

A NEW CRAFT



Brodie Neill sitting on his e-turn seat.

TASMANIAN-BORN, LONDON-BASED DESIGNER BRODIE NEILL UTILISES DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND TOOLS TO CREATE FURNITURE AND LIGHTING THAT IS SLICK AND HIGH-GLOSS, WITH A SLIGHT NOD TO THE ARTISANAL CRAFT OF HIS TRAINING.

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photography Courtesy of Brodie Neill

— Tasmania has the reputation for producing some of Australia's finest designers working in timber. It's a tradition developed through the University of Tasmania's (UTAS) School of Architecture and Design and sustained by the Design Centre – Tasmania. It's not to say that there aren't fine woodworkers working on the mainland, just that the island is renowned for this type of making. So there surely must be a certain level of expectation felt by students and new graduates to work in wood. It's within this context that the work and practice of Brodie Neill is so intriguing.

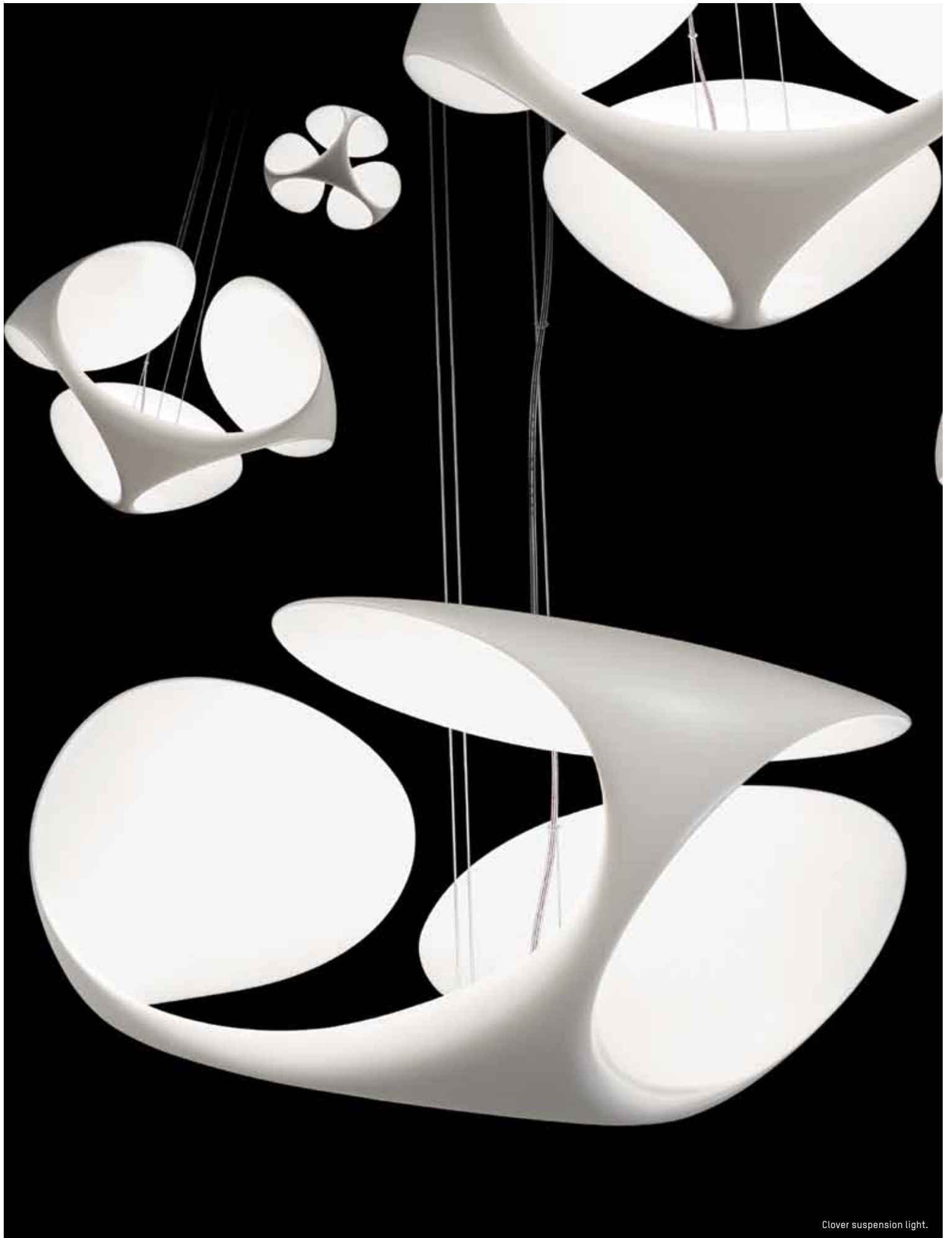
There's no suggestion of a timber mafia operating behind UTAS closed doors, however, Neill's work really is so different to what is usually expected that it encourages a double-take. But once Neill's background is discovered, his process and aesthetic makes for a logical progression. The designer graduated from UTAS in 2001, not before he received a fellowship to study at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). If UTAS taught him the craft of design then RISD taught him the technical side.

Neill has always been enamoured of organic forms that have the continuous line and shape often associated with automotive industry design. The look is highly stylised, glossy and utterly

modern. It's something that can't be truthfully replicated by hand, but rather, needs digital tools and techniques to achieve. He learnt those tools and techniques while undertaking classes in RISD's architecture department, and, in a sense, the missing piece of the design puzzle was found.

Exposure to digital technologies, such as rapid prototyping, suggested to Neill what could be done, and that the ideas he had could actually be realised. What working with such advanced technologies also meant was that the process could drive the idea, and this is evident in his revised wire iteration of Reverb, produced in a limited edition of 20 and exhibited at Interni Legacy at Milan 2012. The original Reverb seat was made from a single, continuous sheet of metal, which was expanded and inverted to form a mushroom-like seating structure. The wire version is still mushroom-like in form, but it has been constructed from a system of hand formed and mirror-polished stainless steel rods, which lends it an exact geometry. Reverb Wire is showing off, but the preciseness of its manufacture makes for a compelling design.

When Neill was living in the US he was focused on Europe, and so it comes as no surprise that he decided to move to London, where he has been based for the past seven years. His



Clover suspension light.



Remix CNC-carved chaise lounge.

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Reverb Wire chair.

studio on Charlotte Road is where you'll find him working on furniture and lighting products, and his practice is split 50/50 between pieces for production and limited editions. The latter is informed by exhibitions held while still a student at UTAS, and the pieces that fall into this range have the exquisite artistry that one would expect of a gallery-worthy object of design. One such work is the Remix chaise lounge, which is CNC-carved from a combination of reclaimed and sourced materials, including wood and plastics. It is dynamic in form and execution and had its debut at The Apartment design and art gallery during London Design Festival 2009.

Neill is currently in talks with Kundalini regarding the production of new work, and he is also fleshing out his Clover suspension lamp, which is produced by the lighting manufacturer. One wonders where this design could possibly go; it already seems so utterly well resolved. But that being said, digital processes are developing at a rapid rate, so it will be interesting to see what tools and techniques Neill harnesses to take this design that one step further. *(inside)*

> brodieneill.com