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Post-pandemic, furniture designers are using huge pieces to add a sense of excitement and surprise. Is this a case of more is more, asks Caroline Roux



The subject of scale comes up a lot these days, especially among architects and designers, some of whom have been recalled by clients whose apartments have miraculously grown. "We went back to see a client on the Upper East Side because she'd just bought the apartment upstairs," says one. "Once we've combined the two, it will completely change the way she is going to live and the size of the spaces she'll occupy." Another, a lighting designer, talked about installing a chandelier that would swamp any other room he'd ever previously worked in. While a third noted that "All our clients are moving to the next size of yacht, and the dining table to seat 24 is a basic requirement." Size, it seems, is everything.

Individual designers are responding by going large. Simon Stewart, profiled on page 36, notes that one of his gallery's most iconic pieces – Mia Jung's *Cloud Console* table, a near-ethereal design in hand-silvered Murano glass – began at just over a metre in length. "But then we increased it to 1.5m, and now we are making it as a two-metre table," he says. "That's the new requirement from architects and designers."

"We've been working at a larger scale for a number of years," says the San Francisco-based interior designer Douglas Durkin. "I have two furniture designers on my team, and we aim to never repeat the same thing twice. It's very old school and embraces

Above: Architect Charles Zana. Photo: Jean-Pierre Vaillancourt, courtesy Charles Zana





**"THERE'S
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Previous page: Misha
Kahn, *Alaskartica*
Deannexation, 2021.
Photo: Courtesy Misha Kahn.
This page and opposite:
Charles Zana, *Mobilier*, 2021.
Photos: François Halard,
courtesy Charles Zana



craftsmanship. We're currently working on custom daybeds for a house on a lava flow on the Big Island of Hawaii. They are amorphic and sinuous and will stretch up to 15ft."

Durkin, however, is equally keen to commission some of the design world's major players. Recent works include 12ft-long bronze *Two legs and a Table* by Ron Arad, which had to be hoisted into a penthouse apartment on Fifth Avenue; and a bronze light, 12ft in diameter, by Dutch artist Frederik Molenschot (who is represented by Carpenters Workshop Gallery) for a supersized Californian living room. "It floats in this beautiful large space," says Durkin.

For Parisian architect Charles Zana, this new normal has led to the development of a series of furniture that is infinitely scalable. "I sometimes design for very spacious houses," says Zana. "You would have to install two, three or even four sofas to complement a drawing room. Sometimes it's a much better solution to use one really big one." Zana grew up surrounded by his parents' daring taste in rule-breaking contemporary furniture, and is now finding it to be a useful touchstone.

"In the 1970s in France, when there was a more utopian view, people had those huge enveloping sofas you would all fall into together," he says. Zana's current answer is the "Alexandra", which encloses its own space and can be reconfigured specifically according to the shape of the room. "It's my Tunisian couch, if you like," he says, referring to his own heritage, and the multi-occupant sofas that are found in North Africa and the Middle East. There is also the chic and sinuous "Julie", which Zana has been known to place diagonally in a space. His Isfahan table, with a gently pitted red travertine top and patinated bronze legs, starts at three metres.

For rising US design star Misha Kahn, this upsizing trend has led to increasingly complex and exciting commissions, particularly for his bas relief tapestries, which are hand-woven at the Stephens Tapestry in Johannesburg, South Africa. "The larger the work, the more detail and information you can add," says Kahn, who works across many media including glass and bronze, as well as incorporating found objects and refuse into his work. "For one collector I made an enormous piece: she sent me a list of every creature in the Antarctic and I managed to include every one of them. It was a wonderful opportunity. I saw it as a collaboration."

Another commission, also from a contemporary art collector, was for a 14ft-wide headboard. "There's a level of bravery involved," says Kahn. "And the bigger and braver, the better and better."