

## Design Talks

Design Miami/ Basel 2007

Performance/Process

Moderator: Marcus Fairs

Panel: Fernando and Humberto Campana, Maarten Baas, Kiki van Eijk

CRAIG ROBINS: Welcome everyone. Welcome to our Design Talks. I'm going to give everyone a second to come over. Robert, nice to see you.

My name is Craig Robins and I asked Design Miami/ if I could have the pleasure of introducing this panel. Marcus Fairs is going to moderate the panel. He is the editor of this absolutely incredible website, [dezeen, dezeen.com](http://dezeen.com). It's written like 'dezeen' but I never know if I'm saying it correctly. It's really a wonderful website, incredibly informative. I strongly urge you to log on, even with your Blackberrys while we're here. At the end of the talk, he is incredibly generously going to also present some books, so if any of you would like to see this wonderful book that he just came out with, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Design*, come and see Marcus after. He also, by the way, did the essay on the incredible performances that you are seeing happening at the fair. And two of the designer performers are with us. Kiki, we haven't met. Hi, I'm Craig.

KIKI VAN EIJK: Hi. [Laughs]

CR: Thanks for coming and helping. And also Maarten Baas has had a beautiful demonstration going on, actually doing the 'Basel' chair. So in the spirit of limited-edition design, he's controlling the edition by how many chairs they can finish during the Design Miami show. And Ambra and I have collected Maarten's work and enjoy living with it quite a bit. Then we also have two good friends, Humberto and Fernando Campana, from

Brazil. I remember at the beginning of my odyssey of getting interested in design, I really first became fascinated with what was happening at Salone. This was probably 10 or 15 years ago. I went to Salone and I found it incredibly remarkable and inspiring that two brothers from Brazil were really dominating the Italian design scene in such an incredible way. Mainly, from my point of view, with the 'Rope' chair and wonderful furniture pieces they were designing with Edra. They really, in many ways, began my collecting of design. I also have many of their chairs. So I welcome you all here. I thank you for being here. I have no doubt that with Marcus we are about to have a very inspired talk. So, you've got the floor.

MARCUS FAIRS: We've never met before. Thank you for plugging everything I've done in the last year. Actually, my publishers forgot to invoice me for the books, so I'm going to give them away. But I've only got ten, so we'll have to have a fight at the end or something. Anyway, we've only got an hour because Fernando and Humberto have to go and run for a plane at 4 o'clock, right? So let's rattle through it. Each of the three designers is going to give a very short presentation to give you an idea of their work and hopefully a flavor of how they create. The theme of Design Miami/ Basel this year is performance and we've had people like Maarten and Kiki and others making things over there and that's really interesting to someone like me. That they've been treating the act of creation of design as a performance because when I studied design, you had to sit and sketch things. It was kind of boring. And then you had to get the ruler out and then you had to make a model. It was really dry, really Modernist. Now we've got people who are turning the production process into some kind of spectacle. But I'm not going to waffle on anymore. Fernando Campana is going to talk us through some of their work.

(6:06)

FERNANDO CAMPANA: Thank you, Ambra. Thank you, Craig. Thank you for

everybody to be here. We are going to start to talk a little bit about our background because this is performatic too. Humberto graduated in law and then he became a designer. And I graduated in architecture and then I went on to Biennale of Art in Sao Paolo in order to get in contact with my brother and then found the Studio Campana 25 years ago. We say that our career chose us. We didn't choose the career of designers.

HUMBERTO CAMPANA: The first exhibition that we made was called 'Uncomfortables.' We've very rustic pieces [6:50] and we didn't know if we were going to be sculptors or designers. I guess through the materials we started getting closer to the design world.

FC: This show was presented in a gallery in 1989. So we started in a gallery, then we made the transition into companies, into our studio productions and now back into galleries like Albion, Moss in New York. So it had this performance, also, in our work. This is one of the pieces, the 'Uncomfortables.' This is the 'Rope' chair.

HC: We started to be known through this chair because it was done in 1993. From 1993 until 1998, we have sold just ten of these chairs. And I weaved them myself. I liked it because it was like filling up the space with lines. I stayed almost 15 days enjoying the pleasure of working with colors and volumes. From this chair, our history and our career started to get maturity.

FC: Then we discovered, in order to keep this strength of images and materials, we should have contact and dialogue with industries. But how could we draw this idea? This chair was the first piece edited in scale, in unlimited editions by Edra. And we got the phone call from Mr. Massimo Morosi Octet [?], an art director at Edra, and he asked about the project of this chair and said, "I want to produce it" Since then we have just told ten

pieces, and Humberto was weaving. If we put this in larger scale, Humberto's going to die! [Laughs] Pass the rest of his life! And then we made a videotape, how to weave and construct the chair. Because the base of this chair is a kind of a knife in metal. Then we transferred the rope, made it step by step, edited the video and sent it to Edra with some sketches. They loved it. They said, "This is fantastic because now we know how to make it." They showed the video for the works and then the chair was there in 1998 and became like our business card.

HC: This also is another way of weaving, but it's a deconstruction of transparencies. Most of the time, we would have liked to make work with plastics but we didn't have the choice to make a tool in plastic or whatever. It would cost a lot so we started looking for materials in the market that could be changed, transformed into another.

FC: Make a kind of deviation from the original function. It's a way to reuse the same material for another purpose.

HC: But there is never a design on a computer. All the prototypes started in real scale and are alive since we started.

FC: Comes from the conscious directly to the 3D. We have never stopped drawing or making models. Sometimes we have to make them, but most of the time we go straight ahead to the prototype.

HC: Normally our design is much more liquid. It is not dry. It's like water, there are no limitations.

FC: This chair is also now an unlimited edition. It's the 'Corallo' chair. It's a metal line that we see as a drawing in the air. It's also made by Edra.

This is the 'Sushi' chair. We had a briefing from Edra to make a sofa and a chair with upholstery without a metal or wooden frame. And then we went to Tuscany and visited many stores around Pisa and Viareggio and started buying felt, carpet, pieces of rubber, things for a boat, plastics and we started rolling it. Like a packaging. And in the end we cut the points and it opened like a flower. And this has no structure. It's just tissues, fabrics, carpets, rags, retained by an elastic belt.

(12:01)

This is our studio production, limited editions made in our studio in Sao Paulo and this is the 'Multidao' chair. It means "crowd." And for this chair we used the dolls from a social program in Brazil of girls that make small dolls in the northeast. And we buy from them to make the upholstery of this chair.

HC: And they are made in our studio by two ladies that stay all day long sewing them, myself together with them, because each one is completely one of a kind almost.

FC: And also we see these works like the 'Sushi' chair, this one and the others that we are going to show you, as how to investigate a new way to make upholstery. We have such beautiful works from other colleagues like Hella Jongerius that make it so beautiful. But in the standard of the companies. And we try to do it in our own way so we can make them in the studio, limited or not limited, and sell in galleries or in stores. This work is more directly for galleries, made in our studio. The 'Banquete' chair, the kind of natural chain of nature, is also another investigation of how to upholster by using plush toys.

(13:33)

This is the 'Boa' sofa. It's part of that briefing with Edra to make the sofa without a metal or wooden frame.

HC: It's a magnified lens over the 'Vermelha' chair. We just put an angle of the 'Vermelha' and constructed it like an architectural landscape. [13:56]

FC: There are nine tubes of velvet with foam weaved together, with ten meters each. So we have 90 meters. And we have to be in the company and interface with the workers to tell them how to make it. We had to make three simulations until they got it. This is the 'Alligator.' It's an evolution from the 'Boa.' The 'Boa' is about the trance, tight, we cannot move. And we made this a modular system.

HC: This allows the user to transform it in different ways, different positions, to become islands of seating. Or they can be alltogether and transform in a sofa.

FC: And this communication, as we said in the beginning, for the regular production is more Edra's, based only in Edra. We have dialogues or images from the Amazon, that Massimo Morosi sometimes sends to us. We don't have to exchange projects, but...

HC: Emotions.

FC: Emotions.

This is the 'Astor' proposal [?] also from last year.

HC: Two huge pillows, one over the other and moveable.

FC: We create a circular seating.

This is the 'Leatherworks,' the last work that we have made in this salon. The idea was to pick up a very conventional and bureaucratic office chair that's upholstered with leather but make our intervention on it. So its composed of small pieces of leather sewn together, and they can be leftovers from the company.

HC: A second skin for a chair.

FC: This is our last work presented for Vitra yesterday. It's the 'Drosera'. We call it 'Drosera' because it's a carnivorous plant. It's a system of tiles for the wall, like wall pockets, and they have a flexible system to open and to close. One is made in copper mesh, on the outside and velvet inside. And the other one is velvet outside. positive and negative. It allows people to put in toys or...

HC: And create a metamorphosis on the piece.

FC: You can be eaten by the piece. Thank you.

We have another work that you can see now presented at Albion Gallery in London, which is the 'Transplastic.' But this would be so long, so you can go there and see. Thank you. Bye.

MF: You're not leaving yet, though, are you?

FC & HC: No, no! Just said bye.

MF: You painted a very interesting picture there of the process by which you create your design objects, and it sounds rather theatrical. You can imagine you walking through the street markets in Italy or going to haberdashery stores in Brazil and also particularly, I love the story about the way you made a video of weaving the rope for the ‘Vermelha’ chair. But what happened to that video? Does it exist?

(17:35)

FC: It exists. We presented it at Design Museum during the show that we did there three, four years ago. No...

HC: It was 2004, I guess.

FC: Yes. This video was shown during the exhibition. Edra still has it. It was fun because I didn’t know how to videotape in videocassette, and Humberto was weaving and saying, “You have to take this side and then we started fighting.” [Laughter] And I didn’t know that there was a microphone on the video. In the end, we had to edit it with beautiful Brazilian music that contributed even more for Edra.

MF: So the music is to stop people from hearing what you are saying to each other.

HC: We must have the original copy somewhere with this awful fight.

MF: But if you think about classic designs from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you have the production pieces of course, but then the archive material is often the drawing or the blueprints. So all you have from the ‘Vermelha’ chair is this video of you fighting, right?

So this is a new type of archive, isn't it? You should put it on YouTube. Everyone should be able to see this.

FC: I guess people have to find a way to communicate. It's not necessary to do it only by computers. Today there is a range of ways to communicate.

HC: In performance, also.

FC: I guess people need to bring emotions.

HC: Or to tell the truth, they have to communicate. If someone is good in computers, in graphic computers, go jump on it and make the best that you can. If you are better manually doing handcrafts, do that. You must try to make the letter arrive to the right destination, with the right zip code and address. So you can get the response from the right company for your designs.

FC: And thank God the world is changing in terms of design. Today, industrial design is just one. There is a whole world of possibilities in big design.

(19:50)

MF: Thanks a lot. Kiki, do you want to take us through your images now please?

KVE: I work with a lot of different materials but something that all of my projects have in common is that a lot of things are inspired by traditional techniques, materials or products. It's like an ode to old pieces. So this is inspired by a traditional quilt technique. It's made of felt, hand-stitched in our own studio. And the pattern you see is a 'cable' derived from knitting patterns.

These are called 'Cubic Lathe' tables. They are inspired on a turret legs of wood which you saw a lot in Victorian times. These are tables that become like a pedestal for your most precious pieces in your house. It's made of powder-coated steel.

(20:47)

This is more like free work. It's an emboss in hand-made paper. These are drawings I made for sketches of ideas, and it turned out to be quite nice as an object on its own, as well.

This is a giant jewel box. You can see it in an exhibition space here, too. It almost becomes a jewel on its own. I handcasted it myself, completely out of pewter. The pattern looks like an engraving, but it's silk screened with an ink that is resistant to chemicals. So only the pieces you see were not silk screened. So it goes in a chemical bath, and then it goes down more like in a deboss, is that right? Emboss and deboss? It's like a relief which goes down [? 21:48] and then on later it's nickel-plated. And inside is completely wenge wood.

This one is called 'Lightbox.' It's just a normal box made of wenge. When you open it, a candle comes out and from its shadow pops out a light, so it's like a little poem in a box.

This is porcelain silverware. The handles are made of porcelain bisque, and they have old style table settings and icons of the past in themselves.

This one is the vase. It's hand-blown. There was another version of it here in the show. It's completely hand-blown, then sandblasted. The bird on top of it is in 3D and silver-plated, so it's an ode to the traditional ceramic kitsch birds and the theme was bric-a-brac.

This is a quilt chair. It's made of powder-coated stainless steel, like the tables. And then it's quilted with leather, so you see a very subtle relief. Here's a stool in the same series. This is a cabinet, it's difficult to see now, but you should see it for real here in the show. The drawers are completely made of ceramics, but they have the feeling of textile because they are first stitched completely out of textile. There are plaster mills around it, and then they pour ceramic into it so the ceramic gets all the details and characteristics of the textile. It looks very soft on first sight, but if you look close and touch it you see it's a hard and durable material. That was it!

MF: Thanks. You are one of the designers doing performances, live performances over there. So tell me what are you doing?

KVE: I'm actually just working like I normally do. I have my little studio there, and I'm sketching and printing and making combinations. What I'm doing at the moment is a project about textile for the collection of the Textile Museum in Holland. They asked me to design some new pieces for their collection, and I'm just starting out the project, so I'm showing my inspiration pieces and printing them out, combining them, going over them with sketches and paint.

MF: And when you design, do you consider that a performance? Because the word 'performance' kind of suggests some kind of theatricality or artificiality. Like performance art, for example, is preconceived as an event. But sketching to develop a new chair, for example, is that a performance or is that just sketching?

KVE: Well for the exhibition, I think it's a performance. Also because a lot of times

during exhibitions, the process is not shown. So this is the total image. And yeah I consider it a performance. Only during the show.

MF: And with this new emerging type of design, which some people are calling designart, where it's about limited editions and galleries and things like that, and often the work is handmade rather than industrially made. Do you find that to the people who buy your work the story of how it was made gives the piece more perceived value. Are they interested in the process?

KVE: Yeah, I think so, because a lot of projects I do have a lot of crafts involved, and take a lot of time, and have a long process. Like it happened in the past, as well. And I think it gives an extra value.

MF: And what about when you've been sketching over here? Have people been looking at your sketches and saying, "I want that one."? Have people been getting involved in the performance in that type of way?

KVE: They have been involved here but not picked any out yet because there are no final pieces yet. It's just still in process.

(25:50)

MF: Because Max Lamb (Max Lamb's the English designer who was doing casting live in the sand yesterday) turned up with all these really heavy bits of metal from England and he cast this stool. And somebody watched it and was so engrossed in the process that he bought the piece then and there. And obviously that's a great story to take home. "Look what I bought in Basel, and the guy made it in front of me!"

KVE: Yeah, it's great.

MF: Maarten, if you could talk through your images now please.

MAARTEN BAAS: What you see here is literally my graduation project. It's this week, exactly five years ago, that I graduated at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, the 11<sup>th</sup> of June of 2002. This is a vintage baroque chair which I found in a flea market, and my project was about burning existing pieces of furniture. So I literally took it, burned it all down, and later on, I put an epoxy resin so it was durable again, and I reupholstered it in a black leather. This piece is the prototype for a reproduction piece which is in the collection of Moooi. And besides that reproduction piece, I made a couple of editions, special requests and things, also within the theme of the burned furniture. The 'Smoke' series, as it is called.

In 2004, Murray Moss of Moss Gallery in New York asked me to do something in his exhibition space, and we discussed it a lot and we decided to actually make a whole timeline of existing pieces of furniture. It was in chronological order. It started with antique. It went until the 1900's until 1950. There were the 80's, there were the 90's and there were the really current pieces all in chronological order. But all in burned versions. So here you see the Rietveld's 'Zig Zag' chair from 1934. You really see it in flames. And this is how it was presented in Moss.

Of the Campana brothers, [Laughter] they didn't know about it, but at that point, I think the chair is 2003, isn't it? Yeah, so this show was 2004 so it was really one of the most recent icons in the design world. And here in Moss, I made the 'Smoke' version of it.

FC: He is not allowed to go to our installation in Vitra. We are spraying this straw every day in order to receive his visit. Sorry.

MB: So this is a part of the exhibition in Moss. Well as you can see the Mackintosh chair, the 'Zig Zag'... It was the latest stage, actually, with a random collection of icons and non-icons, you can also see an Ikea chair in the back. So it was also mixed with normal pieces. And after that, I did a few other editions, as well. The 'Smoke' series with Moss has gone on even until now. I literally burned a Steinway grand piano for them, which is going to be shown in Los Angeles and also for museums. And so I did some pieces.

After that, I had a few other concepts, but I didn't put them in the presentation. I want to show only three concepts. This is last year, 2006, clay furniture. Actually, it was a very intuitive idea. I wanted to get rid of all thoughts and concepts, putting the pieces of furniture in a more heavy position or so. I wanted to get rid of all of that and start it all over again. I think it's even kind of a symbolic thing that first I burned all of those icons and after that, it felt like there was time for a new fresh start, and the clay furniture came out of it. I didn't think about it so consciously, but later on I thought, hey, that's quite a line that's in there. This is a children's chair and a normal chair and a little cabinet. This is an installation of ventilators. I made an installation of five of those ventilators for the Groninger Museum. These are only three of them. One of them is also shown here in the exhibition space. Since it's quite hot here it's attractive to be in front of it.

[Laughter]

MF: Can somebody go and get it please actually and put it here? [Laughter]

MB: This is actually the table, Craig just already said they are collecting my work. This is their table. It's also sold through Moss. Actually, they didn't buy literally this table. This is the fifth table which I made, and they bought the very first table.

(31:49)

And this is my very newest edition. It's called 'Sculpt.' I presented it in Milan for the very first time. They are based on sketchy models. Sometimes if you make a maquette or something like that, you make just a model, one or ten or something like that, you just make it quickly just to have a feeling for the size. And often I think, those models are more interesting to me than the final "serious" product, so to say. So I thought why wouldn't I use that quality, and make it in the real size or even bigger because it's a huge cupboard.

The same with a leather upholstered chair and a little side table. And a dining table out of stainless steel, sandblasted stainless steel. And a little cabinet. That's how far I am at this moment. I didn't present this new stuff here because there's not so much performance in the making of it. Moreover, it's much more complicated to make these things. But clay pieces, I literally make them here live on stage. The special Basel chair, which Craig already talked about, is made especially for this week. I actually moved a part of my studio here, and we do exactly the same thing that we do every day. Creating those clay pieces with our team.

That's it, so far.

MF: Thanks, Maarten. And I want to ask you the same question I asked Kiki. When you are burning your furniture or claying your chairs...

MB: Let's go back to the clay. [Laughs]

MF: ...are you conscious that this is some kind of performance, or is this just what you do because you're a designer, you're a creator and you like working with materials?

MB: Anyway, I never think of labeling things. I always do just what I do. That never-ending question, is it art or design? I really don't care about it because I just make it. And if you consider this art, it's totally fine with me. If you consider this design, it's also fine with me. If you consider this as a performance, that's also fine with me. I'm just here to make my things. You can call it whatever you want.

MF: I did an interview with Maarten in Design Miami/ in fact, in Miami, when clay was your new range. Maarten spent ages explaining to me exactly how it was made. And actually to come and see you do it, then you get it in an instant. Maybe you should give journalists a video of the process.

MB: Well the video is playing here. You can see it. I made some images of the step-by-step process of it. It's actually more complicated than it looks. It looks as if it's just half an hour of claying and that's it. It's actually a new kind of craftwork, I think. It's a very modern material which I use. It's two component clay. The guys who are working with me are really skilled at doing it. It's not that easy.

Here you can see a part of the process, it's not the whole process. Because it starts with the reinforcement, the metal frame. After that, the clay comes on top. That's what we are doing here, live. And after that, spray paint goes over it. We also bring the 'Basel' chair back to Holland to paint them in the final color.

(35:38)

MF: And your 'Smoke' range, I think the images of the chair in flames is a really powerful image because you can spend a lot of time, again, explaining to someone how you burned the chair but to actually see something on fire, that's really quite powerful. Whose idea was it that you show pictures of the chair on fire?

MB: You mean Moss or my idea? It was my idea, I think. I don't know exactly how it went anymore, but I was so enthusiastic about having the chance of getting all those design classics. I could literally choose whatever I wanted and a few weeks later, it came in my studio. So I thought, I have to make pictures of the process. I have to make pictures of them in flames. Because when the hell do you see a Sottsass burning? This was my chance to.

MF: A bit of history. Or a Campana brothers chair, for example, being destroyed. But actually I went to Maarten's studio in Eindhoven a few years ago and I said to him, you have to burn something whilst I was there because I had seen those photographs and actually the thing he burned...

MB: ...I did the grand piano for Li Edelkoort's piano! [Laughter]

MF: And I must say that I expected the process to be something spectacular and violent. Your pictures of the chair in flames against the black background, and I somehow imagined some kind of hellish inferno. And it was actually really civilized. They just put some petrol on it and torched it. And then it went out. And then they did it again.

MB: Another boring job at the office.

MF: Yeah, exactly. It wasn't performance at all. It was just like somebody fixing their car or something. But we were talking about this before, weren't we, Fernando and Humberto? The point Maarten made about in a way this is just a return to craft, and perhaps we're dressing it up with the language of art. Like it's performance and all those kinds of things. But for you, this is a natural process, isn't it? Because you didn't train as designers, so there's nothing about throwing away old design processes and discovering new ones in what you do, is there?

(37:37)

FC: It's what we know. That's the way that we do things, as he said. Otherwise, he would be a lawyer. I would be an architect. Nothing against architects, but you know the one that sits down and just draw, draw, draw? That was not my main goal. We fought for this freedom. This was a built freedom. There is a system to work. It seems to be very free, that we do things just by chance. And there is a discipline to it. But from discipline we learn how to get the freedom to make a work that pleases us first. Then we can please the other people and get the right correspondence with the companies and determine who is going to buy and who is not.

HC: Thinking about what is going to be art or design... First of all, I would like to have freedom. What I fight for is for freedom. Not to be [contained] in a box, in a drawer. The thing is open doors. [ 38:48 ]

MF: The idea of performance has been very strong in the art world for decades. I remember when I was young one of the most powerful things [was] that film of Pablo Picasso painting a bull on a piece of glass, and it's filmed from the other side. He just takes his brush and, in just one movement, he creates the shape of a bull. And that bit of

film tells you everything about the genius of Picasso. It tells you as much as reading a whole book. Do you think designers are perhaps a little bit modest when it comes to explaining what they did? Maarten, what do you think? Do you think that you could use the performance nature more to explain your ideas to people?

MB: What I like most about it is that you also see the concerns which are there. It's a lot of work. Also, to smoke things, to preserve them, every square centimeter should be preserved with epoxy. I think that indeed gives more insight into what the product actually is. If you're talking about unique pieces, limited editions and so, you understand that this is a limited edition because it's just physically impossible to make a million of them. Because not just any machine could make this and not just any factory in China could make it. You really have to know what you're doing and explaining that is very good. I think it's really a part of the process. I'm really proud of my team of workers. We enjoy making it. We all are very concerned about the quality of it. It's not just a mass product. I think that's the logical line of making a limited edition. I really don't like what's happening a lot at the moment that you just take a mass product, you paint it gold and you say, here it's a limited edition. I think there should be a reason why it's a limited edition and in the process you can see why it's like this. So I think it's very important to be involved in that.

(41:05)

MF: Is that important to you, too, Kiki? That there's some kind of integrity to the process.

KVE: Yeah, I think it is. Like what Maarten says, it's very easy to just paint something gold and call it [limited] because then it becomes just a name. It should have some content,

why it's a limited piece, and I agree that it should be in the process itself, as well, because otherwise it just becomes a kind of fashion thing.

MF: To what extent do you document the process of your work? You told me about the video that you made for Edra, but that's presumably because they said, "How do we make the chair?" Do you film all your processes? Do you make movies or take photographs in the studio?

FC: Photos. Sometimes we make a sequence of photos of the how-to, to make a montage of the piece. Also, we brought this limited edition inside the factory. People have to weave this chair. They have to put all the slats of wood to construct the 'Favela' chair. They have to bend the iron to make the 'Corallo' chair. So it's an industrial process, but each one is one of a kind.

HC: Humanizing.

FC: There is no repetition for the weaving. No connecting dots.

HC: To make, for instance, the 'Favela' chair, because I have done two of them myself...when Edra was interested in making a series of the project...

MF: The 'Favela' chair is the one made of all the little bits of wood?

FC: Yes, that he burned.

HC: How could that be translated to a worker in a factory? We went to Rio Grande do Sul in a German community. And to teach the workers to make the 'Favela,' I went to the

backyards of the factory. Me and my brother showed them the pile of slats and we gave them the frame of the chair, and we told them, please I would like you to reproduce this kind of attitude. Something very casual.

FC: Filling up this space but with no regularity. This company's in the southern part of Brazil where the German community are based.

MF: So maybe that's a bit like a director showing an actor how to play the part?

HC: All the time it's about talking – talking and transforming together with the worker. Because most of the times in my studio, in our studio, I stay in the backyard working. For me, it's a process.

FC: Every project that we do, we must be in the factory having an exchange with the workers. The same thing for Alessi. We had one piece that was the 'Screen' sculpture – many TV antennas and aluminum tubes connected together by aluminum wire. One day, Alberto Alessi said "I want to produce something of yours." We had this proposition we [made]. And then we went to the factory, started seeing the metal sticks and then we put them together. They got how to make it. Industrial but it still keeps our pattern, our way to organize or disorganize the things in the space.

MF: And what impact do you think that modern technology is having on this? Because the Front girls, who are also over there, the Designers for the Future, near where you all are set up. The 'Sketch' furniture, which they use Motion Capture for, they tell me, and I'm not quite sure that I believe them, but they told me that they put the film of them doing that on YouTube when they showed in Japan for the first time and 600,000 people

watched that video. For 600,000 people to watch some Swedish designers producing a chair, that's quite an extraordinary powerful new audience.

(45:12)

MB: That's the best example of what you were talking about: that the performance is really a part of the piece of furniture. And I really like the 'Sketch' furniture. Maybe it's a bit comparable to my black background fire thing. The movie itself, the pictures also, is like a scenery. But there you really see growing the chair. It was not only a work in process. They were all dressed in black, the chairs were white. It was a beautiful movie, and you really see the chair happening and there it's standing. That's such a logical line of what's happening. I think it's great.

MF: Yeah it's very interesting because in Front's work the product and the performance are integrated. In fact, the performance is central to the concept behind the piece.

In Milan at the Furniture Fair, I noticed that more and more designers show movies of what they're doing. Like Pieke Bergmans was showing a movie. Pieke Bergmans is a Dutch designer who drops molten glass onto existing objects, which looks pretty interesting. But when you see it actually happening in the glass blowers studio, it really brings it alive. Do you normally use any kind of performance interaction in your shows, Kiki?

KVE: Not yet. But I'm thinking of putting more things on my website about how the process is working, because I think it's a really interesting point. This way, design becomes more understandable for the general public. Because design is still, for the general public, something very vague. This way, if you really see it, it becomes very clear and very nearby.

FC: Demystifies some things. In our case, for instance, we show materials that you can buy in housewares – bubble wrap or garden hose tubes. Then people are astonished. How come I didn't think about it before because I have it at home? But this is the mental process. It's very hard to make something [that] doesn't have the same sense anymore. You don't see something anymore as a garden hose tube, but you see it as a plastic chair. You don't see anymore as a ceramic, but you see it as upholstery. That's magical.  
(47:57)

MF: So maybe one of the main differences between design and art, given that there's a lot of confusion about them, is that like you say, that design at its best is demystified, transparent and clear, whereas art can be a bit confusing. Maybe the performance of the creation can help people to understand even more that design really should be completely understandable and not weird or esoteric? Do you think?

PANELISTS: Yeah.

MF: I'm conscious of how hot it is. We've got ten minutes before the Campana brothers have to fly back to Brazil. Does anyone have any questions for any of the panel related to the theme? Not related to the theme?

AUDIENCE: In New York, you did a *real* performance at The Apartment. Do you guys remember? I mean they actually did a play [laughter] about making a chair. I just thought maybe you'd like to tell us.

MF: Oh yeah we want to hear about that.

AUDIENCE: Where you tied up the people in The Apartment. [Laughter]

FC: That was not a performance, but how to do something funny during the opening. The store in New York, The Apartment, got an actress that came to interview us and then she was confused. In the end, me and Humberto untied her and throw away [?] but that was more theatrical or dramatic. Not the process of design. I don't tie people up! But once, I had a funny thing. [About] the Rope Chair, someone came and said, [it would be a] good thing to tie your lover in this chair. I said, okay, you can do whatever you want. Sit or jump.

MF: Now that's something that should be filmed for sure.

FC: That was not our intention. But I like to see, they are like personages in a theater that's the house. Then they start playing the role that the person wants.

HC: The imagination of the owner, of the observer.

MF: Do we have another question?

AUDIENCE: Hello. I guess we touched on it a bit with the Campanas' work, but obviously the point of design, when we're not talking about high end designart necessarily, is its functionality. Consequently, you've got to think of the end user in that role and certainly the 'Alligator,' more the 'Alligator,' but then I guess the 'Boa' chairs engage the end user. They enable the performance to carry on. And so I wonder how much you as a panel think about that when you're starting your design process? How much the end user will carry on the performance and whether the idea of documenting that has any appeal?

(50:51)

MF: That's an interesting point actually because when Wava and I were talking about the essay that I was going to write in the catalog, I was like, where does the performance stop? Do you remember that, Wava? The performance of the thing. And then once the user gets the piece then they have an interaction and the performance goes on through the life of the piece. Do you have any thoughts on that?

FC: Sorry I didn't understand your question. It was too long in English. [Laughter] Can you resume it? It was just a commentary, or a question?

MF: I think it was a question. So we've talked about performance in this debate as being the thing that allows the object to come into being. But of course when you finish the object and you sell it or give it to the retailer or whatever, then a whole new performance can start. The ritual of using the piece, the way it degrades over time. And some designers actually work with that idea. Front did a chair that decays. It falls apart over a year. So how much do you think about that?

FC: We face it very much because people first of all, they ask us, can I sit on it?

[Laughter]

FC: Sometimes it creates a conflict. Of course, sometime people love it, sometimes they don't love it. We don't [feel] obliged to be the [best] in the house. We do things first because they please us. A classic story is about the Philippe Stark squeezer. I see it as a sculpture inside the living rooms of many people instead of being in the kitchen. It's funny, you cannot give the rules of the game, or instructions. There is a chair. You can sit

in another chair and look at the other chair. You can sit on a rug and look at the sofa. You can lay down on the sofa and look at the table. The user's creativity or necessity depends on what kind of performance this is going to...

MB: This reminds me of the book of Richard Hutton who asked all his clients, "Send photos of your Richard Hutton product in use." And I don't know who it was who had that cup with the big ears which was for the dog.

[Laughter]

MB: And he says inside the book also, he got that chest of drawers of Tiera Mi [?] and his children are using it as a climbing rack.

(53:40)

FC: For instance, we have the 'Bubble Wrap' chair. We didn't intend for it to be limited but we just sold four pieces. It's a metal frame and the upholstery is 40 layers of bubble wrap plastic. And a friend of ours in New York bought it, Jeanette Kahn, we made the 'Jeanette' chair [after her], and the cats love it. Fortunately, we can [repair] the chair. She has a roll of bubble wrap. Whenever we go there, we can cut it or she cuts it by herself. The cats are using it [for their] nails.

MF: I was talking to an architect last night at the Vitra party, and he was talking about the idea of the building after it has been handed over to the client, like the occupancy phase and the problems that might occur in a new building. And he was very clear about it: "That's the client's problem. If the building doesn't work properly after we've completed the construction period, I'm out of there." I found that quite shocking,

actually. Do you say that to your clients, Kiki? That's your chair now. If it breaks, don't come back to me.

KVE: It depends on what you tell them before. If you say it's a very fragile piece and be careful, it's your own risk. But if you present it as a very functional piece and it breaks down, then you should be responsible for it and repair it.

MF: And do you think that with this very expensive design that we see here that it should still be designed to be used every day by people or is it something that you just put behind a glass wall?

KVE: Depends on the product. Some products are easy to use and others they really stay as a piece of art. Like my cabinet of ceramic, for example. You can really use it, but you shouldn't drop it on the floor.

MF: Well that's the same with lots of things, isn't it? My phone, for example, which I dropped last week and broke. Do we have any more questions?

FC: Our installation in Vitra has been used by the birds now in droves. This installation became a big apartment house. We had two baby birds yesterday, already living there. So, functional.

MF: This is the straw wall, is it? On the Gehry building? You better not tell Maarten about that because he would destroy that!

[Laughter]

FC: We are putting anti-fire spray every day until he goes there.

MF: Did you see the installation that Arne Quinze did at the Burning Man Festival last year? You know the festival in the desert, I think in Nevada, in the States.

FC: Oh yeah, the Burning Man.

MF: Yeah, and these are the kind of timber installations that he does at design events around the world. He did one there, and then they set fire to it. They've now made a movie, and the movie is coming out in a couple of weeks time. So it was a structure created and destroyed in the very same day.

HC: We have to be not so serious. We have to not take life so seriously. It's important to make but we have to bring humor. Otherwise things wouldn't change. We have to have irony. The same chair, the same table, the same lamp, with the three legs, four legs and if you don't make an insertion, make something new. [? ] There is a creativity, the work of someone's mind and designers desire it too. [? ]

MF: I put the Arne Quinze's project on my website and obviously that is a performance in its own right. But I got all these comments at the end with people saying, "It's not very sustainable, is it?" [Laughter] Well, obviously! We're getting some signals from over there that the Campana brothers have to go to the airport. Let's give them a special round of applause for giving us their time. In these very Brazilian tropical conditions. Lovely to see you again.

And I think that we should probably wrap up the session now. If anyone wants to join in the scrap for a free book over here, I'll definitely sign it for you. But thanks to everyone

for coming. Thanks also to Maarten and Kiki for joining us. And I'm sure that Maarten and Kiki will be around for a few more minutes if anyone has any specific questions. Thanks a lot everyone.

WAVA CARPENTER: And thank you, Marcus. Thank you for coming. Marcus is doing a book signing now if you'd like to get in on that. It's a first come first serve sort of situation.

[58:40]