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Elements by Scholten & Baijings for J. HILL's Standard
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Designers find new paths forward collaborating with traditional craft makers—and vice versa.

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If you spend much time on our site—and we hope you do—then you’ll find that collaborations between designers, editors, and traditional craft producers have become a growing, widespread practice that lends itself to the creation of design objects beyond the ordinary. In a world filled with generic, throwaway goods, where our relationship to the things that populate our everyday environment (not to mention their origins) has become more and more abstract, there is a rising demand for design that communicates and upholds a deeper connection to our personal identities—objects that bring value to both the creators and the users over and above a price tag.

It isn’t hard to see this development as an Arts & Crafts Movement for the 21st century. More than 100 years ago, the great William Morris said, “Nothing should be made by man’s labour which is not worth making, or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers.” It’s still true today that the way things are made—whether that’s a traditional technique or a technological innovation, or a unique combination of the two—shapes the way we relate to our surroundings.

During our recent trip to Milan to scout the many exhibitions presented alongside the world’s largest design fair, Salone del Mobile, we encountered numerous projects forged at this intersection of high design and artisanal production. Here are some of our favorites:

***Cuttings* by Martino Gamper and *Elements* by Scholten & Baijings for J HILL's Standard**



Anike Tyrrell

As the founder of the newly launched, hand-cut crystal company J HILL's Standard, Irishwoman Anike Tyrrell has her own unique perspective on the role of craft in contemporary design. Driven by her conviction of craft's importance to Ireland, Tyrrell launched her company in fall 2013, and presented her inaugural collections—commissions with design stars Martino Gamper and Scholten & Baijings, called, respectively, *Cuttings* and *Elements*—this spring at Rossana Orlandi in Milan.

Tyrrell was initially motivated by her experiences as the former CEO of the city of Waterford's Enterprise Board, where one of her responsibilities was to consider preventative measures to slow the decline of Ireland's traditional glassmaking skills, a craft that had long been central to the local community. At one time, 3,500 crafts workers employed 120 furnaces to make glass. As the industry gradually moved towards machine production, however, these skills became redundant. And as many of these craftsmen are now in their fifties, sixties, and seventies, the window for them to pass along their handcrafting knowledge appears small. So Tyrrell decided to act.



Elements by Scholten & Baijings
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"I have always had a strong interest in design, in rural development, and a belief that the skills in this community have an honest and unique value. Given the huge current interest in crafted products that reflect real skill, I felt there was a clear space for J HILL's to operate in. It was also an exciting opportunity to re-imagine cut crystal and use existing skills in a new way." Tyrrell has chosen to focus on producing a strong, evergreen house collection that will always be available, as well as a "Free collection, which will push the boundaries of the material and decorative processes and, by doing so, build innovation into the making so that the company never stagnates."

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“The more I researched the industry,” she notes, “the more evident it became that there is a bit of a global crisis in progress. Many of the big names have ceased to hand-make. At the same time, traditional cuts and decorative practices have remained largely unchanged and strongly reference their archives. The result is an industry, with some wonderful exceptions, divorced from the expectations of their existing customers and also, in many cases, failing to connect with new ones. We wanted to re-introduce the consumer to the quality and potential of hand-cut crystal, but set free from the expected.”

The brand’s ambitious Salone debut featured projects with two of contemporary design’s most sought-after names—projects that celebrate wholeheartedly the mark of the maker (and both of which will be available in September). “We have worked to ensure that the hand is visible in the individual pieces; it is very important that people appreciate the time and skill that goes into making each one. We are hugely taken by the Japanese idea of ‘perfection in imperfection,’ and it is important to us that each glass is and will be slightly different.”

For Tyrrell, *Cuttings* and *Elements* (though undeniably impressive) are only the beginning. While the company is cutting in Ireland, it’s presently partnered with a Czech company that does all the hand blowing; Tyrrell wants to bring that process back home within the next two years. She sees the company as the center of a sustainable wheel whose spokes will, hopefully in the not-too-distant-future, include a facility with its own blowing furnaces, a glassblowing school, and an apprenticeship program. “The school and working apprenticeship scheme is vital to having a vibrant ‘making’ ecosystem. We have very particular skills in Waterford that are closely tied to our deep glass and decorative heritage. We want to bring teams of blowers, cutters, and etchers from other traditions to teach here, and vice versa.”

Wava Carpenter

After studying Design History, Wava has worn many hats in support of design culture: teaching design studies, curating exhibitions, overseeing commissions, organizing talks, writing articles—all of which informs her work now as L’AB’s Editor-in-Chief.