

stanleypickergallery:

23 April - 13 June 2015

Fabien Cappello: *Streetscape*

We all have a daily commute. For most of those coming into Kingston it involves walking through a largely uninspiring townscape of pedestrian crossings, traffic lights and corporate leisure and retail spaces. For the next few weeks though this everyday route is going to get a bit more interesting thanks to a series of colourful additions: bins, benches, bollards, planters and bike racks. These unusual forms have been designed by Fabien Cappello for *Streetscape*, an exhibition of work developed during his Stanley Picker Design Fellowship. Each object is a prototype that explores how the redesign of street furniture could improve our experience of the built environment; an investigation that fortunately spills out of the Gallery and into the surrounding streets.

The designer's intervention is much needed. The quality of our public spaces and the objects that define them is in a state of disrepair. Our urban environments are what Marc Augé called "non-places", the French anthropologist's early nineties term for the anonymous and homogenised transient spaces that increasingly define our globalised condition. The contemporary corporatized 'streetscape' is shaped by the intangible forces of the marketplace rather than any local physical properties. Like the sea of commodities in which we are sinking more generally, the forms, colours, materials and manufacture of our urban furniture is not born out of the places in which it resides. Instead, our street furniture increasingly consists of objects that largely resist any relationship with provenance; made for everywhere and so nowhere, their identikit appearance prohibits our own sense of place. Our environments should foster a sense of identity and belonging, yet too often they encourage only disinterest.

Cappello's playful *Streetscape* prototypes offer a solution to this design problem. They are the latest in a series of the designer's projects that have explored ideas of provenance and place. In 2009 the Paris-born designer graduated from RCA MA Design Products with *Christmas Tree*. This was a project born out of a singularly time and place-based phenomenon - the near two million pine trees dumped on London's streets each January - festive hangovers which Cappello turned into a series of stools and tables. These were not inspired out of any particularly environmental ambition, but rather a desire to celebrate the undervalued everyday resources that litter our urban environment.

Cappello's interest in the overlooked extends beyond materials to include people and production cultures too: in the same year he travelled to Odivelas, an unfashionable Lisbon suburb, where he collaborated with a local ceramicist to create a series of jugs and drinking vessels. These are inscribed with drawings that map the location of local manufacturers, a visible proclamation of provenance that was designed to open up the rich reservoir of skills and production possibilities of this out-of-the-way area.

Cappello is not just interested in place-based making in his designs, but also place making. This is evident in one of his earlier street-based projects, an outdoor furniture system designed for the 2012 Ceramic Biennial in Vallauris. Cappello collaborated with a local ceramist to create a series of concrete-filled ceramic containers that acted as ballasts for the wooden benches. With its combination of industrial and natural materials, local craftsmanship and serial production logic, the *Vallauris* furniture exemplified another trait of the designer's work - his delight in working across craft and industry. This is also evident in *Cloister*, a one-off wooden and steel bench designed for Bloomberg's London headquarters, whose tall profile and semi-circular plan sought to define a place within the open plan interior. It is also there in *Streetscape*, whose industrially orientated designs were developed through the intensely craft-based stages of prototypes and model making.

Designed to be sympathetic to, but also stand out from, the existing environment, there is no doubt that these designs will serve to create a sense of place in their surroundings. For the sake of the daily Kingston commute, let's hope they are a permanent addition.

Catharine Rossi April 2015

Fabien Cappello (Paris, 1984) is an award winning furniture and product designer working across contexts from commercial objects to limited editions and the public space. He studied at the University of Art and Design (ECAL) in Lausanne, Switzerland and in 2009 obtained a Masters degree in Design Products at the Royal College of Art, London. Cappello was appointed Stanley Picker Fellow in 2013. Instagram: **fabien.cappello**

Streetscape Offsite: *Streetscape* extends around Kingston town centre. See gallery leaflet for map and locations.

Stanley Picker Gallery Edition: Streetscape Key Ring

Limited edition key ring by Fabien Cappello, made from steel with dipped plastic coating in blue, yellow or grey, is available for sale directly from the Gallery (£15).

Associated Events:

Streetscape Walking Tour with Fabien Cappello / Saturday 16 May 2-4pm / Free Event / Booking Essential
Evening Salon with Fabien Cappello / Wednesday 27 May 5-7pm / All Welcome

Project Credits:

Film Rachel Davies; Camera Karen Livesey; Student Runners Ruth, Amy, Liam & Rose
Audio Installation Rachel Davies & Joseph Sanchez
Project Assistant Se Eun Yang

Offsite: Special thanks to Kathryn Woodvine, Peter Treadgold and staff at the Royal Borough of Kingston

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A cycling vision for everyone www.kingston.gov.uk/cycling



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