

izé
Stories of Door Handles



who we are

izé was founded to reconcile the realms of design, architecture, art and manufacture. We offer bespoke design and production, the customisation of individual items or products from our constantly expanding and changing ranges.

We work with some of the finest international names in design and architecture. Our products include handles designed by Eric Parry, Kenneth Grange CBE, Sergison Bates, Zaha Hadid, Mark Pimlott and Terence Woodgate.

We collaborate with architects to design bespoke products for specific buildings so that the architecture is allowed to permeate even the smallest detail of a building, from door handles to escutcheon covers and coat hooks.

In addition izé also manufactures classic modernist handles, including works by designers from Adolf Loos to Wells Coates, many of which remain unsurpassable in their simplicity and elegance. We are also happy to reproduce or adapt historical items where the setting may demand it.

izé's door handles have been exhibited at the Royal Academy and the Design Museum in London and many are in the Victoria & Albert Museum's permanent collection.

izé

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introduction

The door handle, one of the smallest of architectural elements, can exert the most powerful of impacts. Architecture is usually seen as an art expressed through space and light, as if it were somehow apart from our bodies. Yet it is our sense of touch which introduces us to the building. It is the weight, solidity and texture of the handle which guides us across the threshold, which gives us our first impression of the architecture.

Like the building itself, the handle is not a static object but a small piece of sculpture which bears the traces and memories of use, abuse and the lives of those who have briefly touched it. The handle Walter Gropius designed in the early 1920s was intended as the model of the machine produced aesthetic of the Bauhaus. Used on modernist buildings throughout Europe, their deceptively simple geometry, all based on the circle and the square, was the first commercially successful product to emerge from the Bauhaus. Yet look at those handles now. Scuffed from years of use, overpainted, repaired, they stand as exquisite reminders of the exigencies of use and the impossibility of perfection. Yet they remain beautiful, intrinsic elements of the architecture, inseparable from the moment in which they were conceived yet layered with the patina of time.

The idea of *izé* is to create small moments of hand-held architecture which reveal something about the time in which they were made but which are capable of absorbing the use and wear and accumulating a patina which makes them far richer than they ever were when they were new.



no.

1

material

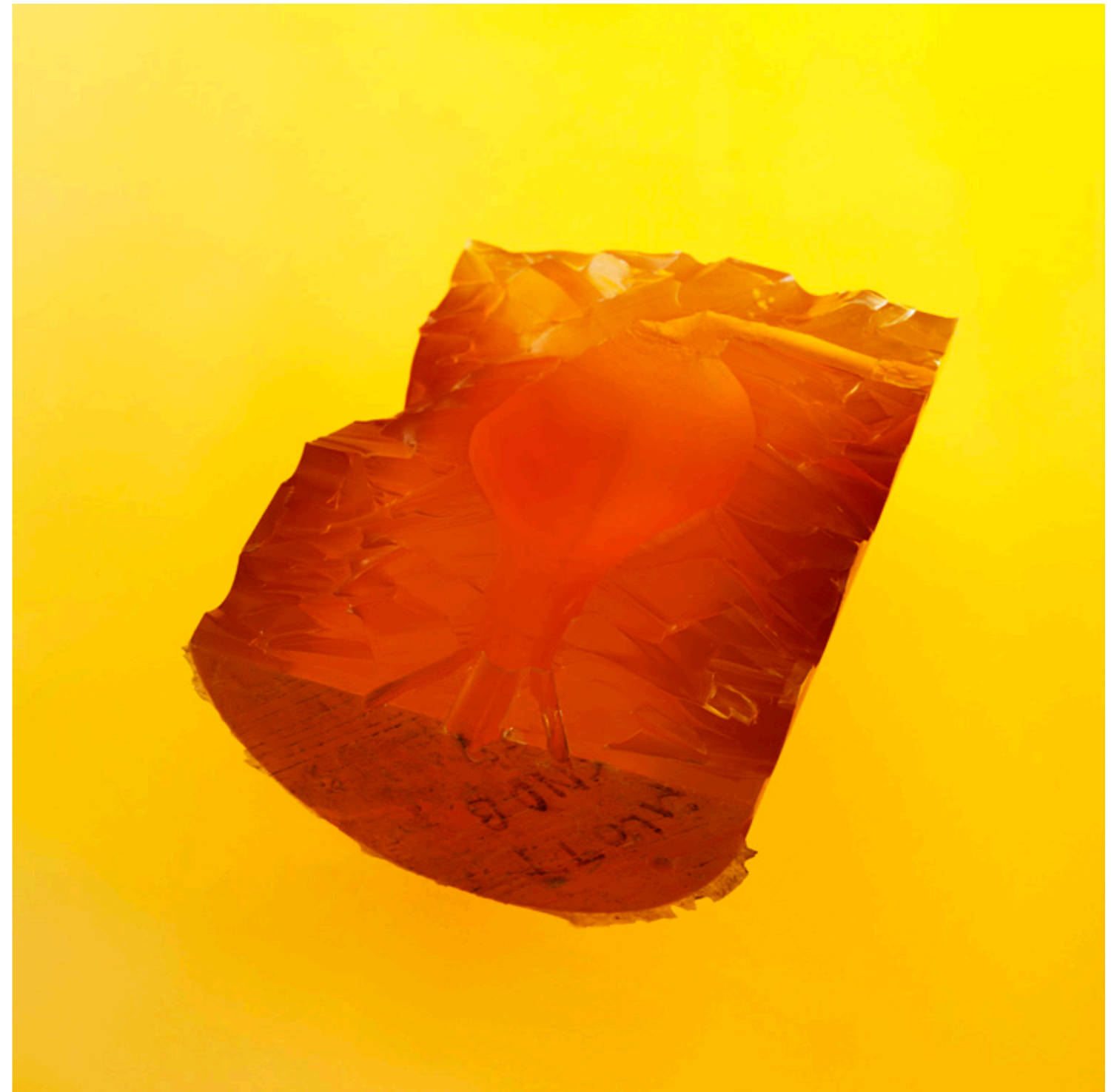
From the idea to the initial sketch, from the model to the final object, izé attempts to imbue its products with the traces of material and making so that the handle becomes an artefact, a manufactured product which maintains through its conception, through its material, through its design, through its finish, a thread to its beginnings in the archaic heat of production.

'The door handle,' wrote Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, 'is the handshake of a building'. He pinpoints an anthropomorphism which is embodied in this most intimately held of architectural elements. It gives away the feel of the building, the character of the architecture. In its touch we communicate with the structure. Modernism, in its search for architecture as *gesamtkunstwerk*, as total work of art, has witnessed a torrent of designs from virtually every great designer. From Walter Gropius to Alvar Aalto,

A manufactured product which maintains through its conception, through its material, through its design, through its finish, a thread to its beginnings in the archaic heat of production.

from Adolf Loos to Álvaro Siza, each generation has sought to reinterpret the handle in reflection of its own aesthetics, its own rigour. From the minimal to the organic, the expressionist to the industrial, we try to accommodate the most compelling ideas in the development of the modern handle, so that each phase in its history is available as a snapshot of a cultural moment and then to facilitate a constant reinterpretation of the values and ideas.

In our reproduction of classic early modernist designs and our commissioning of new ranges which we believe complement, add and question the typology, we are trying to build a collection which suits all settings yet which produces a slice through contemporary culture, a cross section of real depth and interest. We are constantly adding to the range, constantly questioning and revising and hope that each new project, each bespoke design, can add to our understanding of the process.





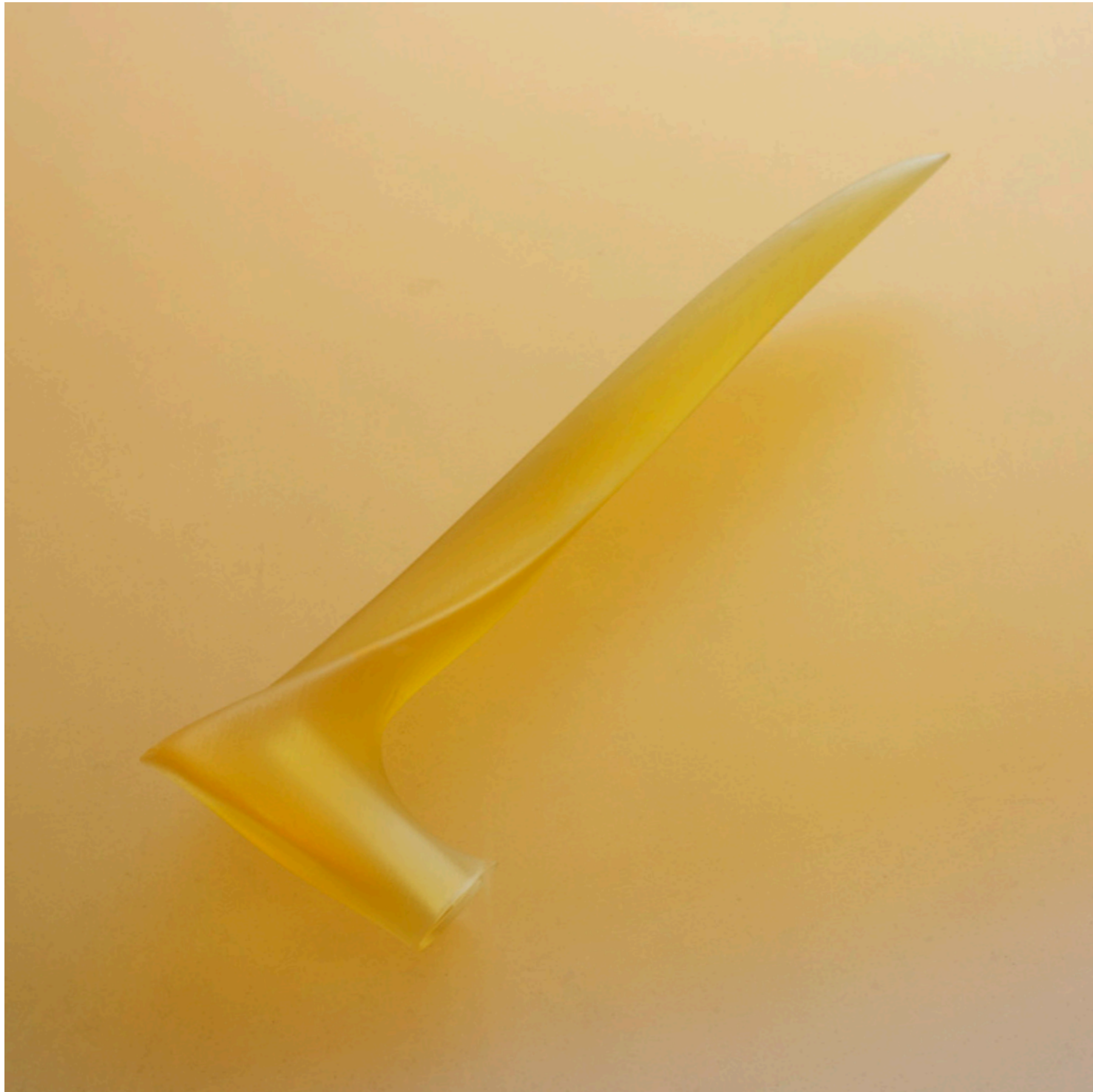














no.

2

form

The door handle is an extrusion of the architecture. In its grip you feel the building. Architecture, despite being the most plastic and the most three-dimensional of the arts, is curiously reliant on the sense of seeing, of vision. Only at certain points do you physically engage with the building and the door handle is not only the first but virtually the only component in a building which privileges the sense of touch. In the intimacy of that contact it is able to communicate a message about the architecture and the experience that far outweighs its size and its cost. Its form, therefore, serves as an introduction. A heavy piece of cast bronze, unfamiliar yet sensual, transmits one message, a cool curve of bent steel another altogether.

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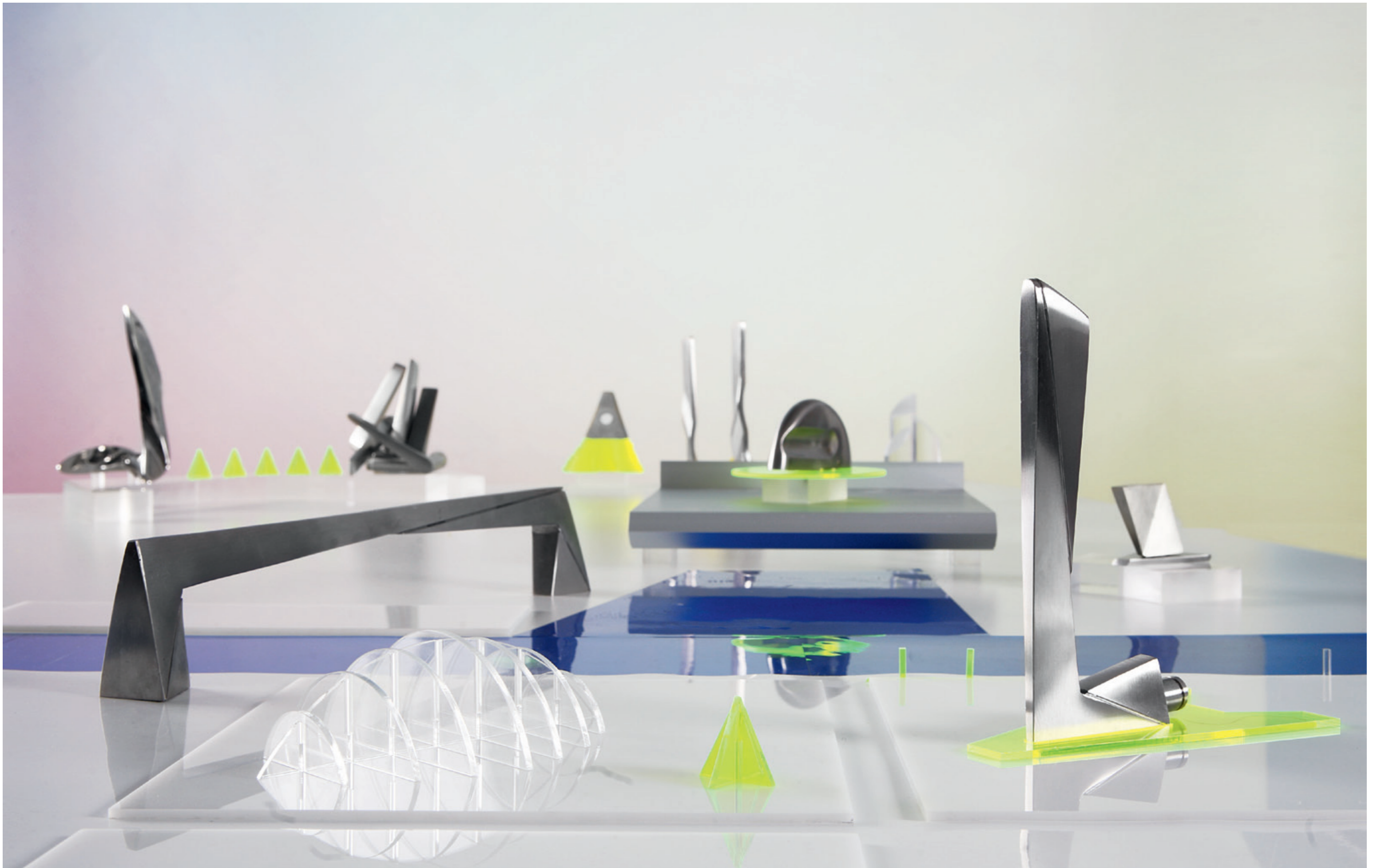
Is it possible to imagine a city of handles? A landscape of disembodied components stripped from their doors yet which are still able to communicate about the architecture they have left behind? What can a handle say to us in isolation? Can we extrapolate the architecture from touch? Walter Gropius's 1923 lever takes as its formal vocabulary the fundamental geometries of the square and the circle and develops these into a stereometric composition of cylinder, cube and rectangle. The aesthetics of modernism are contained in the tiny container. In the radically simplified but asymmetrical levers designed five years later by Ludwig Wittgenstein we see the introduction of the notion that handles can acknowledge the differing natures of spaces to either side of the door.

We hope that the projects we continue to initiate begin to illuminate a series of ideas and propositions about architecture, that they become punctuation marks in the narrative of construction, use and meaning. 6a's designs for knobs acknowledge an archetype, a memory of historic types yet their mouldings and their complexity have been smoothed out by history, like a pebble washed by the sea over millennia. Mark Pimlott's designs seem to swell from the door, as if plastic material were squeezed through an opening. Zaha Hadid's fluid design echoes the melding of landscape and architecture so characteristic of her practice. Each begins to tell a story of its conception, its making and its relationship to those which have preceded it.











no.

3

space

Each door represents a new beginning, the opening of a new story. From the legend of Bluebeard's Castle to Georges Perec's *Life: A User's Manual*, the notion of a dwelling containing a series of stories hidden behind the tempting anonymity of a simple door remains a powerful trope. Nothing can be more guaranteed to provoke curiosity than a closed-off door. The handle represents both the locked and the open, exclusion and promise. It becomes a symbol of ambiguity, representing the plane of the door and implicitly the space beyond. But it also carries within it a memory of those who have dwelt in and used the building. If the handle becomes a narrative device is it enough that it's a generic product?

The handle is a sculpture which exists in architectural space, ambiguously attached to the structure yet mobile, moving through the three dimensions.

If this is a conduit through which the building's meaning, its history, its texture and its patina are revealed and expressed then surely each handle should have its own part of the story to tell? As architecture becomes increasingly mechanised, from its inception through a digital interface to its manufacture through standard components, we are left with fewer and fewer moments in which the hand of the maker can be made visible. The processes of metal manufacture remain, in essence, archaic, they have changed surprisingly little since the Bronze Age. The casting, shaping, working, tooling and polishing of the base material represents a way of imbuing the act of revealing the subsequent space with a direct communication between the maker and the user, between the designer and the inhabitant.

Architecture is about space and light, at its best it is theatrical and both evokes archetypes and confounds expectations. The handle is about form, about touch, about texture and grip, it is intimately connected with the hand and body as well as with the eye. It is a sculpture which exists in architectural space, ambiguously attached to the structure yet mobile, moving through the three dimensions. At its most predictable it is a utilitarian tool, a simple lever for performing a mechanical function. Even at this level it can communicate something of its essence. Yet at its most expressive it can speak of something beyond, becoming the embodiment of the promise of movement and revelation.











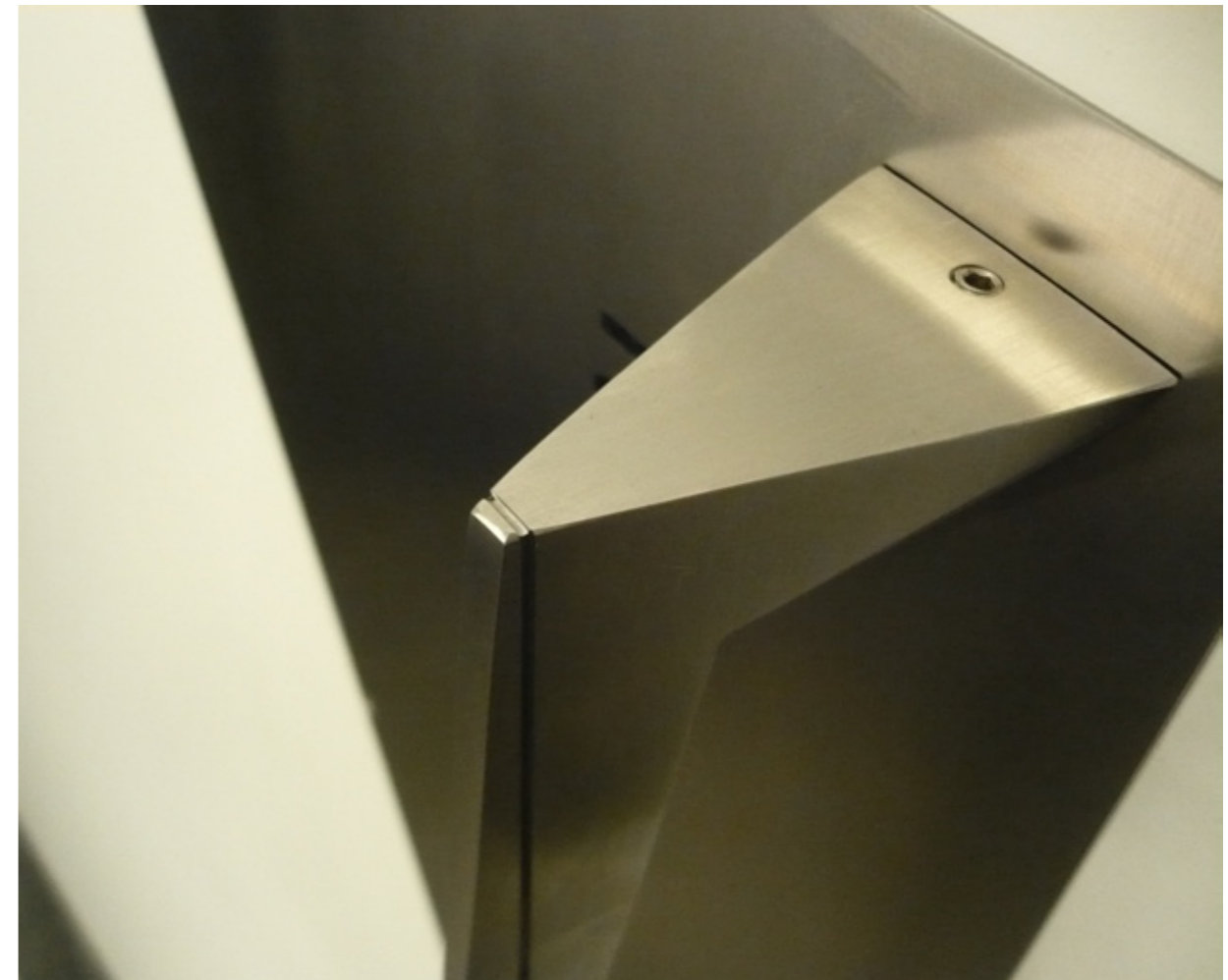
case
studies

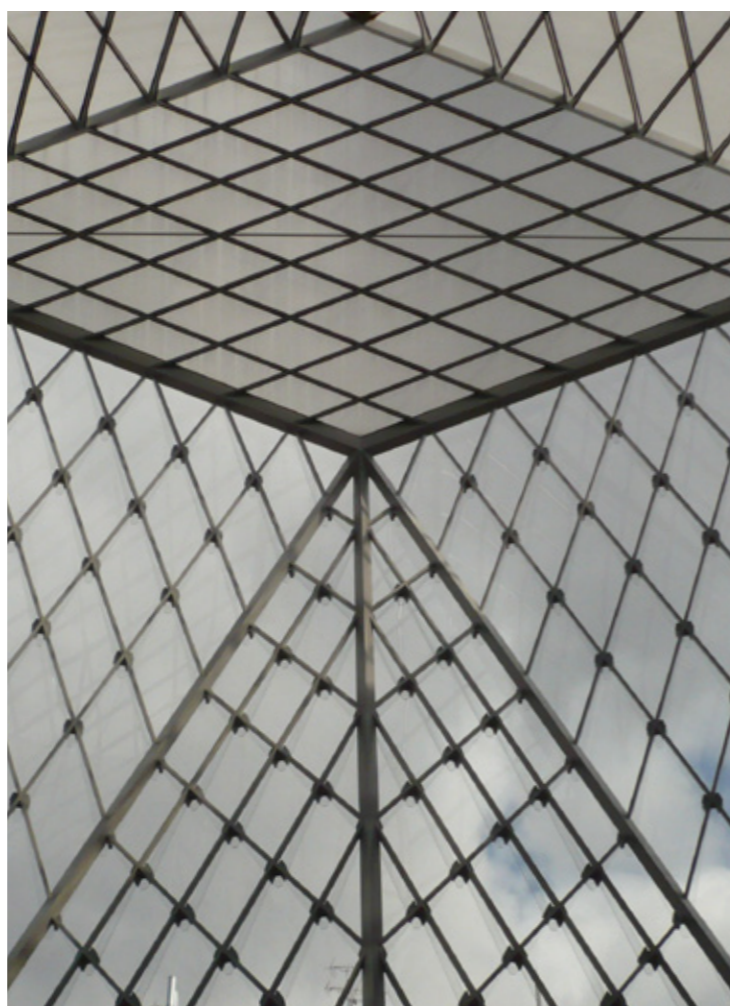


55 Baker Street

Make's rebuilding of the former Marks & Spencer's Headquarters at 55 Baker Street reimagines the blocky, conservative 1950s architecture. The gaps in the elevation are conceived as 'masks', as faces in the façade. Faceted, planar and complex in construction, the door handles were intended as a reflection of these public aspects of the architecture. This facilitates the transition of the ideas inherent in the elevation to the deep floorplates of the interior without dominating them. The condition of reconciling an old, highly orthogonal commercial building with a very contemporary, theatrical architectural statement is communicated in the expressionist/cubist influenced angled planes, as if the new is both bursting out but also acclimatising to the original context.

The design of the handles reflects this duality, the Flamingo range was developed for this project. Designed as a series of planes intended to resolve the relationship between the grip and the neck, the result is a deceptively simple product which appears sharply-defined and inscribed, as if manufactured from a series of constructivist volumes, yet which sits remarkably comfortably in the hand. The unusually-shaped and chamfered rose echoes the planar effect of the lever so that it imbues the door with the spirit of its form rather than tapering out into a simple round rose. The range encompasses handles, knobs, hooks and bathroom fittings, from coat hooks to toilet roll holders, allowing the designers an unusual degree of control over the micro-architecture.





Sebastian + Barquet

London's first gallery dedicated solely to mid-century modernist design, Sebastian + Barquet is an offshoot of the New York Gallery which opened in 2006. It specialises in French, Italian and American design from the 1940s-1960s and exhibits museum quality works by some of the twentieth century's most revered architects and designers. The gallery was designed by Eric Parry Architects. The simple, restrained elevations, which meld into the Mayfair mews setting, feature an entrance door with an industrial aesthetic which deliberately echoes the aluminium building components of Jean Prouvé.

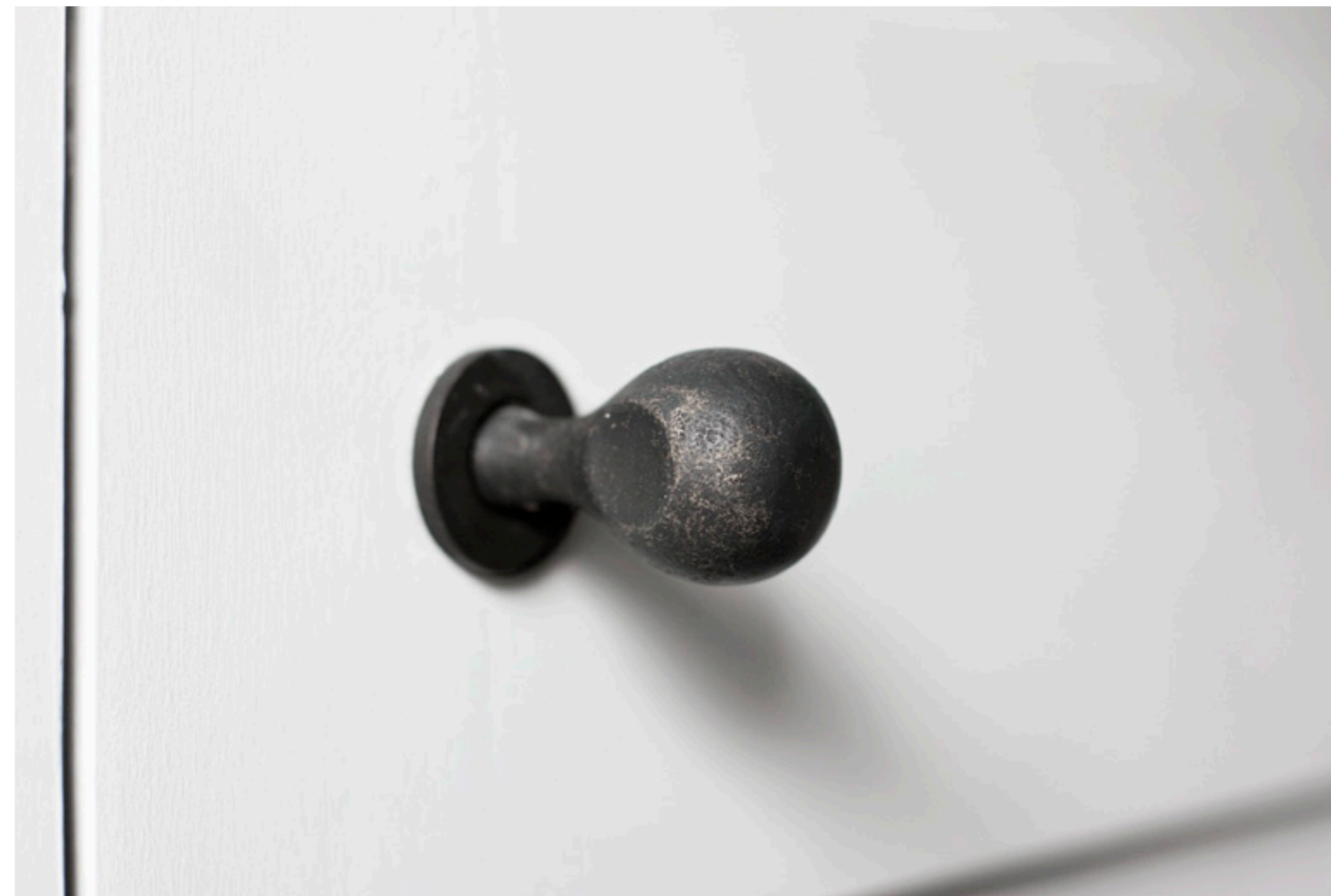
The Z-handle used here is a compelling blend of the quotidian and the theatrical. From above it appears as a simple square section, only its slender profile visible in elevation. But the planar, almost cubist construction of the neck and the junction with the door reveals a complex junction which feels both surprising and comfortable in the hand. Although not conceived specifically with this gallery in mind there is nevertheless a neat confluence of project and product, the geometric construction of the handle chiming with the modernist aesthetic of many of the products exhibited inside.

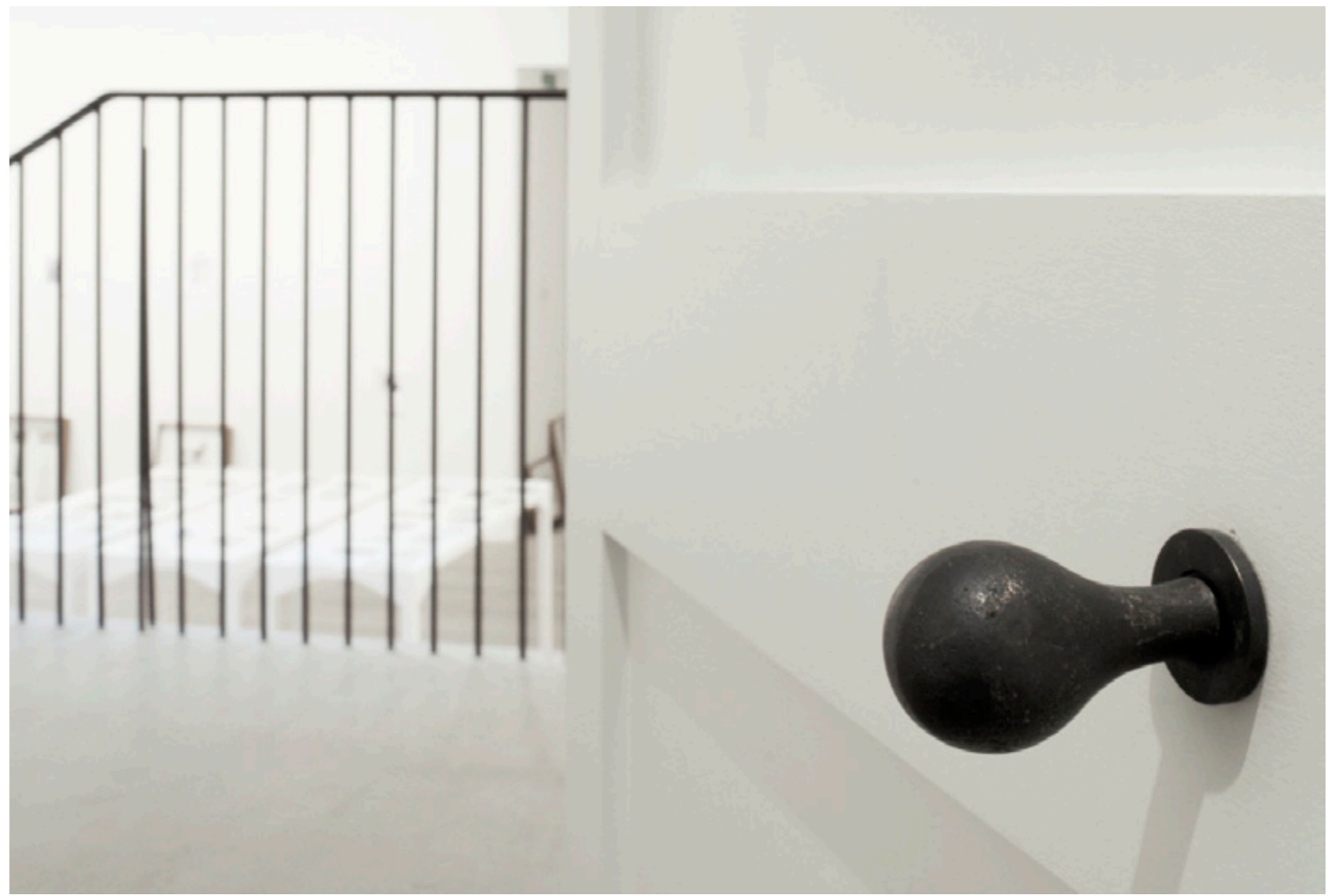


Raven Row

A pair of the most exquisite surviving Georgian shop-fronts in London, Raven Row has been transformed into one of London's most compelling galleries. Architects 6a attempted to establish a dialogue between the old and the new elements of the building so that the modern element is not merely juxtaposed with the historical one but enters into a metaphorical conversation. The haptic elements in an astonishingly simple series of interventions were placed firmly in the foreground. Along with the balustrade the door handles were rough cast in bronze to accentuate the process of their making through stripping the final layer of production, the finishing, away. The dark, coarse oiled finish echoes the charring of a fire which tragically tore through the building in the 1970s, destroying many of the original intricately-wrought interiors.

As well as recreating a complex Regency design, for the knobs on the historic panelled doors, izé also developed 6a's designs for a contemporary series of fittings which take their proportions from historic models yet display surprising quirks. The knobs have a dimple on their underside, a motif which allows the thumb to naturally find its place but which also acts as a surprising deviation. Elsewhere the turns were derived from the rather anthropomorphic profile of the cylinder, a strangely familiar form made into something surprising, small and effective. The bronze finish was intended not only to wear but to emphasise its wear, so that it becomes a dynamic surface, changing with use, indicating heavier or lighter traffic, public or private, the patination and rubbing of the handles becoming part of the narrative of use.





Lost House

Buried within an anonymous street in the post-industrial landscape around Kings Cross station, the Lost House gets its name from the incongruity of the dramatic interior and its virtual urban invisibility. It appears to the street as a simple shuttered access-way in a blank brick wall, a remnant of the area's manufacturing fabric. Yet, once inside, the house reveals an extraordinary nocturnal aspect, a dark, compelling, complex series of spaces in which light seems to be sucked in only to spark and disappear once more in flashes of theatrical spatial manipulation.

The architect used the wedge knob designed with izé as one of its earliest products. As intriguing and unorthodox in its sculptural mass as is the curious plan of the house, the dark density of the knob acts as the perfect bridge between the striking spaces and the radically changing conditions of light, colour, space and atmosphere. The dark bronze finish used throughout appears to emphasise the blackness of this half-buried piece of spatial experimentation, an artefact as much as a fitting whose angularity denotes a certain sharpness and visceral surprise in the architectural transitions.



IV



One Hyde Park

izé worked in collaboration with the design team at Candy & Candy to create a range of bespoke and exclusive fittings for the world's most expensive apartments at One Hyde Park. Overlooking the park and Knightsbridge, the building's shell was designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and is composed of a series of four lozenge-shaped, interlinked pavilions. The plan of the building is intended to make the difficult contextual transition between the various conditions of this complex urban junction: the Mandarin Oriental Hotel (which will service the apartments), the more modern buildings towards Kensington Gore, the Edwardian fabric of the intersection and the greenery of Hyde Park itself. The complex includes pools, a spa and leisure suite. Each of these spaces features bespoke products and fittings produced by izé.

In order to achieve an understated aesthetic, this bespoke range, designed, manufactured and supplied exclusively for this development, became a pivotal and indispensable element in the image of the apartments. The design is based on a simple rectangular section lever with delicately chamfered edges, inspired initially by a Viennese Secession design by Otto Wagner and sitting somewhere between the elemental proto-modernism of *fin de siècle* Vienna and the gleaming elegance of Art Deco. izé developed a deceptively complex backplate mechanism which, through a unique pivoting section, avoids the need for visible fixings or separate coverplates. The design aesthetic, the combination of chamfered edge handles and stepped profile and inscribed plates was carried through the bespoke hardware.







index



no.

1

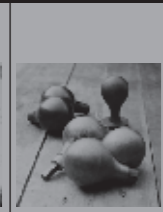


11

R
Wax mould



12



13

L
Raven Row Regency knob
R
6a knob + Pimlott knobs
[different stages of production]



14



15

L
Chapman knob
[rough cast]
R
Chapman knob
[finished]

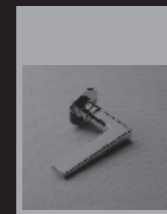


16



17

L
Kenneth Grange lever no.4
R
Investment casting tool

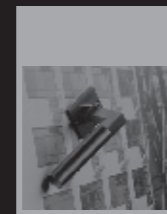


18

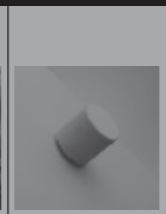


19

L
Burchartz lever
polished white bronze
R
Burchartz lever
dark bronze



20



21

L
Gropius lever
R
Terence Woodgate knob



22



23

L
Michel Mossessian lever
R
Mark Pimlott asymmetric knob

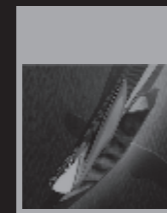


24



25

L
Kenneth Grange lever #1
[rough cast]
R
Zaha Hadid lever
[rapid prototype]



26

R
Zaha Hadid lever

no.

2



29

Left to Right
6a Raven Row knob
2x Mark Pimlott knobs

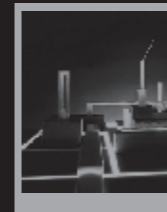


30



31

Left to Right
Raven Row Regency knob
4x Mark Pimlott knobs
6a Raven Row knob
David Adjaye 'Wedge' knob



32



33

Left to Right
2x Keith Williams lever
2x Make 'Simple' levers
Make 'Accessible' lever
2x Gropius levers
2x Make 'Simple' levers
Make 'Accessible' pull
Eric Parry lever



34



35

Left to Right
Zaha Hadid lever
Make 'Flamingo' pull
Wagenfeld levers [various]
Make 'Flamingo' lever rose
2x Michel Mossessian levers
Kenneth Grange 'Anti-ligature' handle
Make 'Flamingo' lever
Make 'Flamingo' bathroom turn



36

Left to Right
Make 'Flamingo' lever
Make 'Flamingo' coat hook
Make 'Flamingo' pull
Kenneth Grange
'Anti-ligature' handle
2x Michel Mossessian levers

no.

3



39

Centre
Wagenfeld lever



40



41

Left to Right
4x Mark Pimlott knobs
Wagenfeld lever
Kenneth Grange levers
#1, #2 and #3



42



43

Left to Right
Kenneth Grange lever #2
Wagenfeld lever
Kenneth Grange lever #1

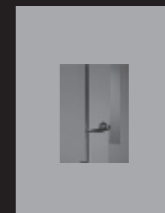


44



45

Left to Right
Kenneth Grange lever #3
Kenneth Grange lever #1



46

Centre
Kenneth Grange #3

selected projects

5 ALDERMANBURY SQUARE City of London, London – Eric Parry Architects

ATHLONE CIVIC CENTRE Athlone, Ireland – Keith Williams Architects

CAMDEN ARTS CENTRE Finchley Road, London – Tony Fretton Architects

CARRIAGE STREET APARTMENTS New York, USA – Adjaye Associates

CENTRE POINT Tottenham Court Road, London – Richard Seifert

DIRTY HOUSE Shoreditch, London - Adjaye Associates

HOUSING SCHEME Vassall Road, London - Tony Fretton Architects

IDEA STORE Whitechapel High Street, London – Adjaye Associates

IRINGAN HIJAU LUXURY APARTMENTS Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – Eric Parry Architects

ISOKON BUILDING Lawn Road, Hampstead, London – Wells Coates /Avanti Architects

LE GRAY HOTEL Beirut – Fox Linton Associates

LONDON LIBRARY St James - Haworth Tompkins Architects

MARNIX BUILDING Avenue des Arts, Brussels, Belgium – Adjaye Associates

MONTAUK HOUSE New York State, USA – Adjaye Associates

KENWOOD PLACE Hampstead, London - Hamilton Associates

KETTNER'S RESTAURANT Soho, London – Studio Ilse

KINGSDALE SCHOOL Alleyn Park, Dulwich, London – dRMM

NEW MANSION BLOCK Davies Street, London – Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects

MUMMERY + SCHNELLE GALLERY Fitzrovia, London - Haworth Tompkins

PALLANT HOUSE GALLERY Winchester - Colin St John Wilson

PENTHOUSE Portland Place, London - Eldridge Smerin

PORTLAND SPA Limerick, Ireland - Carmody Groarke

PRIVATE HOUSE Denver, USA - Adjaye Associates

PRIVATE HOUSE London – Andy Martin Associates

PUCK RESTAURANT The Hague, Netherlands – Mark Pimlott

QATARI DIAR OFFICES Doha, Qatar – Candy & Candy

ROYAL ACADEMY FRAMING WORKSHOPS Piccadilly, London – Royal Academy

ROYAL INSTITUTION Carlton House Terrace, London – Burrell Foley Fisher

ROYAL SOCIETY John Adam Street, London – Kenneth Grange

SPENCER DOCK Dublin, Ireland – Scott Tallon Walker

STROUD VALLEY ARTS SPACE Gloucestershire - Tony Fretton Architects

UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL COVENTRY Walsgrave, Coventry – Nightingale Associates

UNICORN THEATRE Tooley Street, London – Keith Williams Architects

WEMBLEY ARENA London - PRP Architects

WEXFORD OPERA HOUSE Wexford, Ireland - Keith Williams Architects

YOUNG VIC The Cut, London – William Howell / Haworth Tompkins Architects

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