Azagury-Partridge talks to Tom Dixon
Tom Dixon and Solange Azagury-Partridge
David Hayes FEBRUARY 21 2014
Tom Dixon and Solange Azagury-Partridge at Azagury-Partridge's Mayfair store  Solange Azagury-Partridge is founder and
owner of her eponymous jewellery label, which has stores in London and New York. The former creative director of French jewellery house Boucheron, she has a celebrity following that includes Thandie
Newton, Emma Watson and Sienna Miller. Born in London to parents of Moroccan descent, she lives in west London with her husband, the screenwriter Murray Partridge, and their two children.
Tom Dixon OBE is the former creative director of Habitat. London-based, he was born in Tunisia to a French mother and English father and is now creative director
of his own brand, Tom Dixon, specialising in lighting, furniture and accessories, as well as Design Research Studio, an interior and architectural design studio.
How we met  Dixon The first time we met is lost in the mists of time. It's all a blur.
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Azagury-Partridge It has been nearly 30 years. You DJ'd at my wedding. I think you were going out with Marie-Hélène [de
Taillac, the French jewellery designer], who I was working with at the time. There was that French connection. Also we discovered that we both have north-African roots.
Dixon And were both brought up bilingual.  I think we have a dual sense of humour, too.  Azagury-Partridge We speak franglais to each other.
<b>Dixon</b> It wasn't just social. When I was at Habitat I commissioned some objects from you. You came up with a fabulous safe, which was the perfect crossover between our two worlds.
Creative differences  Dixon People always ask me what advice I
would give a young designer and I always say that the most difficult thing to do now is to have a unique design personality. You have that.
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Azagury-Partridge What I love about your work is that you have a really strong point of view but you have always wanted that to be for everybody. You are always
experimenting with materials that are innovative and trying to do them in a mass way. Sometimes I know exactly how you have come to an idea because I feel that our creativity crosses over.
<b>Dixon</b> Yeah. We share some references, like psychedelia, mathematics <b>Azagury-Partridge</b> the 1970s,
geometry. That's what makes me feel so close to your work. For me it is like jewellery for the home.  Dixon The other thing we share is that our
work is about creating a whole universe. We are both happy to turn our hand to a variety of things, from perfume to film to music.  That is a very British trait – being the enthusiastic amateur.
Azagury-Partridge I am a typical Brit in the way that I'm not 100 per cent English. I am English but my parents are immigrants and I think that is a very British thing – to bring something "other" to the mix.
Technology and craft
A Solange Azagury-Partridge ring  Dixon If there is anything that ties it all together for me it's that I'm really interested in factories and techniques. I love nothing
more than going to a factory in India or Poland or Newcastle and seeing how people are making things and thinking, "What if we did something in a different way?" It is always about making stuff. My real pleasure
has always been the physical connection with the materials or the new tool that I've just bought.  Azagury-Partridge I do think there needs
to be a visceral reaction to things. If you don't get that, it's just meaningless. That's what I think is the missing link with a lot of computer-generated design.
<b>Dixon</b> I'm absolutely not anti-technology – I find it fascinating; it is another tool in the toolkit. I think what has changed is that there are so many more people engaged in design now. If something is interesting, then
it is broadcast round the world in such a way that it becomes public property almost immediately. So it is harder and harder for young designers to find the space to develop unique stuff.
Azagury-Partridge I started with just a typewriter, and then we were so excited when we got a fax machine. And then we got a computer and were even more excited. It
all feels like pre-history! Now I see students in their first year at college working in a way that probably took me five years to get to.
<b>Dixon</b> We should be careful of sounding
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