

ARIK LEVY

A FASCINATION WITH THE PROCESS OF CREATION AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT HAS MADE ARIK LEVY ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST CELEBRATED INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS, WRITES HEIDI MORTLOCK.



Despite a distinguished career as an industrial, lighting and set designer, visual artist, photographer and filmmaker, the adage 'Jack of all trades, master of none' is by no means applicable to Arik Levy. For Levy has managed to glide seamlessly through his multi-disciplinary career, garnering adulation for his ability to mix technical skill with breathtaking aesthetics along the way. And his presence in the world's most influential museums and galleries together with an ongoing demand for his work is proof enough.

Perhaps most celebrated for his work as a sculptor, Levy credits his career success to his need to "create things to work and function". For Levy, design is a way of life and it is both the challenge and the process that drives his creations. "It is the way I look at things," he says. "Every time I look at something it makes me think about a new idea, or parts that I would have done differently. What I like is the evolution and contrast in everyday experiences," he explains.

Originally from Tel Aviv, at the age of 27 Levy left Israel and his job managing a surf shop to pursue his passion for industrial design at Art Center College of Design in Switzerland. He went on to teach various design workshops across Europe, before creating stage sets for modern dance performances and acclaimed theatres including the Finnish National Ballet, the Grand Theatre in Geneva and the Netherlands Dance Theatre.

In 1997 he co-founded his Paris-based design studio, L Design, with partner Pippo Lionni. Alongside a talented team of designers, it is here he works daily to translate his creative concepts into products, spaces and experiences.



Perhaps a link to his early love of surfing and the natural environment, Levy's works are often environmentally focused and multi-purposed. He sees sustainability as an important tool that helps preserve nature and maintain equilibrium.

With a speckled path behind him, Levy insists that his varied experiences in a mix of artistic capacities have not only influenced but also improved his outlook on design. For it is the many facets of the design and arts fields he has practised that have inevitably given him additional platforms to draw inspiration from. "The theatre is a wonderful incubator for creativity that is exciting and extremely powerful, working on all senses. This experience enhanced my understanding of space and light, rhythm and dynamics," he explains.

Showing at Paris' Passage de Retz late last year, his most recent exhibition, *Nothing is Quite as it Seems*, presented 120 different works. "It is a unique opportunity to experience my work in this way and to give my visitors the chance to look into me – for both art and design," he commented. And whilst the exhibition certainly explored Levy's back catalogue and therefore evolution, a certain emphasis was placed on his signature Rock design. And with good reason, according to Levy.

"These meteorites are the juxtaposition between man and nature. A non-geological growth, it is a sculpture in the mid stat between hard and soft, light and reflections, optical and emotional illusions. The rocks will disappear and appear by reflecting us and our environment. In nature, it seems to arrive from the advanced civilisation and indoors it looks like the nature we almost know."

Also on the geological front, Levy has a long-standing relationship with crystal giant Swarovski, a brand that shares his democratic approach in encouraging people to explore art and crystal with all their senses. Along with exhibitions, Levy has designed his own jewellery line for Atelier Swarovski, and was recently invited to collaborate with the brand on its new exhibition space. For Swarovski's Kristallwelten, Levy created his very



own crystalline room, with crystal structures dissolved onto graphic structures, which are then projected onto the performance spaces. This installation will be open to the public for a two-year period.

The envy of many artists, Levy's work darts between mass-market and high art. Functional or based purely on aesthetics, works can be anything from wall clocks and magazine racks to oversized sculptures and tool boxes. His designs can be seen in the permanent collections of some of the world's finest artistic organisations including London's Victoria and Albert Museum, the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. With a string of awards under his belt and clients including Lanvin, Galeries Lafayette, Gaia & Gino and L'Oréal, his resume is nothing short of commendable. And while it may be his job, for Levy, design is first and foremost his pleasure.

"I am just happy this passion can be translated into a studio and [I am] in the position to share my opinions and be able to still wake up in the morning excited to get to the studio and generate creative ideas," he says. Nowhere near as happy as the design community, Mr Levy ■

