Press Release

Stylecraft and NGV announce winner of the Australian Furniture Design Award

As part of Melbourne Design Week (12–22 March 2020), the National Gallery of Victoria has for the first time partnered with Stylecraft to present the winner of the Australian Furniture Design Award (AFDA), with James Walsh taking out a $20,000 cash prize for his entry **Anthropic Bench**.

James Walsh was selected from a shortlist of five finalists, who were invited to present their realised designs for exhibition at the Stylecraft showroom in Melbourne, followed by virtual judging.

Sydney based furniture and industrial designer, James Walsh graduated from RMIT university in 2017. Designing furniture and homewares for his own studio brand and leading Australian companies, his work has appeared in various exhibitions including the Salone Satellite in Milan. Currently James is working with leading design house, Vert Design, while also undertaking various side projects and exhibitions that demonstrate his experimental approach to design.

Founded by Stylecraft and first awarded in 2015, the AFDA is a national competition open to all Australian designers and makers. As one of Australia's most prestigious furniture design awards, it recognises excellence in furniture design and the contribution this makes to design discourse and Australian culture.

"James Walsh is representative of the exemplary standards we have come to expect from Australia's top furniture designers," said Simone LeAmon, Jury Chair and The Hugh Williamson Curator of Contemporary Design and Architecture, National Gallery of Victoria.

"The NGV, in partnership with Stylecraft, is delighted to provide a platform for the Australian design community to showcase its work as part of Melbourne Design Week. The jury congratulates James Walsh and commends all the ADFA finalists for their outstanding submissions."

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Pictured — Anthropic Bench by James Walsh

Reinventing an ancient material tradition, furniture designer James Walsh combines rammed earth with recycled glass filings to produce a seductive, sustainable and hard wearing composite for Anthropic Bench. The material is realised in a design exhibiting an intelligent assembly, beautifully detailed and resolved.

"The AFDA jury was unanimous in their applause of Walsh's furniture design, recognising the designer's ambition to investigate meaningful and practical uses for glass that would otherwise end up in landfill, while delivering a new and novel aesthetic experience for furniture design that successfully merges the past with present," said LeAmon.

Stylecraft Brand Director, Tony Russell, has said that "Stylecraft are proud to be involved in such a prestigious award that fosters Australian designers and makers through professional mentoring and commercial production opportunities. We look forward to collaborating with James on a new collection that aligns with the sustainable practices and contemporary aesthetic demonstrated in his winning design."

Downloadable Content and Credit
Exhibition Photography — Tom Ross
Product Photography — Provided by James Walsh
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Pictured — AFDA Winner, James Walsh

In addition to a $20,000 cash prize, James Walsh will receive support from Stylecraft for design, production and distribution of a furniture design, plus a two-week residency program at JamFactory in Adelaide to experiment with new ideas and materials, prototype new work, or explore new making processes.

Shortlisted finalists included Design King Company with Dr Christian Tietz, Marta Figueiredo, Supercyclers with Seljak Brand, and Michael Gittings.

The competition jury featured Simone LeAmon (Chair), The Hugh Williamson Curator for Contemporary Design and Architecture, NGV; Tony Russell, Brand Director, Stylecraft; Brian Parkes, CEO, JamFactory; Helen Kontouris, Designer and Creative Director, LEN, and Tom Owens, Managing Director, Principal, Gensler.

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The Australian Furniture Design Award is presented by NGV and Stylecraft as part of Melbourne Design Week 2020, an initiative of the Victorian Government. The awards competition is coordinated by Citylab. For more information about the AFDA, visit the NGV website.

As part of the Denfair 2.0 Speaker Series, Simone LeAmon will speak to AFDA 2020 winner James Walsh about his winning entry, Anthropic Bench. View the interview from midday on Monday July 20th. Register here.

NGV will be streaming an Instagram live interview between Simone LeAmon & AFDA winner James Walsh on Wednesday July 22nd from 6pm. Watch here.