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At home in Medellin with reggaeton superstar J Balvin





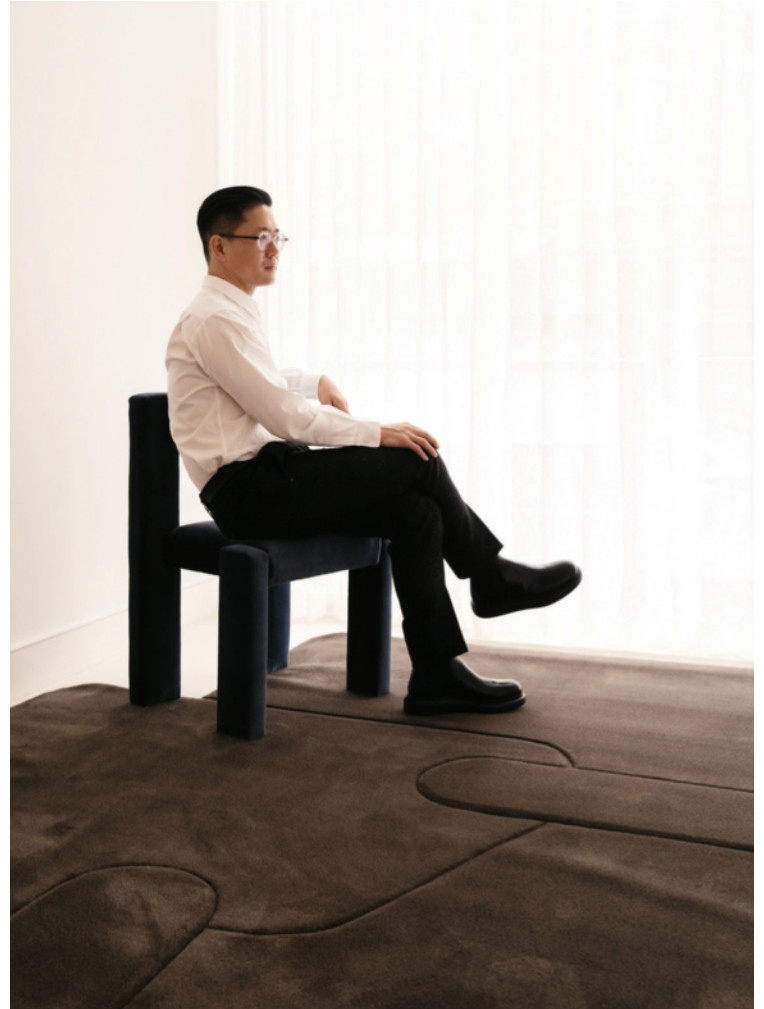
Community action

New York design platform Trnk's latest collection champions the work of emerging designers of colour

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Going to the right schools, finding the right work placements and mixing in established circles is often key to success in the design industry. None of that applied to Tariq Dixon, the founder of the New York City-based Trnk, which launched as an online store for vintage furniture in 2013 before expanding into a platform for international contemporary design. An extension of Dixon's personal love of collecting objects, Trnk has become a stealth resource for the discerning, particularly since it launched its namesake furniture line in 2017.

Dixon, a former menswear buyer, considers himself as an industry outsider in more ways than one. 'Design wasn't my original career or education,' he says. 'At Trnk, we always apply a level of approachability.'



From left, Trnk founder Tariq Dixon on a 'Toma' lounge chair in bouclé, \$2,995, by Studio Anansi, for Trnk. Farrah Sit with a pair of tables she designed in collaboration with Trnk, due to launch in autumn 2022. Evan Jerry of Studio Anansi on a 'Bambara' sofa in cotton velvet, \$4,495, by Studio Anansi, for Trnk. Michael K Chen on an 'Angle II' dining chair, \$2,295, by Trnk, with a rug by Trnk x MKCA, launching in autumn 2022

We like celebrating the ways in which objects inform memories and experiences, and the role environments play in our everyday lives.'

It's through this practical lens that he created the inaugural Trnk Collection, predominantly consisting of seating. 'The original impetus was problem solving; trying to find a sofa that suited the needs of the urban customer. But it was also about American-made quality and craftsmanship within a certain price point. We just couldn't find it anywhere,' recalls Dixon.

The collection quickly grew to encompass a well-rounded assortment of tables, rugs and sectionals, made with producers from around the globe. Its latest iteration champions the work of emerging designers, and notably creatives of colour – Studio Anansi, Michael

K Chen and Farrah Sit, who all entered Dixon's orbit in different ways. Fuelled by shared perspectives and identities, Trnk's new collaborative collection proves there is much to gain from expanding the visual narrative.

The motivation to amplify unconventional voices sprang out of Dixon's need to reconcile his work with his personal passions. Since the start of the pandemic, he has put solitude and introspection to good use, fulfilling his ambitions of staging an exhibition series (albeit now virtually) to echo the cultural zeitgeist. Memorable moments include 2020's 'Provenanced', celebrating African and Indigenous contributions to Western visual language and design culture, and 2021's 'Chosen' portraiture series, featuring queer photographers of colour.

'I'm constantly interrogating how to represent our lived experiences, while being mindful of the ways in which our identities are inherently politicised as queer people of colour,' shares Dixon, who is of Black and Korean descent. 'These are questions we aren't able to avoid. At one point, it felt essential to integrate this into the business.'

Trnk's collaboration with artist and designer Evan Jerry of Studio Anansi is a direct result of these efforts. The two creatives connected when Jerry got in touch after seeing 'Provenanced'. 'The show reflected the direction that I was going with my studio and practice, so it was just so refreshing to see someone exploring those avenues as well in such a high, conceptual way,' says Jerry, who is based in Nova Scotia. »



Left, 'Toma' lounge chair (just seen), \$2,995; 'Kyaman' side table, \$3,895; coffee table, \$4,995; 'Bambara' sofa in cotton velvet, \$4,495, all from the Fawohodie collection, by Studio Anansi, for Trnk. 'Lozi' vessel, \$1,750, by Studio Anansi

Below left, 'Prism' bookshelf, \$3,995; 'Abla' dining chair, \$1,495, both from the Fawohodie collection, by Studio Anansi, for Trnk. 'Lozi' vessel, \$1,450, by Studio Anansi

All images shot in Trnk's newly opened showroom in Tribeca

melting away the traditional boundaries that delineate living, working and resting spaces. 'The rug is absent of any particular orientation and we designed it to make endless, varied landscapes of the furniture,' says Chen. 'As designers, we don't subscribe to a particular aesthetic style, but we are both fascinated by and suspicious of historical aesthetics. Many of them are white and exclusionary in nature, so we are consciously trying to coax out new visual traditions.'

Among the three designers who have contributed to the new collection, Farrah Sit has the deepest connection to Dixon. Having befriended Sit more than ten years ago, Dixon says her ability to challenge and merge aspects of femininity and masculinity in her form-driven work reflects 'her vantage point as being a female designer in still a pretty male-dominated industry'.

Her first designs for Trnk – a coffee table and side table – build on a lighting collection she developed at the start of the pandemic. 'I was interested in creating monolithic forms that can be stately without being stylised. There is no femininity or masculinity, there's just this swirling oneness,' Sit explains. 'I was interested in representing this in a three-dimensional form and creating movement within a very weighty, masculine volume; to merge these two opposing visual languages and show how they might be in harmony.'

Standing together, Trnk's new pieces mark a new peak in American design, where different points of view are not only validated, but celebrated. 'I don't necessarily think it's because [the designers] are people of colour that I fell in love with the work. Maybe it's that I see them and recognise them more readily. It's also based on the community that we've built for the company and I've personally built for myself,' Dixon says, adding that future partnerships will not be limited to designers of colour.

'What will be consistent is that we want to grow up with this community and evolve together. We will continue to support young talent, find more undiscovered and under-celebrated voices, and inspire each other in the process.'*

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The Studio Anansi collection articulates a Black aesthetic in its oblique, sculptural forms. Inspired by African architecture of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when many countries were gaining independence from colonial rule, Jerry incorporates modernist forms in his designs as symbols of liberation: 'What I found really interesting is all the beauty and chaos, and contradiction, turmoil and even trauma that was actually in these architectural forms as these countries looked for freedom. These contrasts mirrored the political turmoil we [were experiencing] with the murder of George Floyd, and I thought it was a beautiful representation of what it looks like after some sort of oppression. I love that this collection shows that tension.'

In contrast, Michael K Chen's pieces are intentionally reference-free. The architect's designs, which will include a rug, modular sofa and chairs that build on an earlier custom daybed design, experiment with the notion of

