



# Organic Matter

Biomorphic design pieces and decorative objects—recalling tree trunks and seashells, fossils and driftwood—have a soft-edged beauty with natural appeal.

BY SARAH MEDFORD PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ABRAHAMS  
SET DESIGN BY JULIA WAGNER

## HOLDING FORTH

“I am drawn to the way clay can collapse, fold and blob, and that certainly influences my forms,” says Naomi Bikis of the inspiration behind her elegant vessels and plinths. The London-based ceramicist works with stoneware and porcelain slip, first throwing a piece on the wheel, then letting it dry a bit before slicing into it or otherwise reshaping it by hand. A former fashion writer, Bikis took up ceramics as a way to balance her hours at a desk, and the rewards have been plentiful.

Lesson one: Mistakes inform creativity. *Soft, Soft, Hard Collection*, by Bikis Ceramics. Opposite: Quirky, chubby, endearingly anthropomorphic—and a storage cabinet for shorts? So says Brooklyn designer Thomas Barger. “When dating someone, I share everything, including underwear,” he explains. “This piece has a container for my undies and a container for his, and the central pod is a hamper for our dirties.” It’s also an assemblage of sorts: The designer combined paper and cardboard to form three baskets, as he calls them, before piecing them together and sealing the whole with polyurethane. Low-tech though his method is, Barger says he finds it freeing. Maybe more like boxers than briefs. *Boyfriend’s Underwear Armoire*, by Thomas Barger.



#### ROUND TRIP

Growing up in Hawaii, sculptor John Koga was never too far from a mountain peak, often one wreathed in clouds. The Honolulu-based sculptor set out to make a table with a similar opposites-attract sensibility, “a grounded base that has a lightness—almost a floating feeling,” he says. The result is both sturdy and weatherproof, evoking rough-hewn furnishings or bleached-out animal bones. Koga starts by making thumbnail sketches and a model, then creates a finished piece in clay, finally casting it from a proprietary fiberglass resin mixture. It’s always a thrill, he says, “to see my finger markings in each cast.”  
*Pali (Cliff) Side Table, by John Koga.*



#### CURVES AHEAD

Ryosuke Yazaki, a Japanese sculptor based in Tokyo and L.A., works in rare woods and sometimes terracotta, which he equates with warmth and refinement. This tabletop sculpture displays all the bumps and hollows of something alive, though it’s hard to know what—Yazaki achieves an air of duality all the way down to the soft skin of the piece, rubbed raw here and there. *Biomorphism* feels like too trivial a word for the small universe he’s made.  
 “I think that the movement of the heart itself can be represented by shape and shadow,” the sculptor says. *Outou Second Edition, by Ryosuke Yazaki.*



#### HIDDEN ASSETS

The whorls and clefts common to many undersea creatures often turn up in the work of Rogan Gregory, who lives and works near the beach in Amagansett, New York. His sculptural light is a case in point. Hand-built of gypsum, a soft mineral used in making chalk, the piece can be suspended overhead for a multidirectional glow. Gregory started out as a fashion designer, shifting his practice a decade ago to sculpture, painting and functional objects. “I make a rough sketch or maquette; then once I have an idea of the form, I let the material and my naiveté lead the way. It’s a very organic process.”  
*Fertility Form, by Rogan Gregory.*



#### BLUSH HOUR

When a material taps you on the shoulder, sometimes all you can do is follow. Julian Watts had this experience recently with pink alabaster, which he’s come to think of as human and otherworldly at the same time. “I was completely blown away by the intimate, living quality of the stone,” says the Oregon-based sculptor, whose usual preoccupation is wood. Wielding an arsenal ranging from chisels and power tools to sandpaper, Watts carved a block of the rosy stuff into a form both massive and tender—he calls it a 21st-century bust. *Pink Statue 1, by Julian Watts. For details see Sources, page 118.*