THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Playing with faceted shapes in this folded paper model; patterns and texture are important in Lehanneur's work, but those aesthetics don't ever drive projects; the Andrea air filter; a prototype sits in the office.

"MATHIEU LEHANNEUR IS DAPPLED IN DISCO SUNSHINE."

www.mathieulehanneur.com

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: Mathieu Lehannuer in his studio; various models and three-dimensional sketches have been arranged on the wall.

Mathieu Lehanneur industrial designer

MATHIEU LEHANNEUR IS DAPPLED in disco sunshine. A series of welded disco balls sit near the open window and splatter the entire studio in bright spots of light. The disco ball sculpture isn't the only bit of flotsam from his design work lying around – a series of mannequins made for Yohji Yamamoto are arranged near his desk, a glass cabinet with urinal-like glass appendages faces the door, and various experiments and three-dimensional sketches are tacked to the walls. This is the office of one with a natural curiosity. Though the sloping attic-like space in this Parisian building is beautifully arranged by someone with careful aesthetics, Lehanneur's work isn't simply about making beautiful objects. He isn't interested in designing a chair or a desk lamp. What he is thinking about is how to design things that don't even exist yet. Not only is he creating forms, he is akin to an inventor, finding holes in our material culture and filling them with beautifully designed and thoughtful experiments.

By the time they get to market, like with his recently released Andrea air filter, they are no longer experiments but heavily researched, prototyped and organised pieces. Lehanneur developed Andrea after reading in a science journal (not exactly typical reading for most designers) about the potential of some plants in removing toxins, like formaldehyde, that are released into our spaces from carpets, solvents or plastics and purifying the air. Lehanneur saw the potential of designing an air filter that would harness this. With careful collaboration with Harvard professor David Edwards, he realised his early scheme for passing air past the leaves was not going to work as it is really the roots that do the work. From here he developed the first prototype, all 20,000 euros' worth. This was then redesigned and simplified into Andrea, which retails for the much more digestible €150. It has won the Popular Science Invention of the Year award and was also exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.