

Wallpaper*^{HOTEL}

AUGUST 2016

*THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU

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Ring-a-ding!

David Chipperfield's multitasking butler
Vladimir Kagan's big-wheeling magazine rack

Alfredo Häberli's 24-hour jumpsuit

And Jean Nouvel's grand entrance

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Service, please

Ring our 'Edgar' bell,
by Victoria Wilmotte
and Maison Vervloet



ENTER ►



LEFT, OLIVER AND JEAN PELLE AT THEIR SOAP-MAKING STUDIO WITH PIECES INCLUDING THE CYLINDRICAL AND SPHERICAL FORMS FROM THE 'ROCK GARDEN' SET OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, JEAN CASTS VEGETABLE-BASED GLYCERINE SOAPS INTO MOULDS; 'ROCK GARDEN' PROTOTYPES AND THE TOPOGRAPHIC BRASS TRAY; ON A CUTTING MAT USED FOR SIZING, SHAVINGS SURROUND A STACK OF CARVED SOAPS BEING SAMPLED FOR LEVELS OF BLUE; AND OLIVER HAND-FINISHES THE WATER JET-CUT BRASS FINS THAT ER BUTLER & CO PRODUCED FOR THE SOAP TRAY

Clean lines

'Rock Garden' soap set and tray, by Pelle and ER Butler & Co

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIM SCHUTSKY WRITER: PEI-RU KEH

When it came to giving the humble hotel bath soap a makeover, we looked to Brooklyn-based design studio Pelle. Soon after forming in 2011, the firm, run by husband-and-wife team Oliver and Jean Pelle, made waves with a range of faceted, gem-like soaps. Handmade at Pelle's Red Hook premises, the glycerine Soap Stones, as the line is called, quickly became a mainstay of museum shops and design boutiques alike.

'I've [always] played with bars of soap. My father was a sculptor and so my brother and I would play around, sculpting things around the house – vegetables, apples. It was a parlour trick,' says Jean. 'When Oliver and I started Pelle, there was an open call for New York-based designers to submit product for the MoMA Design Store, so we took the idea of faceted soaps and [made them] with original formulations. We came up with seven colours and scent combinations in three sizes, and that was the Soap Stone line.'

Pelle has since produced a second collection, called Folly: seven soap sculptures inspired by architectural follies and made using textural, natural ingredients, such as sea sponge, pumice and activated charcoal. Ranging from domes and blocks to discs

and columns, the pure forms are teamed with moody tones and quixotic finishes, and articulate the same refined, hand-produced ethos of Pelle's lighting and furniture designs.

For Wallpaper* Handmade, Pelle was inspired by Japanese rock gardens and the work of Isamu Noguchi. The duo created a quartet of geometric soaps that appear embedded in a topographic brass tray, with fins that rise up and cradle each piece. The tray is both elegant and functional, enabling the soap to dry quickly after use.

'In Japanese rock gardens, there's an idea of placing each rock in a particular way to show off its best face, and then an equally specific way of treating the ground around it that creates a place for that stone. That's where this idea came from,' says Oliver.

Jean adds, 'We try to pull back from just the function of what we're designing, and incorporate other things that may inform the design process better, so in the end it's a more meaningful, layered product.'

The brick-red cylinder is scented with energising bergamot and amyris essential oils and lends itself to body cleansing. The grey dome (a sandalwood and vetiver-infused pumice soap) and black mini dome (scented

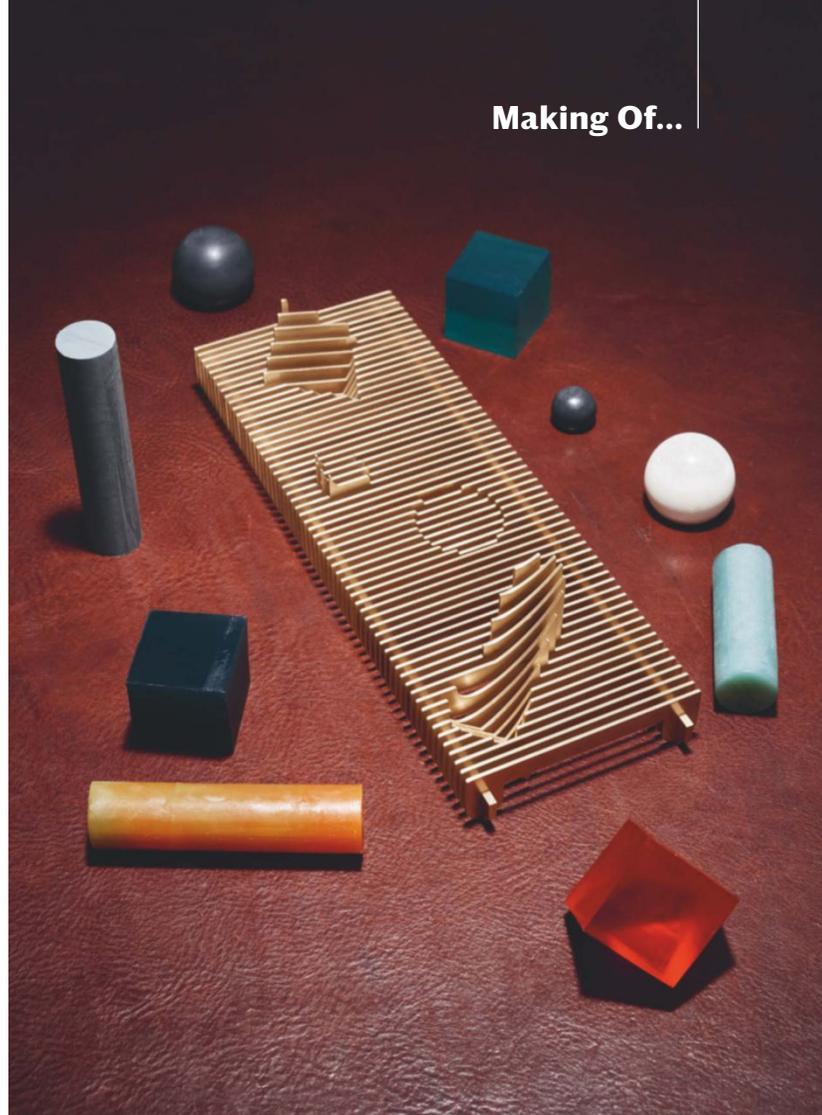
with patchouli and musk) are better suited to exfoliating and washing the face or hands respectively. The marbled cube, which is made from natural sea sponge and activated charcoal and smells of geranium and basil, can be used sink-side or in the shower. Each piece is made from pure, vegetable-based glycerine and hand cut and carved at Pelle's soap-making studio.

The brass tray was machined by custom hardware company ER Butler & Co. Using water-jet technology, 62 unique brass profiles were cut and then assembled to create the landscape-like setting.

The chance to collaborate with founder Rhett Butler – who has nurtured many rising careers in the New York design scene – was a highlight for the Pelles. 'We've known of Rhett for years, but knew he had a reputation of being hard to reach,' says Oliver. So they were delighted when Butler readily accepted their Wallpaper* Handmade proposal. 'It was perfect. Now we have a great relationship with him and are talking about future collaborations. To have somebody like him available, who has a real appreciation of design, is a great outcome.' ★ pelledesigns.com; erbutler.com



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See the
finished exhibition
piece on page 164
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Making Of...



**'Rock Garden'
soap set and tray**
Pelle and
ER Butler & Co

Inspired by Japanese rock gardens, Pelle's topographic brass dish has rising fins that gently cradle each soap while allowing them to dry quickly, see page 118

