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Evangeline Pesigan

The London designer weaves her Filipino heritage into radical forms

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS have been a part of contemporary design's culture for ages. For Evangeline Pesigan, however, employing traditional craftwork to create original furniture pieces has led to a new way of working – and all without a whiff of nostalgia. “Each one is an abstraction of the culture in the Philippines,” she says, “and it has its own story. It's not necessarily the result of simply using local materials or techniques.”

The interior designer and furniture maker – who grew up in Manila, then studied in New York and London – sees her relationship with artisans and their engagement with the project

as paramount: “I approach it as a facilitator rather than a creator.” Each bespoke piece invites a generous level of experimentation, in terms of mixing ancient weaving techniques with modern fabrication. The materials – sustainable tropical woods, rattan, abaca fibre, metal and synthetic yarns – are equally important in her unexpected juxtapositions. The result is a beguiling collection that's both inventive and playful: in the Pista chair, loose strands of hemp rope artfully encircle the narrow tub form; meanwhile, Aninag, a high-backed “chair within a chair,” reads more like a sculpture, with a high collar-like framework

channelling a peacock in full plumage. To communicate her designs Pesigan travelled between London and the Philippines for months, sharing ideas with her collaborators through paper models, drawings and prototypes.

As she expanded the series, she has gained media attention with displays at the London Design Festival last fall, and at Milan Design Week in April. Her goal is to eventually attract big companies to the project, “as a means to bridge the gap for handmade production, and to explore projects with other cultures and organizations.”

– C.S. evangelinempesigan.com



Plantation wood veneer strips are loosely mounted to the Tirintas chair's metal frame using eyelets.

← ← For the Aninag tub chair, Pesigan wrapped a metal frame with bamboo rattan and recycled polyethylene.

The Pista chair, named after the Filipino word for "fete," reflects the people's love of decorative and elaborate festivals.

