



LIMITED

34

## The Case in Question

**PHILIPPE MALOUI** ARGUES CONVINCINGLY FOR A NEW BREED OF MINIMALISM.

PHOTOS PAUL PLEWS

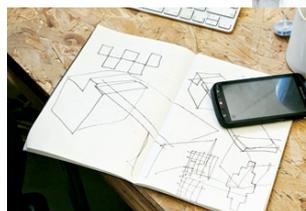
When Philippe Malouin graduated from the Design Academy Eindhoven three years ago, it was at the height of the design world's craze for all things crafty and imperfect. To understand how he ended up designing a chainmail rug requiring 3,000 hours of construction or a series of scaffolding furniture even more complex than his breakout, look to his family—every one of his close relatives is a lawyer. Or trace his enthusiasm for the precise and the geometric back to his younger days studying chemistry and math in his native Montreal—followed by the pursuit of his industrial design degree. “I started off making boring shit, like gas canisters for Ski-Doo,” Malouin says. “But it taught me how to use materials and gave me a basic technical knowledge.”

Malouin, in other words, is no conceptualist. While his peers at Eindhoven were turning out cracked vases and sofas made from dog poop, he was learning how to augment his intellectual, type-A design sensibility with a hands-on, process-based approach. It's a sophisticated alchemy that early on won him a stint in Tom Dixon's office and, since founding his London studio in 2009, a place in galleries such as Fumi, Carwan, and Rossana Orlandi.

This fall, Malouin takes a stab at incorporating larger narratives into his minimalist repertoire. During Vienna Design Week, he launched a new collaboration with Lobmeyr of three oversize hourglasses that symbolically illustrate the staggering amount of time that goes into handcrafting the Austrian glassmaker's wares. Each one shows time with progressively intricate engravings that took a Lobmeyr artisan five, 10, or 20 minutes to complete. Paired with the hourglasses: a sculptural brass sand-dune-making machine.



(CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT) Brass Gridlock objects for Malouin's NextLevel Gallery show. A prototype of the sand machine from his Lobmeyr hourglass project in his studio. Philippe Malouin. Prototypes of his 1:4 bowls for KM & EM. The designer's sketchbook.



His new series of Gridlock objects, on view through November 26 at Paris's NextLevel Gallery, are rendered in brass and aggregate concrete rather than aluminum and glass. In shapes that reference Aztec pyramids and Scarpa buildings, the pieces are meant to reflect the Brutalist architecture of his adopted city. “Brutalism means something to me personally,” says Malouin. “It was extremely important in Canada at the same time as it was in the U.K.”

The commission that will take Malouin into 2012 has even greater ties to his roots: He's been asked to contribute furniture for the interior of the Quebec Government Office in London. Since he's never done any work back in Canada, he views the job as something of a validation. Says Malouin, with a laugh, “When I first decided to go to design school, my dad was like, ‘What the fuck do you want to design for? You're not an artist.’” Good thing he didn't listen.

—MONICA KHEMSUROV