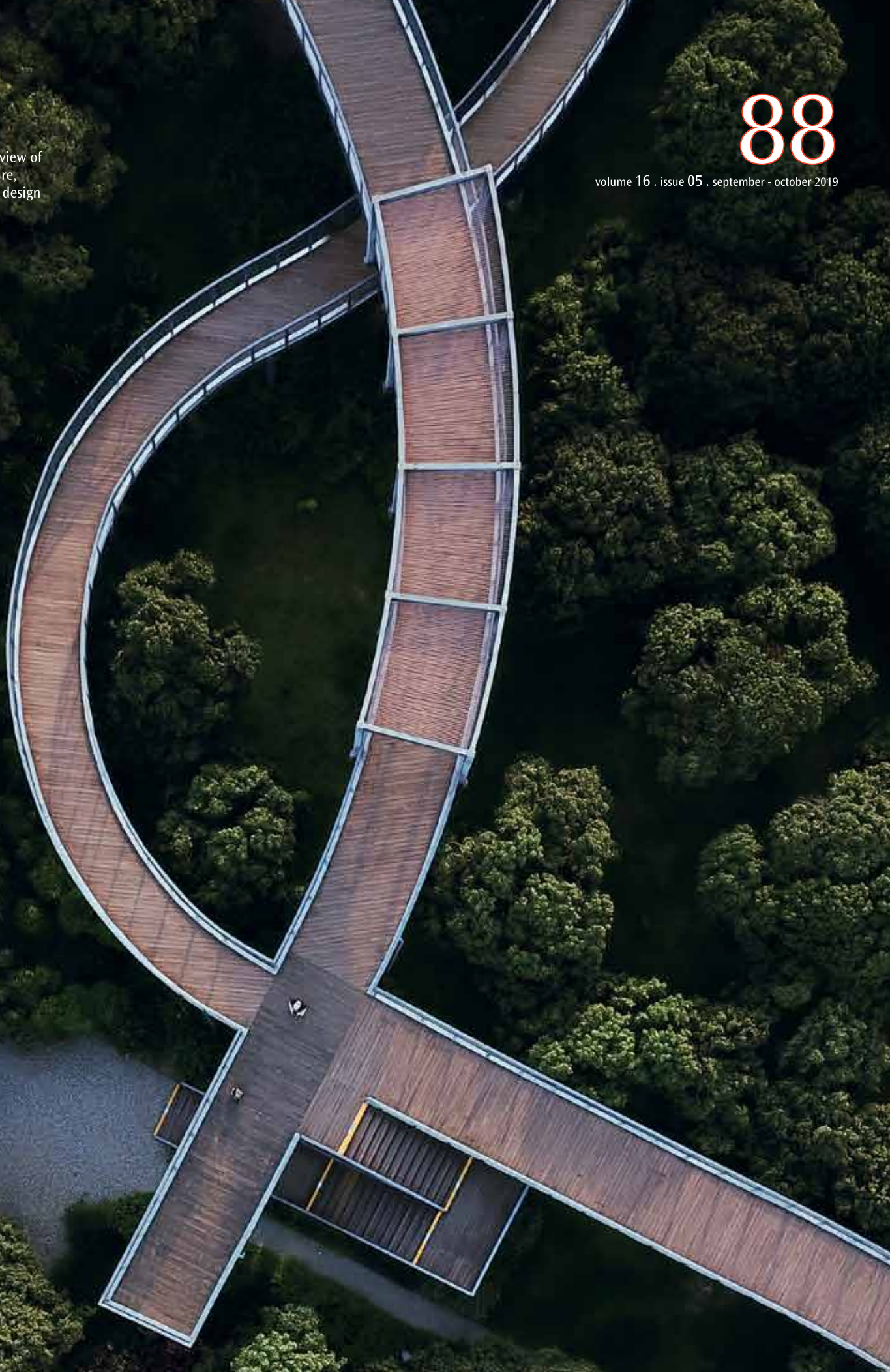




the indian review of  
world furniture,  
interiors and design

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volume 16 . issue 05 . september - october 2019



"The old architecture, especially from vernacular, has much to teach us as it always develops a typology of fundamental sense."

AR. CHARLES CORREA



INSIDE:

if FOCUS : VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE | if PERSONALITY : AR. SONALI BHAGWATI

if INDUSTRY FORUM : AUTOMATION | if GENNEXT : SHRUTI JAIPURIA



# an enquiring mind: MANOLO BLAHNIK AT THE WALLACE COLLECTION london, uk

commission : nissen richards studio, london, uk

**This seminal exhibit** aims to create a dialogue between art and craft in an exhibition co-curated by legendary footwear designer Manolo Blahnik and Wallace Collection Director Dr Xavier Bray. Blahnik has long drawn inspiration from the Wallace Collection's paintings, furniture, porcelain, sculpture and works of art. Thus, their common aesthetic territory has been highlighted.

Nissen Richards Studio worked with the co-curators to place, contextualise and display over 120 of Manolo Blahnik's shoe designs (some individual and some pairs) within 10 first floor rooms of the two-storey collection.

The structural display stands housing the shoes embody the practice's architectural approach to the creation of form. Intricate and ornate ideas were rejected in favour of a more stripped-back simplicity of form, using steel discs and rods housed in tall, glass domes. The manner of exhibiting sought to serve the shoes almost invisibly, not compete with them or with the surrounds of the Wallace Collection itself.







Although a small number of shoes have been placed within existing cabinets that house painted miniatures, the majority have been displayed within a total of 44 glass domes. Between one and three shoes are displayed in each dome at optimum viewing angles, with each shoe supported by a 15mm-diameter steel rod.

The domes are located in well-lit spaces such as window bays and fireplaces, creating pleasing surrounding frames. Some of the shoes are paired with paintings of a similar or directly-inspirational aesthetic, whilst others ally with the colors or textures of the objects and furnishings directly adjacent.

Manolo Blahnik helped select masterpieces from his archive. These now lead visitors on

a journey of enquiry around the Wallace Collection's great works. From the rise of the public spectacle in 18th century France, for example, the Commedia Dell'Arte and the performing arts, to the collecting passions of neoclassical connoisseurs and the revival fashions of antiquity, to the erotic power of Bouchet and Fragonard. In one room, the shoes designed for Sofia Coppola's 2006 film *Marie Antoinette* are placed in front of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's 1767 painting *The Swing*, while in another Frans Hals's 1624 portrait of *The Laughing Cavalier* is juxtaposed with a single ornate black boot. if

