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The duo behind *Objects of Common Interest* describe their tag-team approach to reading and endless fixation with colors.

AS TOLD TO RENATA MOSCI
PHOTOS BY LUKAS CHMIEL

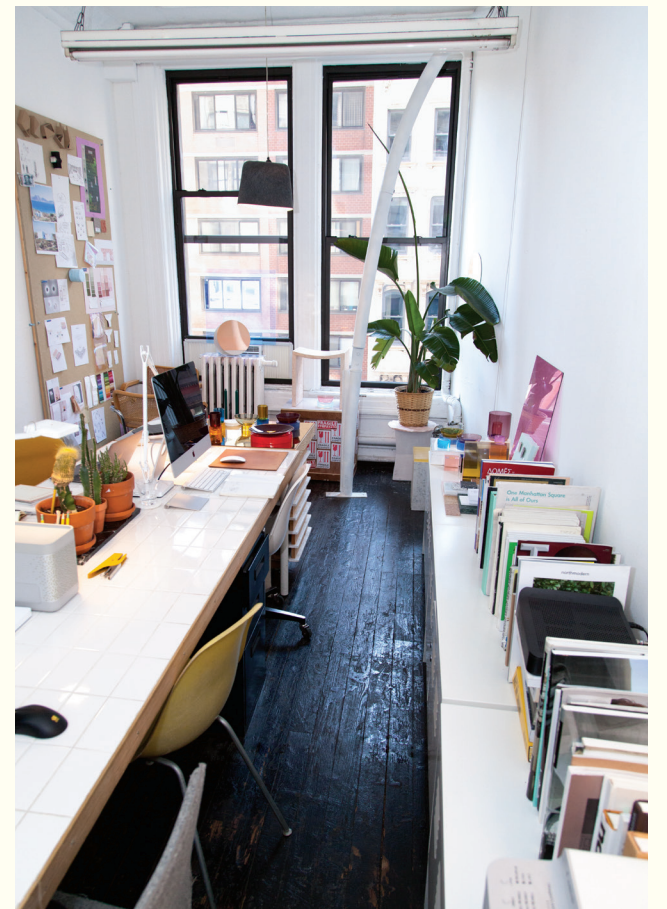
To Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis, design calls for a balancing act. The duo splits their time between their architecture firm LOT, based in Greece and New York, and *Objects of Common Interest*, their line of furnishings and other design products. Since they established the collection, two years ago, Petaloti and Trampoukis have designed pieces that also depend on supporting relationships: a copper mirror that leans on a concrete base, and tabletops and feet that connect like puzzle pieces. Their new series “Relativity of Color” is composed of 20 interchangeable acrylic and glass pieces that invite the user to mix and match to form their own color combinations. In their New York office, the designers reflect on the creative process behind this collection, which launches in October with an exhibition at the Manhattan space Matter, as well as their other work.

Eleni Petaloti and Leonidas Trampoukis. (OPPOSITE) Scenes at the *Objects of Common Interest* studio.

Leonidas Trampoukis: Our process starts the same: with random references and discussions not necessarily having anything to do with objects or architecture—just things we’ve seen, things we like. In architecture, we start with more abstract ideas, but narrow them down and start seeing them in context. With objects, the idea remains abstract and goes from a sketch to actual production right away. We do a couple of mock-ups on our own, but we like working with the actual materials.

Eleni Petaloti: We let each object take its time to develop—we don’t push too much. It has to be the right timing for each object.

Sometimes when we read books, we each read half. Or one has already read the book and the other one just takes notes. Leo read a book by Josef Albers first. When I was reading it, I started obsessing about an idea, and I started sketching it. >





Trampoukis: I said, “Let’s try to make them,” and as simple as that, we decided to create something and figure out what to do with it afterwards.

Petaloti: Most of the time, one of us gets passionate about something, then the other one adds. It’s kind of like a tango.

Trampoukis: We don’t involve other people that work with us, so that’s why it’s always faster. We know each other and communicate quickly with sketches and ideas. Even without sketches and references, we know what each other wants. We always go from sketches to 3-D models that we design on the computer. Then we start a discussion with the craftspeople right away, because we have to work with their limitations as well.

Petaloti: In the beginning, color selection is a work in progress. If you leave it to us, it’s going to go unlimited. Every week we develop more colors. We start by playing with more *pow* colors, and then we get into deeper combinations.

Trampoukis: In our new collection, the idea is to have the glass be more transparent than the acrylic. And because it’s solid, it makes it a bit more funky. So we’re trying to find the ideal color pattern, but it also has to do with transparency.

Petaloti: It’s also subjective: the perfect combination for me is not the same for you.

One basic concept is that nothing will be glued permanently or attached to each other. It’s a balancing game between the two volumes, so one cannot exist without the other. It’s a supporting relationship.

Trampoukis: Books and exhibitions are a big thing. We used to have a lot of references from art, but recently it’s less art directly—except for Albers—and more architectural. Something between architecture and the abstract. We know that we like working with specific ideas, like things just gently touching each other. The references lately have been more about how things are structured and put together. That can be found in art, it can be found in random moments, so we cannot really specify.

Petaloti: Sometimes we even find old exhibitions or spaces online, and we just keep the reference. We don’t know why, but we keep it. A few months later we’ll go back to it and refresh.



(FROM TOP) A bulletin board at the studio. Petaloti and Trampoukis.