

THE BASTARDS

As the insatiable design world demands more, more, more, the provocative Belgian-Dutch duo Studio Job delivers



JOB SMEETS AND NYNKE TYNAGEL OF STUDIO JOB SERVE THEIR NEW FAST-FOOD FURNITURE FOR SELETTI RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF MILAN'S PIAZZA AFFARI.

TEXT BY HANNAH MARTIN
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2. LOEK BLOK; ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF STUDIO JOB

1. LAMP FOR QEEBOO. 2. SKETCH FOR A GUFRAM TABLE. 3. PLANTER FOR QEEBOO. 4. BULLET LAMP FOR GHIDINI 1961. 5. SNAKES RUG FOR NODUS. 6. MIRROR FOR GHIDINI 1961. 7. CLOCK FOR ALESSI. 8. WINE COOLER FOR GHIDINI 1961. 9. ARMCHAIR FOR SELETTI.

S

tanding at the foot of Maurizio Cattelan's *L.O.V.E.* sculpture—that monumental middle finger that rises from the center of Milan's Piazza Affari in front of the Italian stock exchange—designer Job Smeets contemplates another sordid symbol: the banana.

"It's such a big icon in art. I don't understand why it's never been in design," he wonders. He poses the same question of another edible muse: the all-American burger. "I mean, a

hamburger really does make a perfect seat."

At the Seletti flagship during Milan Design Week this spring, Smeets and his creative partner, Nynke Tynagel—the principals of the Belgian-Dutch design firm Studio Job—unveiled a collection that included both. In fact, the line sheet reads rather like a diner menu: Hamburger chair, Banana lamp, Sausage rug, Egg plate, Hot Dog sofa. "It's quite hot. For a dog," Smeets quips theatrically as he doles out balloons and bananas (real ones) to visitors.

The introduction—one of eight that the designers unveiled at the same time in the Italian city, including poly confections (sharks, skulls) for Qeeboo and skeletal brass whimsies for Ghidini 1961—marks the peak of an eventful few months for the studio. There was a show of new limited-edition works at Carpenters Workshop Gallery in Paris, a bronze sculpture placed outside Miami Beach's buzzy Faena Forum, and the holiday windows at Barneys New York.

The breadth of their presence in Milan emphasizes the extent of the plunge Studio Job—the name is pronounced "yobe," though Smeets prefers "job," as in work—has made into the world of industrial design. While the provocateurs still make painstakingly detailed, stratospherically priced pieces in their Netherlands ateliers, they have now introduced more than 300 licensed products ranging from tiles to tableware.



SMEETS AND TYNAGEL CRUISE THROUGH THE SELETTI DESIGN PRIDE PARADE IN STUDIO JOB'S BANANA MOBILE.

"It starts with haute couture, and then the prêt-à-porter filters from that," Job explains, likening the trickle-down effect to fast fashion or the way artists such as Andy Warhol and later Jeff Koons (both serious pools of inspirations for Job) licensed their work to everything from baby carriages to, most recently, Louis Vuitton bags.

Business partners for 17 years, Smeets and Tynagel met in 1996 at a bar near Design Academy Eindhoven, the Dutch school where they were enrolled and which is famous for boldface alumni Hella Jongerius, Tord Boontje, and Maarten Baas. Tynagel, the doe-eyed brunette daughter of two well-known modernist designers, turned out to be the perfect yin to Smeets's wily, enfant-terrible yang. Soon after she completed her studies, the two joined forces creatively (they'd started dating in 1996 but dropped that side of their relationship last year), producing wildly decorative one-off works in bronze that kicked conventional ideas about design to the curb.

"If ornament is an immoral and degenerate practice, as Adolf Loos described it, then Job and Nynke are the most immoral and degenerate designers of our generation," declares Juan Garcia Mosqueda of New York City's Chamber gallery. He discovered the duo in 2008, when he was still in design school, and went on to work with them during his tenure at the now-defunct Manhattan design mecca Moss, and later at his own gallery. Mosqueda recalls that Studio Job's Farm series initially caught his youthful attention: a barn's worth of humble pastoral tools—a pitchfork, a spade, a cooking pot, an oil lamp—subversively made of bronze and polished to a gleaming, reflective gold.

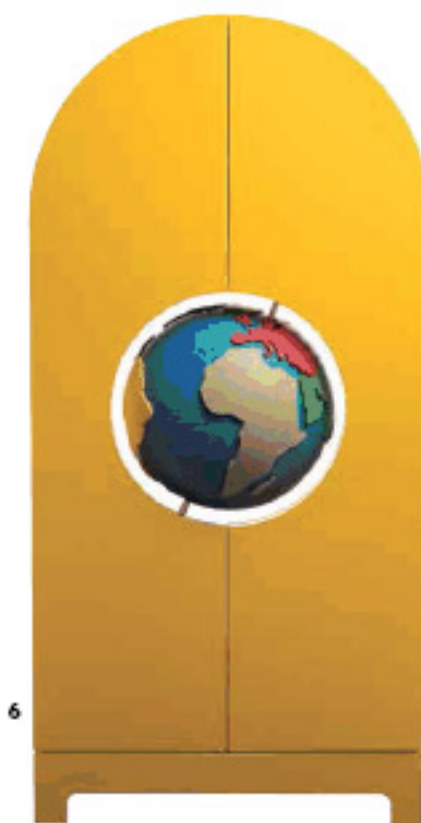
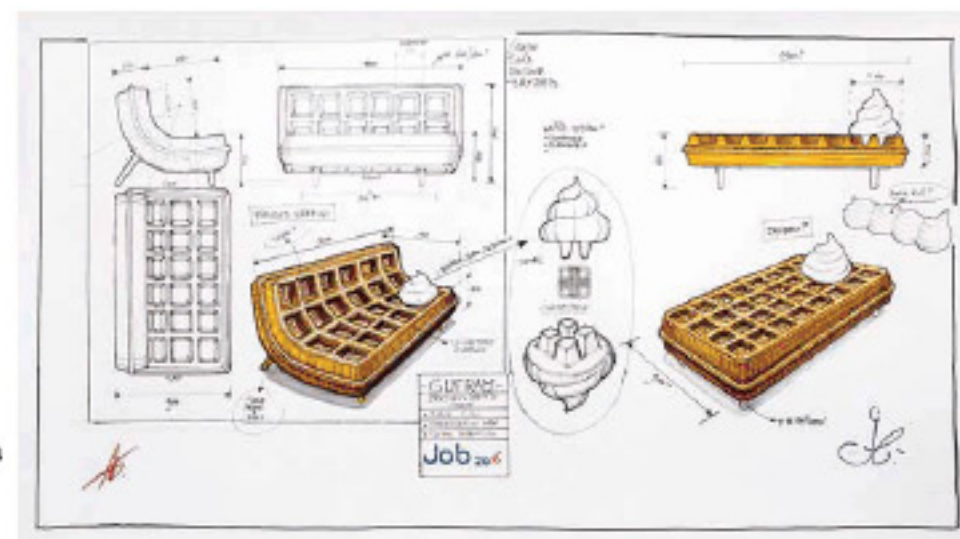
"We love to play with high- and low-end," Smeets explains. Like the Pop artists of the 1950s and beyond, Studio Job cleverly elevates mass-produced motifs and symbols into costly objects of desire. "I put so much effort into something so common, like spending six months polishing a bucket," Smeets continues. "It's kind of what we all do in life."

Their recent affection for American food culture can be traced to Brooklyn Diner on New York City's West 57th Street, a kitschy spot they frequented back in 2016 during the installation of their MAD retrospective. So when menu items became fodder for furniture, it's no surprise that the duo returned to the Seletti factory time and again to get the details just so. Luxe materials from Maharam and Kvadrat were applied to the hot dog and hamburger by an upholsterer who works for Lamborghini.

"It's the best leather, the best filling, the best embroidery," Smeets observes. "It's a spin on the so-called good-taste design brands like Vitra or Cassina. The so-called tactility. The so-called quality. The so-called durability."

When Tynagel finally saw the finished products the day of the grand Seletti store debut, she breathed a sigh of relief. "It has to be executed really well," she admits. "Otherwise it's only a joke." ▀

"Job and Nynke are the most immoral and degenerate designers of our generation."
—Juan Garcia Mosqueda



3. LOER BLONK; ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF STUDIO JOB

1. RUG FOR NODUS. 2. UMBRELLA STAND FOR QEEBOO. 3. A DRAWING FOR THE WAFFLE DAYBED FOR GUFAM. 4. BASKET FOR GHIDINI 1961. 5. STOOLS FOR QEEBOO. 6. CABINET FOR GUFAM. 7. FLOOR LAMPS FOR SLAMP.