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\*DESIGNINTERIORSFASHIONARTLIFESTYLE

**3 GUEST EDITORS  
3 COVERS**

**ZAHA HADID**

**REI KAWAKUBO  
LOUISE BOURGEOIS**



**LATEST EDITIONS**  
 Anastassiades' highly crafted 'Editions' collection includes (clockwise from left), 'Tube Chandelier'; 'Copper Mirror'; 'Mirror Pendant Light'; 'Bronze Bowl Black'; 'Meditation Stool'; 'Three Champagne Glasses And One Water Glass' (two champagne glasses pictured); and 'Ball Vase'

# INSTANT CLASSIC

*Michael Anastassiades' elegantly simple designs deliver function and beauty*

Between functional, mass-produced design and aesthetically focused, limited-edition design-art there is a grey area that has a foot in both camps. It is home to design that values functionality, craft and rarity: pieces that work, but are produced in limited editions, often by hand. They tend to sell for prices closer to art than design, but the pleasure is in using them, not simply looking at them.

These are contemporary designs that are also showcases for disappearing

artisanal skills. And this kind of work is currently getting a lot of attention. Take Meta, the high-profile new off-shoot of UK antique dealer Mallett, which uses the best artisan studios worldwide to create high-quality contemporary designs, and was the talk of the town when it launched at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan.

Michael Anastassiades is a quieter flag bearer of this movement, but a flag bearer nonetheless. A 1993 graduate of the Royal College of Art, the Greek-born, >>



London-based designer is finally starting to gain the attention he deserves. As well as having his own collection of limited-edition designs, he has worked on a series of high-profile commissions: in 1997 and 1998, for example, he designed Hussein Chalayan's catwalk venues; and in 2004, he created a pair of chandeliers for the Swarovski Crystal Palace.

'Until quite recently, people didn't really understand the area between design and art that a lot of my work falls into,' says Anastassiades. 'It's never been a problem for me. A creative process is a creative process. What happens in art can happen in design, it just depends how you choose to use it.'

After years of working on one-offs and small production pieces, in 2006 Anastassiades launched his first 'Editions' series at London's 100% Design. This striking, pared-down collection of marble, metal and glass pieces, all with a distinct modernist influence, was still limited edition, but on a far more ambitious scale than before.

Ever since, he has been adding to the collection, which now includes lights, vases, stools, mirrors and a glassware collaboration with Ilse Crawford. While the items are produced in larger batches than his earlier work, Anastassiades still carefully monitors each piece. 'The idea

of the edition gives an added value, but for me it's only about maintaining quality,' he says. 'If you go from making one product to then churning out 100,000, you can't help but sacrifice the quality, because of the sheer speed of growth. I wouldn't know how to cope with that.'

What really makes Anastassiades' products stand out is their bold shapes. Never gimmicky, but always striking, the collection as a whole treads that fine line between classic and au courant. 'People often say they find nostalgic elements in my work and I like the idea that an object designed today could have been designed in the 1900s, too,' he says.

Experimental, then, might not be the first word you think of when you see Anastassiades' work, but his 'Editions' collection is only half the story. Since 1998, the designer has collaborated with experimental designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby on three projects, exploring the social implications of emerging technology on design. The latest of these – 'Do you want to replace the existing normal?' – consists of four hypothetical products, each providing solutions to projected future problems. The 'Risk Watch', for example, tells its wearer, at any given time, the level of political, social and economic risk they are at on a scale of one to five.

Such inventions couldn't be further from the elegantly simple brass 'Ball Vase' or 'Tube Chandelier' of Anastassiades' 'Editions', but he insists the two creative outputs inspire each other. 'The visual simplicity is the same throughout. Just as the function of many of my Editions pieces is initially ambiguous, so it is with my collaborative work; but the latter takes functionality to a new level with the inclusion of technology. I'd like to bring the more experimental, interactive products into my own collection.'

The advantage in working on both sides of the design spectrum for Anastassiades is that he gets to dip his finger in more pies. September sees him included in a landmark group show at Somerset House, 'Wouldn't it be nice', which examines the crossover between contemporary design and art, and he is also showing his 'Editions' at London design gallery Sigmar as part of the London Design Festival.

Anastassiades may well occupy the grey area between mass-produced design and art, but the softly spoken designer clearly relishes the opportunity to play on both sides of the fence. ★

[www.michaelanastassiades.com](http://www.michaelanastassiades.com).

'Wouldn't it be nice', 17 September to 7 December at Somerset House, [www.somersethouse.org.uk](http://www.somersethouse.org.uk).

Anastassiades' 'Editions' are on show 16 to 23 September at Sigmar, [www.sigmarlondon.com](http://www.sigmarlondon.com)

#### TIMELINE

**1991** Graduates as a civil engineer from Imperial College London

**1993** Graduates from Royal College of Art and sets up own studio in London

**1997-1998** Designs sets for Hussein Chalayan's catwalk shows, London

**1998** First solo show at Colette, Paris. First collaboration with Dunne and Raby at ICA, London

**2004** Designs a pair of chandeliers for Swarovski Crystal Palace

**2005** Group show, 'SAFE: Design Takes On Risks', MoMA, New York

**2006** Launches 'Editions' collection

**2007** Group show 'Design A-Z', Mitterrand+Cramer gallery, Geneva

**2008** Designs chandelier for Cristina Grajales, shown at Design Miami. Phillips de Pury & Company features 'Editions' piece in auction. Anastassiades takes part in group show 'Wouldn't it be nice' at Somerset House and has a solo show at Sigmar, both in London

#### SPIT AND POLISH

Anastassiades' 'Editions' collection may be on a larger scale than his earlier one-off work, but he takes great care with each piece; here he hand-polishes one of his 'Ball Vases'