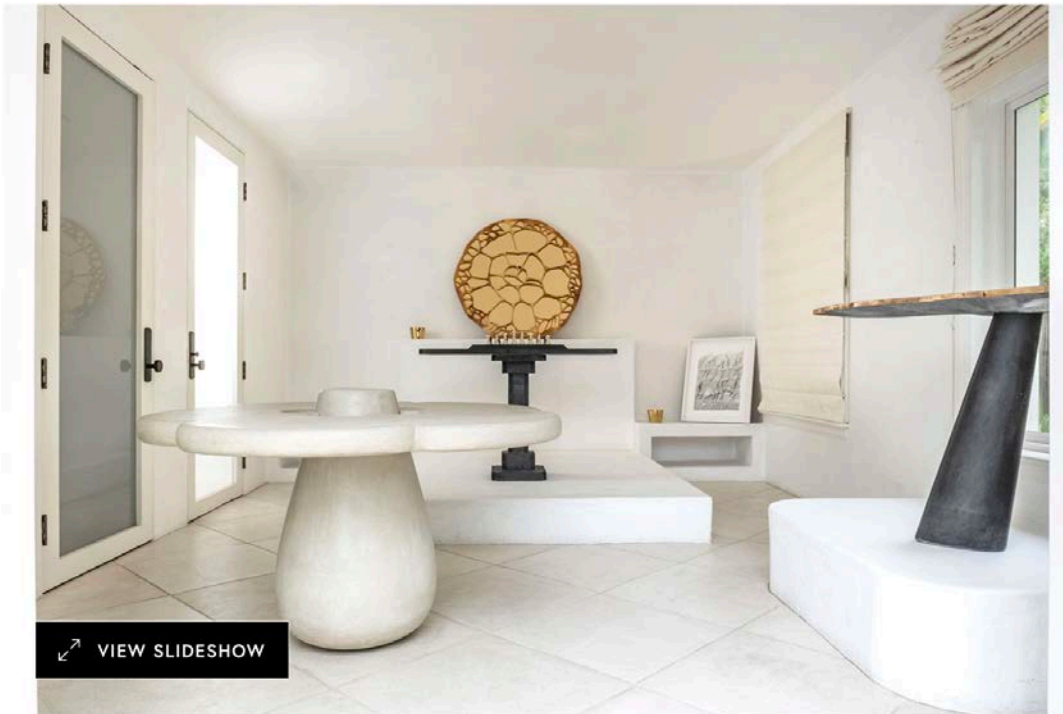


James de Wulf Pioneers Artful, Analog Gaming Tables With Expanding Exo Series

06.06.24 | By Joseph Sgambati III



The Blueberry Table, Deco Chess Table, Lotus II Exo Mirror, and Leaning Lotus Exo Console on display at DESIGN MIAMI.LA \\\ Photo: Benjamin Juhel

Cement, aggregate, and water are to concrete as ingenuity, artistry, and vehemence are to the craftsman James de Wulf. But the amalgam makes for a man whose artistic bravado is surprisingly tempered by his humility, priding himself on positively impacting his audience through the delights of his design vision rather than stardom; his work graces covetable spaces designed by the likes of Frank Gehry and Albert Hadley. As of late, these custom creations have contributed to a re-emerging and upscaled subgenre of home furnishing – **analog game tables**. The current lineup comprises ping pong, pool, poker, shuffleboard, mahjong, chess, and backgammon, with plenty of room on the roster for more.

Since his first sale of the Ping Pong table to Steffi Graff and Andre Agassi in 2009, and then a second in 2011, the designer has seen an exponential growth in demand for this type of low-tech entertainment – and joy – cranking out handmade pieces weekly. While reflecting on the current trend, de Wulf notes: "I like video games myself, but they separate you from your present surroundings. With analog gaming you are enhancing your current environment with a little fun, some competition, and maybe even exercise."



James de Wulf with the Deco Chess table at DESIGN MIAMI.LA \\ \\ Photo: [Benjamin Juhel](#)

Clever concepts are carried over into corresponding accoutrement, like custom chips for the Exo Imperial Poker Table, infusing additional elements with a nod to the brand's graphic language. "Incorporating a QR code is an awesome interactive tool. With just a scan, so much information is quickly conveyed, especially for us scroll addicts," says Chief Operations Officer Dot de Wulf, who applied her own design chops to the custom calling cards. "All surfaces can become marketing tools, especially the ones in your hands as you fidget and participate in play. We had a lot of fun making those, and that's what James' design philosophy is all about – having fun with it!"

But it's not all fun and games – there's a science to de Wulf's creative practice. As the offerings increase in variety, so too does his iconic, patent-pending Exo Series architecture, which is also showcased on the Mahjong Table. The avant-garde approach distills form through physics pushing a seemingly organic skeletal structure to the exterior as it fortifies the concrete flesh. "Imagine playing under a microscope, looking at everything to its most minute detail. Finding the beauty of natural patterns in cells and the intricate surprises of microorganisms," adds Dot. "Exo is still so new and untapped. Everything that comes off the drawing board is so fresh, and each idea has evolved into something greater than the last. That's the philosophy of Exo too, the growth patterns in nature. I hope it does get the opportunity to keep on growing." It will.

Exo Mahjong

A simple form conspires with functionality for the ultimate 4-person experience while gaming. The sunken playing area is designed with a generous lip to prevent losing tiles to the floor and the soft felt top allows for pieces to glide. Its feminine silhouette and sand casted bronze border are contrasted by the traditionally masculine material and significant visual weight for an oddly calming, beautiful balance.

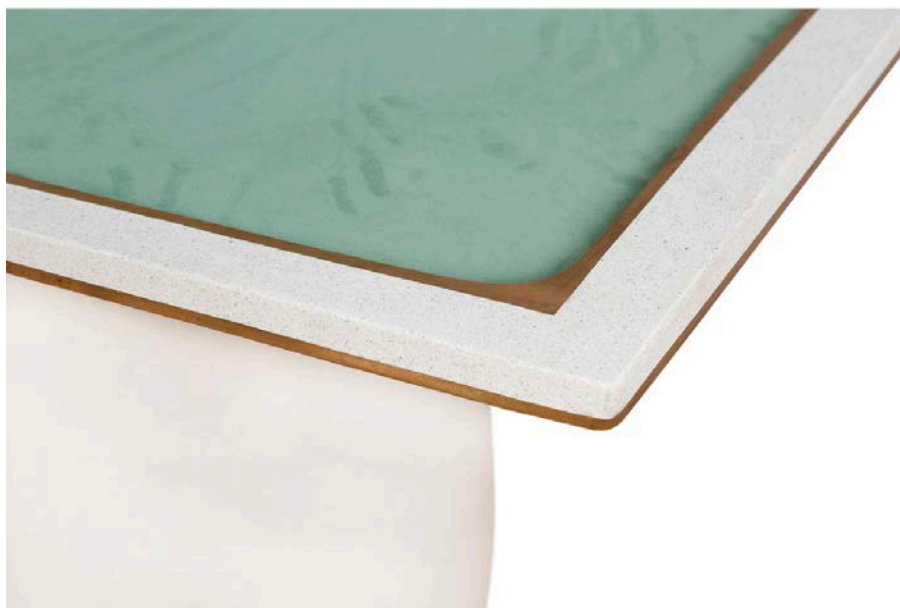


Photo: Gianni Franchellucci

Exo Imperial Poker

Designed to transform your typical Texas Hold'em game into a battle, the 450-pound table adds girth between users for a safe place to harbor poker chips in the sunken playing area. The unit can be specified for indoor or outdoor use, and embraces weathering with a unique wax finish that will encourage the exoskeleton's patination. When paired with its striking form, the aesthetic appears as if it has been plucked from the lair of any formidable Bond villain.



Photo: Gianni Franchellucci

Deco Chess

In commemoration of DESIGN MIAMI.LA's inaugural showcase, this piece pays tribute to the Los Angeles Art Deco movement distilling some of the architecture's iconic features – like strong geometry and handsome detailing – into a contemporary home furnishing. The play surface is elevated pulling focus to the game while the surrounding surface area provides plenty of room for the clock and captured pieces.



Photo: Gianni Franchellucci



Backgammon

This concrete object is something of a sturdy, structural furnishing that references traditional lowboys while trading drawers for indented tabletop fields of play etched in acid stain. The indoor-outdoor piece is sealed and waxed for its own unique ombré luster over time.



Photo: Gianni Franchellucci

Billiards

Now considered a classic from the brand, this regulation-sized pool table is constructed of carbon fiber reinforced concrete with a smooth, high-performance finish layered in premium black felt. Its brooding composition is accentuated by pierced leather pouches for a satisfying kerplunk as balls sink into its corner pockets.



Photo: Gianni Franchellucci

Shuffleboard

Shuffleboard has been elevated to new heights – literally and metaphorically speaking – through this magnificent, monolithic, 9-foot slab of concrete reinforced with carbon fiber. The smooth glide surface ushers pucks across the tabletop with ease. And the unique legs generate a seemingly forced perspective for passersby.

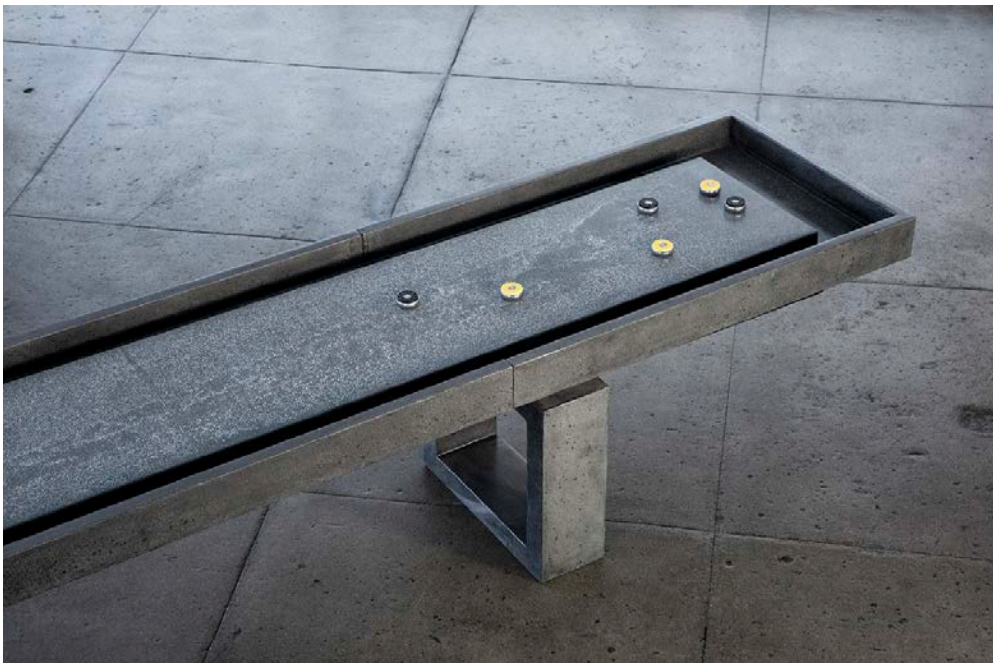


Photo: [Gianni Franchellucci](#)

Ping Pong

Perhaps the most versatile offering, this concrete, carbon fiber reinforced, regulation-size ping pong table – with an acid stained center line – can be utilized for dining when not in play. With the ability to dress it up or down, users can accommodate up to twelve seated comfortably around the surface for a variety of merriment.

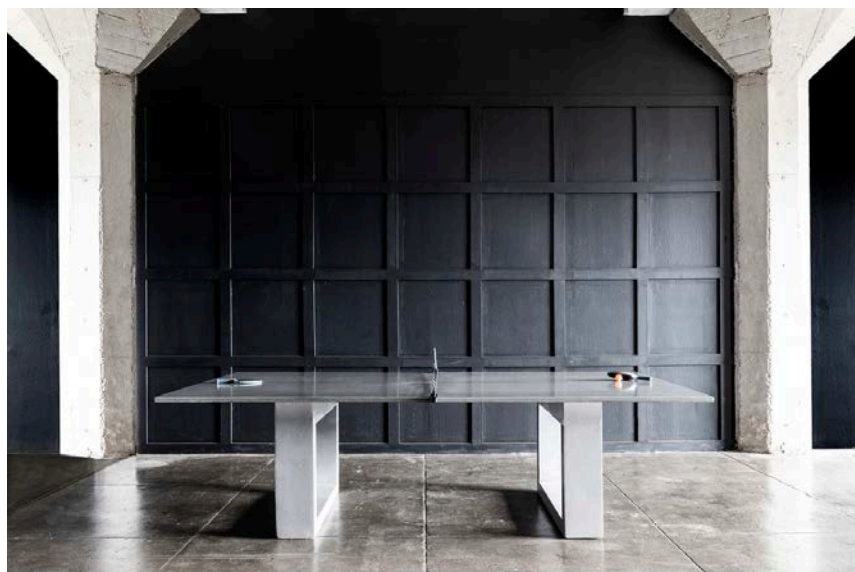


Photo: Gianni Franchellucci