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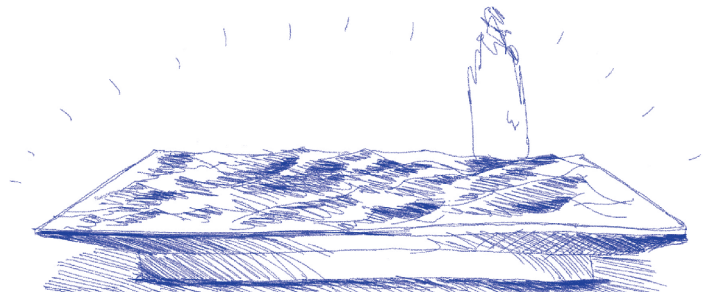
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Making waves
in the art world

One of the standout pieces at this year's London Design Week was French designer Mathieu Lehanneur's material-defying *Liquid Marble*. The Frenchman took a 1.5 tonne slab of marble and made it look like water. How? Certainly not with a hammer and chisel. He used the same CGI software used to create the tsunami in the 2012 film *The Impossible* (starring Naomi Watts and Ewan McGregor). Lehanneur has been something of a poster boy for science-inspired design, pushing the limits of what's been technologically

possible for the last 12 years. His latest project, and arguably his magnum opus to date, is a shining example of cutting-edge fabrication. Lehanneur wanted to recreate 'a moment in time from the ever-changing, dynamic surface of the sea', but to do that, first he had to understand it. To portray the natural peaks, channels and relief of a wave accurately, he and a team of 3D programmers had to translate the seemingly irrational form of the ocean into a geometric form using computer algorithms. This was the

easy part. From there they needed to convert the CGI file into a format that could be read by an industrial saw, which – unsurprisingly – no one had ever done before. It took a year of what he calls 'alchemy', four different pieces of software, and a handful of tried and failed plan Bs (at one stage, out of desperation, Lehanneur tried to sculpt the scene using clay) before the machinery was able to interpret the software and reproduce the contours of the image. **AM**

Lehanneur used a combination of technology, algorithms and an industrial saw to create *Liquid Marble*



1 A slab of black marquina marble was cut from a quarry in northern Italy and was then transported to the cutters at Mármoreos Centrais do Minho (MCM) in Amares, Portugal.



2 Rotating saws slowly cut the marble lengthways, moving up and down in keeping with the CGI-designed template. The saw worked on the marble without pause for two weeks, cutting lines 5mm thick.



3 The 4m slab was cut into four pieces to allow for transportation to the V&A Museum for London Design Week (the work was reassembled in the museum's Norfolk House Music Room).



4 At this stage you could still see where the saw had cut. The rough marble was then gently buffed and polished to seal any gaps and bring about its reflective quality. This took around two weeks.