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BLOG : DESIGN

aruliden

By [Dave Weiss](#)
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Photo: Dustin Ross
 Franck Raharinosy, Johan Liden, Rinat Aruh and Marty Reisman

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To most people ping-pong is a casual sport, a social sport – but at [aruliden](#) it's also the starting point for high design. Their latest project is a highly functional piece of design as well: the stunning CHALK ping-pong table for Puma which just launched at NYC's [Conran Shop](#) at the start of June. Rinat Aruh and Johan Liden started aruliden in 2006 after having met while collaborating on the Mini Lifestyle campaign, Rinat for BMW and Johan as a part of fuseproject. Since then aruliden has done a little bit of everything, their body of work ranges from packaging to industrial design from identity to marketing. The Scout met with Rinat and Johan in aruliden's Chinatown office:

The Scout: So, ping-pong or table tennis?

Rinat Aruh: It depends who you ask, I would say table tennis.

Johan Liden: Well, I would say ping-pong, so there you go.

With every sporting company seeming to have all their focus on the World Cup it's great to see Puma involved with this, can you tell me how this project came about?

JL: I think honestly this started more or less three years ago. It started with something called PT3 (the Puma Tennis Table Tournament) where we were involved with a couple of friends and some other people in starting this tournament. At first it was very small and very underground and it's grown throughout the years – it started with something like 12 teams and now I think it's 40.

And this is how it started, this is the paddle case we did for Puma for one of the first PT3s, and it's actually just two clamshells with magnets inside, hidden, kind of going away from zippers and soft cases and creating something really iconic and simple.

RA:When we started this in about 2006 with Puma they really embraced the sport – which is great because when you speak to people about ping-pong everybody has a little story to tell or they smile and there's a recollection. It's such an iconic sport but you go looking for things and there's nothing out there.

- Secret Forts
- Sight Unseen
- The Blue Hour (Brian Ferry)
- The Moment
- The Selvedge Yard
- Tiny Vices
- UnBeige
- Valet.

JL: It's amazing how this sport, even though it's so popular, hasn't had a facelift since it started. You go into a store and look at tennis or soccer and there's walls of new technology and new colors. Ping-pong? It's the same as it's always been and it all looks the same.

So what was important for us when we did this was not only to make a statement and do a different-looking table but also one that was playable and really works as a ping-pong table.

RA: And that was a big part in terms of choosing materials that could actually be played on.

JL: What's good about this material is it's a baked ceramic so it holds up really well – we did a lot of tests to make sure that surface didn't affect the bounce and make sure the playability wasn't compromised. And it's on top of a thin thin piece of metal which also allows the table to be magnetic.

And you just launched CHALK at the Conran Store...

RA: We invited [Marty Reisman](#) and [Franck Raharinosy](#) to come out and test it and there was a moment there where we're getting the international champs to come out and put their stamp of approval on it. To hear them bless it and embrace it – and they were like “yeah it's great bounce, it's right on” – it's really kind of giving kudos to not just designing for the purpose of making something pretty but also something functional that's legitimate to the sport.

JL: Ping-pong is a sport that everyone can relate to: they've played it at one time or another in their life. A lot of the people involved, I think, like the sport but also like to get together and have a fun time and I think obviously that's what the whole thing's about, it's not just about performance and playing ping-pong even though we love that. You can really play this game for a long time and just get better and better but for anybody to just pick it up, pick up a paddle and have fun it's easy. And you can't say that about every other sport. Allowing everyone to be a part of something, it's not just about the top athlete it's about enjoyment.

RA: You don't have to be a superstar celebrity athlete just to play. It's going back to just playing and having fun.

CHALK really seems to build on the social aspect of the sport.

RA: Absolutely – it was great to see it in use – at first we just put a piece of chalk down and stepped back but habitually people aren't used to writing on tables and on furniture in a retail stores. It just takes one person to take it and start and then everybody...

JL: ...everybody's tracing paddles, having fun – good to see it catching on. It makes sure that people get a chance to get together and do something else other than just having a beer, it's about doing an activity and having fun

It seems like every three years you do a really great collaboration with Puma – sneakers in 2004 for the Mini Lifestyle campaign, the PT3 Ultramagnetic in 2007 and now CHALK – will we have to wait until 2013 for the next one?

RA: No – you'll see more in 2011, we're doing more things around the sport of ping-pong in the spring. We have a great partnership with Puma when they want to think differently and do things differently.

JL: We're thinking about sports that are a little bit the odd sport out if you will.

RA: Sports that live in bars.

JL: Undervalued sports.

[CHALK by aruliden for Puma](#) is available exclusively through the Conran Shop.