

Another Architecture N°69 August — September 2017

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**New Kid
on the Block**
Thomas Kröger

Art Installations
by Bureau Spectacular,
Doug Aitken and
Salottobuono

**'The purpose
in life is a book'**
Mark Cousins



Bullets & Ghost Ships

Beirut's newest buildings by Bernard Khoury,
Youssef Tohme and Herzog & de Meuron



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Traditional elegance and new ideas mingle in De Cárdenas's architectural concept.

Transitional Style

Dornbracht had Neri&Hu and Rafael de Cárdenas design environments for the Vaia series of bathroom fittings.

When Dornbracht introduced the fitting series Vaia at the start of the year, creative director Mike Meiré suggested taking a different approach to the presentation of taps and shower heads. Meiré, who's been involved with Dornbracht as a brand director for more than 25 years, is responsible for the design of the imaginary bathrooms where the company's products are presented. To allow as much creative freedom as possible, he decided to ask two design studios that weren't closely connected to Dornbracht. 'We wanted someone from Asia and someone from North America,' says Meiré. 'In the end, we asked Neri&Hu and Rafael de Cárdenas. They do a lot for hotels and other professional clients, and are very familiar with the topics that are relevant at the moment.'

The Vaia series was created by Sieger Design. This studio also has a long-lasting relationship with the family-run company, dating back to the 1980s. Dieter

Sieger, the founder, was succeeded by his sons Christian and Michael, who both designed several products for Dornbracht. The Vaia series is vaguely reminiscent of the existing Tara series, although Tara has lots of details with sharp corners. 'Vaia is more gentile,' says Meiré. 'Inside, the fixtures are beautifully curved. People want innovation, but at the same time they long for tradition, a reference to something that already exists. That's what Vaia is about. We wanted to make it both modern and familiar, as in a déjà vu. You could call it a transitional style.'

Meiré tasked Neri&Hu and Rafael de Cárdenas to let their imaginations run wild. 'Originally, bathrooms were all about combining fixtures and fittings in one style, but these days it's much more eclectic,' he says. 'You can combine products from more than one series.' Apart from that, he wanted their designs to rise above the prosaic qualities of most bathroom iterations. 'There's

a strong cultural dimension to the bathroom and we want to communicate that,' says Meiré. 'A bathroom is usually very private; everything happens behind closed doors. It's also about sexuality and ageing. This is culturally relevant.'

The commission for Dornbracht wasn't Neri&Hu's first collaboration with a sanitary wares manufacturer. 'We designed our first bathtub, which was launched in Milan during the past Salone, for Agape,' says Lyndon Neri. For Dornbracht, Neri&Hu was looking for 'a sense of the domestic ritual within bathing spaces'. The designers came up with a beautiful concrete structure, where the arched ceilings and shallow pond recall Le Corbusier's Legislative Assembly in Chandigarh, India. Furthermore, they used a lot of marble and combined both wall- and deck-mounted taps with one brass washing basin. Part of the ceiling is open, to give the space the characteristics of a courtyard.

Rafael de Cárdenas made multiple designs, of which one had a plan with strongly curved walls. 'We were encouraged to design an environment with a high fantasy quotient,' says De Cárdenas. 'Yet it was also meant to reflect the notion of a "transitional style", which is about the juxtaposition of the traditional

and the contemporary, and which initially informed the design of the fittings. So, for example, we gave a prominent place to brick masonry, a consummately traditional practice, but we inflected it with a distinctly non-traditional coursing to break up the gravity of the walls and infuse the classical with a sense of contemporaneity.' The design by De Cárdenas has earthy colours and soft, round shapes. The taps are affixed to a cubistic piece of bathroom furniture made of different, dark coloured materials, like Corian and smoked glass.

Although initially there were no plans to actually realize the designs, Meiré doesn't exclude that from happening – 'for something like a fair stand'. After the renderings were done, two mock-ups were built for the photoshoot. Some of the materials in those were real, and others were imitated and then refined in Photoshop. 'So the pictures are a cross-over,' says Meiré. 'For now, it's about the imagery.' The images were then turned into trailers that can be seen on social media, such as [facebook.com/dornbracht](https://www.facebook.com/dornbracht). In order to stimulate a discourse about transitional style in progressive interiors, Dornbracht also created the hashtag [#createnewbalance](https://twitter.com/createnewbalance).

[dornbracht.com](https://www.dornbracht.com)



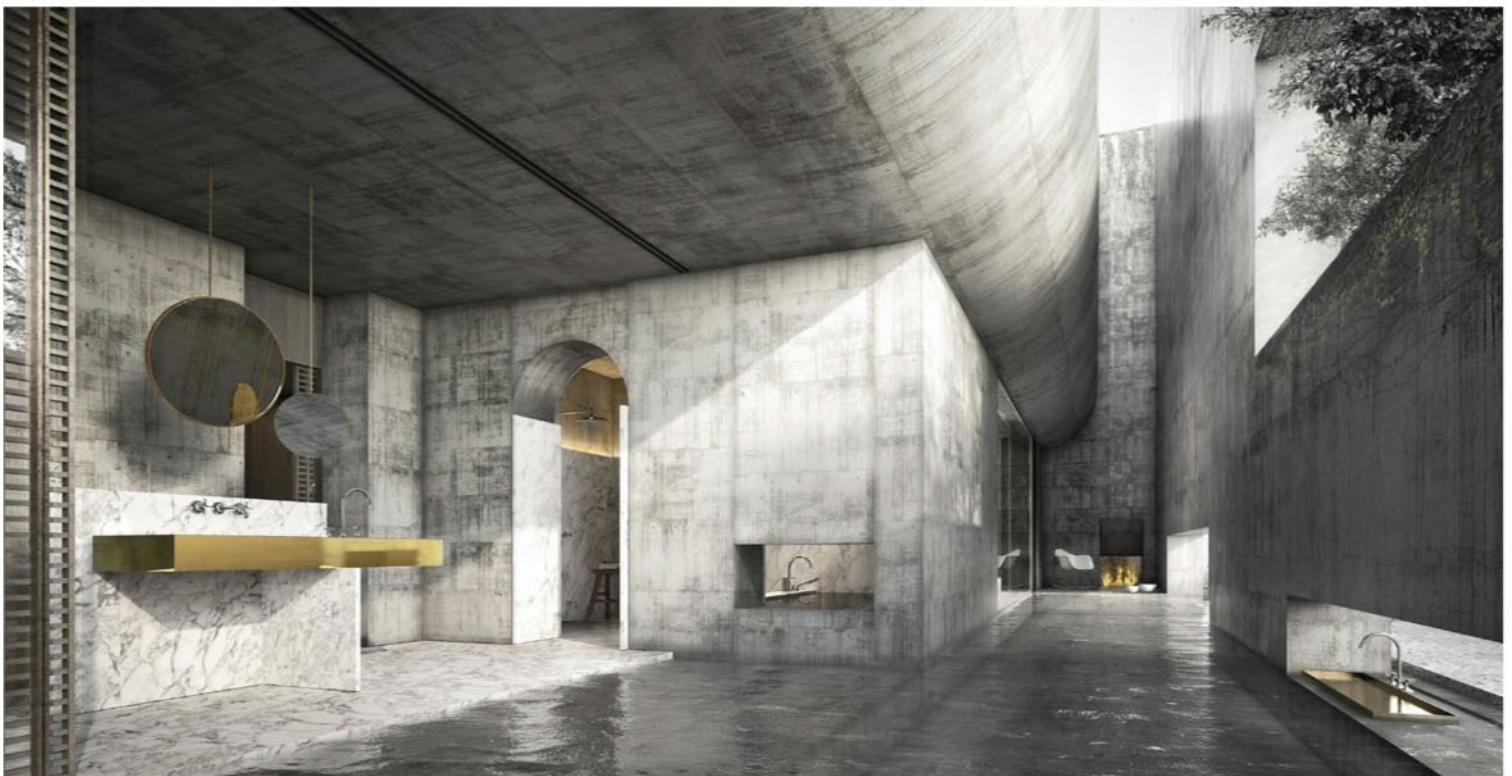
Based on the conceptual approaches of Neri&Hu, Vaia in matte platinum is central within the bathroom architecture.

Photo [Thomas Popinger](#)



The bathroom architecture for the matte dark platinum Vaia ties in with the central elements of Rafael de Cárdenas's design, and also with the range of finishes and colours outlined in the material collage.

Photo [Thomas Popinger](#)



Neri&Hu's architectural concept focuses on the atrium.