



Objects of Common Interest explores "secret recipe" for iridescent resin

Amy Frearson | 25 April 2023 | 1 comment

After learning the secrets of a craftsman with a unique formula for iridescent [resin](#), design studio [Objects of Common Interest](#) has used it to produce 13 ethereal objects.

Presented at [Nilafur Depot](#) for [Milan design week](#), Poikilos is a series of furniture and homeware designs that showcase the distinct qualities of this particular resin.

The works, which range from small bowls to a large dining table, feature unexpected and highly nuanced qualities of colour and translucency.



Afaresi console is one of 13 objects cast in iridescent resin. Photo is by Ambra Crociani

"In every piece, you discover another characteristic of the material," said Eleni Petaloti, who co-founded New York- and Athens-based [Objects of Common Interest](#) with partner Leonidas Trampoukis.

"The solid pieces are more milky, while the thinner pieces become almost transparent," she told Dezeen.

Petaloti and Trampoukis learned how to produce this resin from Romanian-born Ovidiu Colea, 85, who became a maker after moving to New York in the 1970s.



Trapezion dining table is one the largest pieces on show. Photo is by Ambra Crociani

Over the decades, Colea had developed a unique resin craft using techniques and recipes he formulated himself.

"He was casting resin for 40 years and discovered so many different ways of doing it," said Petaloti. "He developed secret recipes and ways of doing crazy stuff."



Klisis is a three-legged chair made from the material. Photo is by Ambra Crociani

Colea's studio worked on all kinds of projects. There were behind-the-scenes collaborations with artists, which was how he first met Petaloti, but he also mass-produced souvenir replicas of the Statue of Liberty.

When he decided to retire, Petaloti tried unsuccessfully to find him a partner to carry on his craft.

"To me, he was a scientist," she explained. "But nobody understood his value, because he was so modest."



Each object shows a different characteristic of the material. Photo is by C41

Instead, Colea decided to entrust Objects of Common Interest with his machinery and recipes.

His entire workshop was shipped to Athens, where Petaloti and Trampoukis set up a new production facility, and he travelled over to help train staff.

"It was an extreme challenge," said Petaloti. "He has a very particular way of making resin – it's like a secret recipe locked inside another secret recipe."

"He came over for two weeks, and he worked day and night on the training."



The works were presented at Nilufar Depot in Milan. Photo is by Ruy Teixeira

Poikilos is the first result of this enterprise. The exhibition, curated by Valentina Ciuffi of [Studio Vedèt](#), explores how this iridescent resin can be used to produce highly sculptural furniture and homeware.

The designs build on the contemporary aesthetic seen in other Objects of Common Interest projects, which include the [tubular Formation seats](#) and the inflatable fountain at this year's [Alcova](#) exhibition.



The exhibition was titled Poikilos, a word used in Ancient Greece to describe iridescence. Photo is by Ruy Teixeira

Highlights include the three-legged Klisis chair, the concave Afairesi console and the whale-like Stala coffee table.

"Valentina didn't want us to go to a territory that had been explored already," said Petaloti. "We had to come up with something that was an evolution of our work but that also reflected the particularities of the material."



The smallest works on show were the Fiali bowls. Photo is by Ruy Teixeira

The name, Poikilos, is a word used in Ancient Greece to describe “the mottled fur of a running leopard or the iridescent skin of a snake”.

This is believed to be the earliest reference to the concept of iridescence, making a clear connection with the studio’s new location in Athens.



Objects of Common Interest has established a new factory in Athens specialising in resin craft. Photo is by C41

One of the most important outcomes of the project, according to Petaloti, is the economic value that this production facility can bring to Athens. The studio is supported by EU funding and now employs 13 people.

“It has been fascinating to activate a making moment in Athens,” said Petaloti. “That makes me really proud.”

Poikilos was on show at Nilufar Depot from 17 to 23 April as part of Milan design week. See our [Milan design week 2023 guide](#) on Dezeen Events Guide for information about the many other exhibitions, installations and talks that took place throughout the week.