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PROJECT TYPE  
FURNITURE

## On the right track

*Delivering socially sustainable design for the community, RAIL by Gwendoline Porte and Marc-Antoine Goulard is full steam ahead*



**I**t takes a lot for a newcomer to make their mark, but when the product is designed around the positive impact it would have in the world, it is bound to be a success. As was the case with RAILS founder and designer Gwendoline Porte, who recently collaborated with French artist Marc-Antoine Goulard to craft a limited edition piece for the charity Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y), a non-profit organisation providing professional and social integration to excluded young adults through

entrepreneurship.

RAIL, the new piece born out of Porte's first RAILS concept and own nomadic upbringing and life, was unveiled during Clerkenwell Design Week 2019, after a transient lifestyle took the designer from Guadeloupe to Paris and London, which would eventually inform her own artistic language. Her work comes in the form of modular and multi-functional pieces that look like giant Lego bricks and can adorn a variety of spaces, such as lobbies, homes and offices.

↑ The exclusive RAIL piece was on sale at Clerkenwell Design Week

→ Goulard collaborated with Gwendoline Porte to raise funds for Life Project 4 Youth



*“The composition I created is about freedom, light in the sky; stars, shades of blue”*

Porte’s limited edition and first collaborative piece with Goulard builds on the previous model (RAILS) by designing for social impact and social sustainability. Demonstrating how design can help encourage connections between people, its sustainable framework promotes learning and provides stimulating opportunities for people to come together and make a difference. “Social sustainability is the DNA of RAIL’S creative process,” affirms Porte. “I wanted to connect people together in a kind of new urban space called ‘concept lobbies’; a place where locals could gather together and share experiences and ideas.”

The project took root after Porte and Goulard met at a charity gala for the LP4Y association. It was this collaboration and sharing of ideas which became a fundamental driver for their design. Dedicated to the professional and social integration of young adults, the LP4Y movement is committed to giving migrants, refugees and youth with disabilities, who have lived in extreme poverty or been victims of domestic violence, the hope for a brighter future.

“We were talking about the journey into the creative process and how you can change your life to become who you really are”, says Porte. “We were standing at the charity gala, deeply moved by the youths’ testimonials. LP4Y’s quest for social and professional integration resonated strongly with our own ideas about how ergonomic design and thought-provoking art has the power to change lives.”

Exploring the idea of ‘journey’ – expressed emotionally by Goulard and spatially by Porte ☺



Claire Mahjoub

↑ Life Project 4 Youth enables social integration for excluded young adults around the world



Frenchie Cristogatin

↑ Gwendoline Porte's new design RAIL was born out of her original collection RAILS, inspired by her nomadic life

– in the form of a hybrid piece that falls somewhere between sculpture and furniture, RAIL mirrors the form of railway tracks. “I imagined myself on a train gazing at the sky through the window”, explains Goulard. “The composition I created is about freedom, light in the sky: stars, shades of blue. I was thinking of the young adults on the other side of the world, the LP4Y student, looking up in the air and dreaming of a better life. Art is about communication.”

Plywood was used to craft the items built as a boat hull, while water-based paint with a natural pigment, combined with Goulard's unique approach to texture, “gives a bespoke twist to this one-off piece” as explained by Porte. Lightweight and ergonomic, the pieces' versatility allows users to stack them on top of one another to form a column, or separate them to use as a stool or side table.

When placed horizontally, vertically or multiplied, RAIL becomes

a bench, wall or striking art piece. “The finish of this piece aims to reflect the varied and sometimes turbulent journey of life,” says Goulard, who used thin layers to create a three-dimensional and transparent effect, resulting in an imperfect finish that mirrors the youths' resilience.

Its vividness, however, represents hope and second chances. “We both believe that giving purpose in what you do, good design and education will help us to live in a better world,” concludes Porte. With the aim of extending the concept of a good life outside the design community and into the wider world, RAIL recognises the fundamental power of design and the social impact it has to ignite positive change; it gives a voice to the voiceless. ▣

*The exclusive piece was on sale during Clerkenwell Design Week. Proceeds from the sale go directly to Life Project 4 Youth.*