

Opposites Attract at the Furniture Fair

DESIGN, From C1

bold colors taking root in monotone contemporary interiors. These designers were building gardens as balm for the soul.

No one is doing it better than Tord Boontje, a Dutch-born designer of blossom-covered fabrics whose intricate patterns are cut with laser technology. He has been credited with opening the door to decoration, aka floral motifs, in modern interiors. At this year's fair, Boontje's blossoms trailed across a new collection of dishware. But he was no longer the only one expressing old-fashioned romanticism in the world of contemporary design.

The dark current sparked at Baccarat, where an all-black crystal collection from Philippe Starck — called Darkside — made its American debut. France's most famous designer has created a set of six onyx-dark crystal goblets in which all but one are intentionally flawed. There is also a paperweight inspired by volcanic eruption and named Hell.

Starck wasn't the only designer trying to spin gloom into striking imagery. A black porcelain vase by Studio Dror for Rosenthal was explained as an object created through violence. The surface is clearly cracked. The designer, Dror Benshetrit, has taken a classic vessel from perfect, to smashed, to whole but scarred. While the gallery exhibition promised only the "future of porcelain," it looked like a metaphor for life.

Ron Arad, the influential London designer, is known for welded metal chairs that look as if they have just survived Armageddon. A retrospective at Barry Friedman gallery through June 24 features stereo components embedded in hunks of structural concrete as well as steely chairs with exposed welds and visible fire stains.

The design company Edra, exhibiting with an Italian contingent of 60 on two shipping piers, presented a chair wrapped in strips of cloth. It was named Mummy, and looked like one. But with suicide bombings and war a daily feature of the news, the chair suggested a bandaged body as much as King Tut.

Retailer Murray Moss, one of the most knowledgeable players in the design world and a board member of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, managed to play with both romance and grim reality. In his SoHo art gallery, he built a fantasy garden around historic glazed terra-cotta figures — a damsel sleeping, a boy with an accordion and the Four Continents — some designed for the Nymphenburg summer palace in Germany. There were also 21st-century garden chairs made of river stones embedded in silicone grout, a \$120,000 Swarovski chandelier shaped like ripe bunches of grapes, and a wall of wood chips inspired by the slums of Rio and designed by the renowned Campana brothers of Brazil.

Next door, in the design shop, Moss put on a show called "Domestic Violence." Starck's gold-painted AK-47 lamps, unveiled in Milan in April, were joined

by three other lamps with provocative decorations. One, a lamp called Addict? has images of needles, viruses and a cell phone. The \$1,800 AK-47 fixtures looked like a perfect gift for that warlord who has everything.

The most compelling exhibition involved 49 avant-garde Dutch designers trained at the Design Academy Eindhoven. At a studio provided by Donna Karan, works from famous alums Jurgen Bey, Hella Jongerius and Job Smeets were assembled along with those of newer graduates as a Dutch Village. Jeroen Verhoeven devoted his senior year to a reinvention of the chain-link fence. A sample was woven into a fantasy of flowers instead of the ubiquitous industrial crisscross. His brother, Joep, took wood-working to a high-tech dimension with a laser-cut antique-styled table.

There was also a bright yellow chair made of recycled debris. The designer, Maarten Baas, gained fame by burning chairs until they achieved the status of charred skeletons. Baas's startling success was an early indicator of the dark side. But his colorful recycled chairs show that even iconoclasts have a sunny side.

And Arad's recent designs include a chair sculpted in layers of red Corian, which looks positively cheery,



INNERMOST LTD

even at \$205,000.

It is a sad fact of the cutting edge that American designers continue to be outnumbered by Europeans. Target Stores provided a stage for one consistently interesting designer from San Francisco, Christopher C. Deam. But the effort provided the weekend's biggest disappointment.

To promote its fall home furnishings, the company commissioned five prefabricated trailers from Deam, a designer with Eames-like modernist instincts. But instead of setting off his clean-lined interior with appropriate furnishings, Target's decorators covered walls and countertops with patterned contact paper (a not-so-subtle reference to the tackiness some people associate with trailer parks) and piled on furniture and accessories without restraint. The overall impact, from a retailer that has cast itself as a bastion of good design, showed less taste than the worst television makeover show.

Deam's design deserved better. His version of the standard 400-square-foot prefab trailer is an airy holiday cottage, with shingle-like exterior, angled ceiling and one long wall of glass. The unit will go into production at Breckenridge in the fall. For \$45,000, it will come with furniture designed by Deam.

