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**MILAN
REPORT 2011**

NEW DIRECTION
FROM THE WORLD'S
BEST DESIGN FAIR



OF HER RESISTANCE to being pigeonholed as a certain type of designer, Faye Toogood says, “I have a constant need and desire for reinvention – I get bored easily.” The designer and creative director of Studio Toogood certainly is consistent in her desire for inconsistency, defying trend and inverting the idyllic and cheerful sentiment of past work in new project *Natura Morta*.

The provocative show was presented during 2011’s Milan Design Week at Erastudio, an 18th-century apartment turned gallery space. As well as a platform to launch her new series of furniture and objects, *Natura Morta* was an environment in which to explore Toogood’s burgeoning fascination with the dark side. “*Natura morta* means ‘still life’ in Italian, but the direct English translation is ‘dead nature’. A lot has happened in the world that has brought home to me nature’s brutality. There is something beautiful about that darkness, so I wanted to explore the dark side of the natural world and of human nature,” she says.

The simplicity of Toogood’s first collection was inverted in the second, a process she describes in photographic terms as akin to working in the negative. Rustic British materials – English sycamore, brass, and Portland stone – at the core of that first range have been usurped. Their elemental replacements include smoky solid resin, aluminium and melted pewter, which erupted in volcanic forms across the surface of sandcast ‘lunar plates’. >



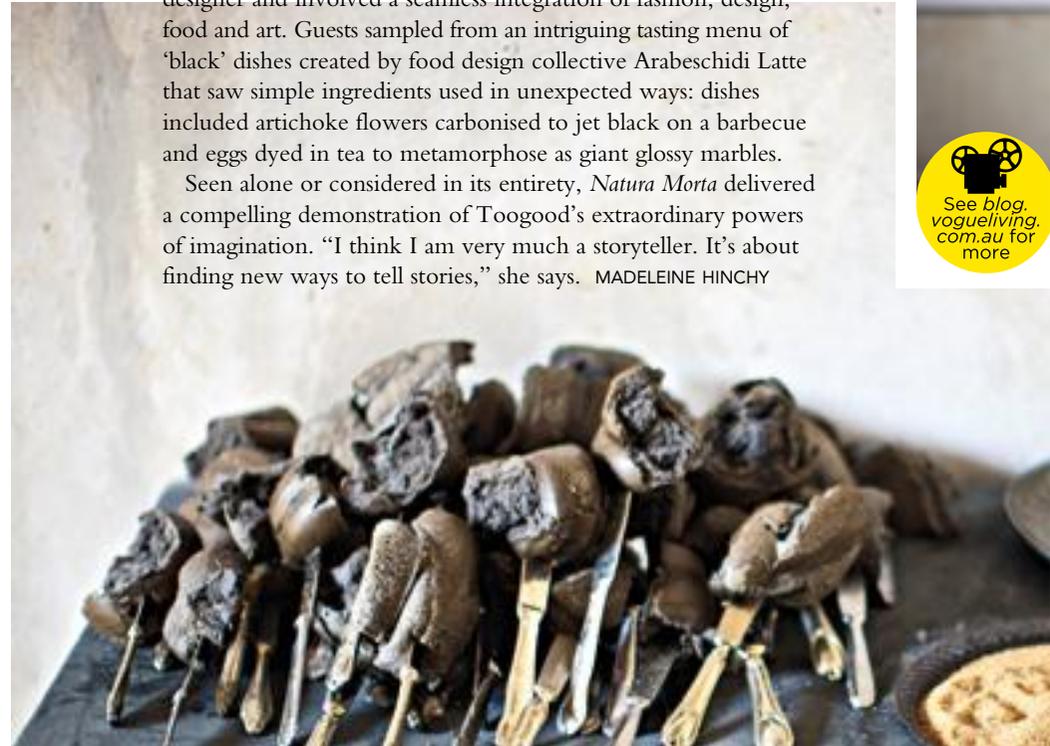
PHOTOGRAPHS, INCLUDING CHEESE AND FLINT, LEFT, PROVIDED A BACKDROP TO THE NATURA MORTA PROJECT WITH NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN EROTIC DRAWINGS FROM PIERO FORNASETTI'S ARCHIVES.



< Past pieces were reborn in new incarnations, including the rustic 'Spade' chair encased in handstitched leather and also in a roughly cast aluminium anodised to charcoal black.

At night, the *Natura Morta* morphed into the setting for *Underkitchen*. One of the most talked about events of the Design Week calendar, the series of private midnight dinners was art directed by the designer and involved a seamless integration of fashion, design, food and art. Guests sampled from an intriguing tasting menu of 'black' dishes created by food design collective Arabeschidi Latte that saw simple ingredients used in unexpected ways: dishes included artichoke flowers carbonised to jet black on a barbecue and eggs dyed in tea to metamorphose as giant glossy marbles.

Seen alone or considered in its entirety, *Natura Morta* delivered a compelling demonstration of Toogood's extraordinary powers of imagination. "I think I am very much a storyteller. It's about finding new ways to tell stories," she says. MADELEINE HINCHY



TEXT: MADELEINE HINCHY

