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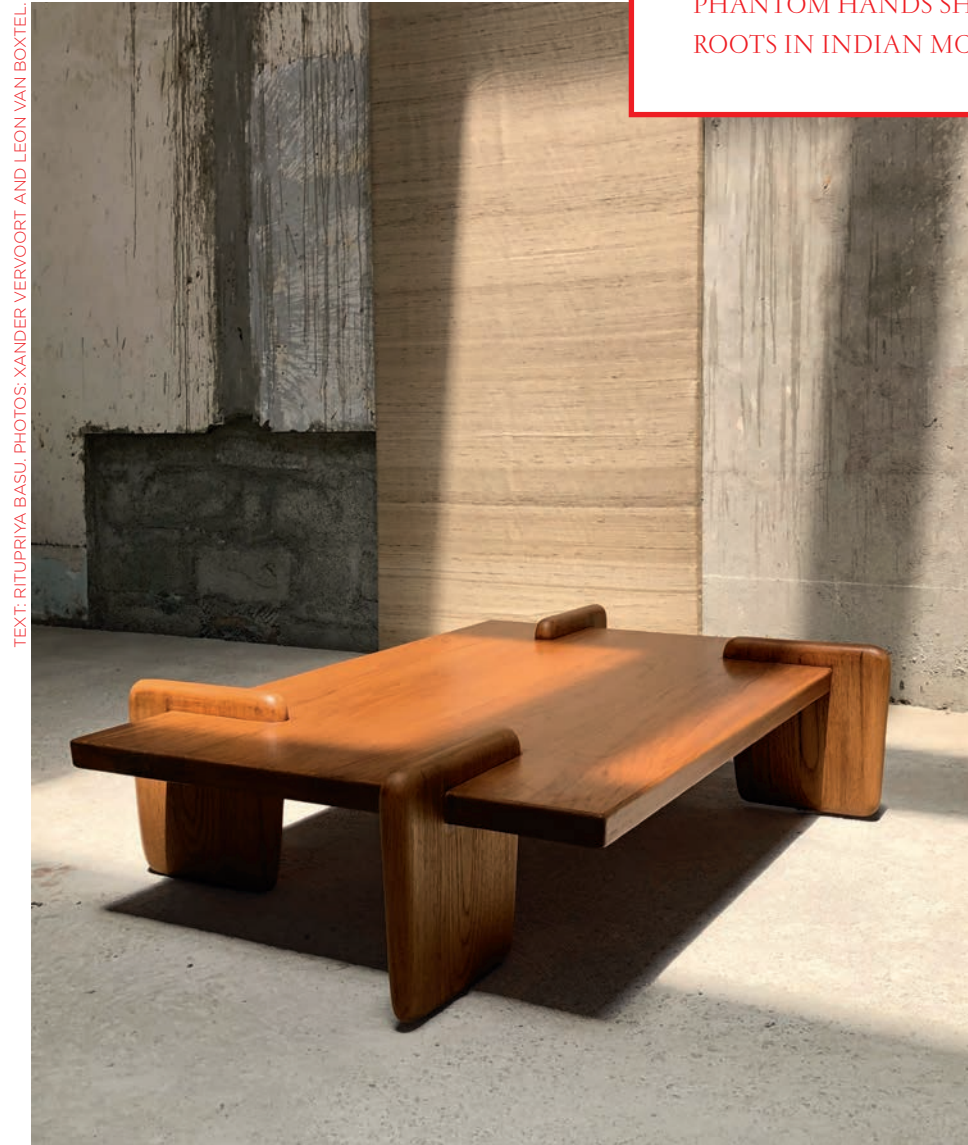
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UNLIMITED EDITIONS

THE LATEST PIECES BY BENGALURU-BASED FURNITURE MAKER PHANTOM HANDS SHOWCASE ITS ROOTS IN INDIAN MODERNISM



in close partnership with a team of carpenters, polishers, cane weavers and upholsterers. Back in 2013, Phantom Hands began as an online catalogue for vintage furniture and antiques, but soon transformed into a furniture workshop with a sharp interest in contemporizing artisanal craftsmanship through modest design interventions.

“Sifting through antiques led us to the discovery of some post-independence Indian design stories, such as Chandigarh’s modernist period, art deco furniture from Mumbai, and pieces

Even the most cursory glance at the modernist pieces of furniture crafted by Phantom Hands is enough to spot the gleam of hand-polished teak and the intricate rattan patterns that have now become synonymous with the studio’s designs. Founded by Deepak Srinath, the studio often collaborates with like-minded international designers, and handcrafts each of its pieces in its workshop in Bengaluru,

from Ahmedabad that were inspired by the work of George Nakashima,” remembers founder Deepak Srinath. “Almost instantly, we were drawn to the idea of using traditional Indian woodworking techniques to craft contemporary objects and re-edits of these modernist pieces of furniture that would effortlessly fit into our homes.”

The heavy, all-pervasive influence of Indian modernism is impossible to miss in their latest collections, which were supposed to travel to Milan earlier this year, in what was to be Phantom Hands’ debut trip to Fuorisalone. Moving past the re-edits of armchairs by Pierre Jeanneret, the X+L collection upcycles wedges and bars of leftover teak to create a coffee table, a trestle table, a room divider, two lamps and a modular sofa set. Amsterdam-based designers Xander Vervoort and Leon van Boxtel added small tweaks to accentuate the texture of the wood. “To emphasize the beauty of the teak, we brushed the surfaces with steel to highlight the grain,” says Vervoort.

The leggy ‘X+L Trestle Table’ (pictured) channels the compass legs that became the signature style of French mid-century modernism, and subsequently that of Chandigarh’s utilitarian furniture. “Our first encounter with the work of Pierre Jeanneret was love at first sight. So when Srinath asked us to design a collection for Phantom Hands inspired by the legacy of Indian modernism, it felt like all our passions came together,” says Boxtel. “Srinath and we share a similar aesthetic, and a love for—seemingly simple design.”

The Mungaru and Tangali collections too celebrate subtle and considered design innovations. Crafted by the Japanese-Danish design duo INODA+SVEJE, the softer, organic shapes of the Mungaru pieces are a departure from the sharper edges and angles of Phantom Hands’ previous works, while the backrests and seats of the Tangali bench and daybed are woven in rattan patterns that are not commonly found in Indian furniture. “Innovative cane weavings were a core part of the design process of Tangali,” says Srinath.

The studio pays keen attention to their creations, right down to the smallest details, like the names of their collections. “In Kannada, Tangali means cool breeze, while Mungaru means monsoon, which is the season when INODA+SVEJE make their yearly trips to Bengaluru,” says Srinath.

Much of the nuances of the furniture—such as the finger joints, radius of the arms and legs and various joineries—are shaped by hand, using materials and craftsmanship that are nearly the same as was used in the 1950s. Unassuming in its simplicity, and backed by the richness of its local material palette and a deep reverence for the handworked, the best of Phantom Hands takes the foundational tenets of Indian modernism, and brings it right up to date. ▀



Facing page: In the X+L collection by Xander Vervoort and Leon van Boxtel, the iconic architecture of Chandigarh’s modernist buildings is translated into the legs of the ‘X+L Coffee Table’ that are slipped into the tabletop. **Left:** Vervoort and Boxtel brushed the teak to highlight the grain of the wood, as seen in the ‘X+L Trestle Table’.