

TWENTY FIRST

COLLECTIBLE DESIGN OF THE CENTURY



ERWAN BOULLLOUD
TOUCHING TIME



French designer Erwan Boulloud's inspirations are vast and various. They range from the infinitely small to the infinitely large, from obscure botanical species to medieval jewelry. He avows a particular passion for the passage of time, whether it be ephemeral or eternal, as well as traces of the past.

Like a modern-day alchemist, he transforms each concept into exquisitely crafted objects that are audacious, ingenious and precious. They spark curiosity and wonder, and inevitably have rich and captivating stories to tell.

"For me, the success of a piece is not just measured by its aesthetic qualities," states Boulloud, "it must above all be justified by an intellectual approach, the expression of an idea."

From February 13th to April 30th, he returns to Twenty First with *Touching Time*, his first solo show in the United States since 2019. It brings together 15 new and recent creations, which further refine, explore and develop concepts and motifs that have become an intrinsic part of his body of work.

He considers every object as a "molecule of a larger entity" and affirms there is Darwinian logic to his output. "For each of my furniture lines, I can establish a sort of family tree," says Boulloud. "A 'source' piece generates different branches of creation."

At the heart of his work is a deep-rooted interest in science. Boulloud often looks to astronomical phenomena, such as the origins of creation, the expansion of the universe and the solar system. Moments at the very beginning of time, places where time travels at different speeds.

In *Touching Time*, his *Ecailles Enfilade* is clad with a geometric, scale-like motif in patinated and polished brass marquetry, which seems to have been warped "as if it had come into contact with a black hole." Dotted with semi-precious stones, the *Jupiter Console* sports a striated pattern that references the planet's iconic rings.

The botanical world is another rich source of ideas. Consisting of a bulbous, organic-shaped seat that appears to engulf a cubic, built-in side table, his new *Yareta Chair* is named for a moss-like plant that grows oh-so-slowly over rocks on the altiplanos of South America, while the form of his *Pezizes Sconces* reference both mushrooms and a photo of insect chrysalides on tree trunks in the Amazon — remnants of a time gone by.

Perhaps his most fertile source of inspiration comes from that which is beyond the naked eye — microscopic images of cells. It's a theme Boulloud has developed persistently for the past two decades and has given rise to the spellbinding, concentric patterns that adorn many of his creations. Some are studded with semi-precious gems (lapis lazuli, tiger's eye, malachite, garnet...) that represent the cell's nucleus. Many resemble the patterns on the surface of water when a pebble is thrown into a lake or stream. Examples in the current show include the *Rosanna Vase*, the *Romane Cabinet and Mirror*, the *Roeco Coffee Table* and the *Noyau Enfilade*.

"I appreciate how Erwan's patterns always have a purpose," notes *Twenty First's* founder and director, Renaud Vuillat. "There's nothing random to them. They can be inspired by fascinating stories and mythology, or take the form of 'mathematical lines' grounded in a physical phenomenon he has observed. That makes them both intriguing and meaningful."

For *Touching Time*, Boulloud not only probes further into his signature topics, but dazzles once again with mastery of materials. He has long had a predilection for metals, such as patinated bronze, stainless steel and brass marquetry. A number of the new designs also feature concrete or burnt wood, and for the very first time, he presents creations — a trio of lamps — made from alabaster. "As a stone, it carries its entire history within it," notes Boulloud. "It's the result of a very long process." A reference to time, once again.

A core element in a number of the latest pieces is the fusion of age-old, artisanal techniques with the latest, up-to-date technology. The latter allows him to produce items that would otherwise be too time-consuming and costly. Both the *Rosanna Vase* and *Pezize Sconces* were created using molds fabricated with 3D printers, while the different components of the stainless-steel *Roeco Coffee Table* were laser cut.

"I'm an artisan, but also a firm proponent of 21st-century craftsmanship," says Boulloud. "Today, digital technology makes a significant contribution. It really increases the scope of possibilities." And very much anchors the *savoir-faire* of the past firmly in the present.

ERWAN BOULLOUD

ROMANE CABINET, 2021

Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry, Lapis Lazuli, Tigereye, Turquoise, Amethyst, Carnelian, Red Jasper, Amber, Malachite, Garnet, and Jasper, Dark Waxed Oak Interior

Signed and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 29.3 x W 70.7 x D 17.7 in.
(H 74.5 x W 180 x D 45 cm)

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This jewel-like creation expresses Boulloud's enduring fascination with cells, in this case those of the epidermis of an onion bulb, whose regular forms evoke for him a landscape of rice fields. At their center are a nucleus, here represented by various stones, including lapis lazuli, tigereye, amethyst and malachite. Clad in glistening, scale-like segments, the cabinet sits on a base in the form of a cross, which nods to the origin of its name — one of the treasures in the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in the French city of Conques consisting of a fifth-century Roman head mounted on a wooden core, covered in gold plating and similarly studded with gems.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

PEZIZE SCONCES, 2024

Patinated Bronze
Signed, Dated and Numbered
Edition of 8
H 31.9 x W 15.75 x D 9.05 in.
(H 81.6 x W 40.3 x D 23 cm)

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This light fixture unites both the traditional and the ultra-hi-tech. Its material — patinated bronze — could hardly be more classical. Yet, its complex, bulbous shapes could not have been achieved without the latest computer software. Instead of using age-old foundry techniques, its mold was created using a 3D printer. Its gilded glow is exceptionally gentle and its sources of inspiration multiple. While its name references a European mushroom, its forms also allude to insect chrysalids found on tree trunks in the Amazon.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

JUPITER CONSOLE, 2024

Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry,
Hard Stones and Semi Precious Stone Cabochons

Signed and Dated

Edition of 8

H 35 x W 57 x D 15 in.
(H 90 x W 146 x D 38 cm)

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Another piece that nods to the gilded treasures of the Middle Ages, but whose swirling surface also consciously evokes the strata and storms of the largest planet in our solar system. Fluxes and cosmic movement are a constant fascination for Boulloud and the effect of this console's sinuous patterns are further amplified by the differently hued gemstones that appear to have created ripples, as if on the surface of water.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

MULTIVERS COFFEE TABLE, 2024

Black Concrete, Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry, Black Steel Base

Signed and Dated

Edition of 8

H 15 x W 58 x D 39 in.

(H 39.6 x W 147.4 x D 99.1 cm)

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The multiverse is a hypothetical realm consisting of a number of universes and the concept behind this graphic table is that of interlocking worlds. Its black concrete top is inlaid with three overlapping shapes in brass marquetry — two circles of different sizes and a leaf-like form that recalls that of the Maasai Mirror. Just like color circles, whose hues change when they meet, the laser-cut patterns of the table's brass forms are fused and modified each time one lies on top of another. The contours of them as a whole, meanwhile, are mirrored exactly in the design of the blackened steel base.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

YARETA II CHAIR, 2023

Patinated Brass Marquetry, Dedar Belsuede Upholstery

Signed and Numbered

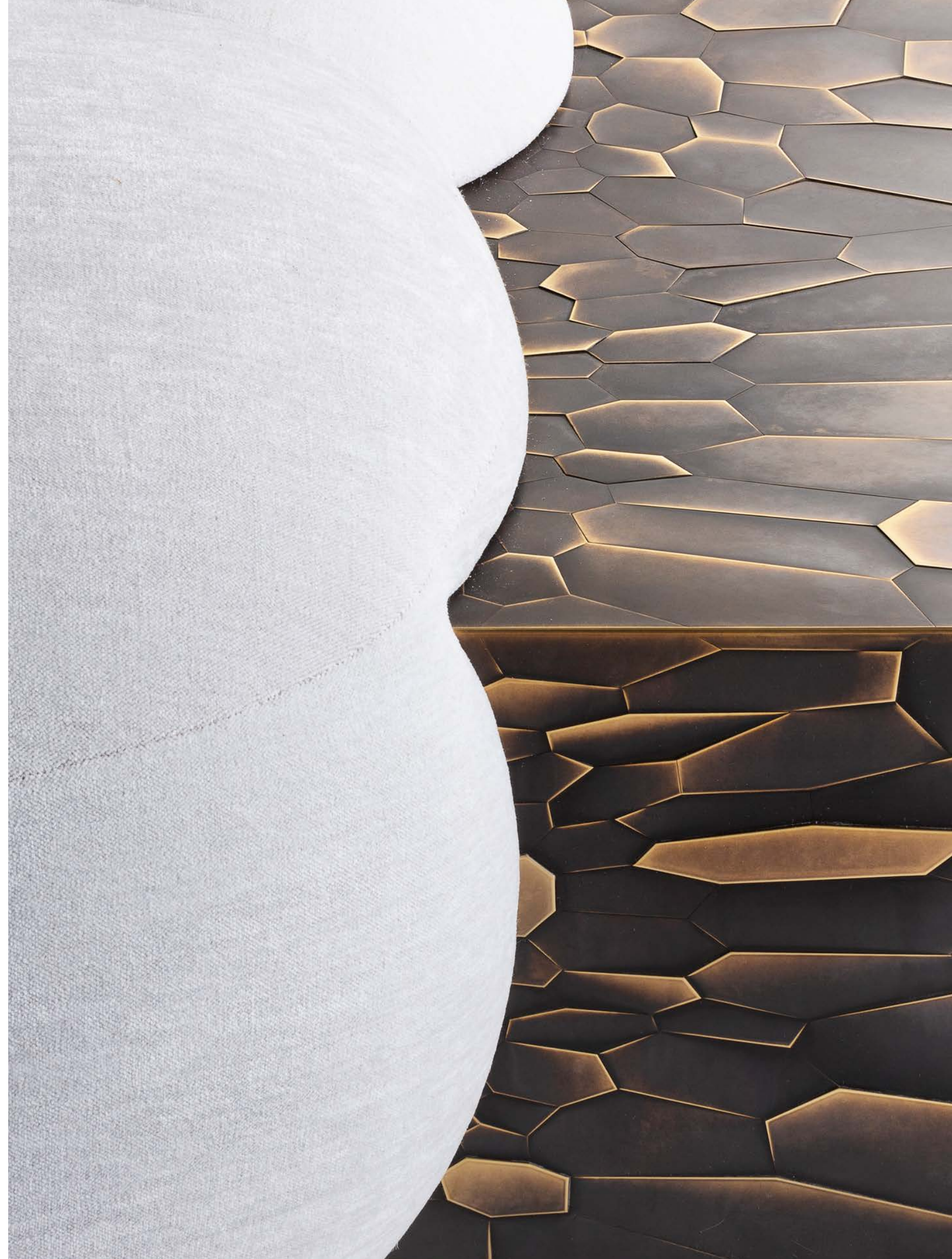
Edition of 8

H 29.41 x W 57.60 x D 42.70 in.
(H 74.7 x W 146.31 x D 108.46 cm)

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An armchair with an integrated side table that represents the confrontation of two contrasting worlds. It is named for a slow-growing, moss-like plant indigenous to the Andean altiplanos of South America, which gradually encroaches upon rocks. The gentle, oozing forms of the actual seat seem to be engulfing the cube-shaped table, clad in patinated brass marquetry. Soft meets hard, rectilinear meets curvaceous in this perfectly poised creation.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

NOYAU ENFILADE, 2024

Burnt Oak, Polished Bronze Medallions

Signed and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 29.5 x W 70.8 x D 17.7 in.

(H 75 x W 180 x D 45 cm)

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A continuation and variation of Boulloud's exploration of cell structures, this credenza sports a more regular, rhythmical pattern that gives it a particularly bold look. The blackened-oak elements are larger and the circles that represent nuclei in many of his creations are rendered using medallions of polished bronze, cracked to give them the look of parched earth. The interior showcases exquisitely veined wood, a brass-edged shelf and complex hinges that are a work of art in their own right.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

ROSANNA VASE, 2024

Patinated Bronze, Rock Crystal Cabochons

Signed and Dated

Edition of 8

H 15.35 x D 8 in.

(H 39.2 x D 20.1 cm)

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There may be echoes of Art Deco and the work of Jean Dunand in this patinated-bronze vase, but its conception is quintessentially contemporary. Its mold was created using 3D-printing techniques and its pattern drawn entirely on a computer screen. Studded with richly veined rock crystal cabochons, it nods to the mesmerizing, concentric patterns created when pebbles are thrown into water and is aptly named for one of the nurses of the Greek god Hermès, who read the future exactly by doing that.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

ECAILLES ENFILADE, 2024

Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry, Burnt Wood

Signed

Edition of 1

H 35.5 x W 69.3 x D 19.7 in.
(H 90.2 x W 176 x D 50 cm)

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The infinitely small and infinitely large come together in this strikingly ornate work, whose glittering façade is based on the idea of taking microscopic cell images on a trip through space. Their normally ordered structures have become deformed and warped, as if they'd come into contact with a black hole. "It's almost as if I'd added a third dimension," says Boulloud. The irregular edges of its brass marquetry sides stick out, giving the impression that it is wrapping the burnt oak structure. As for the wood itself, it has been slightly worn and gouged, as if it too had paid the price for being caught in a cosmic vortex.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

ROMANE MIRROR, 2022

Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry, Inlaid Lapis Lazuli, Tigereye, Turquoise, Amethyst, Carnelian, Red Jasper, Amber, Malachite, Garnet, Jasper

Signed and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 51.2 x W 33.9 x D 11.8 in.
(H 130 x W 86 x D 30 cm)

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Bearing the same cell-inspired pattern as its namesake cabinet, this mirror has something of a commanding character. The sharp lines of its deep, beveled frame are perfectly offset by its exquisitely crafted, meticulous details and the meandering, organic forms of its component elements.





ERWAN BOULLOUD

ALABASTER TABLE LAMP, 2024

Stainless Steel, Brass, Alabaster

Signed, Dated and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 21.6 x W 19 x D 14.9 in.
(H 54.9 x W 46.8 x D 38.3 cm)

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ERWAN BOULLOUD

ALABASTER TABLE LAMP, 2024

Stainless Steel, Alabaster

Signed, Dated and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 21.6 x W 16.9 x D 13.3 in.
(H 54.9 x W 43.0 x D 34.6 cm)

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ERWAN BOULLLOUD

ALABASTER FLOOR LAMP, 2024

Stainless Steel, Brass, Alabaster

Signed, Dated and Numbered

Edition of 8

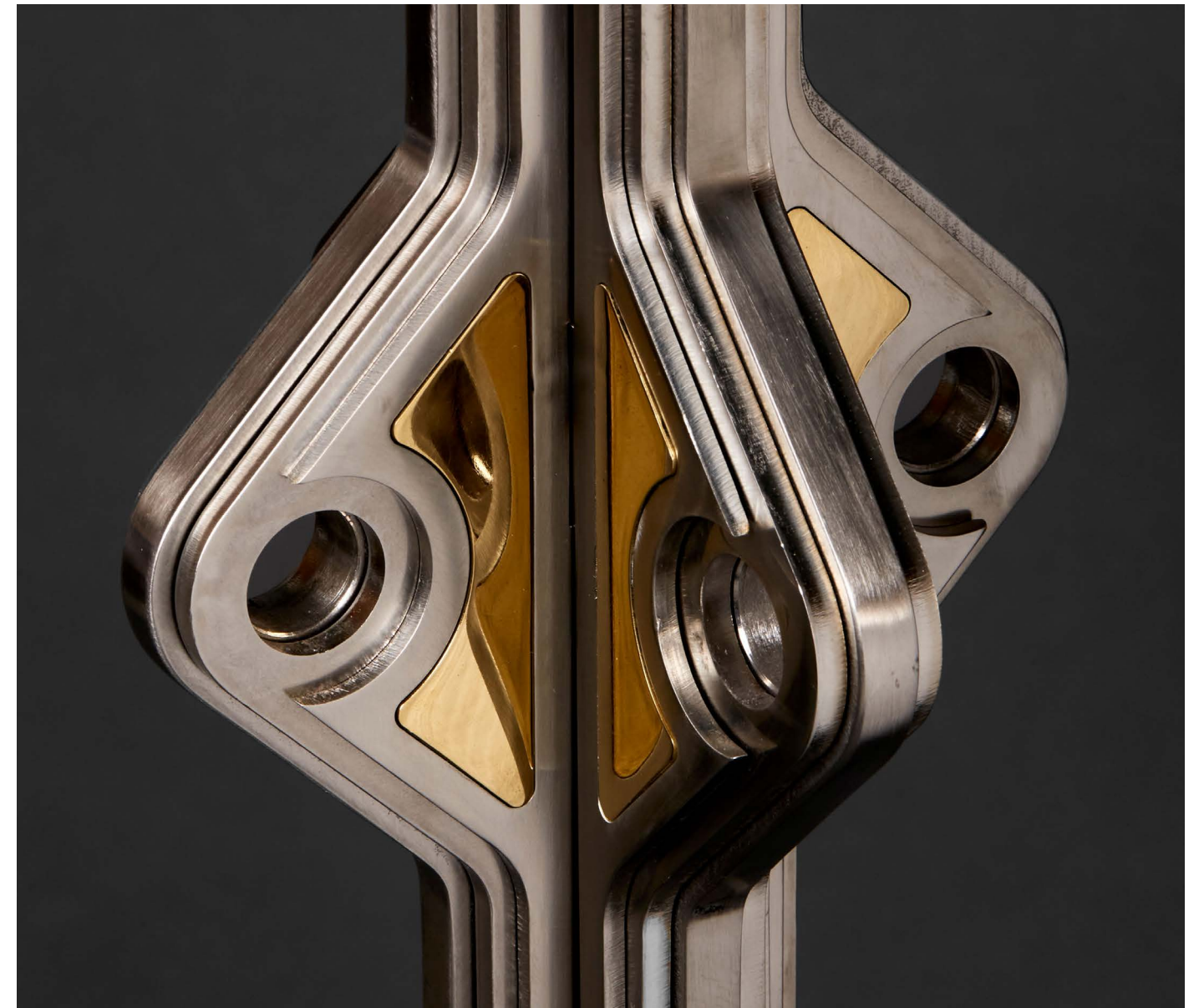
H 71.6 x W 29.5 x D 29.5 in.
(H 182 x W 75 x D 75 cm)

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Time is an essential element in the lengthy formation of alabaster — a material that Boulloud uses for the very first time. He makes the most of its translucency and cloudy veins by transforming it into shades with extremely pure forms for a trio of lights. The bases of the two table lamps look almost chain-like and mechanical with their screws and jagged forms, while the foot of the floor lamp has a more baroque, ecclesiastical feel.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

MAASAI MIRROR, 2024

Mirror, Patinated Brass Marquetry

Signed, Dated and Numbered

Edition of 8

H 70.9 x W 33 x D 1.9 in.
(H 180 x W 84 x D 4.8 cm)

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Sculpted into a graceful shape that evokes African tribal shields, the frame of this mirror is composed of similar elements to the Romane series, but which radiate outwards, almost like the rays of the sun. It is dotted with cabochons of lapis lazuli in a pattern that appears both regular and slightly random, endowing it with an irresistibly graphic quality.



ERWAN BOULLOUD

ROECO COFFEE TABLE, 2023

Stainless Steel, Inlaid With Lapis Lazuli

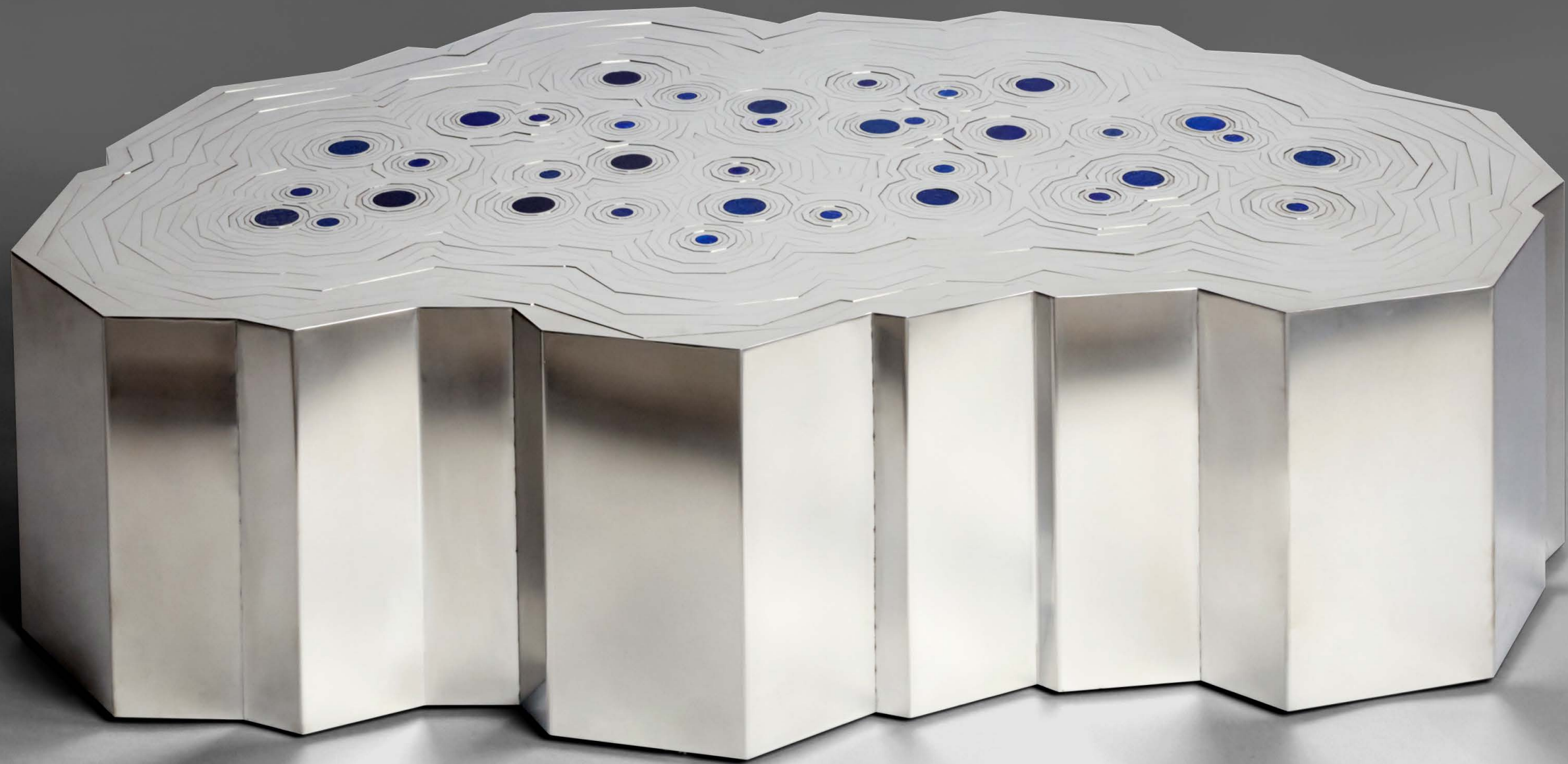
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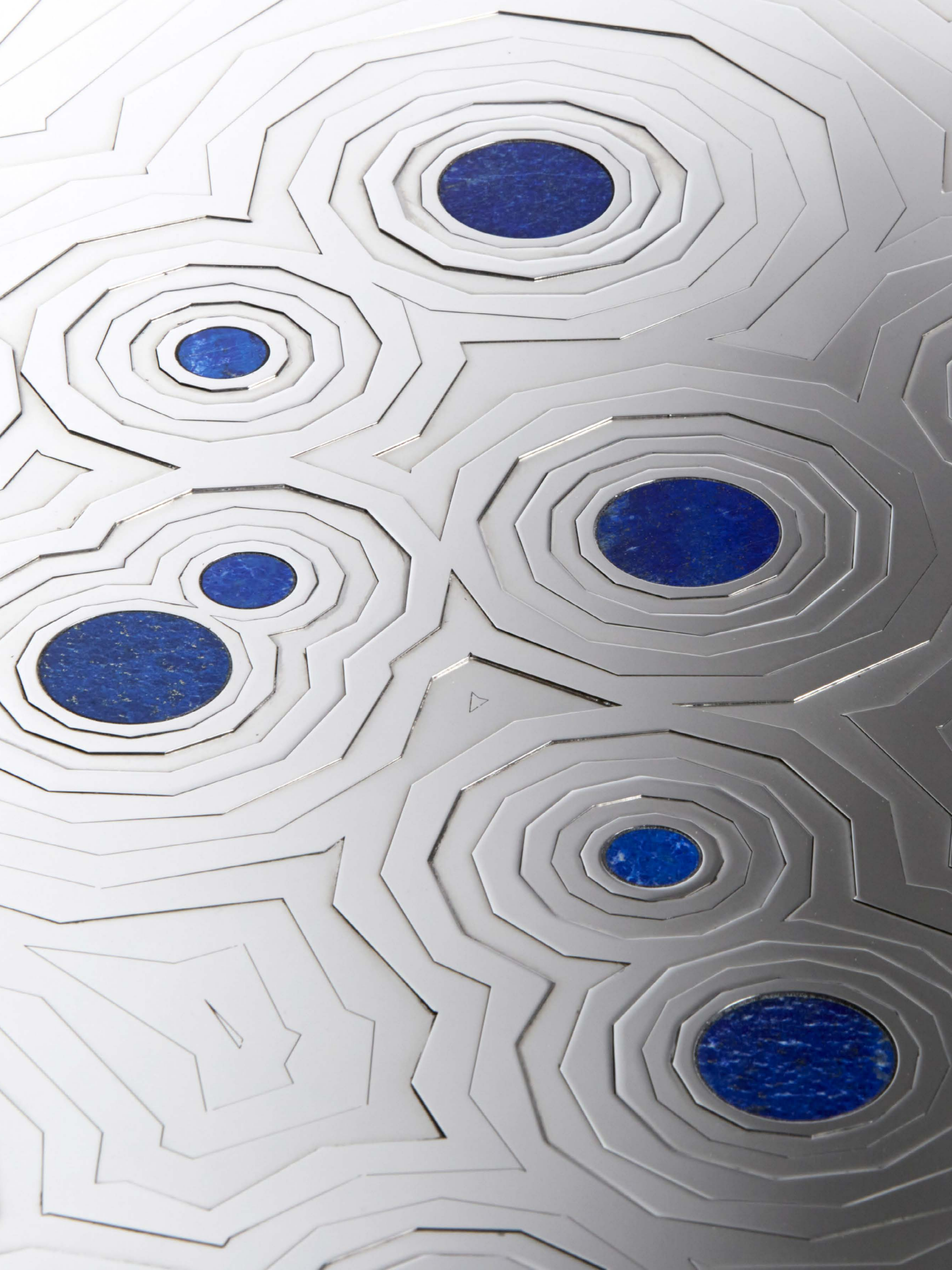
Edition of 8

H 15.75 x W 57.8 x D 34.76 in.

(H 40 x W 146.8 x D 88.3 cm)

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With a faceted shape reminiscent of an ice floe or rock formation, this eye-catching coffee table combines numerous themes common to other works in Touching Time. Dotted with lapis lazuli, its top bears a pattern similar to that of the Rosanna vase, only its ripples have become fragmented and jagged. It also embodies pure 21st-century craftsmanship, having been assembled from laser-cut stainless steel. And it yet again exemplifies Boulloud's passion for the universe, representing the emergence of life propagated throughout space via waves and fluxes.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

CHOLESTERIQUE MIRROR, 2023

Patinated and Polished Brass Marquetry

Signed and Dated

Edition of 8

H 57.71 x W 43.47 x D 1.9 in.
(H 146.6 x W 110.4 x D 4.8 cm)

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A recurrent theme in the artist's oeuvre is that of cholesteric liquid crystals, which periodically adopt a helical structure—a form found in most molecules essential to life, such as DNA and plant cell walls. The patinated and polished bronze frame of this looking glass seems almost tentacular, with its sinuous lines wrapping around each other and metamorphosing into curlicues at their extremities.



ERWAN BOULLLOUD

Born in France in 1973, Erwan Boulloud graduated from Ecole Boulle in 1995, then assisted in the workshops of renowned designers such as Hubert Le Gall and Hervé Van Der Straeten, as well as working at the Louvre, the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) and the Museum of Natural History as a set designer presenting artworks and artifacts.


In 2003, he opened his own studio in Paris, later moving to Montreuil where he works today. His furniture, made in limited numbered editions, fuses a variety of technical processes and aesthetic moods and boasts an ease with a range of high quality materials including wood, bronze, brass, steel, glass, gold leaf, inlaid precious stones, and even preserved exotic butterfly specimens. His showstopping creations don't adhere to any existing styles, but rather take their direction from Boulloud's rigorous intellectual quests and artistic determination to distill an idea to its essence.


His attention to detail creates hidden delights in every inch of his works, and each piece is a testament to his imaginative vision of decor. From textured surfaces that resemble the carapace of a giant creature, to radiant polished metals and glistening modern Boulle marquetry, Boulloud's cabinets, tables, mirrors, and seating defy genres and arise from a lineage all their own.

His work has been featured in publications including Architectural Digest, Surface, and The Wall Street Journal, and in several exhibitions at Twenty First Gallery.



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