

TOAN NGUYEN - COMPLETE BIO

Toan Nguyen is a French industrial designer living in Milan who was born in Paris in 1969. He graduated from the ENSCI (Paris) in 1995. After various experiences in Paris and Barcelona, notably with Alberto Lievore, he moved to Milan pursuing his career with Antonio Citterio, where he became head of design and design partner, co-signing over ten years more than forty products for international brands like Axor-Hansgrohe, B&B Italia, Flos, Iittala, Kartell, Technogym and Vitra, amongst others, before founding his own design office in 2008. This hedonistic purist has a flawless career path, as fascinated by mass production as he is by unique “bespoke” pieces, the result of craftsmanship par excellence. Rigorous gestures and an eye for detail with which he experiments at the heart of the very traditional Italian furniture industry and in dojos in a personal capacity: martial arts act as a founding experience to his everyday approach to design. “To build a dialogue with a company entails getting a specific feel for the place and the people who form a constituent part of it, just like an empty room can only fulfil its role as a dojo, a fight room, after many years of intense training. The buzz of the work and skills fills the premises or businesses with a certain energy that I also reflect in the projects”.

Immersed in Italian design culture for more than twenty years, he establishes a unique dialogue with brands, their processes and teams opposed to egocentric and self-referential designs. “A problem that needs resolving is my ideal project more than being given carte blanche. I convey my irrepressible desire to touch, feel and try objects. Design is not stimulating when the aim of an object is to conceal physical reality. Emotion needs to play a role, no matter how small. I focus on the end user and on the detail that will catch their eye or attract their hand to take long-term ownership of an object. The ideal validation is long-term. Objects that are too loud or speechless will irrevocably be forgotten” summarizes this product designer who is at the heart of the object industry.

With a resolutely multidisciplinary approach, today the office is focused on design in all its aspects, from product development to art direction, in partnership with leading international companies based in Europe, North America and Asia. Toan Nguyen designs specific collections with an elegance that hits the mark, essential as well as spectacular, with an obsessive attention to detail: the Bellows collection of side tables and poufs with gathered leather for Walter Knoll obtains the Red Dot Award in 2010. The iconic Penta armchair designed for Viccarbe comes soon after in 2011. The same year, the MU outdoor range for Dedon projects the standard of outdoor sofas to a new level: an extremely minimal structure, foam of variable densities and high-tech fabrics now offer comfort and aesthetics previously restricted to indoor models. This bestseller has since been replicated countless times.

Likewise, for the ambitious Lagunitas system with Coalesse, a revision of the classic American dining booth typology which merges seat and space partitions to provide privacy in open places.

With these sofas and hybrid workstations, Toan Nguyen pushes the use of three-dimensional mesh to its maximum to create semi-transparent partitions, winning the Neocon Gold Award in 2013. The same year he reveals the Wow table for Lema, whose spectacular natural base results from the same preoccupation for extreme streamlining in the manufacturing process.

Subsequently Toan Nguyen starts his collaboration with Laufen presenting in 2012 the atypical Antero urinal (Red Dot Award 2012) and later the INO range (ISH Design Plus Award 2015) in SaphirKeramik, an innovative material developed by Laufen that permits radically new ceramic work: archetypal thick and solid bathroom components have evolved into visually light functional surfaces with unprecedented resistance. For Urmet, as director and main designer of the brand, Toan Nguyen conceives the strategic range of home intercoms and automation products since the start of his own practice in 2008, while for Fendi Casa he has been developing the profuse Contemporary Collection since 2012. Addressing the needs of the contract market he designs the Infinito Lounge collection (Good Design Award 2015), the Masalla tables and Dual lounge seatings collection (HiP Awards 2017) for the brand Studio TK; whilst for Vibia, he presents the architectural and innovative lighting system Algorithm, a wave of luminous points floating in space (Archiproducts Design Awards 2016 first prize winner).

Toan Nguyen is a compulsive “dessineur” as he himself said in his early childhood, a designer who stays true to his first passions proceeding to refine them with experience. “I like the direct and sometimes rudimentary aspect of objects that are open to immediate interpretation, not requiring any explanation or conceptual pretexts. I focus on reduction to achieve an object free from anything superfluous. Not like a dogma or an aesthetic line, but like a principle of economy, or even of ecology on every front: in the productive process; the matter and materials; the specific functionality, but also in the gestures and the expression”. His creative line can be summarized in a phrase, harnessed through chance encounters that he refers to on a daily basis “Anything that has no use to me weighs me down”.

TOAN NGUYEN / KEY DATES

1969 Birth in Paris

1989 Starts at the ENSCI-Les Ateliers (Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle) in Paris

1991 Experience with Alberto Lievore in Barcelona

1995 Graduates from the ENSCI

1998 Starts working with Antonio Citterio

2000 Design Manager then Design Partner of Antonio Citterio with whom he cosigned more than forty products together with companies such as Axor-Hansgrohe, B&B Italia, Flos, Iittala, Kartell, Technogym and Vitra.

2008 Finds his own agency in Milan and initiates immediately successful partnerships with several leading brands in contemporary design such as Walter Knoll, Dedon, Viccarbe, Laufen, Lema, Fendi Casa, Coalesse, Vibia, Studio TK.

2010 Bellows collection for Walter Knoll wins the Red Dot Award

2012 Red Dot Award for the Antero urinal for Laufen

2013 Lagunitas range with Coalesse gains the Best of NeoCon Award

2014 Fendi Casa Cocoon sofa winner of the Best Furniture of the Year Award by Elle Decoration Russia

2015 INO for Laufen in SaphirKeramik wins the ISH Design Plus Award

2015 Infinito Lounge and Masalla for Studio TK win the Good Design Award

2016 Algorithm, designed for Vibia, wins the Archiproducts Design Awards first prize

2017 Dual Lounge seating collection for Studio TK wins Interior Design's HiP Awards