

# Design Dealers: Maria Wettergren

BY JANA PERKOVIC | AUGUST 06, 2015

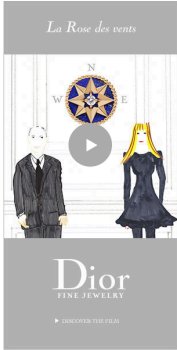


Maria Wettergren, Galerie Maria Wettergren. (Courtesy of Galerie Maria Wettergren.)

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Maria Wettergren opened her gallery in 2010 in Paris, Saint Germain, specializing in contemporary Scandinavian design and art. The works that Wettergren exhibits are engaged in the interdisciplinary dialogue between art, design, crafts and architecture, multifaceted collaborations where high-technological innovations meet craftsmanship and art. Contemporary Scandinavian designers that Wettergren represents are now part of important private and public museum collections, such as the MoMA and the Cooper Hewitt in New York, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In 2013, Wettergren was included in Blouin Art + Auction's annual Power 100 issue, as one of the 100 most important people in the art world. In 2014, she received the Finn Juhl Architecture Prize.



**Name:** Maria Wettergren



**Age:** 43

**Hails from:** Denmark

**Director of:** Galerie Maria Wettergren, Paris

**Gallery's Specialty:** Contemporary Scandinavian design and art

**Designers represented:** [Mathias Bengtsson](#),

Astrid Krogh, Ilkka Suppanen, Ditte Hammerstroem, Grethe Soerenen, Gjertrud Hals,

Eske Rex, Rasmus Fenhann, Tora Urup, Jakob Joergensen, Line Depping, Akiko Kuwahata, GamFratesi, Mikko Paakkanen, among others

**First show:** "Danish Contemporary Design, 1997 – 2009" (2010)

**Do you remember the first time you realized you wanted to work in design?**

My first emotional experience with design was triggered by a work by the Danish designer Louise Campbell entitled Slow Relief (2003), a sculptural chaise longue handmade of thousands of multicolored wool threads winded around a complex laser-cut aluminum structure. I was immediately touched by the fluffy quality and the rainbow colors of this delicate, poetic piece which was obviously made for the comfort of the eyes, rather than for that of the body. I loved the feeling of slowness expressed through the meticulous handwork combined with the new laser-cut technologies, and it opened my vision towards a new type of design: The sculptural, emotional, experimental kind, where the function is less about comfort than about artistic feeling and psychological perception expressed through craftsmanship and new technologies. When I saw this piece in 2005, I think that I had a kind of premonition of my future gallery. I'm not a collector, but I felt I simply had to own it, so I took a bank loan and bought it over several installments!

At that time, I was the managing director of Dansk Moebelkunst Gallery in Paris, specialized in Scandinavian mid-century design. It started in 2002, when Ole Hoestbo, the owner of the gallery sent me from Copenhagen to Paris with the special mission of opening a second gallery space in Paris. It was a fantastic experience. I love the timeless elegance and artistic quality of Danish architects such as Finn Juhl and Poul Kjaerholm. I think that eight years working with the finest museum quality pieces really helped me shaping an eye for uncompromising exquisite design.

**What is the vision of Galerie Maria Wettergren?**

I don't think of my gallery as a design gallery as such. When I founded my gallery in 2010, I did it with the vision of creating a contemporary art gallery or, more correctly, a space for interdisciplinary contemporary design and art. I see as one of the strongest characteristics of our time today the urge to blend and communicate within different disciplines and spheres, including design, art, architecture, crafts, high technologies and science. Breaking down the too strict barriers and borders between the humanistic disciplines is happening everywhere right now, and not only on the artistic scene. It's very exciting!

There is, in my opinion, still too much specialization out there. I founded my gallery with the wish to make a perfect playground for the new interdisciplinary art.

**What are you particularly proud of, when it comes to the work your gallery has done?**

If I may point out an action in general rather than a specific episode, I'm proud of my high-risk policy concerning the art-fairs. Right from the beginning, I chose to participate in the majority of the most important art and design fairs such as Design Miami/Base and PAD Paris/London. As a newcomer with young emerging artists, you can easily break your neck with these extremely expensive fairs. But I believed strongly enough in the quality of my artists. And it worked.

**How do you choose whether or not to represent a designer?**

For me, the most important criteria is the integrity of the work itself. I don't look so much at the artist and their age, length of career etc. It is important, and museum exhibitions and collections do enter into consideration. Even more crucial, however, is the original quality of the work, and its capacity to make me wonder. I like to be in awe, to be swept away. On the other hand, I'm allergic to market-oriented works. If I sense that a work isn't made freely and creatively as a genuine art piece, but in order to please certain currents and trends, I'm gone.

**How has the market changed since you've entered the business?**

The design market has spent about 15 years in catching up with the art market, and although there are some differences (you can still get a masterpiece of design below 50.000 EUR) we are witnessing a true stabilization of the design market today. The collectors' market is merging with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary art market. It's very encouraging and also highly merited. There is no reason that design should be in the shadow of art. Brilliant design can be as rewarding and mind-broadening as art.

**What was the last piece of design that thoroughly impressed you?**

[Mathias Bengtsson's "Growth Table" \(2014\)](#) in walnut. Here, Bengtsson actually used sunlight, rain and wind to create this piece of organic, sculptural design. By inventing an innovative computer-aided design technique that literally grows furniture, "Growth Table" started as a digital seed programmed with DNA that included instruction on the height at which the seed should grow a flat surface. During the seed's maturation, meteorological conditions were randomly applied, thereby according the table its distinctive organic look. In other words, by a biomimicry process, the digital seed emulates natural growth, imitating some of Nature's rules and methods. Made in solid walnut with masterly details by a Danish Master Cabinetmaker, the "Growth Table" expresses a rare combination of high technology and excellent craftsmanship, art and design.

**What do you think will be the next big thing in design?**

I am not so much into spotting trends and fashions.

**...and what trend would you like to see disappear?**

Design without content, empty deco. A real danger to our field.

**What qualities must a good gallerist possess?**

Intuition, a recognizable artistic direction, diplomacy, courage...

**And what should a good gallerist never do?**

A good gallerist should never think short-term.

**If you could live in any other historical era, which one would you choose?**

The Venetian Renaissance. I love the delicate confusion between the sacred and the profane. I think I'm fond of confusions in general.

**If you could have a drink with a historical figure, who would it be, and what would you talk about?**

Leonardo Da Vinci. Art, science and inventions.

**If the constrictions of ordinary existence were not a problem, what one work of design would you love to own?**

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**"If I weren't a gallerist, I'd probably be..."**

I really have great troubles imaging myself doing anything else, because it's my passion. And yet – helping other people in need. It's also about passion I guess. You get a fantastic feeling from making a real difference for someone genuinely needing it. Or being a book translator. I'm in love with literature and languages.

**"Design is..."**

For me design is a possibility of moving in different creative directions. It's a way of staying in flux, in movement, in life, out of fixed, stagnated positions. I sometimes find the art world a little academic in that sense. Design (still) has the liberty of exploring, experimenting, expanding, while containing all the other art forms. A good work of design always has a strong artistic dimension, and it can also contain architectural, engineering and scientific aspects. A good work of art doesn't necessarily have anything to do at all with design or any other discipline. I like the inclusive quality of design.

[For more Galerie Maria Wettergren, click on the slideshow.](#)

