

Design duo Kueng Caputo make a splash at New York's Salon 94 with their new furniture collection

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Since joining forces when they were industrial design students at HGKZ Zurich, the Swiss design duo of Sarah Kueng and Lovis Caputo (AKA Kueng Caputo) have devoted their career to highlighting their experimental processes, while subverting the design canon as a whole. No small feat. Their latest exhibition, 'Never Too Much', which opened in New York at Salon 94 over the weekend, continues very much in this tract, with the pair presenting a series of hand-painted stools, benches, bowls and lamps in a splattered slew of rainbow colours.

As with past examples of their work, there is more here than meets the eye. Kueng Caputo have rendered the leather-covered seats and enamel bases of the benches and stools indistinguishable from each other, hence imbuing a sense of disorientation to the works. Any softness to the leather has been removed by wrapping the skins around steel drums, then drying and tanning them before splashing them with organic vegetable stains. In contrast, the splatters on the enamel bases have been achieved through layers of metal coating that have each been baked on to result in a deep, rich texture.

The duo explain, 'We have chosen a working process that needs a lot of really small steps to be completed. It's a way of slowing down our lives in order to be really focused on only one thing at a time - working in real time, there's no using the "Undo" function.' The designers add: 'To work with these old crafts - with knowledge that has almost been lost even though it's been passed down over generations - this fascinated us.'

Together, the pieces are a pastiche of artistic references. Kueng Caputo riff on Pollock's boisterous painting style, borrow from the Memphis Group's flair for colour and make a nod to the Bauhaus' tendency for austere forms, all the while critiquing each along the way. Even the bowls, which have been made entirely from leather, are familiar and strange at the same time, with their soft buttery interior matched with a textured suede on the outside.

As a whole, the collection is inspired, vibrant and memorably duplicitous. Its frenetic colour palette comes from a simpler inspiration. 'As you may know, we come from a place with a long, long winter, which people express with their clothing preference: black and grey,' say the designers. 'To use a strong word, this is depressing. We bypass this limit; maybe to love life is to feel there's "Never too much".'