



**N**estled into the highly industrial nook of Seven Sisters, London, Hector Serrano's studio space is customarily shared with a handful of creative types. Conveniently, it flows from a light-flooded office into the hands-on workshop next door. Renderings, prototypes, brainstorm and completed projects line the walls and shelves, and I get the thrilling sense that I will be given true insight into the workings of Serrano's mind, business and future.

I arrive a little late – after taking a few wrong turns in the warren of backstreets – and catch the design medley lingering at the kitchen table, savouring the last of their lunch break. I'm not sure whether it's my presence alone, or the mounting work at their stations that sees them disperse, but Serrano and I are left to chat. Ever so slightly nervous about the

questions coming his way, Serrano offers to show me what he's been working on, and guides me away from the voice-recorder and over to his typically neat desk.

His attention, he explains, is now keenly focused on Tokyo. The Spanish government has commissioned an exhibition at Tokyo Design Week. An emotive, theatrical space is in the making – one that conveys everything the new generation of Spanish designers has to offer. It is a project that is particularly poignant for the Spanish designer, who decided to stay in London after studying at the Royal College of the Arts (RCA). The community in London, Serrano says, is "very competitive, there are lots of people trying to make it, but there is plenty of opportunity for collaboration".

One of his most recent collaborative projects was TEN – an initiative conceived by Chris Jackson to gain exposure for sustainability in design. The first brief, three years ago, consisted of a £10 budget and a radius of 10km, from which the materials were to be sourced. Three years on, the 10

## A SPANISH



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designers involved from the beginning have completed their third showcase. This year, however, the designs were to be commercial, with plans currently underway to put them into production. Serrano's piece is 'Do Not Lose Me', a key holder that takes on the familiar shape of the "Do Not Disturb" notice. The product has also seen him recognised as one of the up-and-coming stars in London's *Time Out* magazine.

Serrano's contributions to London's 2008 Design Festival received abundant publicity, in particular his conceptual exhibition stand for Spanish bathware brand, Roca, in partnership with Javier Esteban. A new branding exercise repositioning Roca as innovators rather than manufacturers, inspired the company to move away from the typical exhibition stand with products. "They wanted someone based in London, and

## FLAIR

were looking for a studio that wasn't super established, but someone who could bring a totally fresh and creative approach," says Serrano.

This was undoubtedly achieved in the duo's interpretation of water. LED lights and motorised arms were employed to create an otherworldly effect, with the whole concept inspired by a simple fold-away hair brush. "After we designed the proposal, and before we presented it to the clients we thought, 'if we can build this it's going to be amazing'. But we were scared as well that it might not work out." Assisted by a team of specialists in animatronics, motors, mechanical engineering and chemical engineering, it is little wonder the result created such a spectacle.

This venture into space and branding is a new one for Serrano, who began his career with a succession of lighting designs. Firstly his award-winning 'superparata' that was picked up by *droog*, and perhaps most famously the floating 'waterproof' for *Metastate*

—a company with which he continues to work closely despite the distance between studio and manufacture.

"Globalisation," Serrano explains, "makes design more interesting. It opens up opportunities to work more independently. And there is also the possibility of people being able to look for something unique in their purchases." He predicts that the new accessibility to global design will heighten the appeal of products that are more artisan and unique to a particular region.

While the Spanish flair in his work is evident, Serrano's designs have global appeal. Each usually evolves from keen observation of how people interact with everyday products. Serrano's re-embellished napkins for *Worldwide* were a huge success, and this has led to further projects with the company. One of the concepts he is currently floating is a blackboard-finished set of babushka dolls that house the dial in the smallest doll. His ability to take something simple and make it entertaining — paired with his affable demeanour — is carving out a fast road to the top for Héctor Serrano.

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A relatively fresh face on the global design scene, Héctor Serrano has been commissioned for this very reason — to provide a new approach to typical scenarios. Alaana Fitzpatrick caught him in the wake of the London Design Festival.



01 Light for *Aluna* by *Aluna*  
02  
03 Installed in Valencia as part of World Government Day celebrations  
04 Imagery from the "1" light catalogue, creative direction by Serrano  
04 Valencia by *Corina Havel*, "1" in collaboration with *Luis Llorca*



# Pelikan Sofa

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