

MONITOR

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«MAKING OF» SPECIAL

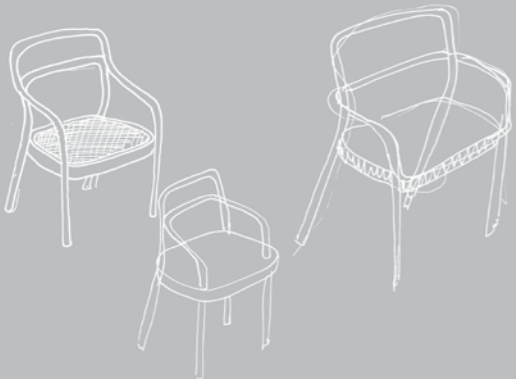
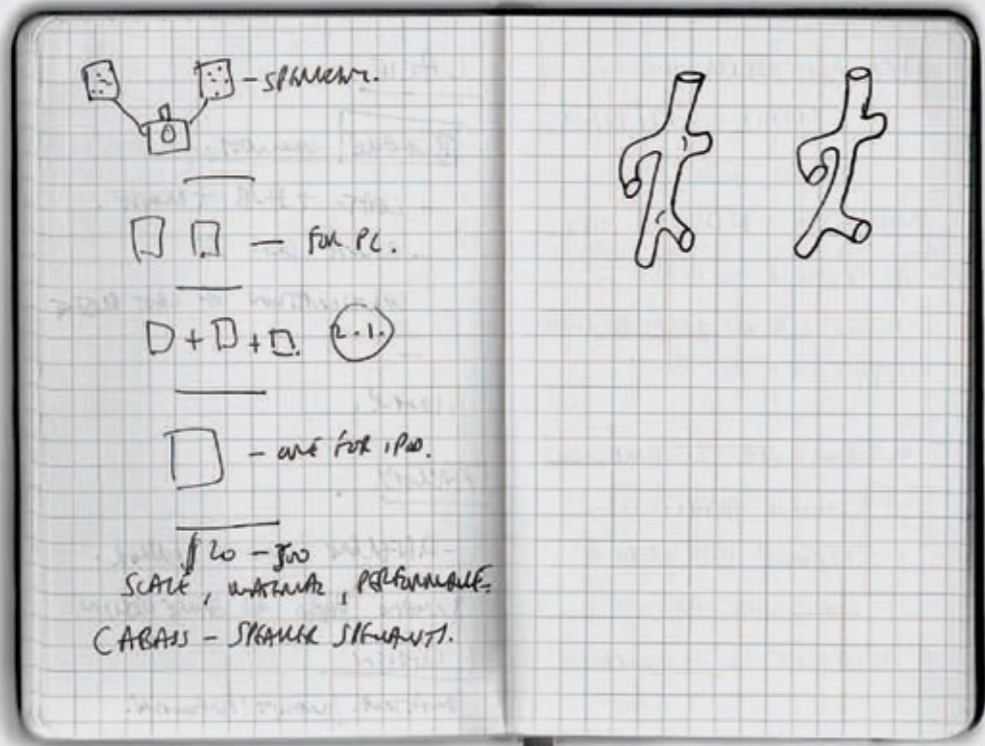
Joshua PRINCE-RAMUS @ REX
Steven.Holl Dessence Yasutaka.Yoshimura
FujiwaraMuro March.Studio Case-Real
Massimo.Mariani Dragon.Rouge Reiulf.Ramstad
Kossmann.dejong Jakob+MacFarlane Cobe
Industrial.Facility Jensen&Skodvin ...





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PRODUCT: BRANCA // DESIGN: INDUSTRIAL FACILITY
MANUFACTURER: MATTIAZZI // INFO: WWW.MATTIAZZI.EU
PHOTO & GRAPHICS: COURTESY OF INDUSTRIAL FACILITY



MATTIAZZI > THE BACKGROUND > In 1978, brothers Nevio and Fabbiano Mattiazzi started an obsession with woodworking. They have spent 30 years producing furniture for great Italian brands. To keep their expertise and quality sharp, they invested in the state-of-the-art machinery, while maintaining a craftsman's attitude. Unlike many other Italian manufacturers, Mattiazzi keep all the facets of wood production under one roof. Today, they are a company of rarity — able to realize the most challenging ideas. Their network of wood shops supports any manufacturing process, milling to lacquering, while the 8-axis robot shapes wood using the formal language of injection-moulded plastic.



After 30 years of working exclusively as subcontractors for other brands, Mattiazzi decided to take a new trajectory and invest its immense expertise in creating an independent, innovation-based brand with an important question to ask themselves and their design collaborators: what is the 21st-century relevance for wood as applied to furniture? The first series in the newborn collection, a family of chairs called «He Said / She Said», was created by young Munich-based office Studio Nitzan Cohen. In 2009, the company approached Sam Hecht's Industrial Facility: the design firm not commonly known for wooden furniture was suggested to immerse themselves into the world of Mattiazzi and produce a furniture family. «This combination of intelligence with all things wood (Mattiazzi) and innocent naivety (Industrial Facility) was to result in a familiar typology produced in an unexpected manner,» comments Hecht. It was an unusual project for his office, which «normally finds itself tackling items of mass-production, where the origins of production are rarely the same place where the project is commissioned.» Industrial Facility have never lost sight of reality when it comes to the reason for a project; its use; its production and even its marketing. According to Hecht, this attitude has set them apart from what design has gradually become, because the studio sees great value in how something is made, its materiality, and its message, rather than succumbing to the proliferation of a rendered reality and an «at arm's length» vision of production.

leg

Inspired by wooden branches that turn, twist, meet and branch off, Branca had to hold all of the functional attributes we expect a chair to have in a modern condition: to be comfortable; to have armrests; to fit under a table; to be light enough to carry; and to stack for easy shipping.



After several trips to Mattiazzi's factory and close discussions with their craftsmen, Industrial Facility wished to push the company further into the position of the robotic craftsman. What is a chair whose ingredients are a combination of highly complex parts — made possible with CNC machinery, most notably their 8-axis robot — alongside simple traditional shaping and finishing by hand? «I observed that the power of the robot, the repetition of the machine and the skills of the craftsmen already have synchronised relationships at Mattiazzi — where each process is as carefully selected as the wood blocks that were to be shaped», remembers Hecht.

And yet, instead of being blinded by limitless possibility, Mattiazzi revealed to Industrial Facility a production formula that dealt with the relationship between cost, time, and technique. For instance, a complete chair made by robots would be too costly, even though making it would be quicker compared to the hand. But if a certain critical part were made by the robot, in combination with other traditional methods, the formula would allow the project to meet the right criteria — a kind of equilibrium. Hecht and his team saw this formula as the gestation of the project. In conversations with Hecht's partner Kim Colin, and his colleague Ippei Matsumoto the focus was turned to nature, where complexity thrives with reason. The branches of a tree provided the analogy for the project — just like them, the Branca chair is familiar to the eye. Branches support the joints of twigs and leaves at different points that may seem random but are all intentional. With Branca, its back leg supports the critical joints of the armrest, the seat and the back, and is made from a single piece of wood produced robotically. The joints are seen as but a part of the seamless nature of the chair, and its simple outline belies the complexity of production.

