



Designer:

TOAN

Toan Nguyen was born in Paris in 1969, he is the youngest-child in a family of a Vietnamese father and French mother. In 2002, he and his family had a chance to come back to Vietnam. Although the trip was quite rush, he was impressed by wonderful color and amazing people in Vietnam.

Toan Nguyen graduated in Industrial Design at ENSCI-Les Ateliers in Paris, in 1995. After experiences in several design studios in Paris, Barcelona and Milan and notably ten years of collaboration with Antonio Citterio as design director and design partner, signing products for many brands such as Axor-Hansgrohe, B&B Italia, Flos, Iittala, Kartell, Technogym or Vitra, Toan Nguyen founded his own design studio based in Milan in 2008.

Toan Nguyen Studio is a multidisciplinary Atelier focused on design development in many different design fields, from furniture to technological products, in partnership with leading international companies based

NGUYEN

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in Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and USA such as Accademia, Coalesse, Dedon, Fendi Casa, Laufen, Lema, Moroso, Urmet Group, Varaschin, Viccarbe and Walter Knoll.

Before New Year, Toan had had a conversation with AA about his life, career and the journey to become a designer as current.

Bellows collection: With the design of the Bellows Collection from Toan Nguyen an unusual idea has been realised. Stool and occasional table are surprising to the eye and play with our expectations. The leather is gathered in soft, sturdy folds. And then it stretches. Bellows changes its height. In an uncomplicated way with just a single movement. The ring-shaped trigger for adjusting the height is concealed in the seat. The collection particularly likes to show its expressive character as a twosome, in a group or as an addition to a sofa.



Hello Mr. Toan Nguyen, you were born in France, living and working in many countries in Europe, you opened a studio in Milan, Italia. Why did you choose Toan Nguyen for your studio's name and choose Milan to develop your career?

My full name is Huu Toan Antoine Nguyen, so I just want to keep my name: Toan Nguyen. I design many things from furniture, lamp to technical product...everything has its own difference features but are signed products.

I studied in Paris, started working in Paris, used to work in Barcelona and I want another experience somewhere else. I was thinking that in Milan was still the city of design masters. I was really divided between going in US for high-tech design and going in Italy. I went to Milan and I found a job on first day. It looked like a good start from Paris to Milan in 1996. Milan was quite similar to what I knew from Barcelona with the difference that Milan was much more international. Milan had mainly big design offices connected to commercial and advertising activities, so I decided to move away from home to find other situations where design had a different meaning. Design is global today, it doesn't make such a lot of differences where you are based.

Bellows Collection: this design has won a Red Dot Award for Toan Nguyen. The chic Bellows Dining Table brought up the same style in its base and has a delicate top of round glass tabletop which is both great enjoyments where it provides an elegant easy socializing. The Bellows Chair is very chic as it's a shape of cylinder with base flares into a beckoning leather clad seat. Bellows Stool is almost similar with the rest of the product where it's encapsulated by a great leather finish with an adjustable height in compliment.



at the moment I'm working little bit more at furniture design but I'm trying to complete the other products. I don't like doing design of the same products everyday. So my strong point is doing something different everyday, not only furniture, not only lighting or only product design. I am more or less a specialist of many different fields.

Can people recognize your way of designing in your product?

For sure, I try not to have any style. I always have in mind the final user and try to give some additional value to the products. Because designing a new chair or a new sofa is not really necessary, you don't really need new chair or new sofa, so it is always important to find a motivation, finding something new but overall something that someone could appreciate with his sensitivity and feel the additional value of a product. I don't have Toan Nguyen's way of designing, product which someone can recognize is not interesting for me.

Agadir sofa-Fendi Casa softens an architectural structure with comfortable lines and generous proportions.



The Blixen chair of Fend Casa presents an elegant thin profile of dark grey chromed steel and leather.



Did you intend to become a designer when you were young?

When I was a little child, I said that I wanted to be a "dessineur", but the word did not exist, it was a way between "dessinateur" which means drawer and "designer" which today my activity anyway.

For you, what is the most important thing that leads you to the fame, success as present?

I don't think about this term, I mean now I'm trying to do the best. It's very difficult

to answer, you need to learn, to meet the right people, to do right project in the right moment. I see that there are many factors.

To be designer, the most important thing in my field is to be really open, and to absorb a lot of information, be able to talk and to discuss with many people coming from different fields from technical development to communication.

You design many kinds of product from furniture, hi-tech product...to sanitary ware. So what is your strong point?

I experienced many different products,

Can you share something about your prizes with SPACE viewers?

My own activity is very recent new, I just started my studio in 2008, so the first products went on the market since 2010, which means less than 3 years. I got some prizes for Laufen and Walter Knoll products. But it's not my goal, the best prize is that your products are welcomed on the market, if you got a design awarded but the product is just on paper, it's not successful at all on the real market. It's always nice to get awards such as: 2 Red Dot Awards for Laufen in 2012, and one in 2010 for Walter Knoll. The other awards are part of my previous life as Antonio Citterio design partner.

What are your proudest achievements in your career so far?

At the moment, I prefer thinking about the future and all the things is to do for tomorrow.

I am lucky to have some successful products in different fields, in sofa, chair, office product, lighting, sport equipment... but I always think that the best is coming.

Recently, I have had a show of products from different companies like Bellows collection for Walter Knoll, Antero for Laufen, and some sofas and complements for Fendi Casa. This year, we will show all



the Contemporary collection of products developed in only one year. For this collection, I have been involved from the design to the art direction working with great photographers, stylists and graphic designers for the advertising and catalogue.

After that, there are some other products that I am proud of, coming soon on the market. So this year, I will show some products with an American branch named Coalesse and we will make a big launch between Europe in Milan and US in Chicago. It's the product which is between office and home furniture, but you will see it in April.

Each design, each product, each activity is all what I am proud of and happy in my career.

In your opinion, to design a successful product, what is the most important thing?

First of all, you need a right commitment,



The Metropolitan sofa is a sophisticated and elegant design, which has a strong aesthetics



The Wow table by Toan Nguyen, a product of Lema, really wow people who look at its curved and sinuous shape.

people in the company should believe what we are doing. After, you should meet the market and the public and people. Doing successful projects needs many many factors.

What is it that inspires you to create?

The most important thing is curiosity. Most of things I'm doing just come from my experiences in different fields with no visible connection between each other. Everything in like is inspiration. My way to do is think a lot of things everywhere and catch, find something which could be inspiration.

Do you travel a lot to find new idea?

I spend some time traveling for business trips but not to find new ideas, but maybe new idea comes when I'm traveling.

Please share us some things about your studio and the way you build it?

My office was born in 2008. I'm the design leader of about 3-4 people. We have great clients, we have a great space. So one of the most important things today for me is to develop my design office.

Do you have any client from vietnam?

Not yet.

To the new designers who want to get success in designing, what are your advices?

For me, when starting, it wasn't such a difficult time. But today is different, you really need to work a lot anyway, to believe, not to lose the motivation. If you are not really motivated, it's really tough. Many people doing this, very few people get really success. If you can't do anything, just forget it and keep moving on, because there will be so many difficulties waiting for us in this way.

Do you intend to come to Vietnam once again?

Yes, I want to go again but this time with my wife and my kids, so I have to wait some years to set a plan.

We wish you all the best and thank you for your talk today. SPACE



Soho sofa for Fendi Casa is covered in leather and fabric which convey an immediate sense of welcome due to its softness and roundness.



Antero and Cinto: This is a standing design and meticulous well-conceived functions to create prestigious washroom facilities. This masterly combination in the product design of the two qualities, form and function, has already earned a Red Dot Award 2012.

