

Tex - Chair

Textiles Take a Seat

by Leesa Hubbell



“Textiles are talking to us,” trend visionary **Lidewij “Li” Edelkoort** proclaims. “Very loudly and clearly. They are talking to us about narrative, about sustainability, about warmth, about embracing [us], about lifting [our] spirits with color.”¹

Thus spake the Dutch oracle of design at Milan’s 2011 *Salon di Mobile* (Furniture Exhibition)—adding that a “tsunami” of renewed demand for textiles in the home is needed to save the declining textile industry worldwide. She blames modernism and post-modernism’s emphasis on metal, wood, and plastic for banishing textiles (like curtains and tapestries) from domestic environments since the 1970s. But the trend shift from hard to softer actually began over 15 years ago, when the flat, cartoonish surfaces of post-modernism were abandoned. Since then, the chair, with its potential for comfort, has become a favored form of the new generation of furniture conceptualists who have been exploring the art of sitting through the language of textiles.

MARCEL WANDERS *Crochet Chair* (Moooi) Crocheted rope soaked in epoxy resin, 25.5" x 51.25" x 51.25", 2006.
Shown courtesy of Marcel Wanders studio and Friedman Benda.



ABOVE: **SOPHIE DE VOCHT Loop Chaise Lounge** (Casamania) Tufted cotton on painted metal frame, 35.5" x 82.75" x 21.75", 2011.
Photo by the artist. Shown courtesy of Casamania.

"handmade with care" and designed for Moroso, an Italian furniture manufacturer that emphasizes environmentally sound production practices. Boontje is currently professor and head of design products at Royal College of Art in London, where he also has his studio.

Fresh out of Design Academy Eindhoven in 2010 (and also Dutch), **Sophie De Vocht** was clearly influenced by Boontje's (website) decree that "modernism does not mean minimalism, that contemporary does not forsake tradition, and that technology does not abandon people and senses." Her graduation project, *Loops Chaise Lounge*, is a home furnishings hybrid—part lounge and part rug. Its bright colors and giant loops evoke childhood memories of potholder looms but were inspired by her interest in tufting. Now manufactured by Casamania, it was first shown at the Milan Salon in 2011.

Kenneth Cobonpue studied Industrial Design at Pratt (NYC), then returned to the family rattan furniture business in his native Philippines to churn out a sweeping collection of artful designs. Known for experimenting with organic materials like rattan, bamboo, abaca, and buri palm, he creates baskets you can relax on, like *Yoda Easy Chair* (2010). Poetic marketing language suggests that "the rattan vines grow from the seat like tall grass in a field on a summer's day, transforming your living space into a garden." Cobonpue credits the lush natural world of Cebu for inspiring designs like *Bloom Easy Armchair* (2010)—an enormous tropical leaf of microfiber that invites you to be enveloped. He also hopes his focus on innovative handmade processes using organic materials will turn into an international movement.²

Tokujin Yoshioka, who frequently collaborates with Issey Miyake, got the idea for



LEFT: **KENNETH COBONPUE Bloom Easy Armchair**
Microfiber stitched over a resin frame with steel base, 34.25" x 41.25" x 38.5", 2010.
Photo by and shown courtesy of Kenneth Cobonpue.