

BEST

NET GAIN

Ocean collection, by Nanna & Jørgen Ditzel and Mater

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An upcycling reissue of a 1955 design, this garden chair is pictured with the fishnet waste from which it is made at the Plastix factory in Lemvig, Denmark. A single chair uses some 960g of fishnet waste, while the collection's large table repurposes 1,320g



Reissues have taken the furniture business by storm in recent years, as brands - including many Danish ones - scour the archives of late design greats for overlooked gems begging to be put back into production. Now Mater, the sustainably minded design label founded in Copenhagen in 2006, has joined the relaunch frenzy with a series of garden furniture by one of the most celebrated duos of Danish design, the late Nanna and Jørgen Ditzel. Thanks to a bit of eco edge, this remake promises to be unlike any other: rather than simply reintroduce a vintage design, Mater has reimagined the table-and-chair collection in ocean waste plastic (it was originally designed in 1955 and realised in timber veneer), creating a truly forward-thinking backward glance.

'I feel that manufacturers have a responsibility to look seriously into waste and upcycling - to take what has zero value, or what is, in fact, a problem for the planet, and mature it through nice designs from the past or present,' says Henrik Marstrand, Mater founder and CEO. 'If we can create a product that is attractive, functional and durable, while cleaning up after the side effects of our collective consumerism, it's a win-win.'

Above, Mater CEO Henrik Marstrand with Dennie Ditzel, daughter and archivist of Nanna and Jørgen Ditzel

Below, the original steel-framed and timber veneer pieces. The reissues have been scaled up by five per cent to accommodate modern proportions, but otherwise their form remains identical

Made using a combination of ocean plastic waste (primarily used fishnets collected from the Danish west coast), PP regenerate (mostly recycled plastic from milk transport cases) and a dash of bioplastic charcoal, which adds stability so the plastic doesn't crack, the Ocean collection represents a considerable shift for Mater. To date, the brand has been known for working exclusively with contemporary designers (such as Space Copenhagen and Todd Bracher) on organic, often wooden designs. This new plastic-centric project has allowed it to diversify its collection and venture into more accessible products.

Originally produced by Kolds Savværk until the late 1950s, the chair and two tables were first designed for the Ditzels' personal use. 'That's my guess, at least,' says the couple's daughter Dennie Ditzel, who has looked after the Ditzel archive since her mother's death in 2005. 'I don't always know for what purpose things were made, but it was often because my parents couldn't find anything on the market that met their criteria.'

Dennie notes that the series' simple shapes and lightness (both in weight and silhouette) epitomise the Ditzels' design sensibility, which was at once precise, practical and playful. Nanna trained as a cabinetmaker and became one of Denmark's most prolific female designers, while Jørgen was an upholsterer by trade. Together, they created countless significant designs across furniture, jewellery and textiles. In all media, their use of materials often broke with convention. 'My mother would have been thrilled that we're using ocean waste plastic,' says Dennie. 'She was fascinated by new materials and always experimenting with them, so this would just be ideal for her - this is very much in her spirit.'

Mater is already contemplating its next Ditzel project: a potential collaboration on a series of vintage accessory designs made from recycled glass. For now, all focus will be on Ocean, which will be available for distribution from 1 February, ahead of a formal launch in April, during Salone del Mobile in Milan.

'We're hoping this new Ocean collection helps set a precedent for other design brands not just to talk about sustainability, but to make it a reality - to put it into practice, and soon. Of course we also want to push ourselves to continue this exploration, and prove that an eco product can make sense: it can be beautiful, it can be cost-effective, it's possible as a business to both profit and solve a problem,' concludes Marstrand. 'This is me being a bit optimistic, sure, but imagine if this Ocean series was a great success - maybe one day we would run out of fishnet waste to use! That would be quite something.' ✨

'Ocean' chairs, from £175 each; table, from £330, by Nanna & Jørgen Ditzel, from Mater, materdesign.com

