

# Sketch Artist

MOVING BEYOND FORM AND FUNCTION, **SEBASTIAN ERRAZURIZ** ENTERS METAPHYSICAL TERRITORY.

PORTRAIT IAN ALLEN

Sebastian Errazuriz revels in working in the murky gray area between art and design. His Magistral cabinet, introduced last spring, is a perfectly functional storage piece, but its shell is covered by 80,000 bamboo-skewer spikes. His Opera fireplace, created at the same time, turns a marble mantle into a stage set, complete with intricately hand-carved wooden figures and scaffolding that's ready to burn. And his Body of Work tables, completed in partnership with American artist Ross Bleckner, consist of two coffin-shaped, glass-topped coffee tables with life-size photos of the collaborators inside. "Somehow the dynamic between art and design has never really allowed people to be both artist and designer at the same time," says Errazuriz, 35. But that hasn't hampered his boundary-straddling tendencies. "In the same way that designers are solving factual problems through functional pieces, we should also start solving conceptual, psychological, and existential problems."

Frequently focusing on questions of life and death, his working process involves freely dreaming up new ideas, but letting them simmer before deciding if they're worth producing. To keep track of them all, he maintains a 22-by-24-foot wall that's littered with hundreds of sketches. "The wall works like a reflection of my head or a wine cellar where my ideas go up for months to mature," he says. "If after several months an idea continues to stand out and seduce me, I know there's something worth making."

Born in Chile and based in New York, Errazuriz has been preparing for his current occupation all his life. "My father is an art professor, and his Ph.D. is in how to teach art, so I was something like a guinea pig for him," he says. "From the beginning,



every weekend was spent in a museum. It was a very rigorous upbringing. I wasn't allowed to even own a drawing from a cereal box." Errazuriz later spent his college years restlessly bouncing between design, film, and art. He established his first studio in Santiago and quickly emerged as one of the country's most recognizable young designers. "I became Chile's little rock-star designer, and had my own TV show, radio show, and newspaper column," Errazuriz says. "I was 27 years old, and felt a little bit ridiculous. I felt very grateful for the attention and opportunities, but I really wanted to continue growing and learning."

So he moved to New York in 2006. The signature pieces he has since created, such as the Porcupine cabinet, a credenza clad with more than a hundred fingerlike panels instead of drawers, have gained him further notice. Last year, Finland's Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art and the Corning Museum of Glass acquired several pieces of his for their permanent collections; earlier this year, New York's Cristina Grajales Gallery, which has represented Errazuriz since 2007, showed his folding plywood Occupy chairs—emblazoned with slogans pulled from Occupy Wall Street placards—at the Armory Show and Art Basel. A room of his work is on view at Kiasma now through October as part of its "Camouflage" exhibition. And this September, he'll present drawings and maquettes at Rove Gallery during the London Design Festival as German book publisher Gestalten releases his first monograph, *The Journey of Sebastian Errazuriz*.

For Errazuriz, the exposure helps further his mission. "I want to remind people we're alive, and that it's our responsibility to look at things every day and be aware of our surroundings," he says, pointing out that nothing in his office stays the same for long. "The setup of my studio is always changing from one week to another, because we're constantly adapting," he says. "For me, that's hugely satisfying." —TIM MCKEOUGH

(TOP TO BOTTOM) First two, Opera fireplace (2011), made from 600 pounds of Italian marble. Magistral cabinet (2011). "Memorial of a Concentration Camp" (2006). (OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM) Errazuriz in his studio. Sketch for "Match Made in Heaven" painting (2012). Christian Popsicles, released at Gallery R'Pure during New York Design Week in May.