

TWO SIDES OF URUGUAY

LDF gets a double dose of South American design

Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery,

17 September – 27 October 2018

Uruguay, a Natural Collective, designjunction

20 – 23 September 2018

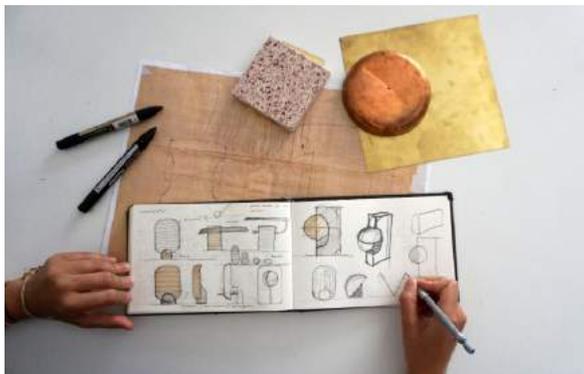


Americana by Muar and Matteo Fogale, to be exhibited at Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery.

Uruguay has a busy September ahead – specifically the Uruguayan-born designer **Matteo Fogale**, who is at the forefront of two contrasting but complementary exhibitions of this year's London Design Festival, both of which set out to demonstrate the energy and ingenuity of his birth country's contemporary creative scene on a global stage.

The first is **Hilos Invisibles** at **The Aram Gallery**, Covent Garden, where Fogale and **seven Montevideo studios** reinterpret and reinvent the work of Uruguay's most eminent architect and designer, the influential modernist **José Vilamajó Echaniz**.

The second is Uruguay, **A Natural Collective** at **designjunction**, where nine **Uruguayan designers** present an exclusively created collection of furniture using natural materials and traditional techniques, and explore different perspectives on design in Uruguay.



(From left) The Vilamajó archives, Sketch of Medianera Lamps by Studio Claro inspired by Vilamajó, drawing by José Vilamajó Echaniz from the Vilamajó archives.

HILOS INVISIBLES

17 September – 27 October 2018

The Aram Gallery

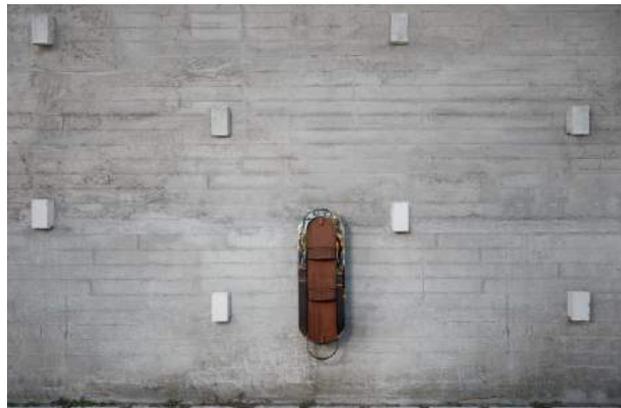
The '**invisible threads**' of the exhibition's title refers to the connections between the **nine works** and the **Vilamajó drawings** that inspired them, many of which date back to the **1940s**. Fogale delved into the vast archive maintained by the carpenters who made a lot of Vilamajó's pieces, extracting sketches of **furniture, pictures** and **architectural details** to act as creative starting points for the studios to work from.

Each designer has responded to a different item from the archive; some picking up on a small detail of a larger design; others exploring the broader characteristics of the architect's work.

Matteo Fogale and the designers collaborated over the course of a series of workshops to create the finished products, which include **furniture, lighting** and other **home accessories**, and are all **handmade in Uruguay** by project collaborator **Antica** – an architect and third-generation carpenter – using locally sourced materials and production methods.



Museo Casa Vilamajó and portrait of Julio Vilamajó.



(Left) Plinto by Studio Diario and Matteo Fogale, to be exhibited at Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery. (Right) El Secreto by Menini-Nicola and Matteo Fogale, to be exhibited at Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery.

Pieces include:

Plinto by Studio Diario and Matteo Fogale

Based on the detail of an unannotated drawing from the Vilamajó archive, possibly depicting part of a column, Ana Sosa and Guillermo Salhón have created a bench in suede and Brazilian Lapacho wood, with a side table in steel rods that can move along the bench as the user requires. Plinto stays true to the graphic aesthetic of the original drawing, employing simple geometric forms and repeating patterns, and emphasising the interaction between its constituent materials.

'What inspired us the most about Vilamajó's work was the meticulousness in the details and the interaction between noble materials. Our project considered these two characteristics, and tries to develop a functional piece of furniture without leaving aside the aesthetic.'

– Studio Diario

El Secreto by Menini-Nicola and Matteo Fogale

Starting from a pair of curves on a sketch of an unidentified piece of furniture, Augustín Menini and Carlo Nicola have developed a lozenge-shaped mirror in glass, steel and Paraguayan Petiribi wood (itself a nod towards Vilamajó's frequent use of mirrors and reflective surfaces in the spaces he created). The mirror revolves within its frame to reveal a set of hidden bar shelves – a reference to the drinking traditions of Vilamajó's era (and his own bibulous reputation).

'We aimed to reach a product that shows the spirit of Vilamajó, without becoming a vintage object.'

– Menini-Nicola



(Left) Tutura by Carolina Palombo Piríz and Matteo Fogale, to be exhibited at Hilos Invisibles, The Aram Gallery. (Right) Recent photo of the interior of Museo Casa Vilamajó.

Tutura by Carolina Palombo Piríz and Matteo Fogale

Palombo's sinuous, high-backed chair for two is a tribute to Vilamajo's iconic 1945 structure Ventorrillo de la Buena Vista (a hostel and restaurant), made entirely from local materials: stone, straw and wood. Like the building that inspired it, Tutura is fashioned from rustic, natural materials and built by Uruguayan artisans, with a Petiribi wood frame, a back braided from the native leaf cattail (aka Totorá) by a local craftswoman, and a seat covered with wool handwoven by weavers from Manos del Uruguay – a craft collective supporting women in rural areas.

'With this piece of furniture, traditional and local materials come inside the house with elegance, simplicity and comfort.'

– **Carolina Palombo Piríz**

The above pieces, alongside works from fellow studios **Claudio Sibille**, **Muar**, **CLARO** and **Rafael Antía**, are showing at **The Aram Gallery** on 17 September – 27 October 2018, together with **Vilamajó's original drawings and photography**, and are accompanied by documentary material of the project. The exhibition will be documented by a new book, created by **Fogale** and **Grégory Ambos**, which tells Vilamajó's fascinating story and illuminates the workshop process behind the initiative.

'From the beginning I asked the studios to be open-minded and prepare to approach this project slightly differently from how they usually would. It had to be approached as a creative exercise rather than as the creation of a commercial product. I wanted them to forget about numbers and create a unique piece with a sculptural character that would have the important function of storytelling. I think the result managed to merge these two different approaches very well.'

– **Matteo Fogale**, designer and curator



Render of Loop tables by Carolina Palombo Piriz to be exhibited at designjunction.

URUGUAY, A NATURAL COLLECTIVE

20 – 23 September 2018

designjunction (Doon Street, Stand F8)

Since Vilamajó's day, Uruguay's design scene has been heavily influenced by the trends and ideas of its neighbouring countries and Europe, and driven more by the commercial than the creative. But the tide is beginning to turn. In recent years, exports of Uruguayan products have increased, and its design studios are rapidly growing in confidence and scope as the country comes ever closer to establishing its own distinct design identity.

At **designjunction** this year, nine studios are all exploring that journey towards identity – each offering their own perspective on what makes Uruguayan design unique. Six of them (Studio Diario, CLARO, Menini-Nicola, Muar, Carolina Palombo Piriz and Rafael Antia) are part of Hilos Invisibles. They are joined by three other design teams at the forefront of Uruguay's design renaissance: **Samago, Estudio Tosca** and **Izzi Design**.

Each of the nine presents **furniture** or **home accessories** created exclusively for the designjunction show, aiming to shine a light on Uruguay's design identity through material combination and technique.

True to its title, the exhibition is the result of a strong shared commitment and collaborative effort between **the participating studios**, the creators of the show's visual identity (**Matteo Fogale** and designer **Grégory Ambos**), the organisers – the **Conglomerate and Chamber of Design Uruguay** and **Uruguay XXI** (the Montevideo-based agency set up to champion Uruguayan industry, creativity and culture worldwide) – and the **Uruguayan Embassy in London**.

Highlights include:

Loop by Carolina Palombo Piriz

Award-winning architect, industrial designer and passionate handcrafted Carolina Palombo Piriz presents a family of three round tables in various sizes, all crafted from wood and natural fibre.

Horing by Izzi Design

Making use of a striking material contrast, Horing is a versatile stool and coat rack set made from powder-coated steel rods and turned eucalyptus wood.

Tabletop products by Estudio Tosca

Founded in 2017, Tosca is the only Uruguayan industrial design studio focused on the development of products using semiprecious stones – found in abundance in Uruguay but rarely used in making products. Both sculptural and functional, Estudio Tosca's collection of napkin holders, spice jars, pestle and mortar, and candlesticks all fuse materials such as wood and metal with stones such as agate, amethyst, jasper and quartz. The naturally varied patterns within the stone ensure that no two Tosca products are ever the same.



(Left) Render of Cocina by Estudio Tosca. (Right) Horing by Izzi Design.

Notes to editors

Hilos Invisibles

The Aram Gallery, 3rd Floor, Aram Store, 110 Drury Lane, London WC2B 5SG
17 September – 27 October 2018

Uruguay, A Natural Collective

Stand F8, Doon Street, SE1 9PU
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.

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