

PORTRAITS

RoWin' Atelier



Designers & Architects

RoWin' Atelier was born in 2011 out of the passion of Hervé Winkler and Frédéric Rochette for shaping, material, and texture work. This French duo envisions exceptional furniture pieces, crafted from rare materials, often in limited series or even as unique pieces. Their cross-disciplinary approach, eclectic artistic sensitivity, and close collaboration with local artisans result in creations that highlight the contrasts of materials and volumes.

What is your background?

Frédéric Rochette: I completed my baccalaureate and pursued studies in architecture in Toulouse. Concurrently with my education, I joined Françoise-Hélène Jourda's agency through the Junior Enterprise of ENSA La Villette. As a pioneer in eco-designed architecture since the late 70s, I identified with its values of sustainable and responsible architecture. Soon, I was entrusted with projects within the agency. I also obtained my HMONP (Habilitation à maîtrise d'ouvrage en son Nom Propre) at ENSA Versailles.

Hervé Winkler: On my side, I have a less conventional, more Anglo-Saxon trajectory! After completing a BEP "Collaborator of an Architect," I continued with a Brevet de Technicien in interior design, then joined a section of Applied Arts in Interior Architecture, finally entering the School of Architecture located at the Beaux-Arts de Paris through equivalence.

When did you create RoWin' Atelier?

Frédéric Rochette: We founded RoWin' Atelier in 2011. We met about fifteen years ago. I joined Hervé, and at the time, I was still a project manager at Françoise Hélène Jourda's firm. However, I wanted a change, and Hervé was already practicing independently. I worked for him for a while, and then we decided to form a partnership. Our backgrounds are quite complementary.

Why this name?

Frédéric Rochette: RoWin is a contraction of our last names. Hervé came up with the idea. In English, "rowing" means "to row," which made us laugh. Beyond the joke, we both like the idea of slow design, of doing things well and slowly, not at breakneck speed. Rowing suits us well as a means of propulsion.

Hervé Winkler: Yes, and "Atelier" conveys the idea of working together with artisans, the image of working by hand, in an old-fashioned way, with materials, and exchanges. The image associated with the architectural "cabinet" didn't resonate with us. We wanted more cross-disciplinarity and less hierarchy between design and realization. It also reflects the desire to offer creations made over an extended period with natural or noble materials, in contrast to disposable furniture or objects from the mass production industry.



What were your beginnings and the major milestones of RoWin' Atelier?

Frédéric Rochette: The journey took some time to kick off. We designed many pieces but didn't promote them. When we finally launched our website in 2013, the 3D projects partially adorned it. A few days after the online launch, Tatjana Sprick, the sales director of the new pioneering online rare design site "L'Arcobaleno," wrote to us, "I'm interested in your pieces; we would like to collaborate with you. What is their price?" We had to tell her that the pieces didn't exist! Due to a lack of a network and partners to estimate manufacturing costs, we couldn't pursue it at the time. Nevertheless, this exchange made us aware of the value and potential of our work, prompting us to collaborate with artisans to bring our ideas to life.

Hervé Winkler: This led us to explore the possibilities of self-publishing for a while. Then, in 2016, we met Alexandre Guillemain, a gallerist specializing in the 20th century. He wanted to venture into contemporary edition and allowed us to publish a first collection, presented at PAD Paris in 2017. It received the prize for contemporary design for all the pieces. During PAD Paris 2018, we exhibited our CONQ armchairs for the first time. Again, recognition from our peers and a great honor to have **Oitomponto**, **Cabinet Alberto Pinto** and **Peter Marino**, and Peter Marino as the first buyers. In 2019, our LILL lamp was selected by the National Furniture for development within the institution by the ARC (Research and Creation Workshop). Completed in 2023, the two solid bronze lamps are now listed in the inventory and considered "**Mobilier national**"! Since 2019, we have been represented by the **Twenty First Gallery** in New York and since 2021, by the **Galerie Scène Ouverte** in Paris.

What drives you in your profession?

Frédéric Rochette: We are passionate about creating objects and furniture. The design phase, managing architectural projects, and working with materials, experimentation, juxtaposition, and encounters with artisans are aspects we love. Working with lava enamel with Jean-Charles Matrone from **Tradition Pierre**, glass, ceramics, and currently exploring

cast iron with azeran alocanu from arte fabrica or FALSA with RIVA acrylic rosnory. Always imagining, but within the possibilities and constraints of materials...



What is your creative process? Where does your inspiration come from?

Frédéric Rochette: I would say that each of us has our mental library of references, from which we freely draw to compose and create our pieces. We don't create ex nihilo; we reinvent with everything we have in our minds—our culture, travels, and discoveries.

Hervé Winkler: ... The research upstream of artisans who work with respect and passion, their production techniques, and materials define our work. With Jean-Charles Matrone from Tradition Pierre, we worked on an adaptation of the crystallization of the enamel used in ceramics on basalt. We had to conduct trials, push the furnace temperature, and experiment. Then the enameler performed a test with a specific enamel and firing. The result was magnificent and impossible to replicate identically. That's exactly what we wanted for this piece.

You maintain a very privileged relationship with artisans. Can you tell us more?

Hervé Winkler: These are real encounters. We work together. We need their know-how, and we want to highlight their expertise, make their virtuosity known. It's truly a spirit of collaboration. We advance together on a piece project, but we also share beyond that. Watching them work, exploring techniques with them, nourishes our creativity. On our part, we bring them novelty, experimentation paths, and also simply new contacts.

And what dream project would you like to undertake?

Hervé Winkler: We've already had some crazy requests! Chairs for the dining room of a major American actor for his West Hollywood home, for example. Their development is complicated; they remained at the design stage, but we haven't given up hope of creating a prototype someday. We envision our work somewhat like the great ensemblers of the 1930s. If we could, we would design everything from the scale of the city down to the teaspoon... Otherwise, a total work hotel like the SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen entirely designed by Arne Jacobsen or the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo by Frank Lloyd Wright!

Frédéric Rochette: ... as much as a contemporary castle... What we enjoy is being part of a whole, this idea of a collection, of transmission. And we also love transversality. But a dream project could also be a cabin in the far reaches of Portugal...

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