

Material of the Year 2018: Beyond the Chipper

London Design Fair
20–23 September 2018



Table by Weez & Merl.

On the surface, plastic looks like a perverse choice for **London Design Fair's** second **Material of the Year showcase**. Across the planet, single-use plastic debris is choking our oceans, microplastics are poisoning our soil, and potentially harmful synthetic chemicals are leaching into our bodies from food and drink packaging. As national governments scramble over each other to introduce legislation to reduce plastic use in everyday products, the once ubiquitous substance has become a pariah on most designers' material palettes. But not all.

For 2018, London Design Fair has chosen to **showcase** and **celebrate** the designers who are tackling the problem of plastic not by avoiding the material, but by engaging with it head on, finding new, environmentally sound ways of working with the material, delving into industrial waste streams or pioneering new recycling techniques to create **a new generation of plastic products** that reduce or reverse its negative environmental impact. The London Design Fair has invited four designers who are going 'Beyond the Chipper' – not simply harvesting waste plastic from chipping, but reimagining and reforming it to create an entirely new material for their products.

"Understanding the Fair's audience, it was very important that the designers we selected produced pieces we know our audience will want. Simply saying something is made from recycled plastic is not enough."

Jimmy MacDonald, Founder & Director, London Design Fair



Surface by Weez & Merl.

Material of the Year was introduced to London Design Fair 2017 with the purpose of exploring the possibilities of the material currently having the biggest impact on the world of contemporary design. For the inaugural edition, lightweight acrylic composite Jesmonite was chosen to be the first substance in the spotlight, and designers **PRIN London**, **Zuza Mengham** and **Katie Gillies** each created works and installations that showcased the **breadth of applications** and **aesthetics** that the material could be used to create.

This year, the London Design Fair team were especially interested in how the design world is responding (and might respond in future) to the **ecological challenges posed by an increasingly controversial material**, and worked with **four design studios who work with plastic**, shining a new light on how we make plastic, what we make with it, and what we do with it afterwards.

Each one presents new work in plastic at London Design Fair 2018.

Material of the Year Designers

Weez & Merl

AKA Louise and Madeleine Thilly, [Weez & Merl](#) is a Brighton-based studio set up in 2015 to reduce the quantity of plastic going to litter or landfill. Specialising in Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE), commonly found in carrier bags and bubble wrap, the studio has developed a method of melting and reforming the plastic to create a durable, marble-effect surface material that can be formed into coasters, tabletops and more, using the techniques of woodworking. At London Design Fair, Weez & Merl presents its first fully recycled **LDPE table**, alongside a stand-alone feature wall of translucent tessellating tiles, heat-fused together, and a lighting collection – all made from waste plastics sourced from businesses in Brighton & Hove.



Vessels by Kodai Iwamoto.

Kodai Iwamoto Design

Born in Kagoshima, Japan and now based in Tokyo, **Kodai Iwamoto** is a product designer with an interest in exploring the junction between traditional craft processes and mass-produced materials. By bringing the methods of glassblowing to the kind of cheap PVC pipes generally used in plumbing, Iwamoto produces a range of vessels, which can vary in form depending on the shape of the wooden mould, the air pressure applied and the speed at which the pipe surface is heated. The result is a collection of **beautiful hand-made objects that give new life to mass-produced plastics**.

Charlotte Kidger

A recent graduate from Central Saint Martins' MA Material Futures, Charlotte Kidger is a material designer seeking to develop ways of reevaluating and reengineering waste substances to create new sustainable materials. She is currently investigating the possibilities of **polyurethane foam dust** – a waste plastic from CNC fabrication processes – which can be cold-cast to create a versatile composite that can form the base material for **3D sculptural and functional objects**. Having created a range of colourful pots and vessels from the composite, she is in the process of upscaling the technique to create a table to exhibit at London Design Fair.

Dirk Vander Kooij

Since his time studying at Design Academy Eindhoven, Dutch designer **Dirk Vander Kooij** has been exploring ways of creating 3D-printed furniture and other interior items made with reclaimed synthetic. Using a machine extruder of his own design, he transforms polycarbonate objects such as CDs and chocolate moulds into ribbons of molten plastic that can then be layered and shaped to create uniquely textured products, reinventing plastic as something durable and precious.



Vessels by Charlotte (left & right) Kidger and Dirk Vander Jooij (middle).

At London Design Fair, Vander Kooij demonstrates the versatility of this process, with a collection of products including his **Changing Vases** – sculptural vessels that create different effects depending on the viewing angle; the **Iced Bubbles and Oak** shelving unique which contrasts the solidity of wood with an enclosing circle of glass-like bubbled plastic; his adjustable **Fresnel pendant LED lights** and their latest iteration, the Buitenhuis Chandelier.

All four designers and their reimagined-plastic products will be on display on Hall 13 on the second floor of Old Truman Brewery on 20–23 September 2018.

About London Design Fair

Set in Shoreditch, the creative heart of London, the London Design Fair is a four-day industry event that brings together 550 exhibitors from 36 countries, including independent designers, established brands, international country pavilions, features and exhibitions. Launched in 2007, the London Design Fair has earned itself the reputation as the go-to trade show during the annual London Design Festival, hosting the largest collection of international exhibitions, designers, brands, country pavilions, features and exhibitions. Each year, over 28,000 influential retail buyers, producers, architects, interior designers, press, designers, and design-savvy public will attend to see the very latest in furniture, lighting, textiles, materials and conceptual installations, from all around the world.

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For images and more information on the **Material of the Year** project and the designers involved, please contact **Dorothy Boume** at dorothy@zetteler.co.uk or on +44 (0)7939 200519.