

# Clash and Combine

A mix of cheap plastic and lush leather in Jaime Hayon's Showtime collection for Spanish manufacturer Bd Ediciones de Diseno convey his view on the future of furniture design.

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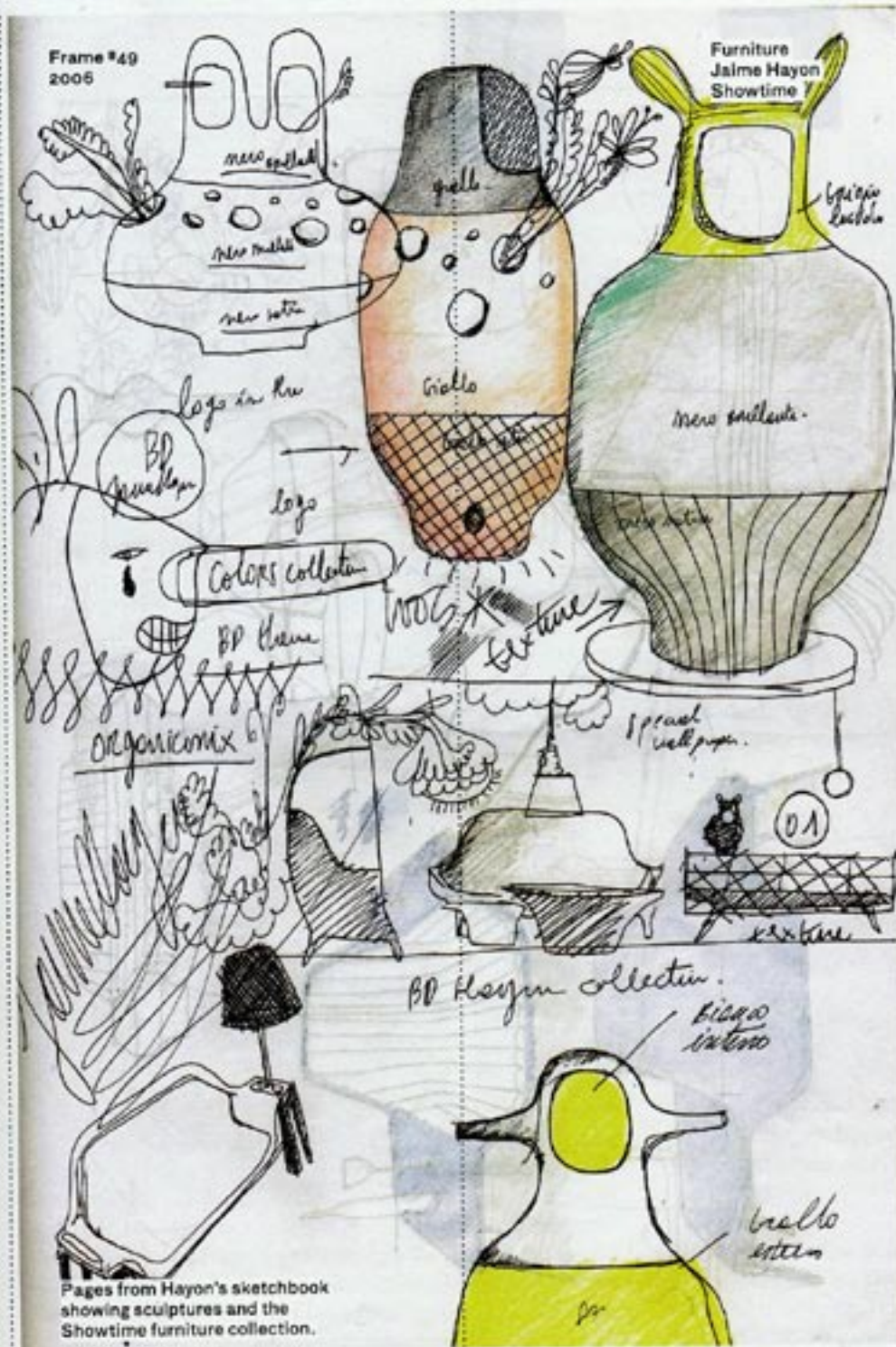
Jaime Hayon at work on his Mon Cirque series of ceramic sculptures.

● Showtime combines highly contrasting materials like plastic and leather. Chairs, sofas and tables unite high-technology and classical shapes. A new design language.

● With this collection, I wanted to explore the contrasts between interior and exterior, both literally and figuratively. The result is a series of furniture very different from what we have seen so far. One might call it a preview of a time in which design will be characterized by combinations of materials that seem to contradict each other. I love it when things that are not supposed to match find a way to coexist in elegance. Bd has been quite open to these ideas.

● Were you happy when Bd asked you to design a collection of furniture?

● Definitely. There are so many dreams and thoughts in my head that are asking to be put into furniture. For quite some time I didn't know what I was. Furniture designer? Artist? Graphic designer? Ultimately, however, I found out that such designations are not the point. I'm here to tell stories with my pieces of furniture. The story you tell with a collection is important, because it can make it strong and coherent. The story doesn't have to be based on reality; it can be a complete fantasy as long as people can recognize themselves in it. Designers can make the world into a theatre. They can make life a lot more fun. The only things that hold us back, unfortunately, are money and conservatism.



Pages from Hayon's sketchbook showing sculptures and the Showtime furniture collection.

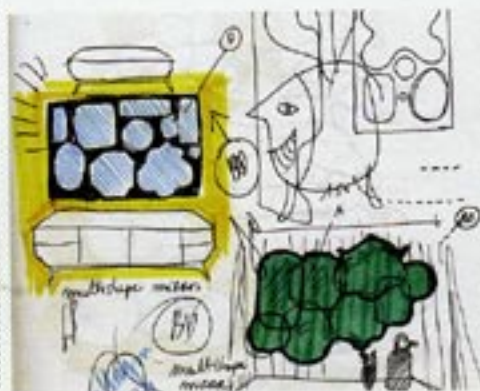
● But you don't seem to be interested in mass-production.

● That's not completely true. There's nothing more beautiful than creating a dreamlike world with my furniture for as many people as possible. I do believe, however, that the design world is slowly yet drastically changing in that respect.

'I love it when things that are not supposed to match find a way to coexist in elegance'

love the pieces that are made of one material but look like another. With this optical illusion in mind, I also designed a cabinet system for the living room. Its frame is made of wood, but the front features ceramic tiles in strong colours. I wanted the tiles to look like cushions, which is somewhat misleading, because when you get closer you

discover a surface of cold, shiny tiles. I played a bit more with the contradiction of soft and hard in the designs of the chairs and sofas. I gave them both a hard, high-gloss outer shell and an inner surface of soft leather.



● How?

● Manufacturers will change the future of design by starting to produce limited editions. Perhaps they will present four or six collections a year instead of only one at the fair in Milan. A bit like fashion designers and companies do. In many cases, the reason people appreciate and want a particular piece is not only because of its design but also because they know it is one of a limited edition. What's more, manufacturers are starting to discover that design can be marketed in the same way that fashion is, and that they can profit from that approach.

● How does this all come together in your Showtime collection?

● You can look at the Showtime collection as a play that is made up of different acts. Together they form a story. The collection consists of tables, chairs, sofas and mirrors. The large table is made of wood, but it has been finished in such a way that it looks like plastic. It also has a very classical form and a ridged pattern on the edges. Normally, classical shapes emerge from a traditional, perhaps somewhat old-fashioned, context. But this table lifts the classical forms out of their original context. I

Lacquered wooden cabinet. Inspired by different styles and periods, the legs were shaped by a sawing machine to Hayon's specifications.



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● When you're faced with the prospect of an entire collection, how do you know where to start?

● I started with the design of a chair for outdoor use – admittedly, a rather unusual way to begin a collection. The outdoor chair is made completely of plastic and, as I just mentioned, the indoor chair has an outer shell of roto-moulded plastic and an inner surface of soft leather. In combined materials we often think of as cold and impersonal – plastic, glass, ceramic and so forth – with warm, natural materials like leather and wood. The soft, organic forms and classical details of these designs underline the contradiction.

● Hard on the outside. Soft on the inside. High-tech versus traditional. Contrasts seem to be the leitmotif of your designs.

● Yes. And when all these opposites combine well and together create a balanced, well-designed piece, I'm happy. Roto-moulded plastic and supple leather: the cheapest material hand in hand with a far more expensive one. I like that. Mark my words. In the near future other companies will start to combine materials you would never expect to see together, like porcelain and plastic, for instance.

● Showtime is haute couture.

The pieces won't be cheap, and they're quite different from what's out there at the moment.

Does Bd also see it as

haute couture – as a group of products that might not be in the catalogue for more than a year or two?

● Not really. Things are never just there because they're there – detached, unrelated and lacking a context. The designs from this particular collection are part of an ongoing story. Pieces that are part of the limited collection can be used as the basis for new designs, applications and experiments with materials. That's what really gives the designs their value and what a manufacturer profits from.

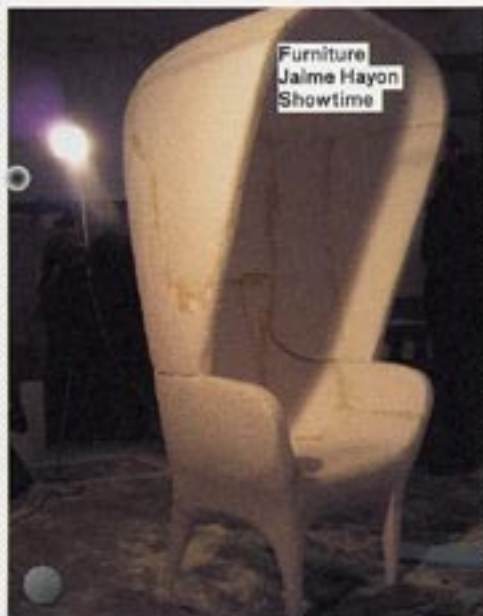
‘Let's have fun with design. Let's tell stories. And let's be a bit more humorous about it all’

● So this first haute couture collection is what it is, but we can expect it to change with time?

● Exactly. One mould for different pieces with a different look – comparable to the way in which a fashion designer works with his haute couture collection.

Made of ceramic, these side tables are finished in high-gloss paint that gives them a plastic appearance. A similar effect is created with the large wooden table (left).





● Of course. No one is ready for this, but that is not the point. When I was working at Fabrica with Benetton's Oliviero Toscani, I learned one very important thing: projects and designs have to be transparent in the sense that they have to be communicative. You have to create a theme for your project or design, and you have to communicate its meaning in an open, humorous way. To be able to do that, you need to discuss your work and to ask others what they think. Only through conversation can you get where you want to be. And while you're talking about your work, you're educating others: clients, marketing people, manufacturers. Even yourself. At an earlier stage, when I showed the Bd designs to others, they often reacted with, 'Where can I buy these?'

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And, in that sense, the pieces go on being classic, time and again.

● That's the idea. Give the table I designed for Bd another colour or another finish, and it's a totally different design. This means that chairs, sofas and tables eventually become collector's items.

● Do you believe that ordinary people will be able to collect these expensive pieces?

● I'm not really thinking about it like that. It's this idea of variations on the same design that counts. The way you approach the design of a table or chair is important. It's not about designing a single piece, and that's that. The design has to become part of an ongoing story in which the execution of the design changes constantly. Furniture design and the way in which collections are built should be like theatre.

● But what about manufacturers that find your designs too progressive? Too different? The world might not be ready for your stories, with all their variations.



The Showtime sofa features a rotation-moulded plastic shell and padded-leather seat and back.