

**TAJIMI  
CUSTOM  
TILES**

**EMBARGO: 30 APRIL 2020**

Tajimi Custom Tiles, the new brand from Tajimi, Japan's historic tile-producing area, will be making its debut on the world stage this year. The variety of skills and techniques, passed down in Tajimi through 1300 years of tradition and history led to the concept of "bespoke" tiles: Catering to architects and designers, Tajimi Custom Tiles creates unique tiles based on careful consultation, combining innovation with the best materials and techniques.

This spring, Tajimi Custom Tiles will present two extensive experimental installations by renowned designers and modern-day craftspeople Max Lamb (UK) and Kwangho Lee (Korea), which were created as part of a collaboration with the brand. Both Max and Kwangho went to Tajimi and spent time with the craftsmen, researching tile production from the clay, the glazings to the firing. With the scope to inspire and to demonstrate the potential and possibilities of tiles, their designs go beyond the current scope of conventional tiles. Only the unique skills of and innovative power of the artisans of Tajimi were able to bring these objects between art and design to reality.

The installations demonstrate the power of innovation and unexpected beauty of tiles.



## WORKING TILE

With this project, Max intends to showcase what makes Tajimi the unique manufacturing location and that TCT hopes to realise. He designed a set of modular, 3-dimensional tiles that can create countless shapes, with objects assuming functions from vases to sofas, tables, benches or partition walls. He uses typical clays with characteristic earthy materiality, and special glazes with ambiguous colours derived from classic Japanese tiles. His production method is local pressure moulding which allows highly-precise 3-dimensional shapes and patterns.

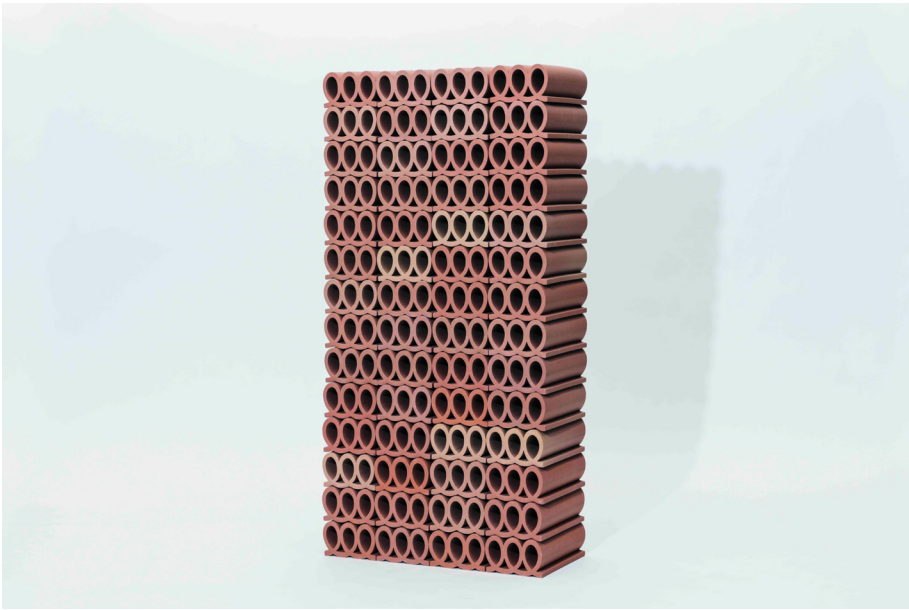


designer  
MAX LAMB

A modern-day craftsman, Max Lamb is a furniture designer with a design sensibility informed by extensive knowledge of manufacturing techniques, respect for materials and skills as a maker. A native of Cornwall, Max has been tinkering with objects and engaging with physical landscapes since he was a small boy. After earning a degree in 3-dimensional design from Northumbria University in 2003, he went on to obtain a Master's degree in product design from the Royal College of Art. By 2008 he had started his own practice. Max explores both traditional and unconventional materials and processes, blending experimentation and reasoning to create furniture and products that are both honest and accessible.

His work has earned him the Hettich International Design Award (2004) and the Peter Walker Award for Innovation in Furniture Design (2003), as well as collaborations with companies such as Deadgood and Sight Unseen. Max's designs are exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide, such as the Design Museum and Gallery FUMI in London, Salon 94 Design in New York, the Wolfsonian Museum in Miami, and Broached Commissions in Melbourne, Australia. Max teaches Design Products at the Royal College of Art and runs regular design workshops for companies and institutions around the world.





## TIDE

For this project, Kwangho was inspired by one of the typical production methods in Tajimi – the clay extrusion. He created a module with a section in the form of a looped line, that can be extruded in different lengths in order to assume different functions. The modules can be stacked horizontally or vertically to form various basic objects, like walls or benches. When the modules are aligned, the repeated loop with its almost hand-drawn quality, creates patterns reminiscent of knitted fabric. “Knitting” has been an important theme in Lee’s work, which he often used in different materials and on diverse scales. With tiles, this creates references to the varying states of clay, from very soft in the making to very hard in the finished piece.



designer  
KWANGHO LEE

Kwangho Lee (born, 1981) completed his studies in Metal Art & Design in 2007, before establishing his own design studio in Seoul. Since childhood Kwangho has greatly enjoyed making things by hand, a passion he inherited from his grandfather. His grandfather was a farmer who crafted daily household goods from the natural materials he found nearby. His grandfather’s influence formed Kwangho’s perspective and way of working. In his work, Kwangho is always trying to discover, revise and reinterpret the ordinary to give new meaning and function to everyday objects. He does this with a particular interest in the physicality of materials and the joints uniting them, working with artificial as well as natural materials, such as styrofoam, PVC, marble, copper, enamel, steel and ceramic clay.



Kwangho was nominated for Jury’s Selection of Designer at the Future at Design Miami/Basel, 2009, was selected as Artist of The Year in 2011 by the Korean Ministry of Culture, and Young Craftsperson of The Year by Yeol-a Society for Korean Cultural Heritage, 2013. His works have been shown at Commissaires, Johnson Trading Gallery, Victor Hunt, Karena Schuessler, Clear Gallery & Edition and Gallery Seomi, as well as with group and international exhibitions such as Design Miami/Basel, and Design Days Dubai. Kwangho’s work is in the permanent collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, while a number of features of his work have been released in major design publications worldwide.



## DIVERSE CRAFTSMANSHIP ROOTED IN HISTORY AND TRADITION

Tajimi City spreads along the southern side of Gifu Prefecture in central Japan. Its soil contains clay rich in minerals suitable for ceramic production. A pottery industry emerged as long as 1300 years ago, and out of that history came Mino Ware, regarded as one of Japan's most distinctive and influential types. With that background, large-scale tile manufacturing began in the early twentieth century. Since then Tajimi has grown into the centre of tile-making in Japan, accounting for around 90% of production. The majority of local companies specialise in high-volume production of standard tiles, but there remains a number of smaller, highly-specialised manufacturers using both alternative production methods and traditional Japanese glazing and firing, in a combination rarely seen elsewhere. We work with the most skilled craftspeople allowing us to realise almost any kind of tile, whatever form, size, glaze, texture or colour, using a range of raw materials, production and firing methods.



## SPREADING THE FASCINATION OF TILES WORLD-WIDE

X'S Corporation / Founder

TAJIMI CUSTOM TILES was launched by X'S Corporation under the creative direction of David Glaetli to be a platform from which to realise unique, innovative tiles to customer designs and specifications targeting international architects and interior designers. X'S operates globally. Founded in 1994, by its CEO Masashi Kasai, who strongly believes tiles made in Tajimi have huge market potential. Unlike other trad-

ing companies, X'S has its own laboratory facilities where tile prototypes can be developed and tested in-house. This allows us to offer competitive pricing, and products in small quantities. In combination with a network of local manufacturers, this creates a unique manufacturing environment with short lead times, stable supplies and high-quality output. X'S has also taken the initiative in enhancing environmental sustainability by developing a system to recycle incineration slag into new tiles, thereby reducing landfill. Our creative director, David Glaetli stresses that tiles have a special role in enhancing the quality of architectural spaces. He was born in Switzerland in 1977 and studied industrial design in Milan and Lausanne. Since 2008 he has been based in Japan. His careful advice and skilful art direction are based on passionate questioning of all issues relating to design and manufacturing, to support local crafts and small industries, as well as securing international design talent to create innovative products. Glaetli is also creative director of the brands KARIMOKU NEW STANDARD and Sumida Contemporary, and design director for 2016/ Arita.



## VARIETY OF TECHNIQUES FOR TAJIMI'S TILE PRODUCTION

Tajimi tile makers have a variety of techniques for production, glazing and firing. Resulting Tajimi tiles are characterised by a warm, hand-made look. Their slight irregularities in colour and texture are often perceived in keeping with Japanese aesthetics. Firing method strongly influences appearance, as well as nature of tiles. Globally most mass-produced tiles are fired in a so called roller heat kilns, providing a completely uniform output. In Tajimi however, tunnel- and shuttle kilns are used. Their fluctuating firing temperature and firing times of 20 hours or more, result in variations in colour among the same tiles, giving them their typical, vivid sense. In addition, a method known as reduction firing (as opposed to oxidation firing) can be used in combination with special glazes so as to create unique textures and colour effects like those found in traditional Japanese pottery.



David Glaetli / Creative director

After interdisciplinary studies in his hometown of Zurich, David Glaetli was trained in industrial design in Milan and Lausanne, where he graduated from ECAL. In 2008 he moved to Japan, where he joined the design studio of Teruhiro Yanagihara as designer. In 2013, he founded Glaetli Design Direction Ltd. (GDD) in Kyoto. Today, he and his company are located in Tokyo and specialises in creative direction, branding, design consulting and design management for Japanese and international manufacturers, brands and institutions. Clients of GDD include Sumida City, Saga Prefecture (2016/ Arita), Karimoku Furniture, A-Net/Issey Miyake (zucca) and the Embassy of Switzerland in Japan. David Glaetli has been teaching at Tama University, Tokyo as a guest tutor. David Glaetli is also the creative director of the furniture brand Karimoku New Standard and the new craft label Sumida Contemporary. [www.davidglaetli.jp](http://www.davidglaetli.jp)

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