



ISSUE FOUR

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One year on Dossofiorito

Italian design studio Dossofiorito launched Epiphytes, a collection of suspended vases in white ceramic, as a prototype at Salone Satellite in April 2015. Exactly a year later, the production model formed part of Airbnb's Makers & Bakers exhibition with Ambra Medda at Ristorante Marta. We caught up with co-founder Livia Rossi to find out how they did it.



"While we were researching our previous project, the Phytophiler, we came across epiphytes. We were amazed by the way in which these plants have evolved over centuries from growing in the soil to growing on other trees as a survival strategy in the forest, so we started experimenting with epiphytic plants. We don't consider ourselves, as the French say 'designer vegetale' (sorry I don't think there is an equivalent in English!) as our work encompasses many fields, but we are passionate about plants, and when we found out about epiphytes we were hooked.

“We were a bit worried about presenting another project about plants but it was really well received and we got great feedback. We tried to recreate a sort of ‘mid-air garden’ in our booth, with 13 hanging pots on which we had mounted several epiphytic species. At this stage, we had been working on the project for over a year. After the Salone, despite a lot of interest, we decided to take some time to improve the water-retention properties of the material so the pot could be refilled less frequently. We were aiming to have the final pieces before the summer of 2015, but it took us a little bit longer! Clay is quite a slow material to work with, and the fact that we were working with plants slowed us down even more.

Finally we were ready with the first pieces in January 2016. We decided not to work with a manufacturer, but to produce them ourselves. In January we launched Batches – our little range of self-produced objects – and the Epiphytes collection is part of that.

Our experience with Epiphytes was fundamental in making the decision to produce our own pieces. We were already making some of our previous project pieces on request, and with Epiphytes, we decided that it was time to become more set up for production. Over the years, we have created a strong network of craftspeople and so it was quite easy to take this step.

Initially Epiphytes had three shapes, but we had to narrow it down to two to make it more financially viable. We reduced the dimensions of the two remaining shapes, because with the plants growing on them, we realised that they were actually a bit too big! We also improved the material and refined the ceramic parts.

The prototype originally hung from the ceiling with a rope and we liked this ‘homemade’ touch, but we realised that people weren’t confident in the rope’s ability to hold. Now we have a sturdy but light suspension system in stainless steel that allows users to position the vase at the desired height with a simple

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movement and also enables it to be attached and detached easily. All of the small but fundamental details have been taken care of.

Our big lesson has come from playing both the role of designer and producer. Often, in industrial production, commercial reasons prevail over design ones at the expense of the project. By using small- batch production, we are striving to find a different balance and really optimise the quality of our projects.

It’s not an easy process. We are not following the logic of the one-off piece anymore, so things need to be thought through in terms of reproduction and possible uses (and misuses), but we feel it pushes us to think more and find better solutions.

Exhibiting at Makers & Bakers this year was really different from Salone Satellite last year. At Satellite you can breathe in the enthusiasm and the energy of all the young people presenting their projects, but, being so connected to the main fair, Satellite is very much a place for doing business. Most of the visitors are running from one stand to the next, and nobody has much time to stand and talk. It’s a really good training ground for a young studio on how to communicate yourself and the core of your work in very little time!

At Makers & Bakers, it was as if everybody had been invited to a friend’s house: there was a genuinely friendly atmosphere and objects weren’t exposed in a traditional way, they were in use. It was conceived as a space for people to sit down, drink a coffee and have a break from running around the Salone – that made visitors more likely to take the time to talk. There was a different and deeper level of engagement. It was great to present our work in an environment that is not a fictitious space like the ones at the fairs or exhibitions, but has the warmth and cosiness of a real place. It was really nice for us to hear ‘Oh, I can really see that in my kitchen!’ or ‘My mum loves orchids! She would love one of these!’ ”



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- 599 **Martin Patze** COLOGNE
- 600 **Imperfect Design** PARIS
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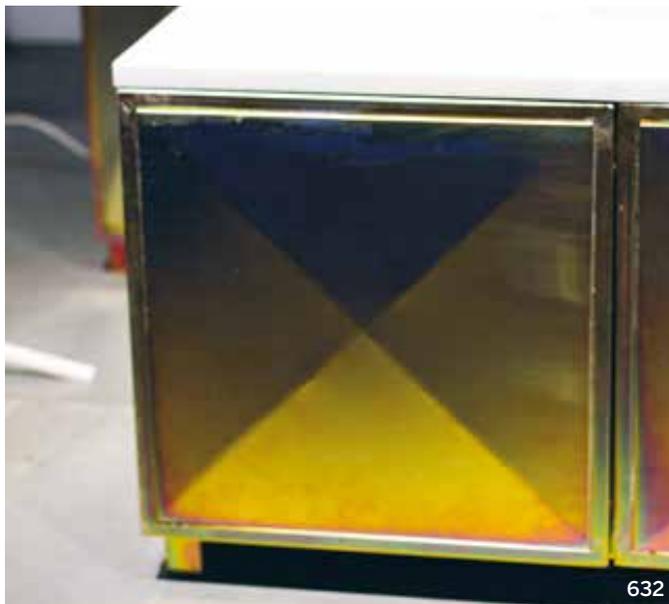


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