

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

It's all in the details



VICKY SANDERSON
AROUND
THE HOUSE

Glenn Pushelberg and George Yabu have been asked for ages about creating a line of home goods.

It's a reasonable question for the internationally-famous Canadian design partners. Having reached the pinnacle of luxury residential, hospitality, and commercial design, surely a houseware line would be logical? And given their expertise at the high end, a collaboration with a partner like Limoges or Hermès would also make sense. It's a safe bet either would be delighted to have them.

Instead, they took another route, turning away from the upper-upper to create *departo* — a line of understated, finely-detailed furniture, ceramics, linens, metalwork, and glassware that's functional, portable, versatile, and affordable: a stoneware coffee cup is \$20, a cast-iron candlestick is \$60.

Prices for single pieces top out at \$657 for a folding bench made out of ash legs on a steel structure with leather handles, with a canvas seat. It's all available online at www.departo.co.

The through-line is that every detail has a purpose, which Yabu thinks users will discover through a thousand tiny tells — the coffee mug that's wide enough to hold soup and designed to cool it at a good pace, stackable bowls with grabbable half-

moon lips that also fit together for a centrepiece or serving station.

Chairs, benches and tables fold easily and can be either hung on a wall or tucked under an arm. Nothing needs to be assembled, and no special screwdrivers or fasteners are involved. To see more, go to www.aroundthehouse.ca

Accessible pricing was a fundamental driver, says Yabu. "I was not sure the world needed another high-end coffee cup. Besides, a Hermès mug is pretty clear about its message from the start. There is a more interesting challenge in a *departo* mug, which will grow on you, because so much thought has gone into it."

The studied sparseness and deep thoughtfulness of the design came in part from their experience working on micro hotels. "We saw everything being reduced in scale. With condo living and urbanization, we just don't have the luxury of space anymore. And that's endemic around the world," says Yabu.

At the same time, he says, people are losing interest in amassing possessions. "They're more nomadic: they want to experience, to travel. When they come home, they can reminisce over coffee in a beautiful *departo* mug, rather than blowing it on a Paul Smith mug that will mean they have to wait longer for the next trip, the next journey."

That ethos is reflected in the name, which references Yabu's love of Japan's elaborate department stores. "In Japanese culture they think



Little details like rounded legs on hanging tables mean fewer scuffed walls.

it's cool to adapt English words but they like to shorten them. Department store becomes *departo*. You look at the word and see "depart", "art", "go", "to". They all evoke going places."

While prices may be starter-level, Yabu thinks pieces should have a long life in any home. He hates to think of people throwing them out if and when their income rises. "I think it can all grow with the house," he says. "I think it has integrity."

Yabu and Pushelberg www.yabupushelberg.com

were inspired in part by historical campaign furniture, which includes anything designed to be packed and carried by troops. Perhaps they in turn will inspire a global march toward more thoughtful design. **SHAYAN ASGHARNIA**

are currently working on line extensions — leather goods are next, and colours like citrine, lavender and azure may soon turn up. New colours will be carefully calibrated to work with existing pieces, part of what Yabu described as an obsessional commitment to detail.

"My father was raised in the boat-building business on the west coast in British Columbia. He was a precision craftsman. I learned from him that it's one thing to make things beautiful, but that a boat has to float and things have to work."

Vicky Sanderson is the editor of *Around the House*, www.aroundthehouse.ca. A self-admitted opinionista, she's been writing and talking about home decor and improvement, design and lifestyle trends for more than two decades. Check her out on Instagram @athwithvicky, on Twitter @ATHwithVicky and on facebook.com/ATHWithVicky



A candlestick that also works as a bud vase sits on a 1.5-metre ash/linoleum trestle table (\$418 for the top, \$392 per leg.)



Pieces are described as essentials for global nomads.

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