

## **Brompton goes back to nature for 2019** Full programme for the London Design Festival unveiled

14–22 September 2019

Late night: Thursday 19 September, 6–9pm



Marléne's sculptural habitats for Brompton Biotopia in her Paris studio © Bernardo Figueroa

Over the past 13 years, Brompton has earned a reputation as London Design Festival's leading district to see genuinely innovative and forward-thinking design – and this year will be no different. Nature/Nurture, the 2019 Brompton Design District programme of installations, exhibitions, talks and more showcases design that interrogates and illuminates the natural world on many levels – and launches into an investigation into design's role in protecting and preserving it.

Under the curatorship of Jane Withers Studio, the Brompton programme is a call for us to rekindle our relationship with nature, to reconnect with the wild within our

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urban landscape, and for designers to look to the organic realm for new method and material inspiration.

*“Nature/Nurture emerged from seeing how design is responding to the crisis in our relationship with the natural world and exploring ways to shift this balance. As well as learning from nature and natural cycles, how can we protect and encourage it?”*

– Jane Withers, curator of Brompton Design District



Interaction Research Studio's habitats for Brompton Biotopia

The answers to that question offered by this year's designers are varied and imaginative. From a family of experimental animal shelters and DIY wildlife cameras to the triumphant return of the urban drinking fountain, a pop-up exploration of anatomy-inspired architecture and a water-filtering tile system to fight pollution in the textiles industry, this year's Brompton line-up is diverse, ambitious, and ripe with transformative potential.

Brompton Biotopia is a collection of animal habitats by Marlène Huissoud, Goldsmiths' Interaction Research Studio and Material Architecture Lab, all designed to support urban biodiversity, and inspired by Brompton's resident species.

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Today, the Brompton area has a human population of 8,839 and an animal and plant population of 3,000+ (more than 3,000 different birds, insects, amphibians, fungi and plants have been recorded in the Natural History Museum wildlife garden alone).

In a radical departure from conventional man-made animal homes, Brompton Biotopia's habitats eschew human-driven design elements (such as the pitched roofs and front doors found on brightly coloured birdhouses). Instead, the designers are employing sophisticated materials and technologies and drawing on research into biophilia (the symbiotic cycle between humans and nature) to consciously design from animal rather than human perspectives.

On view at Thurloe Square Gardens, opposite the V&A, Marlène Huissoud has developed insect shelters using natural and biodegradable materials. Following on from her work exploring insect materials such as propolis (a form of organic glue made by bees), the designer has crafted three habitats in wood and unfired clay, punctured with holes for pollinators and made waterproof using natural binding agents. Two pieces are sculptural; the other is Huissoud's first chair design – resembling human furniture in form but crafted with the specific needs of pollinators such as bees, wasps and butterflies in mind.

*“Biodiversity is an integral and essential component of the urban environment. Biophilic design of buildings and other structures offers important opportunities for encouraging species and ecological communities to thrive in cities, to the benefit of all.”*

– Dr Rob Francis, King's College London

Material Architecture Lab (MAL) – a research laboratory run by Daniel Widrig and Guan Lee and based at The Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London – is creating an ecosystem in miniature, titled Balustrade Garden. Known for its work exploring the application of digital fabrication techniques to everyday materials, MAL's living ecology will attract species of insects that no longer flourish in urban environments. Designed to hang from urban balconies, it is made by hand pressing a mixture of hemp fibres and lime mortar into 3D-printed moulds and CNC-milled parts. Balustrade Garden is supported by Margent Farm, and in collaboration with Jamie Hunt, Edit Landscape Design.

Goldsmith's Interaction Research Studio will unveil a series of habitats integrated with My Naturewatch cameras – motion-sensitive DIY wildlife cameras developed in

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collaboration with the Royal College of Art. Titled 'Nature Scene', the habitats are made using simple, low-cost household materials in order to promote mass shareability and accessibility. Via an online link and screens set up in the Hour Glass pub, LDF audiences will be able to tune into the recordings and see the animals going about their daily lives in real-time, feeding, washing and resting. The project's goal is that this intimate experience will help create a deeper sense of empathy for our local wildlife and help blur the boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

Taken as a whole, Brompton Biotopia demonstrates to the global community that small and simple interventions can make a lasting difference to urban ecology.



Traceless by Oficina Penadés

## **Indus, 21 Thurloe Street, SW7**

Small-scale artisanal industries across the world face a challenge: they must manage wastewater treatment from the textile industry with limited resources. Horror stories about toxic chemical dyes draining into rivers and waterways abound. Bio-ID Lab from the Bartlett School of Architecture presents Indus, a modular wall system of lead-like clay tiles that addresses this with a simple and accessible water-purification system. Vein-like channels in the tiles hold a seaweed-based hydrogel, containing micro-algae that can isolate heavy metals from wastewater

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and degrade compounds from textile dyes. Each tile can be easily installed in rural villages, and is composed of locally sourced materials.

## **UMPRUM, 15a Cromwell Place Mews, SW7**

A huge part of galvanizing the public and encouraging a seismic shift in the way we think about nature is first instilling an understanding of and love for the natural world. Luckily Vítek Škop, a graduate of the Academy of Art, Architecture and Design, Prague (UMPRUM) has developed Vivid Books, designed to attract and sustain children's interest in science by incorporating augmented-reality technology. He will be exhibiting his work at Brompton, alongside fellow graduate and furniture designer, Adam Štok, who will unveil the results of his exploration of hydraulic-press steel production.

## **Traceless by Oficina Penadés, various locations**

Madrid-based designer Jorge Penadés takes another approach to the Nature/Nurture theme, considering how biomimicry might influence future approaches to architecture. Appearing in three public locations in Brompton over the course of LDF, the nomadic pavilion is a lightweight pop-up installation constructed entirely from plywood sheets and tape (inspired by kinesiology tape used to hold muscles in place).

## **Masters of Disguise, 34-36 Thurloe Place, SW7**

Curated by M-L-XL, the SEE·DS gallery exhibition Masters of Disguise explores the notion of human nature, identity and performance as represented by the mask. The designers including Nathalie Du Pasquier, Jochen Holz, Martino Gamper, Michael Marriott, Soft Baroque and Sabine Marcelis create their own masks which will be surrounded by objects they have made, including furniture, lights, tableware, cutlery, glasses and vases. See the full list of designers involved in Notes to Editors, below.

## **The Fleet Fountain, outside South Kensington Tube**

One of the most important elements of Brompton Design District's approach is its focus on lasting impact and meaningful legacy. In September, London Fountain Co unveils its first permanent public drinking fountain outside South Kensington Underground station. Led by Charles Asprey, and Jane Withers who has been at the forefront of using design to address water scarcity, the initiative seeks to reduce our dependence on single-use plastic bottles by restoring the city's public drinking water infrastructure. Designed by Michael Anastassiades, the Fleet Fountain prototype made its debut during LDF 2018 in the V&A's Madjeski Garden. This year,

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it is formally integrated into the fabric of the district – a reflection of Brompton's ongoing mission to use design to actively enrich the area for the future.



Cotone sofa and armchair, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for Cassina © DePasquale+Maffini

## **Showroom exhibitions and product launches**

In Brompton, cultural institutions including the V&A, the Design Museum and the Royal College of Art rub shoulders with contemporary galleries and international retail icons. For London Design Festival 2019, many of Brompton's iconic, international design stores are participating in the programme, including B&B Italia, Boffi, Cassina, Divertimenti, Kartell, Meridiani, Mint, Molteni&C, OKA, Smallbone of Devizes, Society Limonta, Sub-Zero & Wolf, and The Conran Shop.

Italian furniture maker Tacchini joins Brompton's line of showrooms to make its LDF debut. Partnering with the Quarterly Journal of Design, Disegno will host events throughout the week in the four-floor exhibition space. The first of these to be announced is 'Squashed: People, Proximity, and Public Space', a panel discussion with designers Luke Pearson and Tom Lloyd (from design studio PearsonLloyd), Nina Tolstrup and architect Je Ahn from Studio Weave, addressing the challenges of urbanisation and our ever-increasing proximity to one another.

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Latis chair by Samuel Wilkinson for The Conran Shop and Lunair by Filip Janssen for Mint

Elsewhere in the district, the brands of Brompton present a packed programme of material-led exhibitions and collection launches, and one-off events – including a supper club using wild, foraged and sustainable ingredients and a celebration of sustainable and circular design.

## **Talks and events**

Over the nine days of LDF, various retailer showrooms and The Hour Glass pub play host to Brompton Design District's programme of talks, workshops and panel events. Talks will discuss topics such as the challenges of socially valuable design; how designing cities for nature enhances the urban environment and biodiversity; how material research and biotechnology can open up new futures for sustainable design; and whether going vegan should be design's sustainability priority.

**See the full talks programme at [bromptondesigndistrict.com](http://bromptondesigndistrict.com)**

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## Notes to editors

For more information, interviews and images, please contact Grace Ridley-Smith (grace@zetteler.co.uk) or Chris Hayes (chris@zetteler.co.uk), or reach them on +44 (0)20 3735 5855.

### Full list of designers exhibiting in Masters of Disguise at SEE•DS:

Tiago Almeida  
Fabien Cappello  
Nathalie Du Pasquier  
Max Frommeld  
Martino Gamper  
Jochen Holz  
Rio Kobayashi  
Sabine Marcelis  
Studio Furthermore  
Michael Marriott  
Lucia Massari M-L-XL  
Fredrik Paulsen  
Bertjan Pot  
James Shaw  
Silo Studio  
Kim Thome  
Soft Baroque  
Lorenzo Vitturi  
Bethan Wood

### About Brompton Design District

Established in 2006, Brompton is the longest-running dedicated design district of the London Design Festival. Initiated by South Kensington Estates and curated by Jane Withers since the beginning, the district has been instrumental in nurturing Brompton's reputation as an incubator of creative innovation and one of London's leading design hubs.

Each year, Brompton's iconic global design brands, landmark cultural institutions and a curated selection of pioneering independent studios come together to present some of the most forward-thinking, considered and progressive events and exhibitions of the London Design Festival.

Website [bromptondesigndistrict.com](http://bromptondesigndistrict.com)

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Instagram @brompton\_design\_district

Twitter @BromptonDesign

## **About Jane Withers Studio**

Curator of Brompton Design District since its inception in 2006, Jane Withers is a design consultant with a passionate belief in the power of design to instigate positive change. Her eponymous studio works with cultural and commercial clients to apply design thinking to societal challenges, employing a multi-disciplinary range of services, including strategy formation, programme development, curation and publishing.

Jane Withers Studio has a particular focus on environmental issues, and many of its projects are concerned with using design to raise awareness and initiate change – often in collaboration with the studio's extensive global network of professional and academic experts. This interest and approach informs the curation of Brompton Design District, and has played a huge part in making Brompton the focal point for sustainable design innovation during London Design Festival.

In 2018, the studio was awarded the Design Prize for Experimentation at the Salone del Mobile in Milan.

**Website** [janewithers.com](http://janewithers.com)

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