

Jean-Baptiste Fastrez



SPACE CRAFT

1st March - 15 April 2024

For his first solo exhibition at Galerie kreo, Paris, Jean-Baptiste Fastrez (*1984) presents *Space Craft*, an ensemble of mirrors, tables and side tables, stools, a console table, and a sideboard. Characteristic of his research into the narrative power of objects and materials, this new collection features highly designed pieces with a techno-futurist aesthetic, made using both traditional and innovative know-how, such as straw marquetry and Nextel paint. Not a clash of temporalities, but rather a strong desire to reconcile them by creating furniture that directly reflects the current era.

What if the finest craftsmen of yesteryear had created the furniture of the future? What if Jean-Michel Frank, the iconic Art Deco designer, had boarded Space X? What if the 1960s interiors à la Courrèges had populated Gattaca ... These are the kinds of mental and visual brilliance that Jean-Baptiste Fastrez's 2024 *Space Craft* collection is sure to inspire. By orchestrating encounters, even short-circuits, between exceptional craftsmanship, a formal technological vocabulary, and a futuristic imagination, these new pieces play with our visual landmarks and established temporalities. Such collisions are heralded by the provocative association of the title, which juxtaposes "space" and "craft" in a manifesto phrase that sounds like the name of a mission: to create furniture in tune with our (postmodern) epoch.

Since his beginnings at the dawn of the 2010s, Fastrez has been keen to "get people thinking about the production of objects through the force of narrative." In 2019, *Vivarium*, his previous collection for Galerie kreo, featured mirrors and furniture metamorphosed into wild animal silhouettes in a trompe-l'œil style, forming a universe of disquieting familiarity.

For *Space Craft*, he has created highly designed, very ergonomic pieces with a strong narrative dimension. The recurrence of round and lunar shapes, the grid motif inspired by the geometry of solar panels, the dynamic profiling of a console, the organic surface of a side table that evokes the materiality of a crater or the primordial thickness of a galaxy, the astronomical nods in titles such as *Comet Console*, *Gemini Stool*, *Booster Side Table* or *Solar Mirror*: all these aspects express his desire to offer a

contemporary reformulation of the spatial imagination. Fastrez's aim is to combine this universally evocative universe with heritage skills and precision craftsmanship—cabinetmaking, glass chasing, glass bush-hammering, straw marquetry—to design pieces that reflect the aesthetics of our time and its seemingly contradictory desires: on the one hand, a return to the essentials and the longing for the long term; on the other, the relaunch of the conquest of space and the reign of innovation. For the designer, an object such as the solar panel embodies this paradox. "Equally at home on a space station or on the roof of an eco-village," he expounds, "the solar panel symbolizes growth and decline, acceleration and slowing down. I stage its presence as a simple motif that, even if it no longer produces electricity, provokes reflection on the contemporary."

With *Space Craft*, Fastrez updates the visual and formal research inherent to the vision of space in the 1960s and 1970s—when the extraterrestrial horizon chimed with the reign of plastic and consumer society. "Today, with the Mars project and space tourism, we've entered a new space age," he explains. "If the rockets are back, they're taking off from a planet that's not the same at all." Since the times have changed, how can one create a language that reflects our aspirations and imagination?

A glass and lacquered metal table set in the gallery like a spaceship ready for a mission. Velvet-wrapped mirrors evoking the padded interior of a spacecraft with its portholes. Hand-crafted coffee tables in engraved and nickel-plated brass, opening onto infinite space. Straw marquetry looking like printed circuits on a UFO-style sideboard. The use of a non-reflective Nextel paint coating identical to that covering the inside of a telescope. A mirror with articulated panels that recalls both a roof of solar panels and the Gothic motif of a stained-glass window—a short-circuit representative of *Space Craft*.

But all these references, all these details, do not impose themselves, and this is the great openness of the collection designed by Fastrez. His pieces are not saturated with signs nor affects. If they are an invitation to (space) travel, it is in elegance and proportion, a balance between innovation and tradition, the power of their obviousness and the singularity of their presence.



Born in 1984, Jean-Baptiste Fastrez graduated from ENSCI in 2010 and began his career with Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec. Since opening his studio in 2011—the year he won the Grand Prix du Jury at the Design Parade at Villa Noailles (Hyères)—he has collaborated with editors and structures such as Moustache, Kvadrat, Tai Ping, Galeries Lafayette, Manufacture de Sèvres, and CIRVA. Presented at Grand-Hornu Images (Mons), Mudac (Lausanne), VIA (Paris), and Villa Noailles, his works are part of the collections of the Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Pompidou, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Bordeaux, and Centre National des Arts Plastiques. Fastrez has been collaborating with Galerie kreo since 2012, where he has presented the Mask mirror collection (2012), the Etna coffee tables (2013), the Egypt vase collection (2017), and the Vivarium exhibition, an acclaimed ensemble of eight pieces of furniture and objects exhibited in its entirety in London in 2019.

Clément Dirié