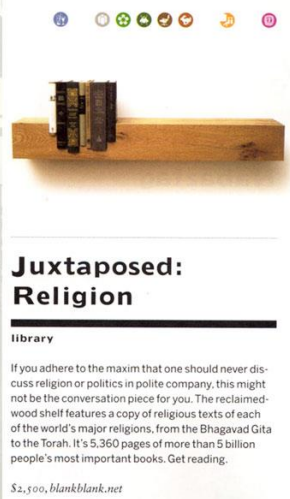


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Juxtaposed: Religion

library

If you adhere to the maxim that one should never discuss religion or politics in polite company, this might not be the conversation piece for you. The reclaimed-wood shelf features a copy of religious texts of each of the world's major religions, from the Bhagavad Gita to the Torah. It's 5,360 pages of more than 5 billion people's most important books. Get reading.

\$2,500, blankblank.net

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Los Angeles Times HOME



San Francisco

WHO THEY ARE: Partners in love and work, industrial designers **Mike Simonian** and **Maaike Evers** create furniture imbued with political meaning.

THEN TO NOW: Simonian and Evers met when he, having just graduated from Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, interviewed at a design firm in Ohio. She didn't want to hire him, but the firm did. Romance ensued, and they now have two small children. They spend only half their time on furniture design because 70 percent of their income is generated by projects like T-Mobile's G1 phone with Google, and a soft laptop case for Bolkin (one of Mike and Maaike's most mass-produced items, which sells for \$40). "You don't see a lot of industrial designers working as families. It's a whole different kind of beast," says Simonian. "Industrial design is, first, experimental and more market-driven, and it caters to corporate clients."

CLAIM TO FAME: Juxtaposed: Religion, a notched-out bookshelf containing seven books that represent the world's major religions. In *Vanity Fair*, Angelina Jolie alluded to the bookshelf as "this great thing" her partner, Brad Pitt, had given her for Christmas. "That's how we plan to raise our kids," she explained. "Teach them about all religions." The mention was a boon (especially because of PIRE's reputation as a design aficionado) for the piece, which appeared at ICFP in NY and had already received coverage in *Dwell*, *LD*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. The shelf's message of tolerance is one of the outgrowths of working in San Francisco. "Political issues are out in the open here," says Simonian. "It seems really natural to bring that into design work."

LOCAL ANGLE: Simonian, a Los Angeles native, wanted to return to the Golden State after a stint in Ohio. San Francisco also appealed to the Dutch-born Evers because of the region's progressive culture. They spent six years at industrial design firms here (she at Lunar Design, he at Adro Studio) before realizing that they wanted to "expand our subject matter and make our design a lot more personal and representative of our way of thinking," Simonian explains. During their first year of business, in 2005, the couple decided to be punts and not take on any paying clients—they simply worked on their own creative projects.

CUSTOMERS: Besides Brangelina, diverse with the "Cosmo" bumper sticker and those who prefer their furnishings to be infused with meaning.

BESTSELLER: Juxtaposed: Religion, \$2,500, done for San Francisco collective BlankBlank.

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JUXTAPOSED: RELIGION

The Juxtaposed: Religion shelf by San Francisco design duo Mike and Maaike was specially formed to hold only seven books: the basic texts for the world's most popular religions, nestled into custom-milled slots in a 3-foot-long, rather monastic-looking span of reclaimed barn timber. The book row's resulting flat top is meant to suggest that all major faiths should be considered equal. "It's sculpture, a gallery object," McQuaid argued. "There's humor to it, but it's a one-liner." The jury nonetheless couldn't resist keeping the \$2,500 piece in the prize-winning pile. "In spite of its flaws, I absolutely love it," Dunningan said. "It's provocative; it's at the border between art and design. It's a one-liner, but one that holds 5,360 important pages."

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2. [Image of a room with a bookshelf and other furniture]

3. [Image of a room with a bookshelf and other furniture]

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At Home in the Modern World

IN THE MODERN WORLD

Juxtaposed: Power
 By Mike and Maaike, curated by Atheya Jayaram for BlankBlank blankblank.net
 Designed more for bibliophiles than beach readers, Juxtaposed: Power makes a statement by placing seven seminal political tomes—by the likes of Plato, Sayyid Qutb, and Karl Marx—on the level. Each philosophical treatise fills in a custom-cut groove in the reclaimed hardwood mantle. As curator Atheya Jayaram explains, "It expresses a deep appreciation for the beliefs of others—an understanding that there are a range of values worth living by—even if one still prefers one's own."

Gwyneth Paltrow

12 THINGS SHE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Act, cook, write, Sing Gwyneth Paltrow famously lives a lot like it all. So it comes as no surprise to hear that she is also a serious design buff. Last year, she and her husband, rocker Chris Martin of the band Coldplay, combined two London townhouses with the help of his architect brother, Al Martin. They restored the period details and added such funky touches as a rumpled room for the couple's two children and a skull-and-crossbones motif on the library's mantel. Paltrow—whose lifestyle website COOP will release iPad and iPhone apps this fall—may one day design her own furniture and tabletop collections. "That's kind of the dream," she says. "Maybe when the kids are older." By Ingrid Abramovitch

9. Juxtaposed: Religion shelf

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