

BALZER BALZER ACID INDUSTRIAL

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Night exists only in wakefulness. If one stays awake through it, it opens up. Its duration becomes punctuated by sparks of light and sound, by a range of motion and thought that strives to be fully other. Then, when morning comes, all that's left are little hallucinatory joys: the kind of experience that often shapes Balzer Balzer's design intuitions.

Growing up in Frankfurt, Yanik, Moritz and Nils Balzer familiarized with raving at a young age. In their early teens, they started throwing rave parties at their place: juggling with Reelap and Pioneer CDJs, subwoofers and amplifiers, the brothers celebrated their birthdays (as well as Christmas and Easter) over techno beats. While the centrality of music and dance brought them closer to the scene, rave culture's value system – based on acceptance, openness and play – was something they could immediately relate to, and felt at ease with.

Come 2019, they began to work as a studio by developing a site-specific project for Kyiv's techno club \exists – whose name, an existential quantifier, reads as “does not exist.” Among the works made for the space is the Active Structure, a five-meter-long and two-meter-high functional sculpture that invites people to explore movement, relation and connection, of which the ASC1 chair (2020-22) is the brainchild. The Wire Drums (2021-22), made from steel reinforcement mesh and foam, are a set of multi-functional stools that evoke the erratic, spontaneous conviviality of free parties. They can be used individually, if set vertically, or in pairs, if laid horizontally.

Giving shape to everyday objects through the use of found materials and industrial gear, Balzer Balzer transcends the rational boundaries of design to enact the fantasy of a never-ending rave. Its bold take on production, however, is ultimately centered on exposing all that qualifies as process.

July 5-10, 2022

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Support structures, traces and signs of manufacturing are mostly left deliberately visible. The studio's operative ethos – which gets reassembled in Vittoria Agrati's video, Acid Industrial (2022) – also serves an essential aesthetic purpose: what happens during production turns into a decorative element in its own right. In the Wasted Day Bed (2022), as in the Soft Decor (2022), re-purposed foam scraps and polyurethane foam move from being hidden from view as unwanted, unsightly signs of production to constituting the item's core identity.

The designers build their collective practice upon a conceptual, product-oriented approach, making the most of their vitally varied skill palette and diversity of backgrounds, which encompass integrated design, product design and architecture. Being Berghain regulars, several of their pieces are directly inspired by the club's premises and the unexpected ways they leave room for interaction and imagination. Funktion B (2020), a shelving unit, is a spin on the Funktion-One sound system, the industry's favorite – which, during busy nights, usually ends up being used as a shelf. The idea behind the Bubble Light series (2020-22), on the other hand, came during a particularly long party, when one of the venue's glowing bunker lights took on a life of its own – or so it seemed.

Text by Veronica Gisondi

Acid Industrial is the first-ever solo show by Balzer Balzer, a Berlin-based design studio founded by Yanik, Moritz and Nils Balzer. Their work has been exhibited internationally, including at Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg (2020-21); Collectible Fair, Brussels (2022); Off Shop, Pittlerwerke, Leipzig (2021); ⌘, Kyiv (2020), and Redesign Death, Cube Design Museum, Kerkrade (2020). They have an upcoming show at Museum Tot Zover, Amsterdam (2022-23).