Julia Lohmann's work eliminates the distance between the animal origins of a material and its utilisation by humans. Her series of Cow Benches and Ruminant Bloom lights explore the threshold between animal and animal material, probing our attitude towards animals and how we use them to sustain us.

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Visitors to the 2005 Milan Furniture Fair who strolled past the unusual installations entitled Cow Bench and Ruminant Bloom Light–included in Great Brits–The New Alchemists exhibition held by the Design Museum and the British Council–saw something a tad more unusual than they bargained for.

Cow Bench, the concept and handwork of sculptural artist Julia Lohmann, is a series of unique hand-sculpted pieces each witha different name and shape. Each bench is upholstered with the hide of one cow, the leather placed in the same position as it was on the living animal. The benches serve as memento mori for the cows that died to make the leather from which they are made.

Ruminant Bloom are flowerlike lights made of preserved sheep stomachs. This series of lights triggers feelings oscillating between attraction and disgust, the former through their warm luminosity and the latter as soon as one learns more about their material origins. The honey-combed texture of the second stomach envelopes the light in a beautiful billowing lace.

Lohmann was born in Hildsheim, Germany in 1977. After studying graphic design at the Surrey Institute, she went to London and studied design products at the Royal College of Art. When she graduated in summer 2004, she decided to work and live in London. Together with another RCA graduate Gero Grundmann, she founded the South London design office studio BEC.

By working with leather and other waste products of the meat industry and giving value to these leftovers, Lohmann tries to use her work to explore the threshold between animal and animal material, probing our attitude towards animals and how we use them to sustain us. "We are blotting out the connection between animals and food, while advances in biotechnology allow us to create artificial living tissue. I want to reconnect objects that made of animal materials with their animal origins and find new uses for animal materials that are deemed worthless."

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