CHRISTOPHE CÔME FORGES AHEAD

The Parisian artisan's dazzling furniture and lighting designs are born of glass, iron and fire.

BY ROSIE CASE

Portrait by Jean-François Gaté

From heartbreakingly elegant Art Deco–influenced console tables to refined glass-clad cabinets to sleek Modernist lighting, the work of French designer Christophe Côme is the stuff of my waking dreams.

So, naturally, when I have the opportunity to chat with Côme about his designs, I go full-blown fan-girl and open with a too-broad query, asking what inspires him. Côme hesitates, no doubt wondering where to begin. "There's so much inspiration," he finally answers politely. "Classical music—any kind of music, really. Nature. Literature." Then Côme gets specific. "The French author J. K. Huysmans describes incredible interiors in his books." In other words, the inspiration for Côme's stunning designs can be found in the images his brain conjures up while he's listening to music or reading a passage in a 19th-century novel. In your face, Pinterest!

Huysmans, the novelist, was a self-described "Decadent," a leader in a movement that rejected both Romanticism and Modernism (only to eventually be regarded as a crucial link between the two). Returning later to the Roman Catholicism he had rejected in his youth, Huysmans set much of one of his novels in Chartres Cathedral and eventually lived in a Benedictine abbey. Huysmans' disparate influences—Romanticism and Modernism, decadence and monasticism—are equally evident in Côme's work, his precious vessels of glass, bronze and iron painstakingly crafted as if to house sacred relics, objects of veneration.

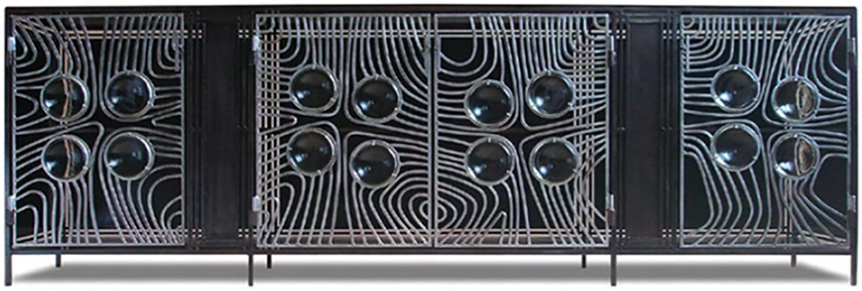
CATHEDRAL-WORTHY
Côme's designs include (CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT) the Honey Silver Cabinet in forged steel, 2003; his statuesque Disc Cabinet, 2014; the Marcus Cabinet in forged steel and cast glass, 2016; and the Irregular Enfilade in stainless and glass, 2007.

Côme began his career in fine art, learning bronze casting from renowned French sculptor Louis Derbré. In time, he gravitated to jewelry design and, by the early '90s, furniture-making. But it wasn't until a visit to a glass studio in 1995 that Côme began incorporating glass into his pieces—and revolutionized his work.

At 51, Côme straddles the worlds of art and design. For the past decade, he has displayed his creations at Design Miami/, where this year his work is being showcased by NYC's Cristina Grajales Gallery. "For me, it's important to have good representation at Design Miami/. Commissions often follow."

I ask Côme his thoughts on how new technologies such as 3-D printing are having an impact on design today. "I'm amazed by the possibilities—the younger generation is so talented and has such incredible machines at their disposal," he says. "But I have a deep respect for things made by hand—it's something clever to go slowly. When you're working with say, ceramic, you may make 25 samples, and the 26th is good," he says, laughing.

Call it a hunch, but I have the feeling that Christophe Côme's first 25 would probably be pretty striking, too.



(ALL CABINETS) CHRISTOPHE CÔME STUDIO

C'EST MAGNIFIQUE
"I have a deep respect for things made by hand—it's something clever to go slowly," says Côme, here in his Paris atelier.