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CREATIVE PUBLICITY

Press release | July 2018

ALL EYES ON URUGUAY

The emerging design nation steps into the LDF spotlight at The Aram Gallery and designjunction

'Uruguayan design no longer has borders, and from this small country we can go far.'

– **Studio Claro**, designer



Coffee Tables (render) by Rafael Antia + Matteo Fogale

At **London Design Festival** this September, two connected exhibitions are set to catapult **Uruguay's** energetic creative scene into global view, revealing two distinct and striking sides of the nation's design narrative. One is a showcase of original design from a selection of the biggest talents of the current creative generation; the other is a fascinating exploration of the legacy of one of Uruguay's most influential architects and designers, as interpreted by seven studios working today.

Despite its small population of just 3.5 million, Uruguay has a long and rich history of design. Characterised by **simplicity** and **functionality**, the nation's design language has been shaped by local raw materials (such as wood) and the country's small but quality-obsessed artisanal workshops.

Hilos Invisibles – 'Invisible Threads'

The Aram Gallery

17 September – 27 October 2018

At **The Aram Gallery**, Hilos Invisibles is the result of Uruguay-born designer **Matteo Fogale's** residency at **Museo Casa Vilamajó**, the Montevideo home that much-loved modernist architect **Julio Vilamajó Echaniz** built for his family in the 1930s.

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During a residency last October with the **British Council**, Fogale investigated hundreds of Vilamajó's original drawings at the **Institute of History of the University of Architecture**. Scanning and documenting these little-seen sketches (as well as interviewing Vilamajó scholars and visiting his buildings in Uruguay and Argentina), Fogale subsequently led a series of week-long workshops with seven Montevideo design studios, collaborating to bring the ideas and details from the drawings to life as new, original products.

'These are products that tell a story, they have the important function of keeping our heritage alive and communicate how collaboration is at the heart of any creative process.'

– **Matteo Fogale**, Curator

All based in Montevideo, the designers and studios involved are:

Carolina Palombo · Claudio Sibille · Menini-Nicola · Muar · Studio Claro · Studio Diario · Rafael Antía

The Vilamajó-inspired works they have created include: Studio Claro's family of lamps that pay tribute by the play of light in the architect's buildings;

Rafael Antía's concrete coffee tables that respond to an enigmatic sketch of unknown function; and Muar's elm-root dresser that nods to a 1944 commission Vilamajó undertook for Salvadoran sweet maker Confeitería La Americana.

All of the products have been handmade in Uruguay using locally sourced materials and production methods – a key component (and challenge) of the project.



The designers with Matteo Fogale outside the Museo Casa Vilamajó.

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They will go on display at **The Aram Gallery** on 17 September – 27 October 2018, together with Vilamajó's original drawings and photography and documentary film of the projects. The exhibition will be accompanied by a new book, created by Fogale, Grégory Ambos and Swiss designer Matthias Clottu, which tells Vilamajó's fascinating story and illuminates the workshop process behind this one-of-a-kind initiative.

'Uruguay still offers the chance to work on small scale batches of entirely hand-made products using some of the best natural and honest materials. This on the one hand was a challenge, but on the other a great opportunity. The designs were dictated by many factors such as materials that were not possible to find in Uruguay but we embraced this and utilised the skills of many makers in town working with wood, metal, natural fibres, stone, glass, leather and wool.'

– **Matteo Fogale**, Curator

Uruguay, A natural collective

designjunction

20 – 23 September 2018

In parallel to Hilos Invisibles, Uruguayan designers will also exhibit at **designjunction** for the third consecutive year, shining a spotlight on the concepts and products at the forefront of the country's blossoming scene.

To emphasise the connection between the two shows, several Hilos Invisibles designers will also be represented at designjunction, and Matteo Fogale is spearheading the decampment of the exhibition's visual identity, alongside designers Grégory Ambos and Matthias Clottu. Whereas in the past Uruguayan design has kept its prowess hidden, recent years have seen the export of design goods blossom, fuelling growth in existing studios and the appearance of new creative businesses.

'Uruguayan design can be described as the rebellious reaction to the limitations of a tiny market flooded with imported products. Perhaps what characterises us is the search for new results, working together with manufacturers and proposing from their limitations, with the ultimate goal of finding the differential in these apparent weaknesses.'

– **Menini-Nicola**, designer

In partnership with the Embassy of Uruguay in London and organised by the Conglomerate and Chamber of Design Uruguay and by **Uruguay XXI** (the Montevideo-based agency set up to champion Uruguayan industry, creativity and culture worldwide), the designjunction show aims to capture the ambition and diversity behind this resurgent design landscape, and secure Uruguay's permanent place on the world design stage. The designers and studios involved will be announced in the coming week.

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(Left) Tutura Chair (render) by Carolina Palombo and Matteo Fogale.
(Right) Medianera Lamps (render) by Studio Claro and Matteo Fogale.

Notes for Editors

Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery – 17 September – 27 October 2018

Uruguay, a natural collective, designjunction: 20 – 23 September 2018

About Julio Vilamajó Echaniz

Julio Vilamajó Echaniz (1894–1948) is one of Uruguay’s best known architects. Graduating at just 20, Vilamajó was behind the Banco de la Republic Oriental del Uruguay, the Felipe Sanguinetti school building, the auditorium of the Ateneo, José Enrique Rodó high school and numerous houses. He was also a member of the Board of Design Consultants for the construction of the United Nations headquarters in New York with peers Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer.

About Museo Casa Vilamajó

Museo Casa Vilamajó opened its doors in May 2012 as a research centre celebrating the life and work of Vilamajó, as well as Uruguayan architecture more widely, and is the first contemporary Uruguayan house opened to the public.

Instagram [@museocasavilamajo](https://www.instagram.com/museocasavilamajo)

For images and more information about either exhibition, please contact **Dorothy Boume** at dorothy@zetteler.co.uk or on 07939 200519.
