I.D. ANNUAL DESIGN REVIEW 2002: FURNITURE

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1. RELAX BEDSIDE TABLE/LAMP

CLIENT Fontana Arte Spa, Milan, Italy: Carlo Guglielmi DESIGN Defne Koz
Design Studio, Milan, Italy: Defne Koz, principal; Gimena Moya Tonelli, designer

MATERIALS|FABRICATION phenolic (top and shoulder), metal frame, wood laminate

HARDWARE|SOFTWARE Macintosh, Macromedia Freehand, Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Windows, AutoCAD
All tables have legs, but how often do they sprout shoulders and a swiveling head? It was the dual functionality of the Relax bedside table/lamp, created by Defne Koz for Milan-based Fontana Arte, that earned accolades from jurors. "It has a naive quality that's enjoyable," Deam noted of the whimsical, almost humanoid form.

And yet the monolithic design demonstrates a succinct emotional intelligence that Deam called "poetic." Dare a product designed for the bedroom—that most sacrosanct of places—be anything less? Relax simplifies the evening hours by allowing users to remove the light source from the tabletop and place it overhead. It's a slight modicum of sanity in an otherwise cluttered world, but a soothing one nonetheless.

"The design has a character that's both modern and soulful," noted Forbes, alluding to the moody quality of the lamp's diffused halogen lighting. Deam added, "It's a product that feels sincere. It's refreshing that it doesn't 'bust a move' with any slick detailing, for which I'm thankful. The way it seems to promote a humane way of life just puts a smile on my face."

>> TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE HABITAT FOR RELAX (THE BEDROOM) INFORM ITS DESIGN?
I see the Relax lamp as a kind of calm invention. It's a simple shape that fits into an environment where we don't want anything too busy. And yet it's not banal. In the initial sketches, I thought about the kind of presence the design would have in relation to the user. The name almost preceded the design itself.

>> HOW DOES THIS INNOVATION BREAK TRADITION?
It changes the way we view and use furniture. Combining a functional piece like a lamp with furniture is always difficult. Relax avoids the temptation to show off its technology; the lamp element is totally hidden. I think of it as more of a bedside table with an aura of light than a light fixture that's integrated into a piece of furniture.

>> WHAT AESTHETIC AND MANUFACTURING ADVANTAGES WERE GLEANED FROM FABRICATING THE LIGHTING COMPONENT OUT OF PHENOLIC RESIN?
Phenolic resins are not often used in furniture, but they fit well with our specs, given their electric insulation and resistance to heat (both fireproofing requirements). We experimented with finishes and were able to obtain, with the same structural pieces, both a lacquered color and a wood veneer surface.

Defne Koz received a master's degree in industrial design from Domus Academy in Milan, Italy, and spent two years at Sottsass Associati before founding her eponymous Milan design consultancy in 1992. She has recently developed products for Fontana Arte, Alessi, Pirelli, Vitra, Cappellini/Progetto Oggetto, Authentics and Nissan. Koz's innovative works have been exhibited in numerous venues, including the Biennale del Vetro Venezia, Kunstmuseum Dusseldorf, Ozone Gallery Tokyo and Designers Odyssey metu Ankara in Turkey.
2. A3 OFFICE FURNITURE SYSTEM

Setting out to create the office environment of the future, New York-based Asymptote developed A3, a modular, reconfigurable system that responds to office workers' behavioral, technical and architectural needs. Designers took cues from sports apparel and sports gear to create a system that fits with the body, and used semi-transparent screens to help achieve a balance of openness, lightness and privacy. Deam noted that the incorporation of curvilinear geometry questionably allows office planners and designers to create alcoves, breakout spaces, impromptu gathering spots and meeting areas. Plus, the use of fewer materials overall and recycled materials is a nod to the environment. The jurors felt that, contrary to Knoll's objective for the system, A3 doesn't respond to office workers' behavioral, technical and architectural needs. Deam commented that A3 "pushes the boundaries of psychological versus physical privacy," but added that ultimately, the workstations are just "billboards broadcasting how cool and hip the firm wants to be."

CLIENT Knoll, New York
DESIGN Asymptote, New York: Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture, principals; Noboru Ota and Jose Salinas, project team; Knoll A3 Project Team: Andrew Cogan, CEO; Karen Stone, design director; Douglas Reuter, marketing director; Knoll Product Development Team, East Greenville, Pa.
MATERIALS|FABRICATION injection-molded plastic, bent steel tubing, cut and routed HDF
HARDWARE|SOFTWARE Alias|Wavefront Studio
3. NIMBUS/IMAGO OZONE

Two surface options—Imago, a lightweight, transparent, hard-surface building material, and Nimbus, a billowy, puckered window fabric—combine to create Imago Ozone. Although it looks like glass, Imago can be fabricated using drills and saws and can be bent or formed under moderate heat to create soft curves or hard angles. Nimbus was developed using a technology from the apparel industry, which prevents the polka dots from shrinking during the finishing process, keeps them lighter and flatter than the surrounding material and creates a puckered effect. Interior applications for both materials include panels and screens, wallcoverings, tabletops, marker boards, window treatments and shelving. Forbes lauded the Ozone's attempt to go beyond “skin coating.” He noted, “It's taking 2D materials and using them in a structural way.”

CLIENT
KnollTextiles Inc., New York

DESIGN
Suzanne Tick Inc., New York: Suzanne Tick, president

MATERIALS|FABRICATION
fabric (Nimbus) encapsulated in an engineered resin (Imago) and stamped with a smooth finish
4. LIQUID LIGHTS

Liquid Lights was born of designer Larissa Sand’s desire to use liquid as a filter for light. The fixture’s Pyrex glass structure creates a double-wall cylinder that holds liquid, which, in turn, acts as a color filter for the light source. A stainless-steel cable and refined, machined, mechanical connections add to the light, airy feel and make the liquid appear to be suspended in space. Forbes noted that the construction gives it an “out-of-the-laboratory” feel, while the shape makes it seem more seductive. Deam added, “Using liquid and oil as a diffuser is so much more sensual than adding colored pieces of plastic.”

CLIENT
100watt Network, New York

DESIGN
South Park Fabricators, San Francisco: Larissa Sand, principal

MATERIALS|FABRICATION
liquid pendants made of double-wall Pyrex vessel; glass cylinder holds water-soluble dye and mineral oil; stainless cable suspension held together with machine-finished aluminum components

HARDWARE|SOFTWARE
Macintosh G4, PowerCADD, VectorWorks
Photocredit: Cesar Rubio
5. IQ LOCKER

Although jurors loved the IQ Locker for many reasons—color, function and aesthetics—the overall strength was that “It brings quality design to a completely neglected area,” Deam explained. Siemens commissioned Berlin London to create an upscale locker for clubs, hotels and gyms. IQ features doors that slide into cabinets (freeing up space); a Smart Card that combines access control, club membership card, locker key and “money” in a coin-sized chip; and a sleek look that complements the well-appointed interiors of high-end clubs and gyms. The locker is available in colored, laminated glass; anodized aluminum; wood veneer; or with a powder-coated finish.
MARY PENDANT

Described by Deam as "a very satisfying meal," the Mary Pendant comprises hand-cut and polished hand-blown glass suspended from the ceiling by a stainless-steel aircraft cable. The 4-inch-tall light fixture houses a dimmable electronic transformer and can hang up to 6 feet from the ceiling. The hourglass-shaped housing comes in wheat, steel, aqua and clear versions. Judges commented on its sophisticated engineering and relaxed, playful design. Deam added that the pendant "has staying power—it's not going to be trendy."

CLIENT|DESIGN
Resolute, Seattle: Douglas Varey, principal; Luca Rattazzi, glass development; Max Moseley, hardware development

MATERIALS|FABRICATION
hand-blown glass, hand-cut and polished; CNC screw machine, laser cutter, spring former

HARDWARE|SOFTWARE pen and paper
7. DNA FURNITURE SYSTEM

A joint venture between Teknion Corp. and Pasadena, Calif.-based Round Three, DNA sought to create a new type of office-furniture company, one that makes use of the Internet to build a system of customizable, configurable components online. The result is the DNA Furniture System, which includes storage boxes, work surfaces and structural elements that can be combined to create durable, space-saving, affordable workstations or display systems. An online customization engine, the DNA builder, facilitates mass customization of office furniture to ensure swift creation of personalized workstations. The online DNA Assistant allows purchasers to set parameters and engage in a virtual design process to custom-build a well-suited office system. Forbes noted, “The details have been thought through in terms of mobility.” Deam liked that DNA was “not obsessed with image-based concerns, but still stylish.”

CLIENT|DESIGN DNA, Pasadena, Calif.: Richard Holbrook, principal designer/CEO; Darren Mark, vice president, product development; Jeff Bentzler, Filiberto Betancourt, Scott Brown and Brad Cracchiola, designers

MATERIALS|FABRICATION folded, extruded and die-cast aluminum (boxes, rails, hardware); injection-molded polycarbonate (storage box tops and doors, shelves); RTF wrapped MDF (work surfaces)

HARDWARE|SOFTWARE Alias|Wavefront Studio, ProEngineer