

Designer duo dach&zephir sow creole seeds in Saint-Étienne

After Laureline Galliot and Guillaume Bloget, the *Présent > Futur* cycle continues at the Cité du design with designer duo Florian Dach and Dimitri Zephir. From 20 September 2024 to 5 January 2025, their exhibition *simé grenn* (sowing seeds) will showcase their unique design practice, which plays out at the intersection between the worlds, real and imagined, and the cultures of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Relating other ways of occupying the world, it invites the visitor into indoor and outdoor spaces to highlight ways of life, forms of know-how, little stories that have been forgotten, neglected or erased.

Présent >< Futur

N°03

dach&zephir, *simé grenn*

Exhibition at the Cité du design

From 20 September 2024 to

5 January 2025

dach&zephir, *simé grenn*

This designer duo’s creative approach is based on the Whole-World concept which follows the thinking of Martinique-born poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant. For them, our modern world must tell its story and be shared in accordance with the principles of the interpenetration of cultures, in a dynamic of fair exchange. The exhibition gives an insight into the thoughts and questions that have driven them ever since their 2015 *Èlòj kréyòl* research project focused on the stories of the West Indies, for which they wanted to offer a contemporary, poetic reading which can be passed on to future generations. Willingly accepting the “participation of the Other” in the creative process, the projects they undertake give form to the words and stories of creole communities, whose voices are rarely heard and recognised. They are thus celebrating the urgent and necessary diversity of the World. Here, French design in the era of creolisation suggests the creation of a rich, shared narrative of knowledge and heritages. A design based on connections that produces more connections, embracing the diversity of cultural and creative histories that make up a France that is not limited to what we call the “Hexagon”, the mainland. The scenography is centred on a sort of imaginary house. It alternates interior and exterior points of view, where objects, items of furniture, texts, images, collages and videos depict and relate scenes from life. The corrugated sheet that defines the spaces evokes the traditional houses of the West Indies.

Accompanying book

A book is published to tie in with the exhibition: *dach&zephir, simé grenn*. An introductory text by Olivier Marboeuf, writer-storyteller, exhibition curator and film producer, sheds new light on the duo’s work. The sixty-page book pages contains a selection of projects with illustrations and commentaries, in addition to a focus on the creative experiment conducted with Saint-Étienne-based firm Neyret specially for the *Présent > Futur* cycle.

dach&zephir, simé grenn – Éditions de la Cité du design – *Présent > Futur* collection
 Publication: September 2024 – Language: bilingual French/English – Collection directed by Laurence Salmon – Retail price: €10





Portrait of Dimitri Zephir and Florian Dach, 2023,
Photo credit: Andrés Barón

“It is at the point where our differences and our visions come together that we founded the dach&zephir studio. But, above all, there is a common desire to build our own definition of what the profession is. We have a special affection for crafts and creative practices that do not enjoy the same recognition. The projects that we undertake deal with subjects where we think there is a need to bear witness. They reflect a practice and an approach that can only be conceived of with the presence of others.”

dach&zephir, a free creative space and a quest to discover what makes history and identity

Florian Dach and Dimitri Zephir met at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Paris in 2012, when they were both still students on the object design course. They quickly came together to work on a joint project: *La figure de l'Autre*. This creative and research project questioned the influence of immigrant cultures in the creation of the French identity. It was dach&zephir's final degree project, which they passed in 2016 with distinction.

They both work with craftspeople, factories and industrial manufacturers on creating a collection of objects celebrating a culturally diverse art of living. They see the duo they form as a free creative space. In it they pool their own lived experiences — their roots are in Paris and Guadeloupe — in a quest to discover what makes history and identity. Cultural heritages are addressed as a rich vein of raw material for design, capable of producing a language of forms, materials and uses that underlies artefacts. Engaged in a constant exploration of new territories, they define themselves as “researcher-authors”.

2016 : Graduation from the École Nationale des Arts Décoratifs de Paris (object design section) with distinction for their project *La figure de l'Autre*.

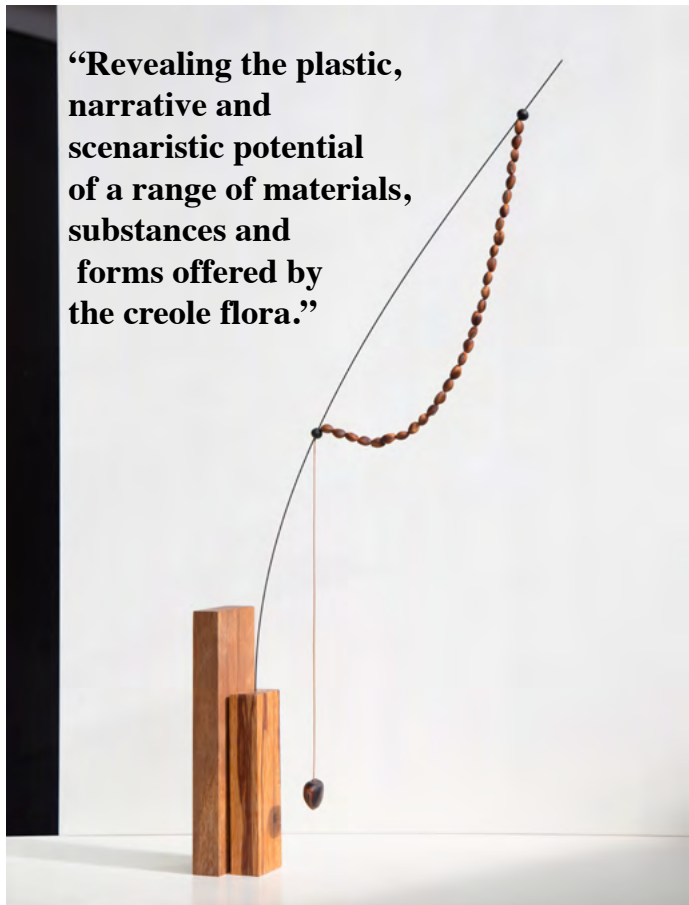
2017 : Award winners in the national support programme for emerging artists “Création en cours” organised by Les Ateliers Médicis, with the backing of the French Ministry of Culture and in partnership with the French Ministry of Education and Youth, for the *Élòj kréyòl* x NATK (Nasyon ATi Kréyòl) project conducted with Michèle Gisquet primary school in Vauclin in Martinique.

2020 : Awarded the FME label by the Foundation for the Remembrance of Slavery for the scope of the *Élòj kréyòl* research project – “Special Prize” at the 35th International Festival of Fashion, Photography and Accessories in Hyères (in the fashion accessories category) for their *Bijoux de tête* (head jewellery) collection produced in collaboration with textile designer Antonin Mongin.

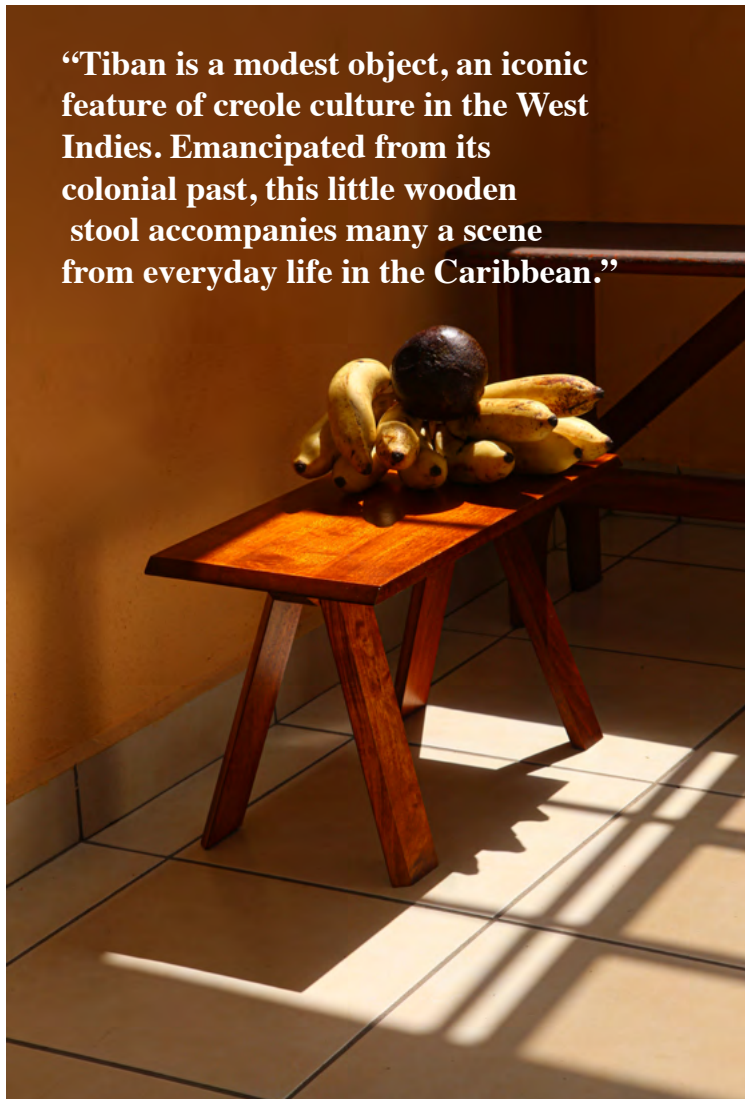
2021 : Exhibition of the *Caribbean beauties* series at the 65th Salon de Montrouge art fair (curated by Work Method) – Winners of the “Mondes nouveaux” (New Worlds) call for expressions of interest (CEI) launched by the Ministry of Culture with their *Voix plurielles, voies créoles* project.

2023 : Winners of the “Créer un vase” call for proposals for a public commission by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP) with the *Vases Péyi* collection.

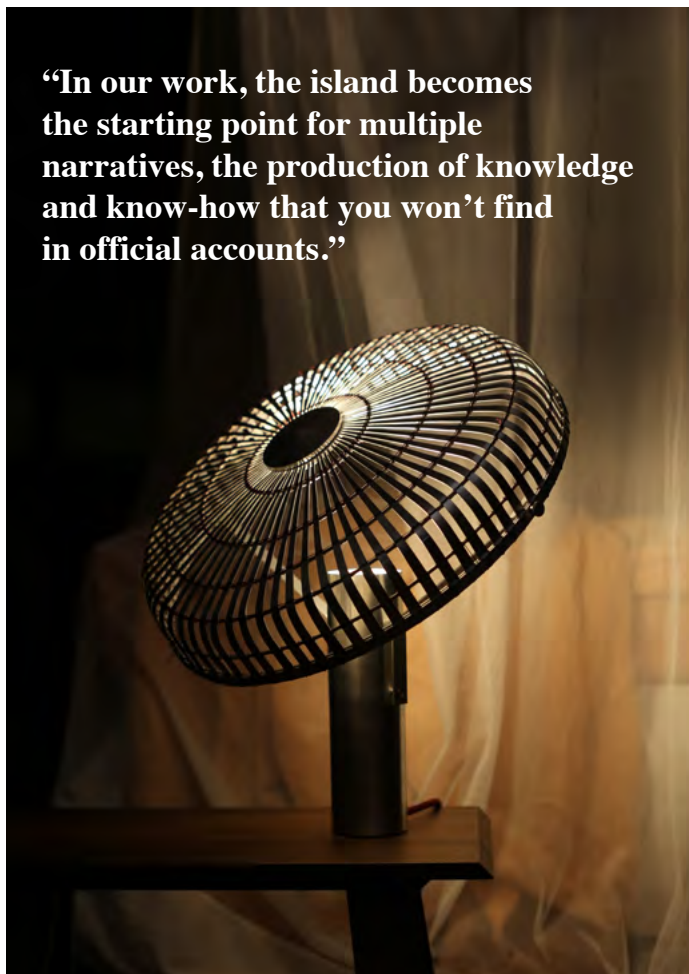
“Revealing the plastic, narrative and scenaristic potential of a range of materials, substances and forms offered by the creole flora.”



“Tiban is a modest object, an iconic feature of creole culture in the West Indies. Emancipated from its colonial past, this little wooden stool accompanies many a scene from everyday life in the Caribbean.”



“In our work, the island becomes the starting point for multiple narratives, the production of knowledge and know-how that you won’t find in official accounts.”



1. *Caribbean beauties #2*, 2022, decorative object, snakewood, white beechwood, bull's eye, sword bean, carbon rod and leather string, 50 x 5 x 70 cm © dach&zephir
2. *Tiban*, 2015 – 2017, seat, «turmeric» stained péyi pearwood, 49 x 24 x 29 cm, TIBAN (design editor) © dach&zephir
3. *Salako*, 2023, lamp, aluminium, nylon thread and LED, piece developed for the «Voix plurielles, voies creoles» project following the «Mondes nouveaux» call for expressions of interest (CEI) launched by the French Ministry of Culture and produced in collaboration with salako hat-maker Camille Beaujour © dach&zephir

About Neyret

Since the firm was founded in Saint-Étienne in 1823, Neyret has developed a unique body of know-how in the manufacturing of ribbons and textile goods. Recognised by the big names in the luxury and fashion industries for the elegance and quality of its products, this family business continues to perpetuate a passion for excellence in textiles through an extensive presence on the international market and innovation, which allows it to enhance and extend its industrial know-how.

**Partner company:
Neyret, weaver of innovation**

For this Présent > < Futur cycle, the Cité du design has asked each guest designer to embark on a creative adventure with a company in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region known for its industrial know-how and innovative approach. The experimentation, which takes place in situ, lasts for three to six months and results in new creative output, items which are unveiled in the exhibition and highlighted in the accompanying book.

The dach&zephir duo have thus been paired with Saint-Étienne-based company Neyret, which specialises in the manufacturing of ribbons and textile accessories. Together, they are currently working on projects combining Neyret’s inimitable know-how and the plastic and historical approach developed by the dach&zephir studio. It’s all going to be about images, woven pictures and using production offcuts, to reveal imaginary worlds and potential new channels and applications for Neyret.

The *Fèy bannann* vase, a CNAP commission, premieres in Saint-Étienne

The exhibition will be the first chance to see one of the vases in the *Vases Péyi* collection by dach&zephir, produced for a public commission by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP) entitled “Créer un vase”. The dach&zephir duo were among the ten winners listed after a call for proposals launched by the CNAP in 2023, whose aim was to recognise and encourage the vitality of contemporary creation in the fields of design, the decorative arts and the art and craft trades. The vases created will go into the CNAP’s collections and may be reproduced for sale. The *Fèy bannann* vase will be revealed to the public for the first time at the *simé grenn* exhibition at the Cité du design.



Fèy bannann, from the *Vases Péyi*, 2024, collection, 3D rendering, a work in progress following the “Créer un vase” call for proposals for a public commission by the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP)
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Présent >< Futur : a panorama of a new generation of designers

Initiated by the Cité du design in 2023 in Saint-Étienne, Présent >< Futur is a cycle of monographic exhibitions illustrating the plurality of forms of expression in contemporary French and European design. To create a permanent trace of the exhibitions and prolong the pleasure of discovery, a collection of books explores a selection of projects for each guest designer. It also tells the story of a creative adventure that brings together design and regional industrial know-how.

To come in the 3rd quarter of 2025 No. 04 – David Dubois

Exhibition by David Dubois, independent designer visual artist and scenographer. After graduating from ENSCI-Les Ateliers in 2003, he collaborated with the Bless collective, then Martin Szekely, and he now develops objects or additions to objects that often fill gaps no-one had thought to fill before. He is reinventing a way of “writing graphics in space” and designs hybrid objects that offer alternative functions to the primary functions of the same objects.

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