



model behaviour

Left Gidon's studio is in one of the quaint old boat sheds on Auckland's Hobson Bay.

Below and bottom right Architectural models made by Gidon for Karen Walker's latest fandeck for Resene.

Right The DIY ply bending machine made up of antiquated hairdryers.



Artist Gidon Bing's eye-catching models for the Resene Karen Walker range draw on just one of his talents.

Half architectural model and half doll's house, is how artist Gidon Bing describes the captivating models he created to help promote fashion icon Karen Walker's latest paint colour range for Resene.

The plywood models were painted in Karen Walker colours, photographed and used on the fandeck of the range and in print advertisements.

The concept for the models came from Karen Walker's long-time friend, interior designer Katie Lockhart and were absorbed into the fandeck design by graphic designer Brogen Averill. "It was very much a collaborative and relaxed venture," says Gidon.

The trio share a passion for early Modernist design and aesthetics, and originally wanted to base all the model designs on mid-century beach houses from the Hamptons in the US. "That wasn't really going to work so I went away and found some additional avant-garde designs that were more interesting and practical to build," says Gidon.

"Because they weren't technical architectural models, accurate scale wasn't an issue. I made objects, like the furniture and miniature sculptures, out of scale for a more creative effect, to intentionally make the models look a bit kooky."

Gidon's work may span various disciplines but all use plywood as a base material. Huge twisted and curvaceous sculptures are suspended from the ceiling of his boat shed studio on the edge of Auckland's Hobson Bay, while relief sculptures hang from the walls. Biomorphic-inspired shapes are painted onto ply and finished in coloured stains and shellac. A prototype bent wood armchair sits in a corner, dwarfed by vast work benches.

Since the launch of the fandeck earlier this year, Gidon has received interest in his models from overseas. "There's a whole cult for miniatures out there that I never knew existed. Dolls house enthusiasts, and design aficionados who have a passion for Modernist houses. They can't collect the real thing so they collect miniatures."

He has also been featured in international magazines like *Wallpaper*, *Casa Da Arbitre*, *Gioia* and *In Design*.

Gidon's love of plywood is a blood legacy; his Czech architect grandfather, Henry Kulka, helped pioneer the use of plywood as an interiors material locally in the 1940s. "I grew up around the material and there were always scraps of ply around to play with and create things from. It was familiar to me. Artists tend to work with materials that are utilitarian, and available."

Gidon shares his grandfather's admiration of honest natural materials and simple elegant forms.

His passion for furniture design may have blossomed when Gidon was about 12, but his university studies went in other directions – into anthropology and comparative religion. While travelling on a postgraduate scholarship, he spent time working on an archaeology dig in the Middle East and became interested in primitivistic art. Those often fluid, organic forms have influenced his work ever since.

While his technique is largely self-taught, his wood curving uses the same principles as those pioneered by legendary furniture maker Thonet in the early 19th century.

His studio equipment is a mix of traditional Japanese methods and bizarre apparatus borne of Kiwi ingenuity – like the wood steamer mounted with antique-looking hairdryers. It's a work of art in itself.

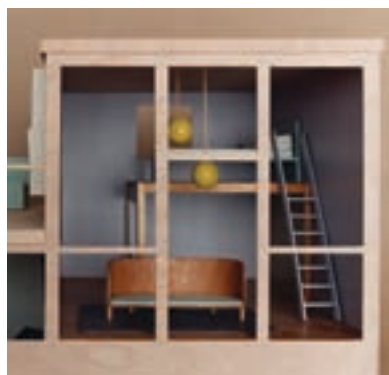
While Gidon admits to never being disciplined enough to exhibit locally – pieces sell before he can collect enough to warrant a solo exhibition – he has shown pieces overseas, including in Tel Aviv currently. He accepts commissions, like his series of outdoor sculptures for Veuve Clicquot, when the prestigious French Champagne house launched their new Rosé here last year. And, of course, his models for Resene.


He hopes to show in Australia soon, and says he finds the local art scene has an off-putting division between what is seen as fine art and craft-based modern art. "It's a shame because in other countries, in Japan for example, there is much less of an artificial division. This is probably because they have a strong tradition for producing and appreciating fine craftsmanship and suffer much less from what is really a type of cultural snobbery that associates craft with manual labour," he says.

At the moment, between developing concepts for more furniture, architectural models, sculpture and a range of light fittings, Gidon is enjoying working on something close to his heart – pieces of furniture made from bent ply for his one-year-old daughter Eli. H



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-  Resene Ecrú White
-  Resene Powder Blue
-  Resene Weathered Yellow

The Karen Walker fandeck is available free from Resene ColorShops or order online from the Resene website.

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