

Dror

in

Surface

April 2012

Dror for Tumi

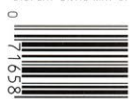


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Dror Benshetrit has always welcomed extremes. The Israeli-born designer has paired high-end work for Swarovski and Bentley with less sexy, but no less necessary, material innovations like QuaDror, a structural joint designed for railroad trestles and noise suppression in urban environments. He has embraced technologies to create collapsible lamps and produced a chair composed of little more than rolled felt. And his immensely popular Vase of Phases for Rosenthal smashed three vases in three different ways, then pieced them back together—an eloquent illustration of Benshetrit's ongoing interest in the transformative nature of design.

This theme runs through his studio's new collection for Tumi, which will be unveiled at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan in April. For the luggage company's first permanent ongoing collaboration with an outside designer, Benshetrit conducted 18 months of research and prototyping to build a line that can change shape in order to accommodate the myriad ways that travelers use luggage. As he was preparing for a weeklong trip to Europe to plan the launch, we caught up with Benshetrit, who admits that even when he's packing a suitcase, there's no room for half measures.

Hi, Dror. What are you up to right now?

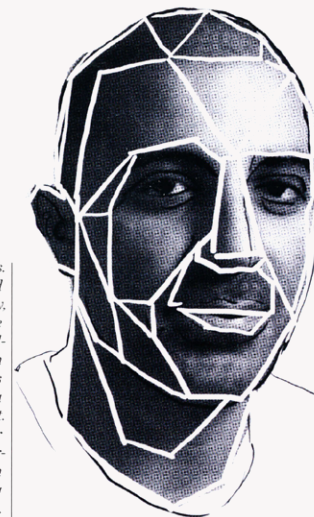
I just left the acupuncturist. I've had some pain in my wrist and my shoulder, which now actually hurts even more, but hopefully in a few hours it will be better. I feel like I woke up from a big sleep!

And you're heading to Europe next week?

Yeah, it's a little bit of a crazy trip, actually: a day in Paris, a day in London, a day in Berlin, a day in Milan. After I finished designing the collection, they hired me to do the creative direction, so we've been busy making the videos and all the materials. We're pretty much starting early meetings and planning for the debut in April.

What was the process like compared to other projects you've done?

It was a lot more detailed. I would actually compare it to more of a complex architectural project, just because building luggage and bags involves so much detail. First, there are all the issues with airline regulations and security, and then you get into the ergonomics of it and how we interact with our bags and carry-on items. That was what was so fascinating about it: to revisit how we travel and what we're carrying—our digital equipment versus our heavy books—and to allow the bag to transform and change depending on what you want it to do.



Did working on luggage affect how you plan for vacation?

I'm sure I've perfected my packing skills. I'm a little extreme when it comes to anything, but especially with packing. I usually either like the luxury of having a lot of choices or completely the opposite, where I'm all about traveling light and only bringing what you really must have. It depends on where I'm going and for how long. Obviously, working with luggage these past couple of years has made me think about how we're carrying, what we're carrying, and what's necessary and what's not.

So where do you like to go when you're on vacation?

That's an easy answer: Costa Rica. I just love it. It's the complete opposite of New York. I don't bump into anybody that I know, and it's just nature, pure nature. No layers of information, no content, no context, just you and animals and sunrise and sunsets.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

It's funny, because in some ways five years is too far off, and in other ways it's right around the corner. I'm going to be 40 in five years, and I think that's some kind of benchmark. I'm so fortunate to do what I love, so my five-year plan, or 25, or 50, is to keep on having that same excitement, keep on having that same great admiration for the clients I work with and the people I work with. My wife would probably be very upset if I don't mention kids in my five-year plan! But other than that, in terms of content and day-to-day projects, I love the challenges I've been having the past five years and I'd love to continue having similar ones.

Do you plan to retire?

Never! I don't think it's possible. When I started my business, everybody talked about how you have to have a retirement fund, and you need to do this or that pension plan. And I was like, "What are you talking about?" I go to the beach in Costa Rica, but the first thing I pick up is my sketchbook, just coming up with ideas and trying to solve problems. Envisioning things is my passion. I hope that will never die.

What would you like it to say on your tombstone?

Maybe not in these particular words, but something like: My sketchbooks have a lot more ideas. Make them happen! 