

# DESIGN

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ARCHITECTURE, CRAFT, INTERIOR DECORATION AND DESIGN



Studio Ciguë's research model of Isabel Marant's Paris boutique on Avenue Victor Hugo, resting on a concept sketch of another store.

## SIX PACK

*A rough-and-ready philosophy gives personality to Paris's Studio Ciguë, founded by Australian Adrian Hunfalvy and five fellow architects.*

AS ONE ENTERS the converted plastic factory in Montreuil, in a suburb just outside Paris, a storage-like space unfolds: wood beams and old sofas, spare pieces and props, layers of materials and stacked-up chairs create an intriguing backstage décor. Ciguë, the exemplary yet off-beat architecture and design studio founded by six young architects, including Sydney-born Adrian Hunfalvy, is venturing into the future with a creative edge.

Through the atelier into the main space, Studio Ciguë is organised as much like a living area as a workspace, and the six main architects and founding partners — who met during their studies at École Nationale d'Architecture de Paris La Vilette — still seem to get along like old school friends. "We met around a vision, which became complementary over time. We were all driven to similar aesthetic and sensorial qualities: a certain kind of roughness that would convey a luxurious identity," says Hunfalvy. >



**Below left:** the six founders of Studio Ciguë (from left) Camille Bénard, Hugo Haas, Adrian Hunfalvy, Erwan Lévêque, Guillem Renard and Alphonse Sarthout. A sketch, **below**, by Sarthout outlines his contribution to Le 6000, a cultural project dedicated to art, design and sustainability housed in a repurposed 6000-square metre factory in Normandy (Sarthout's contribution is scheduled for completion in 2016). **Bottom:** building a wooden model in Ciguë's workshop.



**Clockwise from top left:** the walls of the Aesop store on Rue Tiquetonne, Paris, designed by Ciguë in 2012, are clad in rough sycamore. Handmade Japanese iron nails were meticulously driven into the wood to act as shelving, referencing the aesthetic of the many mid-20th-century workshops that remain in the district; the façade and front window of Aesop Tiquetonne; a staircase made of polished concrete, glass and steel at Isabel Marant's flagship store in Seoul, South Korea; the firm's Tokyo store for the designer was stripped back and beams left exposed; the changing rooms of Isabel Marant's Paris boutique on Rue Victor Hugo are made out of fibreglass resin and natural grey felt to look like papery, illuminated houses.



< In French, *Ciguë* means hemlock, a poisonous plant. Suggestive of the words *scie* (a saw) and *aiguë* (acute), the name seems to embody the craft-meets-design philosophy of the studio and the sensorial approach that drives every one of their projects.

Overlooking the main workspace, an elevated glass box serves as a meeting room. Below, the designated chef of the day places a saucepan on the wood stove to steam green beans and poach a few eggs. From there, Ciguë doesn't really look like a design studio.

"We came into design from a weird angle since we're not designers," Hunfalvy says. "We don't even know much about fashion, either, but we've completed stores for Dover Street Market, Yves Saint Laurent and trade show Pitti Uomo in the past. And that's precisely why we were commissioned: we have a different way of looking at things. We don't really have a 'signature' — our process is much more subtle and interactive.

"In the end, cross-disciplinarity is always where the interest lies for us: it pushes us to come up with a unique response each time, whether we design furniture for Merci, a mobile kitchen for an art space or a high-end fashion store in Tokyo."

Set in a typical Tokyo house, Isabel Marant's flagship Omotesando store illustrates Ciguë's approach: "We didn't have any preconceived idea. It was only after we'd taken a close look at the simple wooden house that we decided to rip off the panelling and expose the underlying frame. We even chose not to cover the beams on the floor."

Asked if some projects have a common denominator, Hunfalvy says that imperfections are everything; they hold its soul. Exploring sawmills and quarries leads the team to discover alternative materials or finishes. "Most of the materials available today have no character: we hate working with soulless, packaged items. We like working with local craftsmen, drawing a pattern and seeing it come alive in the hands of an experienced worker."

As well as working on the interior (and most of the furniture) of a five-storey private mansion in the heart of Paris's 7th arrondissement, the team of six has recently been commissioned for three new Aesop stores (one in Paris and two in London). Always tongue-in-cheek and never taking themselves too seriously, these friends and collaborators have found a winning recipe for delivering seriously creative projects. MARIE LE FORT *Studio Ciguë; cigue.net. Read the full interview with Adrian Hunfalvy at [blog.vogueliving.com.au](http://blog.vogueliving.com.au).*