

Wallpaper*

*DESIGN INTERIORS FASHION ART LIFESTYLE

Boa vista

A new gallery for contemporary and iconic Brazilian design, as well as some sustainable up-and-comers, 19 Greek Street is a good-looking addition to London's Soho



With theatres, sex shops and nightclubs living (relatively) harmoniously side by side, Soho's reputation as London's neon-lit underbelly is undisputed. The area is also peppered with gastronomic pleasure zones, with hyped restaurants, bars and cafés lurking (with the remaining rent boys) around every corner.

But one particular piece of Soho real estate is welcoming a new kind of tenant altogether this month. Occupying a winding Victorian townhouse, 19 Greek Street is a novel furniture gallery that showcases a collection where the emphasis is on craft and sustainability.

Spread over six floors and known solely by its address, the gallery comes as a design double-bill. In addition to a roster of emerging studios, all taking an unwavering, sustainable design stance, the space will also host the first international outpost of US-based Brazilian furniture specialist, Espasso.

The brain behind 19 Greek Street is Marc Péridis, who also runs the boutique interior design agency Montage. The 33-year-old decided to move into retail while travelling in Brazil, where he visited Carlos Motta's studio (see W*92) earlier this year. Seduced by

HOT SEATS

In foreground, 'Pallet Chair Lo', £450, by Studio Mama. 'Asturias' armchair, £4,365, by Carlos Motta, from Espasso. In background, 'Kite' stool, £575, by Blakebrough + King. 'Paxiuba' vase, £1,035. 'Cantante' lamp, £7,110; both by Etel Carmona; vintage love seat, £12,000, all from Espasso. 'Elements' shelf, £650, by Studio NOCC

the contemporary Brazilian design scene, particularly its relationship with nature, the Canadian-born Londoner returned home with grand plans – plans that he has managed to realise in just eight months.

The house's first two floors have been given over to Espasso, which will bring with it the signature pieces by Sergio Rodrigues, Arthur Casas, Etel Carmona and Isay Weinfeld that have so charmed its American audience.

First established by Carlos Junqueira in 2002, in Long Island City in New York, Espasso made its name by introducing >>

HAPPY HOUR

This picture, 'JZ' trolley, £9,885, by Jorge Zalszupin, from Espasso. Top shelf, from left, ice tongs, £9, by Ettore Sottsass; ice bucket, £54, by Luigi Massoni and Carlo Mazzeri, both from Alessi. 'Crush' muddler, €13, by Mendes-Hirth, from Espasso. Bowl, £28 for set of six, by Pols Potten, from SCP. Recycled glasses, £15 for three,

from Folklore. Stirrers, BRL\$6 (£2) each, by Tok & Stok. Bottom shelf, 'Lampi' glasses, £28 for two, by Iittala, from SCP. Cachaça, BRL\$43 (£14), by Cubucana. Below, 'Voltaire' chair, £11,835, by Sergio Rodrigues, exclusive to Espasso, from 19 Greek Street. For stockists, see Resources, page 280



a new generation of Brazilian designers to an American audience. 'When I first started the business,' says Junqueira, 'many of these designers were unknown, even to Brazilians.'

Today, with a comprehensive selection of work from Brazil's most influential modernists readily available under one roof, Espasso has become an ambassador of Brazilian culture from its gallery space in West Hollywood, Los Angeles and its East Coast gallery, now based in Tribeca. The gallery consistently flies the Brazilian flag high, hosting events such as musical showcases and film screenings on both coasts. Its London space will be no different.

'I'm really interested to show what Brazilian culture is about,' enthuses Junqueira about his expansion across the Atlantic. 'British culture is completely different to Brazil's. It's all about attracting more exposure and creating more references for people so that they truly appreciate where these pieces are coming from.' Junqueira plays the part of curator and custodian of Brazilian culture well –



architectural armchair by the legendary Rodrigues. It is the first time the chair will be available outside of Brazil. Designed in 1965, the 'Voltaire' was commissioned for the stateroom of the Bloch office, Brazil's leading television and radio network of the day. Rodrigues was supposedly inspired by images of Voltaire seated at his desk on an upholstered *bergère*, and it is the only instance that he has ever referenced 18th-century design.

In contrast to Espasso's icon-driven catalogue, the next two floors of 19 Greek Street are filled with an exciting assortment of contemporary design with intrinsic, sustainable values. Selected by Péridis, this collection features socially conscious work from design studios across the UK, Germany and France, as well as further afield, including Australia.

The world of eco-conscious design is often seen as murky territory, but Péridis has not compromised on aesthetics for tree-hugging's sake. Each of the pieces is well-made and thought-provoking, from Studio NOCC's bend-and-stand shelving unit to Henry Wilson's A-joint, an ingenious multi-use joint system sandblasted from reclaimed metal. A bed designed by Dutch designers Social-Unit for homeless shelters, may be crafted out of recycled bottle caps, but it has been treated to make it look as if it's made out of wood.

Péridis is so moved by the intellectual aspects of design that he has dedicated the townhouse's sprawling basement to serve as a platform for more conceptual pieces, such as Studio Aisslinger's 'Chair Farm', which manipulates stems and branches within a metal frame to literally grow a chair.

'This is about finding design for the times. Functionality and a story don't have to be mutually exclusive,' says Péridis about his socially conscious approach. 'Sustainable design helps society in the right way by using materials that would otherwise be discarded, and if they can look amazing, then great. If people don't even have to say that it's sustainable because it looks good, that's the best of both worlds.'

As if championing a worthy cause wasn't enough, Péridis also has his sights set on creating the gallery's own exclusive line of furniture. First up, he's commissioned a pair of Studio Mama chairs upholstered in colourful, eye-catching fabrics designed by London fashion studio David David. Altogether, it's a pretty explosive combination of forces that will add 'design destination' to Soho's ever-changing list of aliases. ★

www.19greekstreet.com