

products profile

By Laura Joralemon

FRESH PERSPECTIVES

Four innovative thinkers are designing with the future in mind



TALIA LACONI Los Angeles

When Talia Laconi was working on a commercial project in nearby Venice, California, she found a hole in the market while looking for a lightweight surface product that could achieve the sculptural effect she wanted in a natural material. "We created the custom brick out of necessity more than anything," she says. "We had an idea of a fluted material for the exterior of the building but the only thing we could find that fit our vision was a massive brick and the project didn't have the necessary clearance." That was the moment Kinney Block was born, named for the project's location on Abbot Kinney Boulevard. Handmade in LA using a sustainable composite concrete that is durable, naturally cooling, and weather resistant, the tile collection has grown from the original rectilinear brick to include fluted and reeded versions that play with variations on scale and positive and negative space. Laconi is working to extend the Kinney Block range and is developing designs for flooring and other horizontal surface applications. She is also experimenting with new materials. "I'm focused on bringing more awareness," she says, "so that we can create a community of people that want to be part of the next generation of building materials."

kinneyblock.com



AURORE PIETTE Meschers-sur-Gironde, France

Along the French Atlantic coast, just north of Bordeaux, artist Aurore Piette crafts ceramic objects, tiles, and lighting with an unusual collaborator: the ocean. She calls herself an *artisane de la mer*, or craftswoman of the sea, finding both inspiration and material in the coastal environment around her. "I am curious about the potential of unique, local, and sustainable materials," she says, and she devotes her work to exploring methods of craft that will repurpose discarded biomaterials into objects of value. "I have developed several techniques that lead to different applications for ocean matter in the design and architecture fields," she explains. Piette places materials into handcrafted molds before anchoring them in shallow pools for the tides to shape. Then, she fires ceramics in kilns she has dug into the earth, incorporating natural combustibles to add unpredictable colors and markings to the finished pieces. Her latest method embraces 3D printing, a zero-waste process, to sculpt light fixtures from marine sediment. The rippled, curved forms she designs are left unvarnished because she aims to honor the beauty of the original raw materials. "I believe in local and transparent production and consumption," Piette says.

aurorepiette.com



Photos courtesy of TALIA LACONI and AURORE PIETTE