

Amuseing Mother Nature

"Part of this talk is about magic – it's all around you and happening all the time"



By Annalize Rossouw

WHILE HARRY PEARCE'S words to a captive audience on day one of the Design Indaba 2010 were meant to capture the essence of design – namely magic – it was evident over the three days of presentations that magical Mother Nature is still a muse.

Design trio Troika, Connie Freyer, Eva Rucki and Sebastian Noel, turned to pineapples and daisies when technological solutions proved wanting in their 3D installation, Cloud.

The Cloud was designed for suspension over a steep escalator in the entrance of British Airways' luxury lounges at Heathrow's Terminal 5. The five-metre-long rounded 'sculpture' resembled a cloud whose surface is composed of 4 638 individual rectangular disks/tiles that are silver on one side and black on the other. The tiles, which are electro-magnetically controlled, flip over from silver to black (and back again) in an animated sequence across the face of the 'cloud'. The effect is a sense of the shadows a cloud makes on the earth as it transmutes in its journey across the sky.

The tricky part, however, was the scientific aspect: "The flip dots are rectangular but you can't tile a three-dimensional object with rectangles," according to Noel. In their musings they took a closer look at a pineapple. They noticed that the individual rectangular segments making up the skin of the fruit were arranged in a spiral around the curved body. A similar spiral was seen in the stamen cluster of the daisy, which has rectangular stamen heads.

The proof was in the er... pineapple pudding as the piece casts its magical mood over all who come into contact with it at British Airways.

Tord Boontje, a designer of all things, is a keen observer of everything that surrounds him. A sense of innate curiosity and a healthy respect for daydreaming have been his design beacons. Boontje is most certainly moved by his environment.

Although his first works were driven by waste (turning England's unrecycled wine bottles into finely crafted bottle and glass sets), his more recent works have a more obvious organic element. He says, "My pieces have a yearning for nature in them."

A not-so-subtle example is his experiments with lace: "A lot of my work is lace-like. I started making yarn with fibre and very soon started making my own lace out of grass."

A morning spent in his private garden got him admiring the delicacy and intricacy of a spider's web. From this morning of daydreaming was born a magnificent spider web chair – a creation that resembles an enormous man-sized web in what seems like perfectly natural proportions, that offers various spaces for sitting and reclining.

Other aesthetic treats include the hedge wardrobe.

Imagine a domed bush standing in your bedroom – its leaves are a juicy green and its supple branches can be seen weaving in and out of the foliage. On closer inspection you realise that each leaf is a handcrafted ceramic ornament and the branches are actually the door handles. Open this outward and you've got a wardrobe full of clothing neatly arrayed.

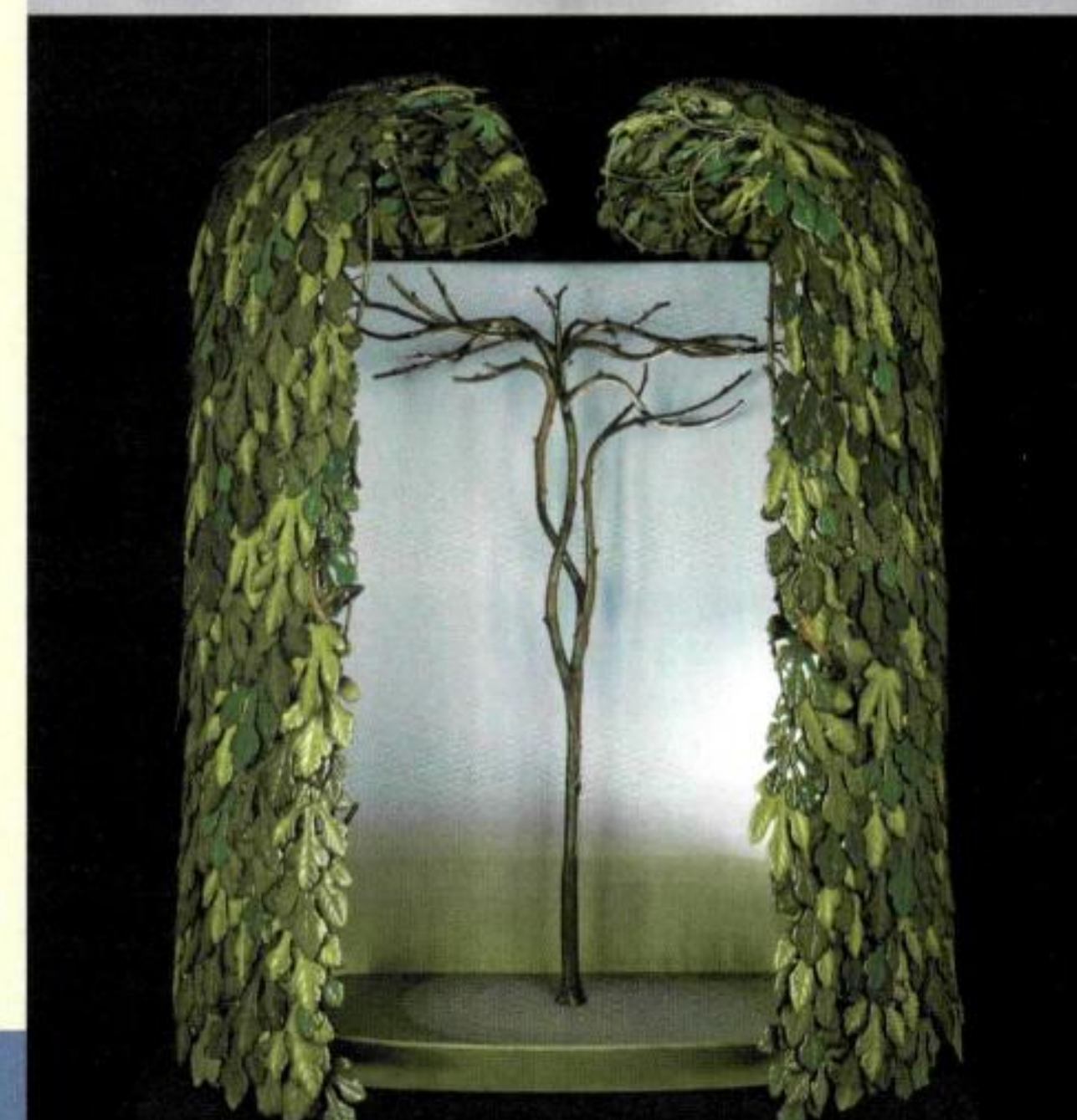
Boontje's nature-inspired designs are endless – carpets, jewellery, clothing; they're all 'homegrown'. Animals are a big part of Christien Meindertsma's creative life. One of her favourite projects was a range of woollen cardigans, each made from the wool of one sheep. Meindertsma, fascinated by tracing things to their origin, realised that each cardigan has a story: that of the sheep from which it comes. Her range of cardigans then became a novelty; each cardigan came with a

'sheep passport' that detailed everything about the life of the sheep that donated the wool.

A similar thought process led her to thinking about pigs, since the number of pigs in her home country, the Netherlands, outnumbers the number of humans. The result of her mind-meanderings is a book entitled *PIG 05049*. It traces the commercial life of a pig; where the individual products harvested from a pig end up. And for the vegetarian the reality is a little disconcerting: pig parts are used in just about every product and used in the manufacturing process of several other goods. Try fruit juice, for example, or electrical circuit boards. Pork puts a whole new spin on the saying 'bringing home the bacon'.



Harry Pearce



This has to be seen in action – pictures don't do it justice.
– View it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=42hgPLL8lrA