially they had very low capacities and were the size of an apartment building. But gradually they became so powerful that now they are the size of an envelope. And their capacity will continue to grow exponentially until a time in the near future when they will have completely disappeared and become virtual, like the iCloud. They will be in places that don't exist and in terminals that will be incorporated into our bodies. So there are clearly two intersecting curves. Meaning that the less material an object is, the more intelligent it becomes.

DAMN°: In design terms, how would you describe the relationship between accessibility and luxury?

PS: I'm not interested in the concept of luxury. I'm so not interested in it that I don't even know how to describe it. I feel as if, if I were to talk about luxury, I would say that it is an entity that continuously shifts such that part of the population never has access to it. I think that's the idea, because once you can afford luxury, it is no longer a luxury. Like caviar and smoked salmon. As soon as you could buy them in the supermarket, they were no longer a luxury. So you can see that it is all a mirage, a bit like smoke and mirrors. Something that is always shifting on the horizon and is never within reach. I don't know whether it is a positive or a negative thing. I would be inclined to say that there is a negative connotation. I would prefer to substitute intelligence and quality for the word luxury. And these two notions should absolutely be accessible. It is not a





Invited by STIF (Transport Union of Ile-de-France), Philippe Starck graciously revisits the future Navigo card (top)

From the first January 2013 on, more than 6 million Parisians will have a new design for their Navigo pass that can be sustainable, in parma and silver.

Zartan, Magis (above)

???

Elise (right)

A box for the recycling in the enterprises.

"To save our planet, to change our societies and Make them more united, we need initiatives, big action ; entreprises coul make possible this major run up for the future of our kids".

Philippe Starck

choice. It's a duty to make these available to the greatest number of people. The only modern elegance is the multiplication of good ideas and quality.

DAMN°: In today's world has Starck become a brand?

PS: No, it's not a brand. And I don't know if it will ever be a brand. On the contrary, it's an adjective (laughs). Which is quite funny. Because people say 'that's so Starck' or 'that isn't Starck at all', to define whether something is black or white, light or dark. But it's also a banner, a reference even, a perspective that you do or don't adhere to. It's a mindset that you like or you don't like. Some think of it as a marker for their decisions, something that allows them to identify and understand themselves in relation to what Starck did or said, which they either agree or disagree with. Those who don't agree can build their own story. Those who do, can find the necessary tools to build theirs, which will also be different. There you have it, it's a banner for a bunch of people who think along the same lines. But there are thousands of these banners, well, hundreds at any rate. Each cultural or sentimental tribe has its plotter. I am just another plotter.

DAMN°: Is there a Starck tribe?

PS: Oh, of course. Its existence has been acknowledged and identified, which is actually quite nice. It is a global tribe. It's made up of intelligent, curious, demanding, creative people who don't give up on their lives and on their world. They think of solutions that are modern, new, interesting. They are also quite honest, very enthusiastic, full of dreams. There is something utopian about them too. You can see it in their reactions, and especially in the response of those who refuse or accept the proposals and how they experience them. It is quite a big global tribe, a very accurate and responsive tribe.

DAMN°: Your three favourite words?

PS: Three words... uhm... I always think of the same ones... I would even venture that there are only two words. Love and Humour. It's funny because these are two fundamental concepts and, barring a few letters, are almost the same word (Ed.: amour and humour, in French). #

www.starck.com