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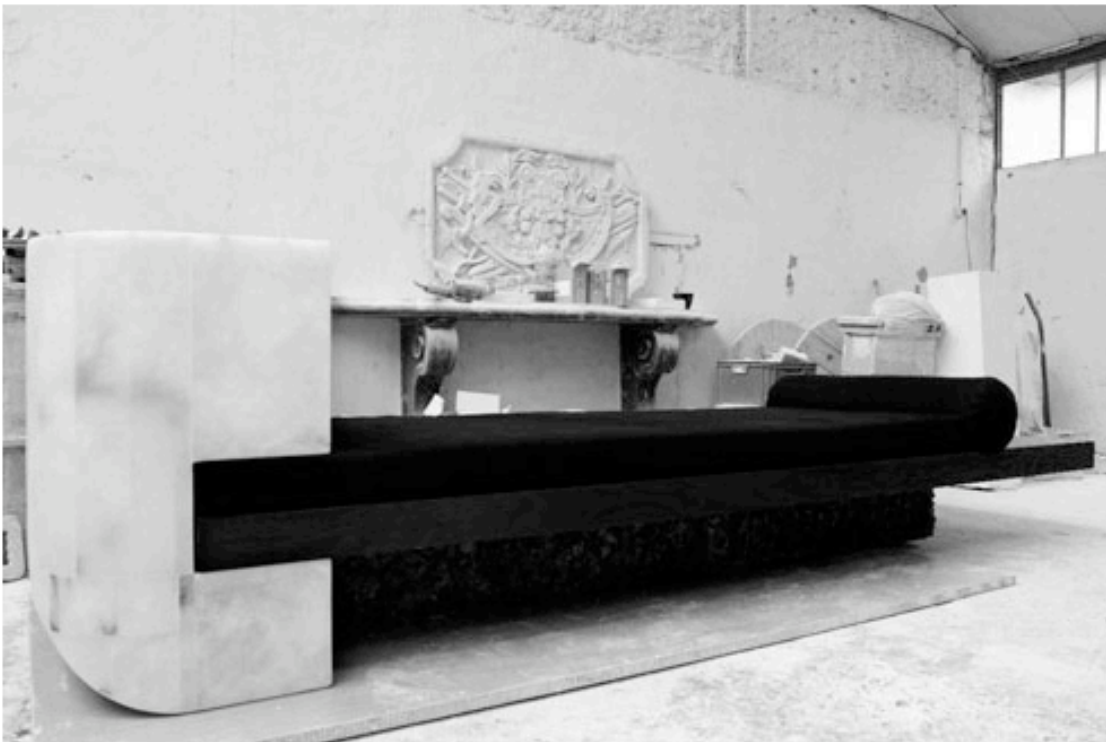
## Off the Cuff, Furniture Edition; or, Rick Owens Goes Safari!

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ON MAY 07, 2010 AT 6:21 PM



Designer [Rick Owens](#)—whose clothes are coveted by edgy, gothically-inclined guys (we're big fans of his fitted leather jackets and paper-thin T-shirts, and of him in general)—started making his own furniture for a pretty simple reason. "It was just out of need," Owens says. "For my first showroom, we needed benches and tables, and we needed them in a week." For the designer's first stand-alone furniture show in the U.S.—"Pavane for a Dead Princess," which opens tomorrow at the [Salon 94](#) gallery on N.Y.C.'s Upper East Side—Owens brought his love of razor-sharp tailoring and over-the-top luxury to bear on our idea of the bedroom. Here's what that translates to: a Donald Judd-style, 1.5-ton Spanish alabaster headboard; a daybed (shown above) crafted from wood, bronze, and more alabaster; and a floor-to-ceiling curtain—made

entirely of shearling mink—that encloses the whole space. We spoke with the man himself while it was all being set up, got a peek at more Owens creations in Salon 94's private collection, and made sure to ask Owens to give us a hint or two on what to expect (machetes? khakis!?) from his next runway show. Rick Owens, "Pavane for A Dead Princess," May 8-June 25. Salon 94: 12 East 94th Street, New York, NY; 646-672-9212; [www.salon94.com](http://www.salon94.com)

More after the jump.

GQ: This work feels like it's pushing a lot of design boundaries. Do you feel comfortable calling it "furniture"?

Rick Owens: I would hesitate to call it art, but on the other hand it's a little bit more than furniture, I suppose. The only reason is because it's hand-crafted and artisanal. And the fact that we can produce limited numbers makes it to some extent rare. So that puts it in furniture-design category, I guess.

This whole project developed just like my clothes did--as a personal thing. I started making furniture to furnish the house in Paris, and once I saw what it looked like, it kind of grew into: Oh, let's just do it as a little exhibit to give some energy to our menswear showroom, because my house is the showroom, too. And we did that, and I thought it'd be a one-time thing, but it kind of took on a life of its own. Which is lovely. So, just like the clothes, the intentions were purely personal. And to an extent they still are. I don't really need the furniture business, but I don't mean that in an arrogant way, like I'm rich or anything. But I already have a full-time job.

You do, though, have a background in art...

I went to Otis-Parsons for art, and studied painting for two years. But at that age I was intimidated by the whole priesthood of art, and I didn't think that I had the intellectual stamina to rise to the occasion in the art world. So I thought, I'll just learn how to do something and get a job. And I learned to be a pattern-maker at a trade school. I did pattern-making for years in the garment industry in Los Angeles, at a knock-off company, which was tremendous training. They'd bring you a Versace jacket, and you'd have to knock off the pattern pretty fast; then they'd take the original back for a refund. I did that for five years or something. It was great.

It was like speed-pattern-making.

Yeah, you have to be fast and efficient, and you just learn and learn. It's the best training I think any designer could have. Creatively it's completely unfulfilling, but at that point I didn't need to be fulfilled. I could get a paycheck, then go out at night and pursue my youth.

Speaking of youth, can you tell us a little about yours?

Well, there are all these disadvantages of youth that ultimately end up doing

you some good later on. My parents were very controlling and conservative. I used to resent how cautious they were. Shame and fear were a big part of their teaching process.

Were you raised Catholic?

Oh yeah. And I used to resent it. But then I think, fear is a big part of what makes me do things on time, what makes me goal-oriented and what makes me want things a certain way. And if I'd had an upbringing that was very liberal and open, without those kinds of motivators, I'd be very different, and maybe not be able to get things done the way I do. I would feel that I wouldn't want my children to feel those things, but maybe those are really good things to teach them.

Back to furniture: When and why did you make your first piece?

It was just out of need. For my first showroom, we needed benches and tables in a week. This was when I moved to Paris, in 2002.

So, furniture was always functional for you.

Purely functional. But, we had a house that was a showroom, that I wanted to look a certain way. Just like the clothes, it's very much a lifestyle thing. I'm not proposing a lifestyle, it is my lifestyle, and this is just the stuff we naturally do and have. And it just ends up that I found a way to execute it so we can sell it. It's not even that I think we're selling a lifestyle, I'm just a clothing designer. And now I'm a furniture designer simply because I have the tools and capacity. Anybody can be a furniture designer, and we all customize our environment. I just went a little further.

What furniture designers inspire you?

Well, I'm always thinking of Robert Mallet-Stevens, Le Corbusier, Ruhlmann, Luigi Colani. I have my little alphabet of furniture designers I love.

There are a couple other Rick Owens pieces here that are part of Salon 94's collection, but aren't part of the show. Like these black chairs, with a sort of mink-like fur..

Right, it's fisher. It's a fur I use a lot. It's always been referred to as the poor-man's sable. It's more expensive than mink, but it was used in the '40s as an alternative to sable. Sable's more recognizable because you know the color, but this is more like a beautiful dark cat. It's got these beautiful dark-grays in it. It's luxe, but it's not in- your-face. It's also very tough and durable. I did sheared mink on some chairs, and it just doesn't hold up. Those other furs smash a lot, they show a lot of wear. So the fisher's really good for standing up to a lot of wear.

Then there's this other pair of wood chairs...



I don't remember how those happened. I did some benches that had antlers, and I don't remember why I used them. Whether we had some around the house, or I just thought, let's stick them on a chair. Things usually happen that way, it's not like there's a lot of conceptual analysis or study. As a matter of fact, I try to make things as unstudied as possible. But the antlers... I also did some bronze pieces that have skulls and antlers, and I've always loved that symbolism. Eggs for birth, skulls for death, and antlers I always thought of as a symbol of glory. And when I was doing these very rigid pieces, I thought they needed a natural, brutalist flourish, and I thought the antlers worked.

Last question. I know you have a new runway show coming up in June. Any hints you could give us about what to expect?

Let's see... there are a lot of references, but they're either obscene or else really politically incorrect. I'm trying to think of anything that I could say... Safari. Let's say safari!

The Rick Owens safari collection! Does that involve machetes and stuff?

Oh, that's a good idea, I hadn't even thought of that. Machetes!

— [Andy Comer](#)

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**Then there's this other pair of wood chairs...**

