



Books of the year

FT writers pick the best non-fiction of 2010
Plus a special issue of How To Spend It

LIFE & ARTS PAGE 17



CHARITY APPEAL

The hunger trap

LIFE & ARTS PAGE 2

FT lunch auction

LIFE & ARTS PAGE 6

FT WEEKEND

Plus *Who will win the World Cup bid?*

FINANCIAL TIMES | Saturday November 27 / Sunday November 28 2010 | EUROPE

World Business Newspaper

Short sellers warned against bets on country ● Concerns for senior Irish bondholders

Spain defiant amid bank turmoil

Richard Milne in London

European bank shares fell sharply amid growing speculation that even the highest-rated bondholders in Irish banks could be forced to accept losses, leading to contagion throughout the financial system.

The market turbulence caps a turbulent week in Europe's financial markets where the focus in the eurozone debt crisis shifted to Spain and Portugal.



Spanish banks were at risk of a downgrade.

Credit default swaps, which offer investors protection against the risk of default, rose by almost 50 per cent at both Anglo Irish Bank and Allied Irish Banks.

The sell-off among banking stocks overshadowed another difficult day for the so-called peripheral eurozone countries, led by Spain. Spanish 10-year bond yields ended the week up half a percentage point while

News Briefing

South Korean equities

Kospi index

Sep 1 2010

1764.69

Nov 26 2010

1901.80

Source: Thomson Reuters Datastream

Peninsula sabre-rattling spooks Seoul again, Page 20

Poll passions

Catalans are fired up to oust their Socialist-led government and vote in nationalists: not because of sex, but money. Page 2

FINANCIAL TIMES

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NOVEMBER 27 2010

how to spend it special celebration edition

15

how to find it

ISSUE 252
NOVEMBER 27 2010



34

64

24

48



9 THE AESTHETE

Dom Pérignon's chef de cave Richard Geoffroy talks taste with John Stimpfig

10 HOLD THE CHIPS

John Stimpfig relishes a change in the UK gaming laws that has opened up casino restaurants to non-gamblers

15 ECLECTIBLES

Philippa Clark presents covetable collectables and gorgeous gifts

19 THE SMOOTH GUIDE

Rachel Howard reveals the cool new cachet of formerly stuffy Brussels

24 OCCASION TABLES

Nicole Swengley on coffee tables that steal the limelight

32 PAST MASTERS

Simon de Burton dreams of owning the ultimate supercar – a McLaren F1

34 ROOM FOR A LITTLE ONE?

Lucia van der Post on the top lodges now offering tailormade family safaris

43 SILVER SURFERS

Simon de Burton clicks with a website that traces and sells family silver

48 A FROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Damian Foxe twins opulent gowns with rough-and-ready outerwear

63 VAN DER POSTINGS

Lucia van der Post lines up a trio of top-drawer beauty treats

64 JEWELLERY IN THE THIRD DIMENSION

Vivienne Becker on jewellery that moves, both physically and emotionally

73-78 ALL OVER THE SHOP

WRY SOCIETY THE SMART MONEY
THE GANNET THE CULT SHOP
FOR GOODNESS' SAKE PERFECT WEEKEND

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32

This watch is just one of hundreds of inspirational gift ideas for him and for her in the Gift Guide, updated daily at howtospendit.com



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EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES: +44(0)20-7873 3203 ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES: +44(0)20-7873 4208 COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF LIANA YAROSLAVSKY COFFEE TABLE, SEE PAGE 24.
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OCCASION TABLES

Designers are casting a new eye on the humble coffee table as an artful centrepiece with serious wow factor. Nicole Swengley reports.

Main picture: the limited-edition Médusa, €19,300, by Russian designer Liana Yaroslavsky, incorporates a Murano crystal chandelier by Archimede Seguso. Right: Yaroslavsky's La Luna, €14,500.



Glamorous coffee tables add drama and interest to a room yet can be surprisingly hard to source. So if you're looking for a chic centrepiece for festive entertaining, here's a tip. Forget about truffling through the interiors shops and instead, next time you're in Paris, head for Le Meurice, where, in the hotel's opulent lobby, you can inspect Paris-based Russian designer Liana Yaroslavsky's dreamily decorative coffee tables.

These are less of a place to park your café au lait than artworks in their own right. One of them, called L'O (€19,000), has blown-glass balls trailing down in chains from the tabletop's interior, while transparent Murano glass spheres appear to float ethereally inside another piece, called O2 Variations (€16,000). The tables look particularly magical at night when their interiors are dramatically illuminated. The effect, says Le Meurice's general manager, Franka Holtmann, "is poetic and playful. Liana's tables add humour while perfectly embodying the spirit of Le Meurice today – comfort, luxury and glamour."

It was Yaroslavsky's own unsuccessful hunt for a statement coffee table that sparked a desire to create her imaginative designs. "Everyone agrees that interesting coffee tables are difficult to find, but I was thinking they should look as wonderful as chandeliers," she says. "Then I had the idea of having a chandelier on the floor and not the ceiling." For her first design, L'esquisse (€19,000), she bought some 19th-century watercolours of chandeliers at auction and spread them across the interior base, then placed a specially commissioned Murano crystal chandelier over the paintings. The scene is captured, like a moment frozen in time, within a transparent, illuminated Plexiglas case. A client immediately snapped it up, so she went on to develop an unconventional collection of bespoke coffee



Clockwise from far left: **Ghibli** by Reflex, from £1,469. **Technocrat** Bronze coffee table, £65,000, by Atelier van Lieshout. **Nigel Coates' Wings table**, £9,987.

tables (from €12,000) with surreal, collage-like interiors. While Yaroslavsky's confections, such as *Médusa* (pictured on opening page), seem more akin to contemporary artworks, they are perfectly practical. And some would say it's high time the humble coffee table had an haute couture makeover. For years it's been considered an essential yet unexciting element of our interiors and has consequently been neglected by designers. Now that's changing. "For me, a coffee table is like an art piece and should be more of a room's centrepiece than a sofa," Yaroslavsky says. And her latest design, *La Luna* (pictured on opening page, €14,500), is a tour de force. In a historic technique called "pullegoso", a mouth-blown Murano glass sphere is infused with air bubbles to create a mirrored effect on the inside. The shimmering, silvery "moon", which sits within a rectangle of clear glass, looks as if it has just dropped from the sky.

Each of Yaroslavsky's designs takes between two and four months to make. "Either I have an idea, sketch it out and then arrange to have the elements made," she says. "Or I encounter an object and use that as a starting point. For *L'O* I had the little glass bubbles made by a master craftsman in Murano. For *Decadence*, I found an 18th-century Swedish chandelier and a Napoleon III tapestry in a flea market and realised the swirling shapes and colours would work well together. I use different materials each time but the final result is always surprising."

Indeed, her main challenge lies in finding gravity-defying technical solutions. The design called *Decadence* (€31,000, a one-off piece) has a seemingly unsupported braided crystal chandelier rising through the tabletop, while *O2 Variations* is filled with apparently floating Murano glass balls. And in *Pluie* (€18,000) a storm of crystal drops, fixed to suspended translucent pendants, creates – when illuminated – the effect of rain. *Pluie* and *O2 Variations* are available as smaller circular side-tables too (€4,000 each).

Yaroslavsky is not alone in believing that a coffee table can be both dramatic and practical. "It's an

"For me, a coffee table is like an art piece and should be more of a room's centrepiece than a sofa," says Liana Yaroslavsky.

unexploited vehicle for art," maintains designer Nigel Coates. His *Wings table* (pictured above, £9,987, limited edition of 12) is supported by three, intersecting wooden wings, carved and silver-gilded by Italian artisans. The table, which has a removable glass top, is produced by Italian manufacturer Poltronova. It's the latest addition to Coates's *Baroccabilly* collection and is intended, he says, to reference rock-baroque motifs (such as leather jackets decorated with angels' wings) while conveying notions of fragility and durability.

Italian manufacturers have always been adept at imbuing even the most functional pieces of furniture with allure – and the contemporary coffee tables from Reflex, whose bases are handmade from thick ribbons of Murano glass, are no exception. Check out *Ghibli* (pictured top left, from £1,469, at Anna Casa Interiors)

with its corkscrew base, *Epsilon* (from £1,979) with a curled glass support, and *Torsades* (from £2,269) upheld by a massive twist of clear glass. Meanwhile the decorative, mouth-blown glass legs of *Gran Canal* (from £1,580) are inspired by the finials that top the mooring poles along the Grand Canal in Venice.

Glass isn't the only material that turns a practical coffee table into a dramatic eye-catcher. Take the limited-edition *Lathe table* (pictured overleaf, £13,500, from

Carpenters Workshop Gallery) by

Dutch designer Sebastian Brajkovic. This circular, aluminium coffee table is literally created by a lathe, which polishes as it carves the metal. Inspired by a spinning top, the vortex of lines on its surface echoes the moment when a top turning at speed no longer appears to be moving. The impression is of simultaneous movement and stillness.

Bronze, marble and fibreglass, meanwhile, are all used to striking effect in other limited editions at Carpenters Workshop Gallery. *Dem Bones* (pictured overleaf, £21,500), by American designer Wendell Castle, is a curvaceously suggestive piece in polychrome fibreglass while the *Technocrat* Bronze coffee table (£65,000, pictured above) by Dutch collective Atelier van Lieshout has a 3-D surface that's a model of an industrial manufacturing plant. And for a contemporary take on classical marble, turn to British artist Marc Quinn, whose *Reef* coffee tables (£58,750) are raw chunks of pure white marble beautifully inlaid with green ming, pink Portuguese malachite, pink rhodonite, honey onyx, agate and lapis lazuli.

Significantly, "It's not just art collectors who are buying but homeowners looking for interesting designs," says David Gill of David Gill Galleries. He cites a coffee table designed in 1961 by Yves Klein in gold leaf, Perspex and glass (£21,150). "It's still popular because it adds glamour and glow to a room and there's nothing else quite like it on the market," he observes. Still, the same could be said for contemporary designs such as Zaha Hadid's fluid, polished aluminium *Crater table* (price on application) and Mattia Bonetti's round, stainless-steel *Yo-Yo table* (£56,400). In the same spirit of material exploration are the show-stoppers at vintage specialist Talisman. Amber crystals glow beneath the lacquered surface of a low, raw-edged, cedar-wood table dating from the 1950s (£5,750). Then there's a glass-topped coffee table designed by Karl Springer in the late 1970s that's made of cork inlaid with a brass lattice (£3,600), while another stunning Springer design is a simple, inverted curve of veneered whalebone (£12,000). "These are highly individual pieces which are more



"The renaissance in cocktail-making has brought a demand for low tables that serve a practical function while making a strong design statement."

like artworks than utilitarian objects yet they're also very practical," says Talisman owner Ken Bolan.

Contemporary designers, however, are intent on pushing the boundaries of materials and shapes even further. Istanbul-based Serhan Gürkan has created Mukarnas, a glass-topped, matte lacquered coffee table (€490) whose pointy, geometric legs play with mathematical formulae, while Roberto Rida's limited edition Tavola Basso Forziere (€38,000) is covered in amethyst mirror glass and decorated with transparent cabochons. And British designer Mark Brazier-Jones's new, limited-edition coffee table Atol (£16,500), unveiled by Lamberty at the Pavilion of Art & Design in London in October, is cast in polished bronze or aluminium. "The aim," explains owner Andrew Lamberty, was to create "an original and visually arresting form that's sculptural and futuristic yet organic – like coral from the sea, a mineral structure or something from the forest – while holding a connection to the lineage of classical furniture evolution. I think it's the best thing Mark has done in terms of combining form, materials and concept."

Smart coffee tables were also in evidence at the 100% Design exhibition in London this autumn. Brazilian designer José Marton's signature acrylic stripes were given a new twist in his dual-purpose Hybrid collection with a vase sunk within the coffee table's surface (pictured above right, £3,237). Similarly, Salvatore Indriolo's lacquered steel Albino table for Horm (€350) incorporates a LED torchlight in a support that extends above the table-top, while the surface is a removable tray.

Not everyone wants a coffee table that behaves out of character, however. Some merely require lots of low, practical surfaces, which is why French furniture

From top to bottom:
Dem Bones, £21,500, by
Wendell Castle. José
Marton's coffee table,
£3,237, part of his Hybrid
collection for Alle.
Lathe table, £13,500, by
Sebastian Brajkovic.

manufacturer Ligne Roset offers a variety of very low, sleek coffee tables with multiple surfaces. The upper two tiers of Rotor (£1,483) and Strates (£1,443) pivot out from both sides – handy for wine glasses or coffee mugs. The flip-out concept is taken further in Ligne Roset's Translation (£1,752). Here, four oak-veneered, upper surfaces are linked by a sliding mechanism which, when pulled, reveal four lower surfaces gleaming with glossy red lacquer.

Rotating leaves are also a feature of Spline (from £1,746), a very low coffee table finished in oak or lacquered veneer from the French manufacturer Roche Bobois. Another of the company's party pieces is Decalo (£2,119), whose architectural, cantilevered surfaces resemble a miniature Modernist building. Meanwhile Sismic (£1,539), a ceramic coffee table with a twisted base, looks as if it is in the process of being thrown on a potter's wheel.

Roche Bobois has upped the glamour stakes with its Sarawai and Reversi cocktail tables. And note the semantics. These designs are clearly intended for glamorous stemware rather than mere coffee

mugs. Sarawai (from £1,969) has two synchronised rotating glass surfaces on a walnut base, while Reversi (£1,523) is a Bauhaus-inspired grey glass table with a single red laminated glass panel.

As Jennifer Barre, Roche Bobois' UK marketing manager, puts it: "The renaissance in cocktail-making and lounge-lover-style parties has brought a demand for low tables that serve a practical function while making a strong design statement. These days, 'coffee table' is a misnomer. People are far more likely to serve martinis or caviar blinis on these chic, contemporary pieces." ♦

TURNING THE TABLES

Alle, 020-8588 0632; www.alledesign.com.br and see Silvia Nayla. **Anna Casa Interiors**, Unit 2/24, Chelsea Harbour Design Centre, Lots Road, London SW10 (020-7352 8353; www.annacasa.net). **Anne Autegarden**, 102 Avenue Marquis de Villalobar, 1150 Brussels (+32-477 228 358; www.autegarden.com). **Atelier van Lieshout**, see Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **Carpenters Workshop Gallery**, 3 Albemarle Street, London W1 (020-3051 5939; www.cwgdesign.com). **Cristina Grajales**, 10 Greene Street, New York 10013 (+212-219 9941; www.cristinagrajalesinc.com). **David Gill Galleries**, by appointment, 3 Loughborough Street, London SE11 (020-7793 1100; www.davidgillgalleries.com). **Horm**, Via San Giuseppe 25-33082, Azzano Decimo (+39-0434 6407 33; www.horm.it). **José Marton**, see Alle and Silvia Nayla. **Lamberty**, 46 Pimlico Road, London SW1 (020-7823 5115; www.lamberty.co.uk). **Liana Yaroslavsky**, +336-0941 0980; www.lianayar.com. **Ligne Roset**, 23-25 Mortimer Street, London W1 and branches (0870-777 7202; www.ligne-roset.co.uk). **Marc Quinn**, see Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **Mattia Bonetti**, see David Gill Galleries. **Nigel Coates**, by appointment, 25 Thurloe Street, London SW7 (020-7838 1068; www.nigelcoates.com) and see Cristina Grajales. **Reflex**, see Anna Casa Interiors. **Roberto Rida**, see Anne Autegarden. **Roche Bobois**, Smugglers Way, London SW18 (020-8874 9818; www.roche-bobois.com). **Sebastian Brajkovic**, see Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **Serhan Gürkan**, +90-212 291 8700; www.serhangurkan.com. **Silvia Nayla**, 109 Westbourne Grove, London W2 (020-7229 2262; www.silvianayla.com). **Talisman**, 190-192 Ebury Street, London SW1 (020-7730 7800; www.talismanlondon.com). **Wendell Castle**, see Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **Zaha Hadid**, see David Gill Galleries.

