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## Celebrating young design

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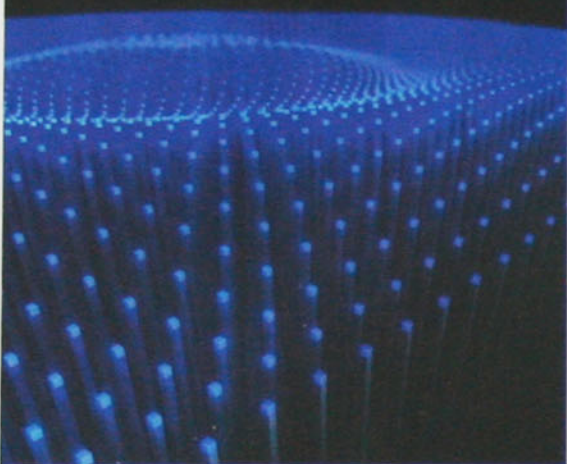
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Resembling a giant ripple, the Waterdrop installation Serrano created for Roca features LEDs mounted on sticks slotted into a latex base. A series of invisible integrated steel arms is programmed to move the base at intervals for the illusion of ebb and flow.



The soft bounciness of Superpatata, a salt-filled fluorescent latex lamp for Droog, makes it equally ideal as a soothing pillow and a plaything.

**Name**  
Héctor Serrano

**Vitals**  
Born in Valencia, Spain, 1974  
Based in London, England

**Occupation**  
Lighting, installation and product designer

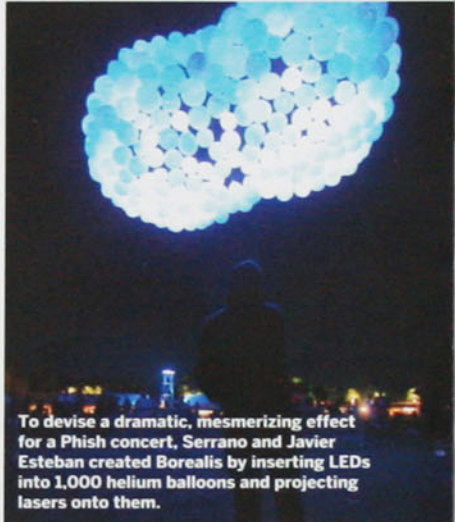
**Education**  
Master of product design,  
Royal College of Art,  
London (2000)

Bachelor of product design,  
ESDI CEU, Valencia (1998)

**Selected exhibitions and installations**  
Salone del Mobile, Milan (2010)  
Phish Festival 8, Indio, California (2009)  
Waterdrop for Roca; Ten Again, 100% Design London (2008, 2007)  
Spain Emotion, Tokyo Designers' Week (2008)  
NetObjects: My World, New Crafts, Experimentadesign, Lisbon (2005)  
300% Spanish Design, Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan (2005)  
Twinkle Twinkle, Laforet Museum, Harajuku, Tokyo (2004)  
Sentiers Lumineux, Villa Noailles, Hyères, France (2004)  
Design 21: Love/Why?, Barcelona, Tokyo, Kobe, New York, Paris (2004)  
Brilliant, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2004)

**Selected awards**  
Designer of the Year, AD magazine (2009)  
Nachlux Award (2009)  
Second prize, the New Bus for London competition with Miñarro Garcia and Javier Esteban, Transport for London (2008)  
Premio Nacional Diseños No Aburridos, Murcia, Spain (2002)  
Peugeot Design Award, London (2000)

**Selected clients**  
Roca, Moooi, Droog, Metalarte, Gandia Blasco, ICEX Spanish Ministry of Industry Tourism and Trade, Phish



To devise a dramatic, mesmerizing effect for a Phish concert, Serrano and Javier Esteban created Borealis by inserting LEDs into 1,000 helium balloons and projecting lasers onto them.

**Boy with the bubble**

One of my first projects at the Royal College of Art was inspired by a flour-filled balloon I found at a Paris market – a simple and cheap toy that changes shape as you play with it. At first, I didn't know what my design was going to be. I tried filling balloons with glass beads, like those used for sandpaper, as well as other things; then I experimented with table salt. It diffuses the heat, so it's warm but not too hot to touch. And it provides a translucent glow.

The result of my experiments was Superpatata, a soft, colourful latex lamp that can be used as a pillow or hot water bottle. Droog exhibited it in 2000 in its Milan showroom during the furniture fair, and the lamp also won the Peugeot design prize of £15,000. This gave me the freedom to start my own studio – albeit from my bedroom, but at least I could start entering design competitions and making things. In 2002, I did the Clothes Hanger Lamp, also for Droog, and got a real studio space in London.

**Newer balloons**

For the outdoor Phish Festival 8 last autumn in Indio, California, we were asked to do a project with an open brief but a tight budget. We wanted to do something really big, because it had to be seen by 50,000 people, outside in the dark. We had to design it in London so it could be shipped and assembled in Indio. So I thought, "Well, air is cheap."

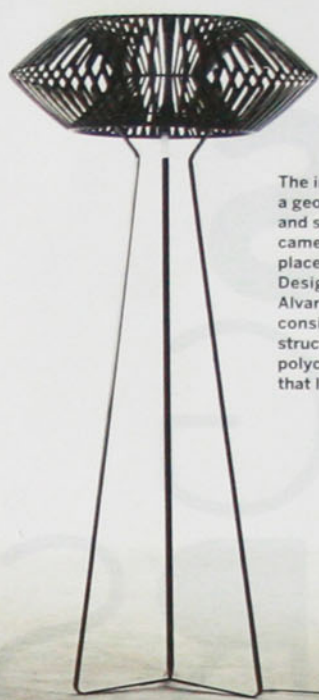
To heighten the experience of the music, we created this "parasite" design – a helium-filled blimp with balloons all over it and LED lights embedded in the necks of the balloons. It lives off the music, changing colour and brightness based on the sound, and it can also be controlled by remote control or live through the Web. More than a thousand helium balloons were transformed into digital screens by the LEDs inside them, and by lasers projected onto them from the ground. I have worked with balloons a lot, but never with helium and blimps.

**Working ways**

I like taking a familiar object, like a table lamp or a sofa, and manipulating it and integrating it into something unexpected. Waterproof, my first product to go into production, in 2003, resembles a standard, archetypal table lamp but is impermeable and battery operated, so it can float in a swimming pool.

The Sofa Lamp, which I designed two years ago with my friends, design collective CuldeSac, began as an exploration of everyday materials and processes that fascinate us. In the studio, we have Orchara (a nutty, sweet drink), and it comes in an EPS [expanded polystyrene foam] vat that keeps it cold. We played with it a lot to understand its properties and examine its design potential. EPS is 90 per cent air, which means we could do a large object that weighs almost nothing. So this material and process became our new starting point. At the same time, I wanted to expand the idea of combining two different typologies. So we experimented with a sofa's quilted texture for a lampshade.

I continued to explore the transformation theme in Waterdrop, a 2008 project for Roca,



The inspiration for V, a geometric floor and suspension lamp, came from an unlikely place: a hair band. Designed for Arturo Alvarez, the fixtures consist of a metallic structure and repeated polycarbonate parts that lend a moiré effect.



Serrano reinvents the hand puppet with his Animal and Monster Hands (in individual box sets, each containing eight). The temporary tattoos are meant for children three and up.

Made of roto-moulded white polyethylene, the indoor-outdoor Air stool, soon to be launched by Gandia Blasco, is a minimalist form with a thin profile.



Anyone with a laser sintering device can now download and print Tower of London, part of Serrano's rapid-prototyped Reduced Carbon Footprint Souvenir collection.



With the delightful Waterproof, Serrano sought to bring the archetypal lamp into the pool. The result: a rechargeable battery-powered fixture made by Metalarte in roto-moulded polyethylene.

where we took the idea of a simple drop of water and made it mysterious. I was inspired by the flexible bristles of a hairbrush, and I worked with a team of specialists for six months to create an LED array that seems to breathe and flow through a darkened space. Mounted on sticks slotted into a flexible latex base, which is attached to a series of steel arms programmed to move at certain intervals, the LEDs are programmed to switch on and off in time with the fluid motions. In effect, we were able to celebrate the properties of water without using a single drop. The people observing it couldn't tell how it was made. That's the magic.

#### Technology as a means

I use technology in an emotional way; it is a communication tool, but in the end it's only a tool. In my work, the technology is always hidden, but it lets me make complicated things that appear simple. Fan Txt, from 2005, is a simple concept with integrated technology. It's an LED-embedded fan that doubles as a communication tool for flirting. When shaken, it lights up with different frequencies to show a message; a girl can use it to indicate that she wants to dance.

The Reduced Carbon Footprint Souvenir collection also uses this idea of integrating technology and making a familiar thing come alive. It's a collection of souvenirs that can be sent by e-mail and then materialized using a 3-D printer. No transport or standard production methods are required, so the object's carbon footprint is reduced to the minimum.

Back Up Objects employs the same principle of using new technologies for everyday objects, but in this case it's for very personal items. If you have something you value a lot, then you might want to back it up as you would a digital file. Back Up Objects is a conceptual project where any item could be custom made: 3-D scanned, saved and uploaded to a 3-D printer, where it can be rapid manufactured. It's this idea that objects and information are becoming more similar. Rapid prototyping isn't new to product design, but I wanted to reinterpret it for everyday objects, because I think in the future this technology will be widespread.

The Sofa Lamp, designed by Héctor Serrano and CuldeSac for Droog, plays off the duelling aesthetics of chesterfields and traditional lampshades.



#### Back to basics

I've been working on Air, a white plastic chair for Gandia Blasco using a rotational moulding process, the same one I used for Waterproof. This time, I'm trying to use this process in an unconventional way, to make something lightweight and not too bulky. It has a really thin profile. More than using techniques in a new way, I want to express something original with something so familiar.

TERRI PETERS