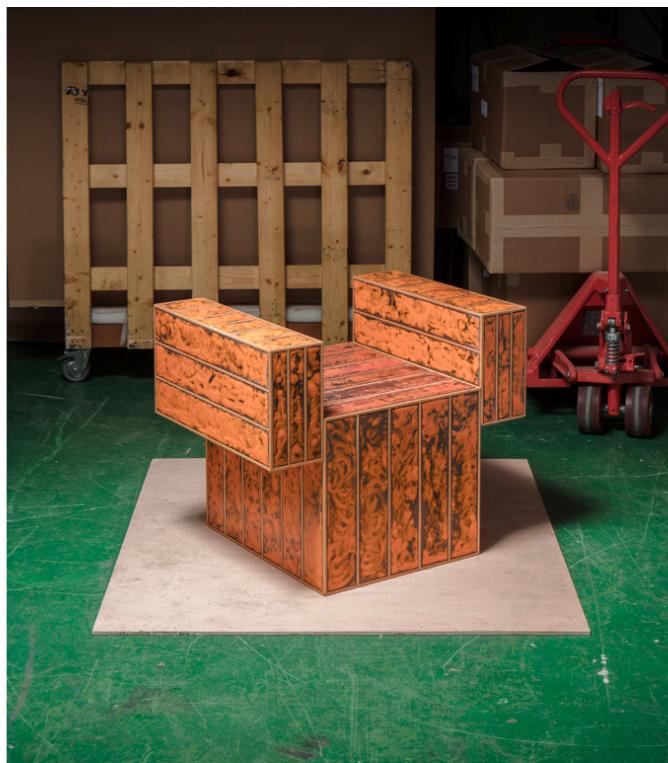


We Have the Hots for This Enameled Copper Chair

Baked in a traditional Korean kiln, this seat by Kwangho Lee debuts today during Design Miami/Basel.

BY Tiffany Jow
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Quick, name an artist who uses everyday materials to make their work. Tara Donovan, El Anatsui, Do Ho Suh—those are just a few of the greats. But you probably didn't think of Kwangho Lee, so I'll add him to your list. Born in Guri, Korea, in 1981, he studied metal art and design at Hongik University in Seoul, where he now lives and works. The reason behind his choice of materials—including rubber hoses, felt, rope, and PVC—stems from his late grandfather, a farmer who transformed natural substances like twigs and hay into household objects like tools or a broom. Lee shares his grandpa's resourceful approach to unremarkable materials: He's made a knitted bench from electrical wire, an outdoor pavilion from foam blocks, and a chair from a bundle of rice straw. Looking at each piece, you completely forget (or stop caring) about what it's made of. You're just in awe of its extraordinary beauty. And, I think, that's the point.

Today, New York-based gallery Salon 94 Design debuts a new series of Lee's work called "Shape of a River" in Switzerland during Design Miami/Basel. The best pieces are cherrywood furniture

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inlaid with enameled copper, including this Orange armchair. This isn't the first time Lee has worked with lacquered copper (he's been experimenting with the medium since 2013), but it does mark a new direction with the material, which is applied in rectangular tile-like slabs onto a specific form. The copper sheets are fired in a large, traditional Korean kiln called a chilbo, inside of which colored glass is then applied, changing color as it bakes. This traditional process results in rich, milky hues peppered with dark spots, bubbles, and cracks created at random by the heat. That raw imperfection, juxtaposed with the flawlessly cut wood frame, makes for a piece of furniture that's like a good work of art: You just want to keep looking, discovering new, tiny details with every second spent.



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