

DAMN°

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2018

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Special
Materials



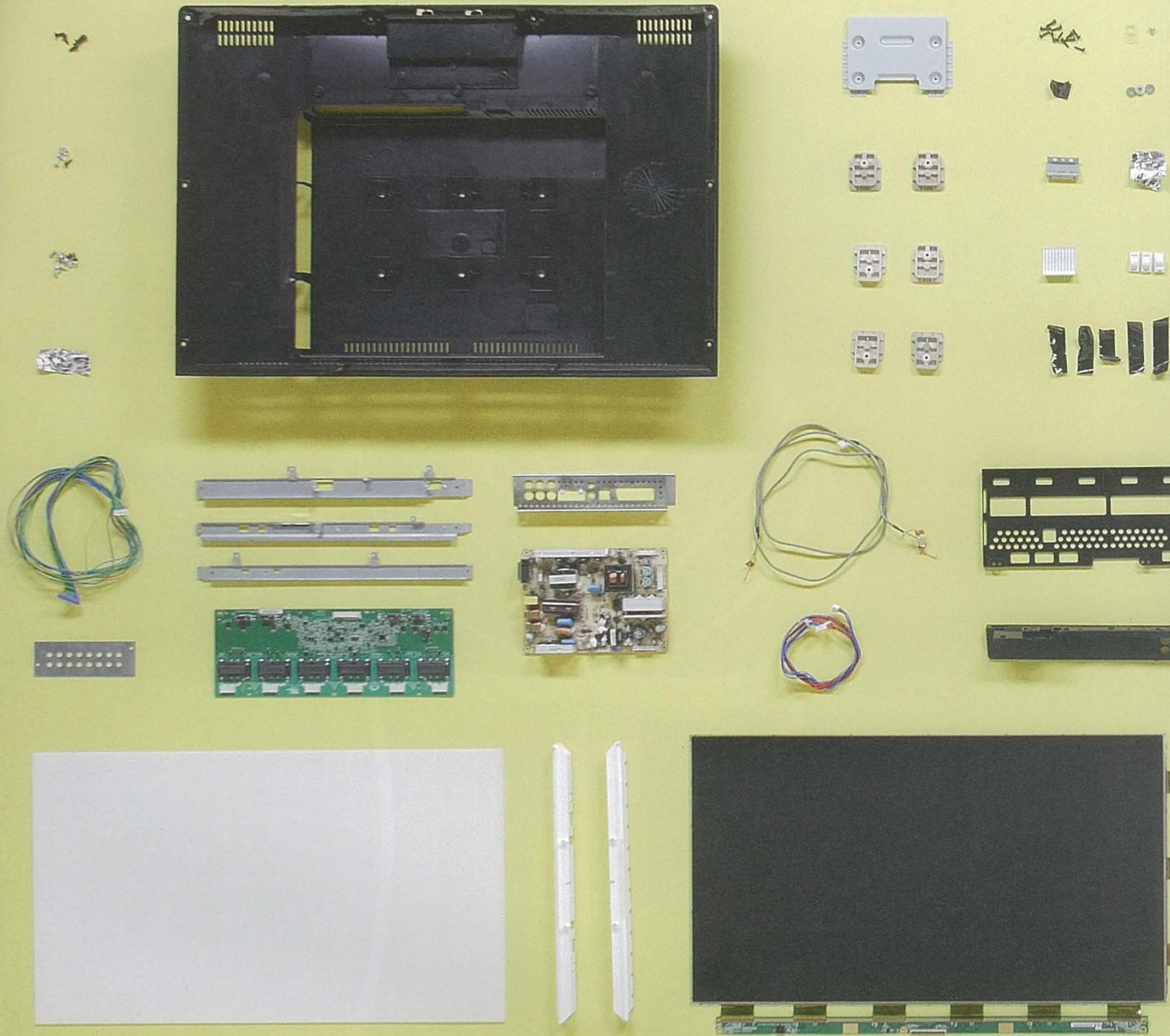
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STUDIO FORMAFANTASMA
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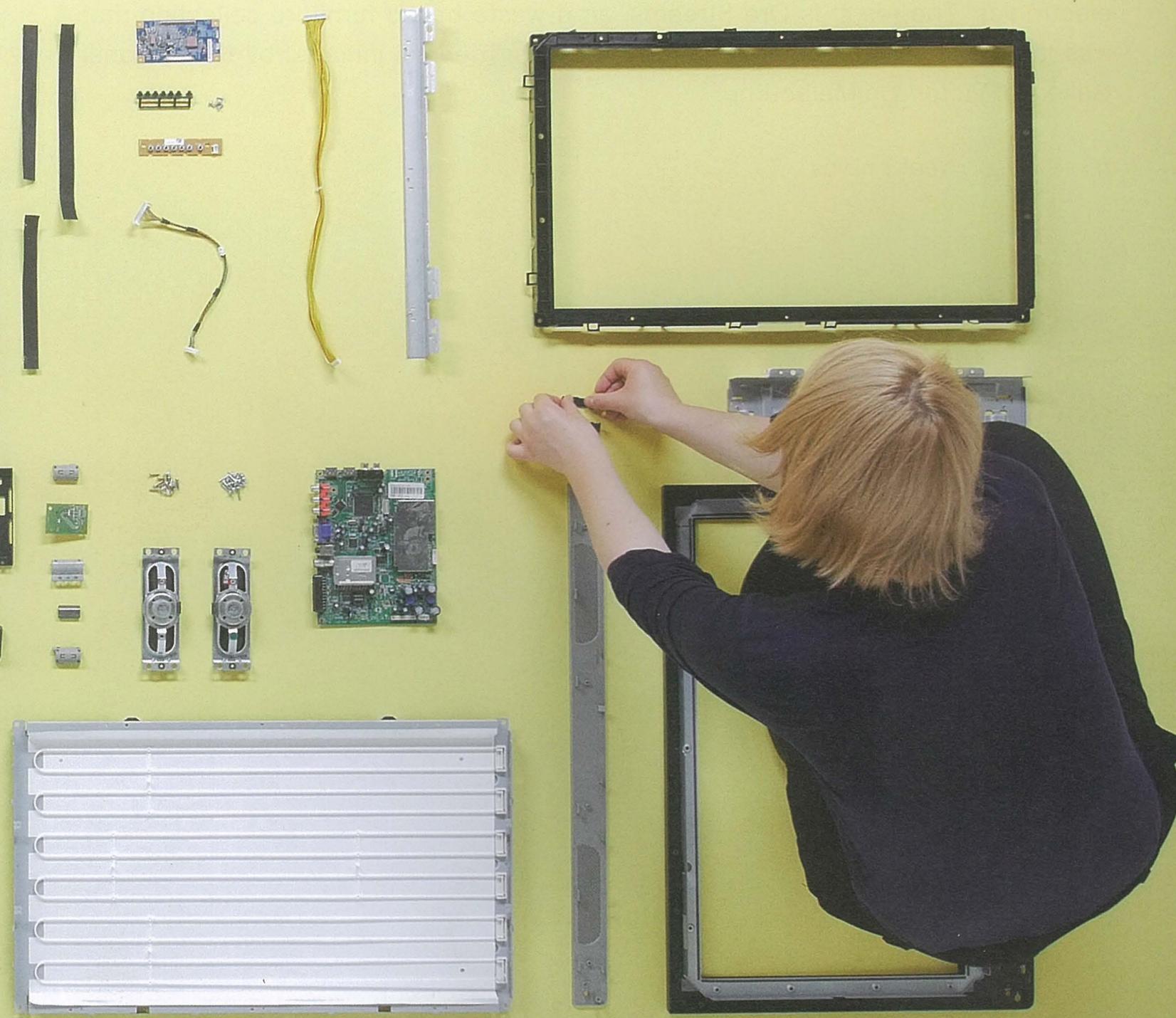
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RUBBISH MAGIC



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Formafantasma launches Ore Streams
at NGV Triennial

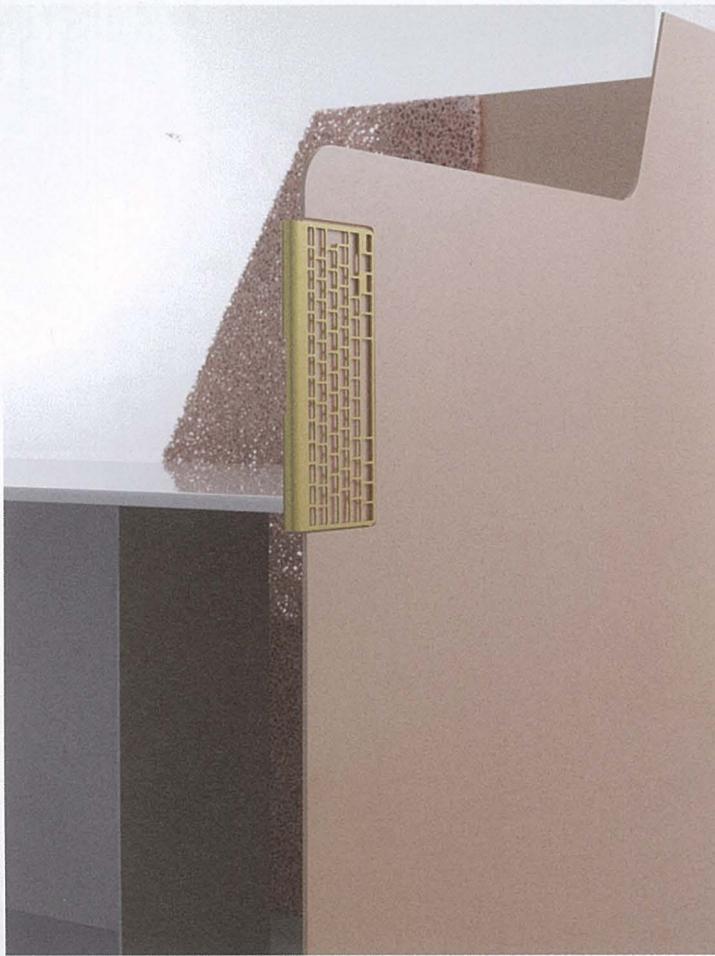
If they're not gathering dust in our attics or garages, a majority of our computers, televisions, mobile phones, household devices, and other kinds of electronic waste, gets dumped in Asia or Africa. Amsterdam-based Italian design duo Formafantasma decided to do something constructive with these millions of tons of salvaged electronics. The result is Ore Streams, an e-waste based furniture collection that was launched on the occasion of the new NGV Triennial initiated by the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne.

TEXT

VEERLE DEVOS



Ore Streams chair, cubicle
Made of e-waste



Ore Streams cubicle
The gold is also recuperated from electronic waste



Ore Streams trash bin

Many of our depreciated and used-up electronic products could be reused, refurbished, or recycled, but until now, a vast majority of it is just thrown away and is piling up on landfills. Developing countries in Asia and Africa accept our electronic scrap because they can extract valuable substances such as copper, iron, silicon, nickel and gold from it. Instead of re-using this precious waste, we in the West are instead looking for new sources. Efforts to recycle this complex hardware remain new, uncharted and contentious. Setting the scene for its e-waste project, Formafantasma explains: 'The earth's surface has been mined for millennia in search of resources such as metals and minerals to fulfil our production demands. In fact, forging metal changed the course of history: bronze empowered humans to weaponise, and gold facilitated local and then global trade. Even at this very moment, new cavities are being hollowed out, while existing excavated sites are abandoned or refilled with new earth – a superficial recompense. Our human greed for metals has grown to such an extent that by 2080, the biggest metal reserves will not be underground. Instead, they will be above the surface as ingots stored in private buildings or otherwise circulated within products such as building materials, appliances, furniture, and an ever-growing market of consumer electronic products.'

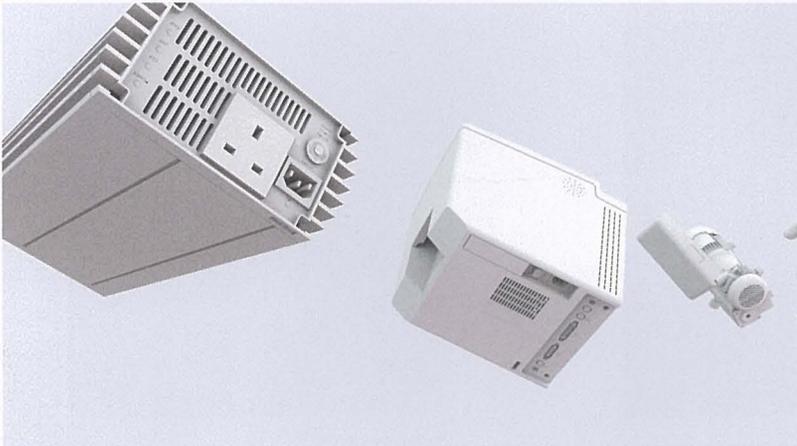


Ore Streams cubicle

E-waste is an increasing part of the global ore streams, and Formafantasma decided to research it, to re-use it, and to share its insights. The fruits of these investigations into the recycling of precious electronic waste have been baptised Ore Streams. Alongside a furniture collection, there is also a video installation in which the meaning of production is addressed from multiple perspectives, offering an insight into how design can be an agent of change. The video installation includes four films showing, among others things, how an iPhone is carefully disassembled and recomposed.'



Still from Ore Streams video

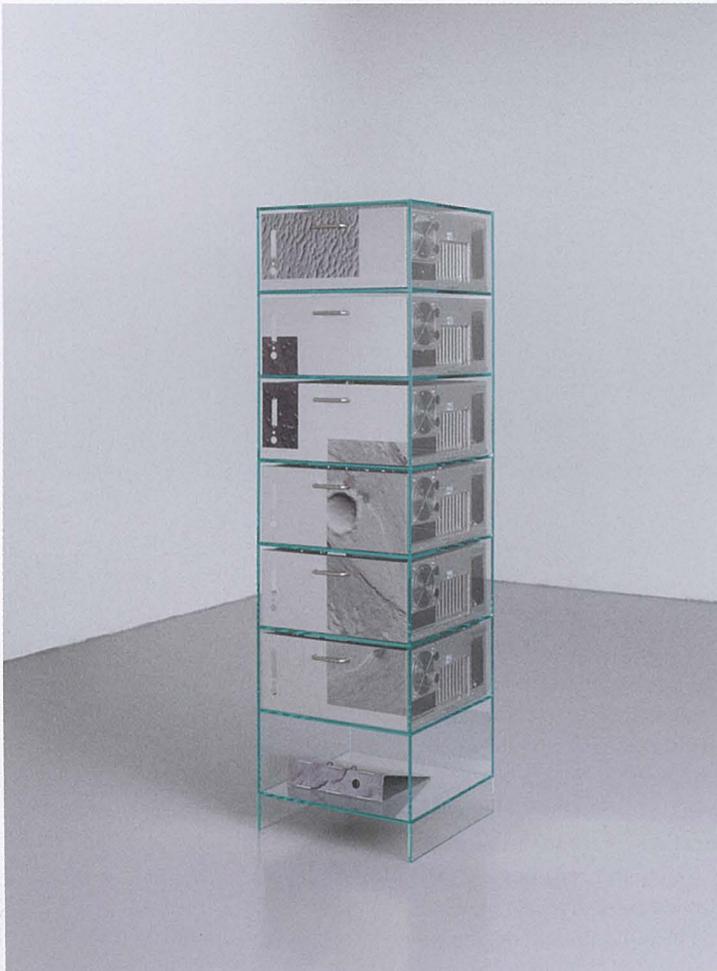


Still from Ore Streams video

Formafantasma wants to highlight the material and design complexity of the products by this taxonomy. The Ore Streams office furniture collection includes a cabinet, desk, table and chair, and supplementary objects such as a lamp, shelf and a rubbish bin. All made of e-waste. For instance, the gold used in the furniture is recuperated from electronic waste.

In this respect, Formafantasma shows us a path to the renewal of these metals in our e-waste, and hopes that soon things will start to change, so that, 'We will enter a new phase, where above-ground scavenging will out-perform and out-value digging below the surface for raw material.'

As always, the innovative Italian duo didn't just create a beautiful project but an ambitious mission with it, too: 'The collection of objects created for Ore Streams act as a Trojan horse, using form and colour to initiate a deeper exploration of "above ground mining" and the complex role design plays in transforming natural resources into desirable products.' Formafantasma challenges us to think differently, and is - as ever - living up to its ambition to be a bridge between craft, industry, object and user, while forging links between its research-based practice and a wider design industry.



Ore Streams cabinet

The first edition of the NGV Triennial in Melbourne, where Ore Stream is on display, features art and design and runs until 15 April 2018 / www.ngv.vic.gov.au