

# Young Guns

Our 2014 class of rising talent includes designers from Bulgaria, South Korea, Portugal, and beyond. This year's installment shows that global design is more accessible than ever before, thanks to technology and fluid borders.

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## Benjamin Graindorge France



Parisian designer Benjamin Graindorge is self-deprecating but completely content in his chosen métier, professing that “learning is freedom.” His enlightened state derives from time spent in Patagonia as a student—a period when he considered dropping out of design school—and a later sabbatical in Japan. Before his travels, Graindorge admits he was more interested in the image of an object than its relationship to its user. Following his worldly design education, as well as a yearlong stint with renowned furniture designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, his work has taken on a new dimension. It's still ethereal—spy his ceramic vases and lamps for Moustache (left), which ripple and bubble across an otherwise smooth surface, or his limited-edition art pieces for gallery Ymer & Malta (Sofascape, below)—but it is ultimately grounded in a humanistic expression of scale and tactility. “For me,” Graindorge says, “the perfect assemblage is the human body.” [benjamingraindorge.fr](http://benjamingraindorge.fr) >



**“My dream is to collaborate with [international] companies like Alessi, Hay, Vitra, and Moroso, since it’s not easy to make and sell products just in Korea.” —Yong Jeong**



## Yong Jeong South Korea

Based in Seoul, Yong Jeong is a recent art school graduate whose inventive and boldly colorful industrial designs owe a debt to the South Korean designer Joongho Choi. Jeong’s One table calendar is composed of three rings that hang together with magnets, telegraphing the date and the cyclical nature of time, while a urethane-finished beech armchair is distinguished by a curved back that Jeong says is meant to “embrace” its user. He is perhaps most proud of Dora, a remote-controlled CD player that spins on an axis like a globe (above). Though he’s now diversifying his portfolio with lighting and stationery, Jeong says he has no immediate plans to show his work. “I’ve just graduated and I don’t have deep pockets,” he says. “The irony is that I may be known abroad but I’m little known in my home country.” [jeongyong.com](http://jeongyong.com) >



## Knauf and Brown Canada



Calen Knauf and Conrad Brown are simpatico in a way that only best friends can be, which is fitting because their Vancouver-based design studio, Knauf and Brown, has its roots in the bonds the two forged as skateboarding teenagers. The pair, who earned their bachelor’s degrees in industrial design just last year, have been making a name for themselves in Vancouver’s industrial design scene by crafting objects that marry minimalism with functional elegance. Their Nine by Nine collection of furniture meant for tiny spaces includes a standalone wardrobe (above right). The Hull Sofa, Brown’s undergraduate thesis project, is a semicircular sectional with tall, flexible white ash slats that hover above the back, offering a quasi-transparent sense of privacy (right). “The overall idea was to create a place of psychological as well as physical comfort, where somebody could see without being seen,” Brown says. [knaufandbrown.com](http://knaufandbrown.com)



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BERND SCHIFFERDECKER





**Simon  
Key Bertman**  
Sweden

Simon Key Bertman's textile designs are a treat for the eyes, the brain, and the fingertips. His chunky woven patterns—as seen in his handwoven Chess throw (below)—are inspired by optical patterns that two-step to a perfectly ordered but free-spirited rhythm. “At art school I discovered that the systematic method of weaving fit my pattern ideas perfectly, so I studied weaving techniques for many years,” the Stockholm-based designer says of his time at Konstfack. Bertman's rigorous mark can be found in recent collaborations with Note Design Studio and Svenskt Tenn, among others, and he's currently busy working on his own showroom. His dream commission? Applying his optical motifs on a much larger scale to public spaces. [bertman.nu](http://bertman.nu)



**Tania  
da Cruz**  
Portugal

Milan-based Tania da Cruz cut her teeth in Marcel Wanders's Amsterdam studio. “It was like living in a temporary fairy tale,” she says. Dutch whimsy factored into her early work—such as her Chia Pet-like Wig vase—but Cruz found acclaim with her modular Braque sound absorber made from cork. The practical and aesthetically adventurous piece earned a coveted first prize at the SaloneSatellite awards in 2013. Working with cork—like for the two-piece Bole stools (below)—holds a special significance for Cruz, whose native Portugal produces about half the world's supply. “I love that, as a designer, I am indirectly helping the economy to show the world its amazing potential,” she says. [taniadacruz.com](http://taniadacruz.com)

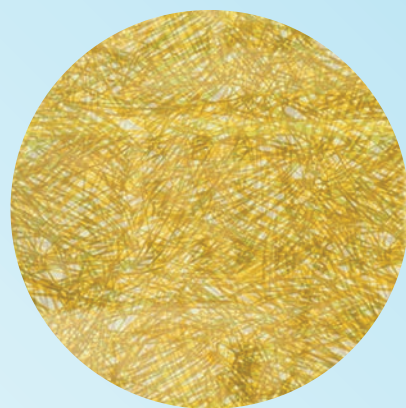


“My country is the world's first cork producer, and I love that, as a designer, I am indirectly helping the economy to show the world its amazing potential.”  
—Tania da Cruz



**Aoi  
Yoshizawa**  
Japan

“I have been interested in textiles ever since my mother and grandmother taught me to sew and knit when I was small,” says breakout textile designer Aoi Yoshizawa. Born and raised in Japan, Yoshizawa has studied her craft in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, where she is currently finishing her master's degree at Helsinki's Aalto University. “For pattern design, I like to work with simple elements and overlay them on top of each other, which gives depth to the textile,” she says. This is especially apparent in her Tokyo pattern, produced by Svensson, that manages to be very graphic and very organic at once (below). Next from Yoshizawa will be a new series of jacquard upholstery fabrics. [aoiyoshizawa.com](http://aoiyoshizawa.com) >





## Marina Dragomirova Bulgaria

Marina Dragomirova studied graphic and interior design in her native Bulgaria before decamping for London, where she landed in the products-design program at the Royal College of Art and interned with luxury fashion brand Alexander McQueen. Her peripatetic background and disparate influences are reflected in her growing body of work. Traditional Bulgarian carpet weaving inspired her Fuchila chair, which features an intricately woven nylon seat suspended from a loom-shaped frame. For her Stellar collection of glass lamps (below), made in collaboration with her studio mate Iain Howlett, she picked out thrift shop crystal pieces, then recombined and illuminated them with an LED system—which she says displays “an unexpected harmony.” [marinadragomirova.com](http://marinadragomirova.com)



## Casey Lurie United States

A Southern California native, Casey Lurie honed his aesthetic in art programs at Cal Arts and Northwestern University, but it wasn't until he met Teruo Kurosaki, founder of the influential Japanese furniture brand *Idée*, that his true purpose took root. Jumping at the chance to live and work in Tokyo, Lurie left behind his workshop in downtown Los Angeles—where he had started developing his first design, a line of plywood furniture—and spent three years soaking up the culture in Japan. His Lap table (right) and Primo shelving system (above) are directly influenced by his time there: simple wood and metal components interlock without tools or hardware for a streamlined version of a household staple. Now based in Chicago, Lurie plans to turn his focus to an expanded line of pieces with interlocking parts. [caseylurie.com](http://caseylurie.com) >





"The designers I have affinity with are Tapio Wirkkala, for his sense of form, texture, and nature; Jasper Morrison for his no-nonsense approach; and Paola Navone for her ability to create drama." —Aaron Probyn



### Aaron Probyn Great Britain

Enterprising British designer Aaron Probyn crafts minimalist kitchenware for mega-retailers like West Elm and Habitat. "It's important for me to pair up with the right manufacturers, as the execution is crucial to the end result," he says. Originally a carpenter, Probyn began exploring design by refurbishing midcentury housewares and selling them in London's Portobello Market. Using the proceeds, he went to Kingston University, then landed a short stint with Habitat under Tom Dixon and another with Conran before establishing his own studio. Crate & Barrel approached him to create Orb barware (above), a collection of organic, slightly mismatched metal pieces. His latest endeavor skews a bit larger than the tabletop: He built a house for his family. [aaronprobyn.com](http://aaronprobyn.com)



### Vera & Kyte Norway

Vera Kleppe and Åshild Kyte are the talents behind the up-and-coming Norwegian design studio Vera & Kyte. The Bergen-based duo credit their mixed aesthetic influences and curiosity about materials—as well as eye-opening internships with companies Fora Form and Varier—for their early design successes. These include pendant lights in vivid lacquered birch and colored glass (above), a daybed that evokes leisure and relaxation in its steel-frame form, and a series of pedestal tables that the designers say epitomizes their focus on "unpretentious combinations of form and color." Look for them in Milan at SaloneSatellite, premiering a new family of lamps as well as some updated versions of their tables and daybed. [vera-kyte.com](http://vera-kyte.com)



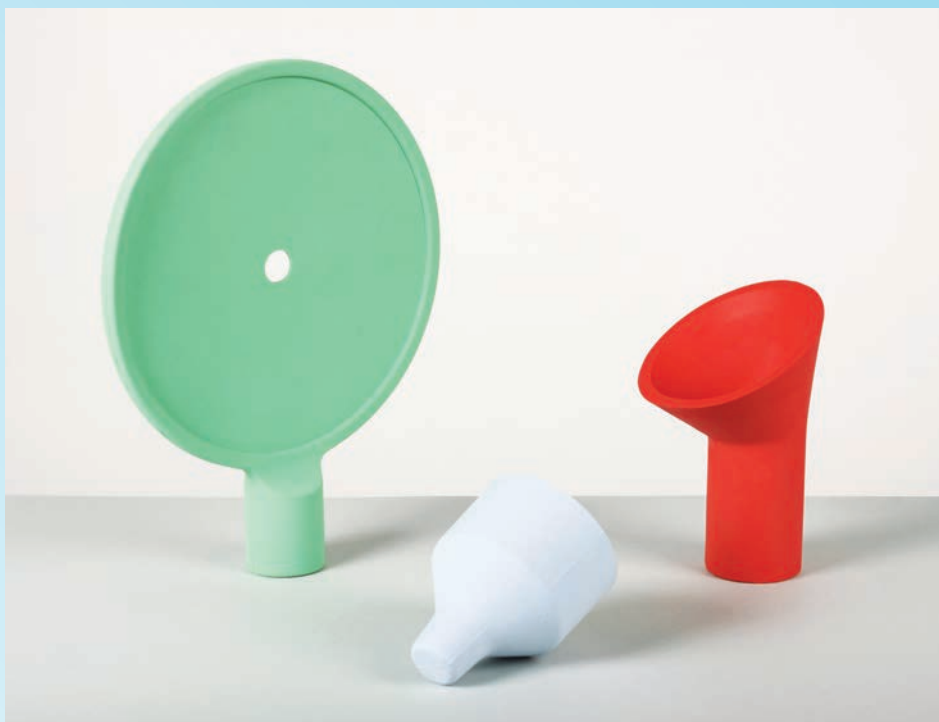
### Nick Ross Scotland

It's no wonder that designer Nick Ross—of the Stockholm studio that bears his name—often references historical events. For inspiration, he says, "You can't beat a good BBC documentary. If the title starts with 'Mysteries Of...' then you already have my attention." His Cararra marble White Lies series (above) transmits a post-modern interpretation of Greek and Roman sculpture, while an ancient trade route is the jumping-off point for his Baltic Gold shelving. Though his immediate plans are hazy—expect new work, potentially lighting, in stone and metal—Ross would someday like to collaborate with a team of archaeologists: "I have no idea how it would work, but it could be a lot of fun, kind of a speculative history project." [nckrss.com](http://nckrss.com) >



**Daniele  
Bortotto**  
Italy

Nomadic Italian designer Daniele Bortotto gleans inspiration from the places he visits: "I'm always on a train," he says. Bortotto has tapped into generations of craftsmanship found in Venice and Treviso, working with master glassblower Massimo Lunardon on his Passerelle vases; with perfumer Lorenzo Dante Ferro on a range of plucky silicone scent diffusers (right); and with 125-year-old textiles company Rubelli on I Sestieri, a Jacquard loom fabric that mimics the colors and textures of Venetian walls. Bortotto's craft-centric yet heady approach comes courtesy of IUAV in Venice and ECAL in Lausanne, Switzerland. Bortotto says that he mixes the practical and the theoretical, perhaps best expressed in his thesis project, a series of objects that explore scent and memory. [danielebortotto.com](http://danielebortotto.com)



**"We always approach an object considering its shape, function, colors, textures, material, but sometimes a smell can tell so much about the object and its story."**  
—Daniele Bortotto



**Karoline  
Fesser**  
Germany

Inquisitiveness motivates German designer Karoline Fesser, who lives and works in her hometown, just outside Cologne. "When I started to think about design, I didn't even know the term 'design' existed," she says. "I was questioning and examining objects, asking myself why things are as they are." Fesser, who studied at the Aachen University of Applied Sciences and apprenticed with Dutch designer Ineke Hans, hopes one day to design an object that people can use throughout their lives. Her universal pieces often reflect a level of customization, ensuring that they can grow along with their users. The extremely adaptable Woonling chair (left), which debuted at SaloneSatellite in 2013, and her newly launched 96° shelf system prove that Fesser is well on her way to realizing that dream design. [karolinefesser.de](http://karolinefesser.de) >



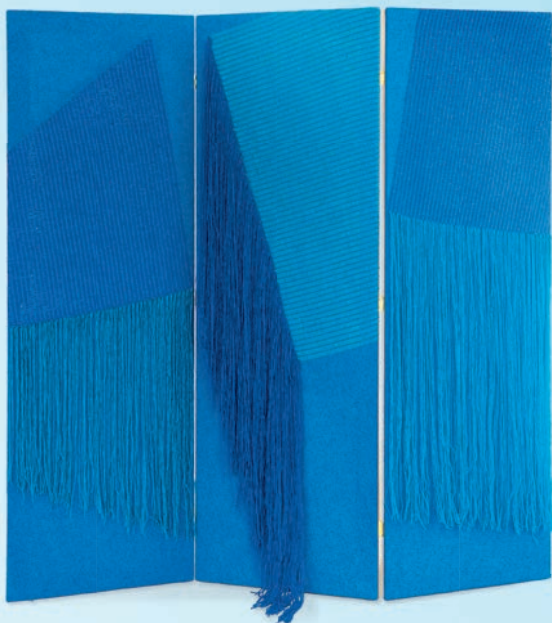




[dwell.com/young-guns-2014](http://dwell.com/young-guns-2014)

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**Plus:** The designers' local hotspots.



## Margaux Keller France

Margaux Keller has come a long way since age 13, redecorating her room by arranging furniture and “pinning stuff on the walls.” She decided then, as a teenager growing up in Geneva, Switzerland, to attend design school in Paris. After she finished two design degrees, she found herself under the tutelage of Eugeni Quittlet during a “crazy” internship in Philippe Starck’s atelier. Since striking out on her own, she’s collaborated with high-design brands and everyday retailers alike, creating pieces like her Soupier tabletop mirror (above) and Fanfan, a cork children’s toy (top). Now she’s making a line of home goods for SIA, under the direction of designer Jean-Marc Gady, as well as pieces for Roche Bobois. [margauxkeller.com](http://margauxkeller.com)



## Henny van Nistelrooy The Netherlands

With his upbringing in rural Holland, his education in London, and his current base in Beijing, Dutch designer Henny van Nistelrooy mixes the flavors of his multiple worlds into a colorful and eclectic cocktail. His Extract series—comprising a screen (above), daybed, and blanket—smacks with craft as machine-woven fabrics are unthreaded into new geometric patterns, rendering the material both translucent and fringed. Furniture from his YIFU collection is sculpted in the shape of traditional Chinese garments. “Lately the scale of projects has gotten bigger,” he says. “It will be nice to find a counterbalance at some point working on something very small and very precise. Perhaps a collection of watches?” [studiohvn.com](http://studiohvn.com)



## NTN Ireland

Ian Walton (who comes from a long line of physicists) and Marcel Twohig (the son of an artist and sculptor) both studied industrial design at Dublin’s National College of Art & Design. They didn’t meet until an overlapping stint at Design Partners, an international consultancy headquartered in Ireland. “Obsessed” with clarity and “achieving simplicity,” they eventually formed their own autonomous commercial design partnership called Notion, of which NTN is an entirely new branch. NTN comprises two thematic collections per year; the next, which debuts in September 2014 at the London Design Festival, encapsulates the idea of time and expands upon the existing Dowel chair and Waterford lamp (above). [ntn.ie](http://ntn.ie) □