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LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL IN DEPTH

DAVID ADJAYE NOW TACKLING LIBRARIES TWO AT A TIME



WHO: BACCARAT
WHAT: EXQUIS BY KACPER HAMILTON
WHERE: DESIGNJUNCTION

Ever played the parlour game where everyone draws different bits of a body – first head, then torso, then legs and feet – continuing each section of the body on another person's drawing, so that you end up with a series of (usually) hilariously disjointed bodies? Well, the game has a name – Exquisite Corpse, or Cadavre Exquis, as its French surrealist inventors dubbed it – and British designer Kacper Hamilton has just used this technique to create both a series of striking new vases for Baccarat, and a tool for commissioning future work.

French crystal specialist Baccarat came across Hamilton's work via its links with Swiss art and design college ECAL in Lausanne, where Hamilton studied after graduating from Central St Martins. The brief for this particular project was to find a way to celebrate Baccarat's 250-year history of decorative crystal craftsmanship. Hamilton teamed up with Swiss photographer Michal Florence Schorro for the project, and first visited the Baccarat factory in the village of Baccarat in Lorraine, eastern France where the brand was founded in 1764.

Astounded by the wealth of different decorative techniques that had been deployed over the centuries, the pair wondered if there would be a way to revive some of them in a contemporary range. They played around with collages and archive imagery, and made a paper 'flip-book' to trial different designs, which they proposed could be turned into an iPad app.



ALL IMAGES MICHEL FLORENCE SCHORRO

Left: A sideways swipe on the app gives you a different section for your 'exquisite corpse'-style vase. Below: The three vases that were made for the show by this technique

Says Hamilton: 'We showed this to Baccarat and they found it fascinating. You could flick through each section and create your own combinations.' So Hamilton and Schorro were given the go-ahead to refine the tool as well as create three vases from their designs. They worked with an app developer to translate the concept into an interactive digital platform, supplying digital images while the developer implanted them into the software. 'The difficult part was to make all the vases of Baccarat fit into the same format to create seamless bodies. As you can imagine each vase is a different size with different proportions; it took some tweaking but eventually worked perfectly.'

In creating the iPad selections – three sections make up a vase, top, middle and bottom – as well as the final vases, says Hamilton, 'we tried to find things that were clashing as aggressively as possible. It's

incredible that one company has so many decorative techniques.' For the three vases displayed at Baccarat's stand at designjunction, they united three very different decorative or cutting techniques for each vase, mixing 18th with early 19th and 20th centuries.

Having worked in glass for a few luxury brands, Hamilton was struck by how different the crystal manufacturing process was: 'It's a completely different way of working, a completely different way of finishing.' Once the elements for the three vases had been selected, drawings and specifications were sent to Baccarat. The pieces were first sculpted in polystyrene and then hand-blown in one piece.

The pair now hope that their iPad tool will inspire Baccarat's clients to commission new and exciting products to marry the brand's historic techniques with modern tastes for bespoke eclecticism. »

