

Furniture Lighting Tableware Textiles Products

Editor **Ron Arad** General Editor **Jeremy Myerson** Design **Neville Brody Studios**

The International Design Yearbook 1994

THE
INTERNATIONAL
DESIGN
YEARBOOK

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Editor **Ron Arad** General Editor **Jeremy Myerson** Assistant Editor **Jennifer Hudson**

Laurence King

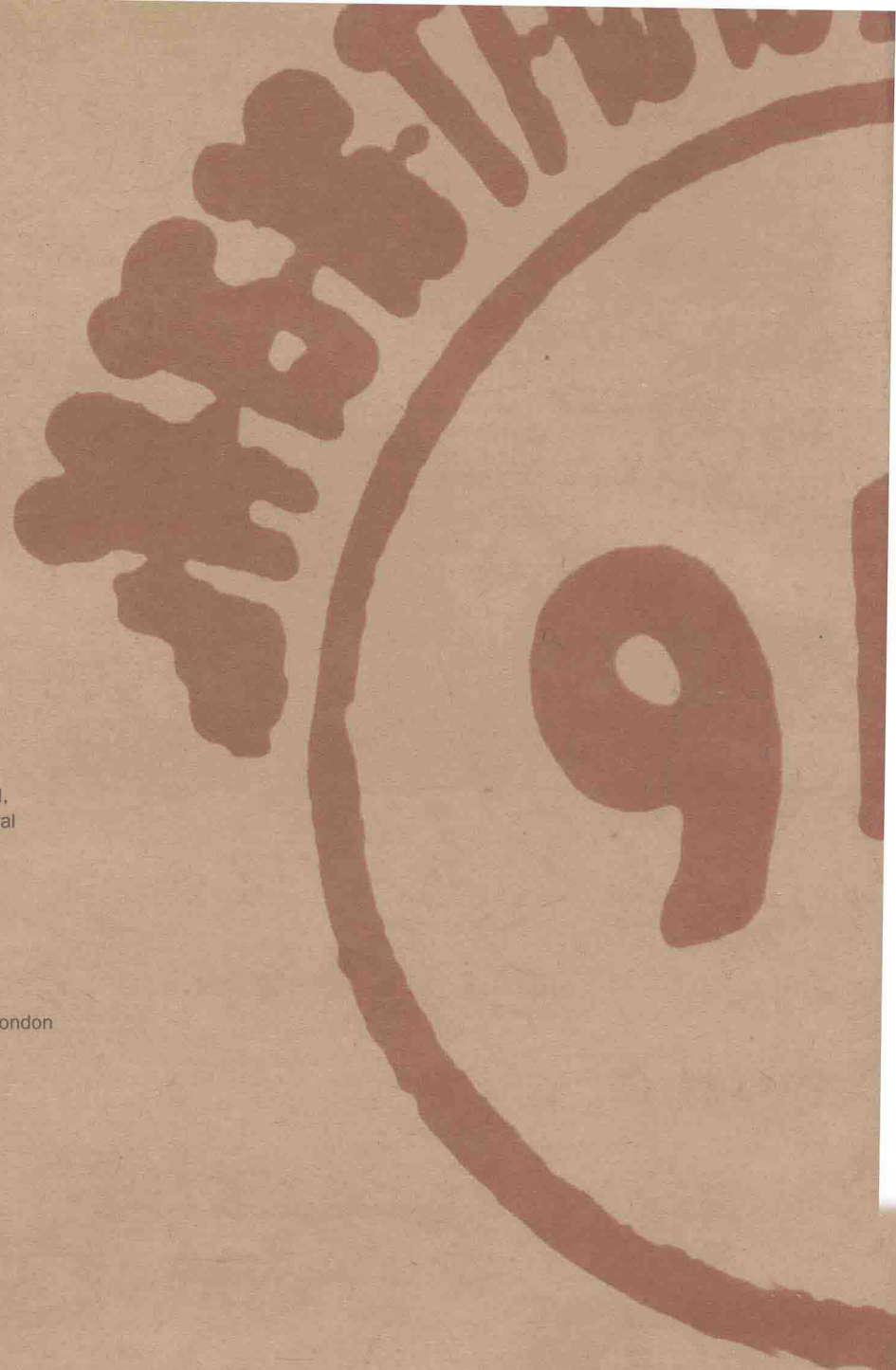
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Based on an original idea by Stuart Durant
Designed by Neville Brody and Giles Dunn for Neville Brody Studio, London
Printed in Singapore



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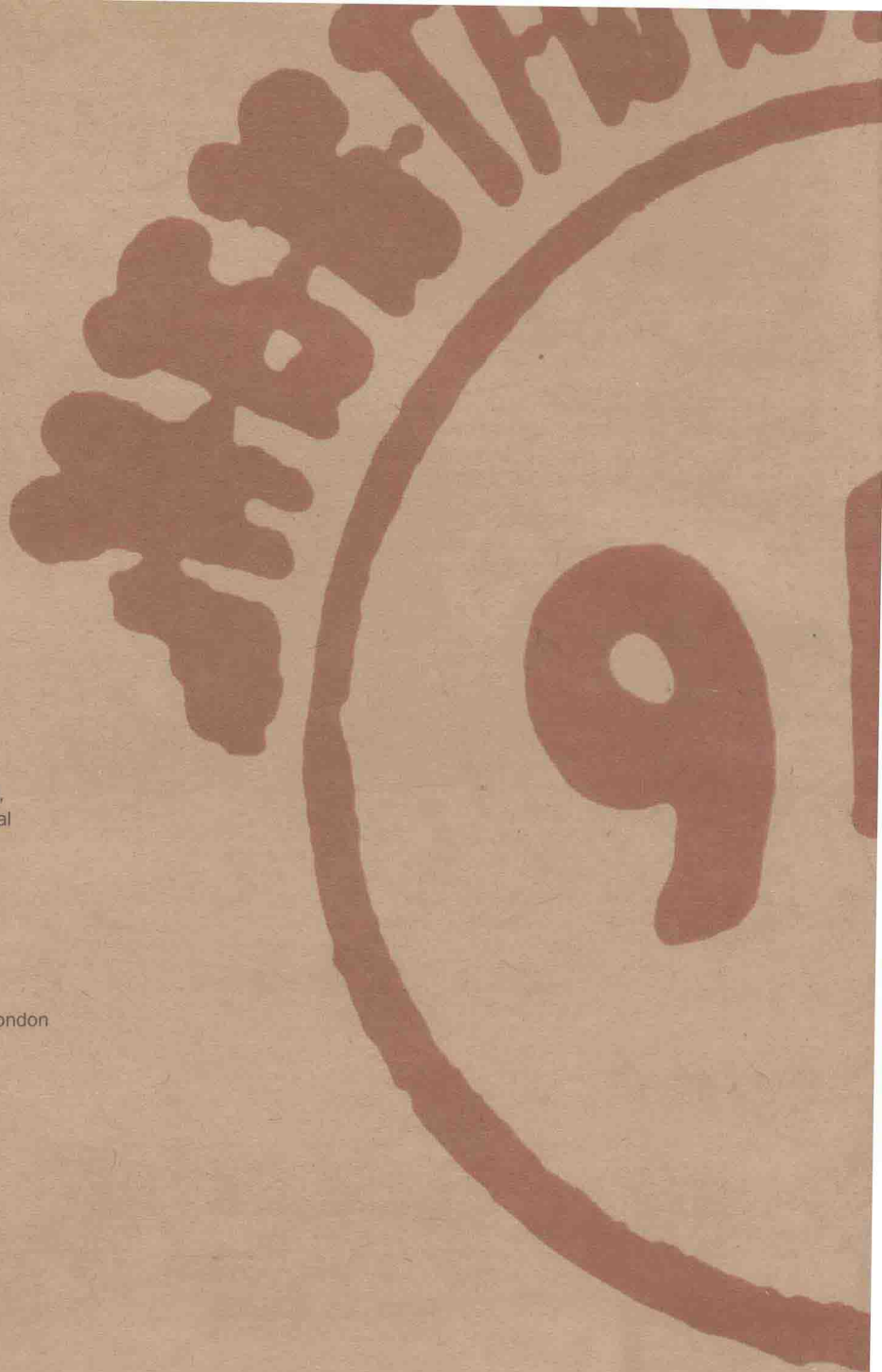
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Jeremy Myerson

Foreword

There has been a growing and pervasive trend in recent years to argue that design is nothing without its context, to suggest that objects owe everything to the surrounding cultural, economic and social conditions which shape their form and define their content. Whether a chair, a light, a kettle or a camera, everyone strives to name the broader national characteristics, aesthetic movements or technological imperatives which help to pigeonhole the design. It is not just critics and academics who have sought to contextualize objects; designers too have been happy to jump on a bandwagon which legitimizes their work and makes it easier to discuss and promote.

In this climate of context above all else, what happens to the individualistic ideas of those designers whose objects owe almost nothing to broader trends and almost everything to personal invention and vision? Ron Arad could be said to be such a designer, and it is fitting that his guest selection for the ninth edition of *The International Design Yearbook* is underscored by his belief that what really matters are the objects and the individuals who create them, not the social or economic conditions in which they are created.

Arad could not care less about the bigger picture – the status of design cities or the credibility of design movements. He focuses on each individual design in a single-minded way to see what it says about the convictions of the

person who has created it. This, then, is a book as much about people as it is about design – about their preoccupations and beliefs, and the way they express them through the artefacts they create.

Arad's selection is defined by his interest in fresh ways of seeing and making objects, and in methods which utilize new technologies and materials. The banal, the dully professional, the "safe" and competent are banished. What inspires Arad is the idea that somehow the individual is trying to break new ground, to communicate, to engage with the user, to say something fresh.

By divorcing the designs from contextual trends and assessing each object on its own merits, Arad avoids an over-emphasis on youth or on famous names. The mix of designers in the selection is a richly intriguing one, with an older generation of designers – represented by such names as Nanna Ditzel, Knud Holscher, Ettore Sottsass, Gaetano Pesce, Takenobu Igarashi, Kenneth Grange and Robert Heritage – rubbing shoulders with newer talent. Johanna Grawunder, Karim Rashid, Toby Russell, Casimir Reynders, Yasuyuki Hirai and others undoubtedly send a shot of freshness and vitality through international design, but the ability to innovate is by no means confined to the newer ranks, as Ditzel's furniture with flexible veneers or Holscher's seashell-styled spotlights demonstrate so clearly.

Only in one category – textiles – does Arad select designers within a more narrow and youthful age range. Here, though, his fascination with new techniques and materials perhaps informs his choice more forcefully than anywhere else. Helle Abild's use of computer scanners to develop repeat patterns from industrial components and Reiko Sudo's use of chemicals to burn fabric and create layered effects represent some of the most eye-catching work.

Such technological innovation in textile design is more than matched in other disciplines presented in this edition of the *Yearbook*. In tableware, for example, Gaetano Pesce's molten, deconstructed glass bowls reflect six new techniques in designing with glass – the results of his experiments for a French government agency. In furniture, Philippe Starck's extruded plastic shelving system for Kartell, *Booxx*, presents the translucence of the material in a new way. In lighting, Tom Dixon's wobbling, shadow-casting *Spiral Uplighter* explores the kinetic dimension of the object. In product design, new techniques and materials abound – whether in the latest notebook computers and camcorders, or in the textured wall tiles of Masatoshi Sakaegi and semi-invisible titanium wire spectacle frames of Dissing and Weitling.

Arad's fascination with technical innovation is not in any way confined to new or advanced technologies, however, as is evident in his inclusion of graphic vases by Japan's Takenobu Igarashi which utilize the ancient metalworking techniques of Tsubame City, or the wicker furniture of Germany's Jan Armgardt which breathes new life into a traditional craft.

Behind Ron Arad's selection one can perhaps see a desire to highlight the poetic within the pragmatic artefacts of contemporary design, to look at the sheer volume of technology and production laid out before the guest editor and find the qualities of human thought and spirit at its heart. A central theme, not only of this book but of design over the past couple of years, has been the concern to find a way to humanize our ever-advancing technological age, to counterpoint the vast sweep of mass

markets and mass production with a rediscovery of craft in conceiving and making the objects we use. Whether it takes new loops in advanced technology, such as flexible manufacturing systems, to achieve design with greater individuality, sensuousness, spirit, meaning and variation, or simply a revival of time-honoured techniques lost or abandoned in the modern era, it is hard to say. Both approaches are highlighted in this edition of *The International Design Yearbook*.

In a discipline such as furniture, where a strong element of craft making survives in the object, such a concern is less acute. In products, however, where multinational manufacturers face growing consumer apathy to anonymous, technical "black box" or "white box" design, such projects as Doug Patton's expressive hand-held remote controls or Marco Susani and Mario Trimarchi's new tools for the kitchen, based on old rituals and comfortable materials, have a special resonance in the search for a craft dimension to technological objects. The big manufacturers – Siemens, Toshiba, Philips and so on – are certainly trying to find a new direction, as prototype telephones, appliances and audio-visual equipment in the *Yearbook* demonstrate.

This search for a new humanizing design language in a sense overrides the increasingly meaningless debate about Modernism and Post-Modernism in international design. Arad sidesteps it altogether. He is attracted to the functional, and impatient with the decoratively useless. Yet he finds most of the conventionally accepted icons of "good design" – those pure lines devoid of ornament – boring and sterile. Only when objects are given a twist, such as Ursula Munch-Petersen's playful tableware for Royal Copenhagen, the impeccably functionalist Scandinavian manufacturer – do they qualify.

Many people, of course, are greatly attracted to the classic pioneer era of twentieth-century Modernism, and 1993 turned out to be a vintage year for classic modern reproductions – from Walter Gropius floor-coverings by Vorwerk to Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax furniture by Cassina. Arad passed them over, not because he thought such work was bad or without its place, but because he was making a selection of what was new in 1993, rather than a twentieth-century design selection; he believed that there was enough fresh talent and ideas around to justify their exclusion. One is reminded of a machine he built for a show at the Beaubourg in Paris in 1987. It was a monstrous metal compactor intended to crush all the Lloyd Wright, Breuer and Hoffmann chairs to make room for a new generation of furniture designers. Only when the classics were in miniature – such as those limited edition miniatures produced by Vitra and Woka – did Arad allow them into the book.

Harking back to the past is precisely the type of contextual trend which Arad does his best to escape. Nevertheless, it is impossible to totally ignore the fact that the period from which the designs in this book are drawn is rich in contextual change. International design has become accustomed to its own new world order. Bust followed boom. Environmental concerns made excessive style in production embarrassingly redundant. Functionality replaced the superficial go-faster stripes of style-addicted design in the 1980s. Arad's selection cannot help but reflect all of this in some way, however unconsciously, whether in the recycled materials of certain furniture or glassware pieces, the old newsprint bonded into new textiles, or poor materials such as Velcro strips or milk bottles incorporated into the latest light fittings. Lighting designs by King Miranda or Tejo Remy in particular reflect what has been called the "new modesty" in international design, a use of the old and the borrowed to create something new in an age of anxiety about the excesses of production.

Fears about the environment and the economic downturn have risen concurrently in design, spiralling into one another at different times. Ron Arad made his selection for this book just as the British and American economies were beginning to drag themselves slowly out of the recession, while the German, Italian, French and even Japanese economies were sliding into the industrial mire, accompanied by growing political instability and uncertainty. One can sense a certain anxiety in the way the industrial giants are looking again to the stylists to stimulate sales, just as they did in the early 1930s. Then Raymond Loewy and his peers came to the rescue, with the streamlined form to the fore. It is much harder to discern what single theme or style will constitute salvation for manufacturers this time around. There are certainly many objects in the *Yearbook* we would all aspire to own, but too many remain at prototype stage or in the realms of limited batch production, as manufacturers balk at taking a gamble on their own future and continue to produce the type of design which sold in the recent past. Arad does not concern himself for a moment with the economic context, but it is there all the same. Even in those objects which reflect the triumph of individual will over materials and technologies (what three-dimensional design is really all about), there are economic questions in the background. When, following the personal tragedy of a car accident, Japanese designer Kazuo Kawasaki set out to create the perfect wheelchair, *Carna*, he had to overcome the high innovation costs attendant on a limited market. British designer-inventor James Dyson has chosen to take his championing of cyclonic technology in vacuum cleaners all the way by manufacturing and marketing his own *Dual Cyclone* product. Perhaps what really commends Ron Arad's selection is the way it says so much about the market pluralism of the age while refusing to play the contextual games of the design critic.



1. Bookshelf *Bookworm* 1993
Sprung steel, fake books acting as brackets
Manufacturer: Ron Arad Associates

2. Chair *Transformer* 1982
PVC, unexpanded polystyrene beads
Air is removed by suction to provide a vacuum-packed chair that retains the shape of the sitter.
Manufacturer: One Off

3. School Chair 1988
Aluminium, rubber
Manufacturer: Vitra International, Switzerland



Ron Arad

Introduction

In my role of Guest Editor of *The International Design Yearbook* I was expected to reduce a mountain of slides that poured in from around the world to a book's worth of a selection that made some sense. This seemed an impossible task. I have no direction to point towards, nor do I have the urge to classify trends and fads, summing up the year's design in captions. I am deeply suspicious of people who do. I remember how in the mid 1980s *Face* magazine (and its satellites) promoted the use of matt black in the home as well as in the wardrobe, only to ridicule it as *passé* twelve issues later. Who are these people to take colour away and then give it back?



4. Carpet chair *Full House* 1987
Aluminium
An aluminium "carpet" winches up to become two chairs facing each other.
Manufacturer: One Off

5. Well-Tempered Chair 1987
Temper-rolled stainless steel
Manufacturer: Vitra International, Switzerland



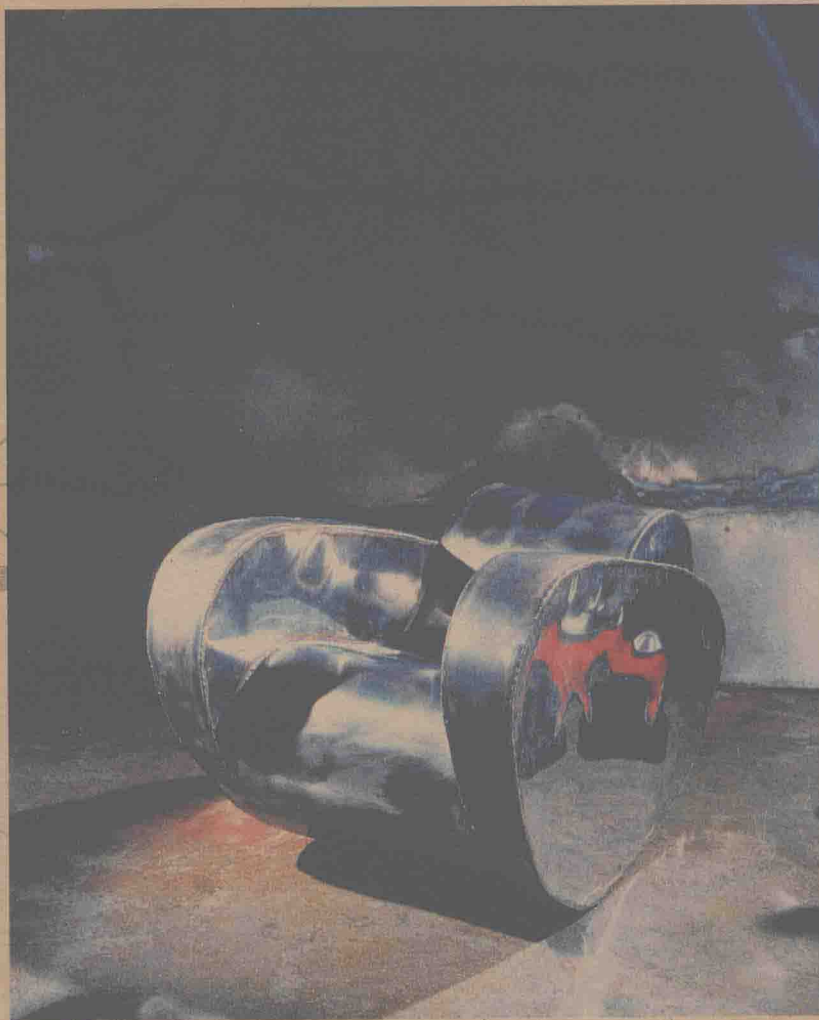
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I do not subscribe to any design religion. I have taken equal inspiration in my own work from things as engineered as a Prouvé chair or as expressive as a Pesce table. I am interested in objects and the individuals who create them, more than in the ever-changing social or economic climate that brought them about. I do not care if Milan is down, Barcelona is up, or if the Scandinavians have lost it forever or regained it. I cannot tell you on the basis of my selection about the state of international design today; I have never lived and worked in a different period, so I cannot really say. What I can say is that out of this year's crop of designs, I made a small personal selection of objects which for one reason or another attracted my attention. It is only in the strength of my own enthusiasm for individual ideas, shapes and processes that I could make any inclusion or omission. Oscar Wilde once wrote: "It is absurd to divide people into good or bad. People are either charming or tedious." I feel the same way about design – it either charms me or escapes me.

My initial instinct to deal with the task of selection was to publish each and every work that was submitted prior to the deadline, providing it met the criteria set down by the publisher for one of the different categories of the book. The allocated number of pages would then have been divided equally according to the number of knives and forks, cameras, clocks etc. Although the material sent in for selection was already "selected" to a great extent (companies chose to produce it, market it, individuals chose to make it, photograph and caption it), it could still be a record of what was happening in design in the past year. For publishing and production reasons my scheme proved impractical. So I reluctantly agreed to make the selection within the existing conventions of the book.

There are a few further points that should be made about this selection. First of all it represents a minority of a minority of the great mass of products that are manufactured around the world, and it should be seen in that context. For example, people refer to Richard Sapper's *Tizio* desk light as the best-selling light of all times. It is not. It is simply the best-selling light within the design community.



6. Chair *Big Easy Volume 1* 1988
Initial prototype for the *Rolling volume*. Weighted and balanced with sand
Manufacturer: One Off

7. Chair *Big Easy Volume 2* 1989
A hollow volume in black or stainless steel
Manufacturer: Ron Arad Associates

8. Chair *Rolling volume* 1989
A streamlined rocking chair weighted with lead
Manufacturer: Ron Arad Associates

SOLID BRONZE
CIRCULAR SECTIONS

9. *Chair by its Cover* 1989-90

Highly reflective stainless steel
The curved mirror forms the armrests and reflects endlessly changing distorted images of the chair.

10. *Tinker Chair* 1988

Mild steel, stainless steel

11. *Rover Chair* 1981

Rover car seat, tubular steel

12. Floor lamp, *Shadow of Time* 1986

Steel

The light projects a working clock face on to the ceiling or wall.

13. Table lamp *Aerial Light* 1981

The aerial is multi-directional and extends to 100cm (39in). All functions are controlled by a separate hand-held unit.
12v halogen bulb



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When looking at the objects in my selection, it is also important to bear in mind the fact that they represent luxury. The world would be no worse off if no new chairs were produced and people had to make do with, say, the chairs in the Thonet catalogue. The range there is wide enough to meet all basic needs. Most new designs are surplus to requirements and therefore, though design objects do fulfil a function, their main *raison d'être* is not purely functional. Like music and fine art, they are there to enrich our lives. The beauty of a car may be best appreciated when there is no petrol in the tank. This is not to say that the delight an object gives is exclusively visual: comfort, performance, wit, manufacturing ingenuity, economy or richness of means can all be vital ingredients.

When we have such great market segmentation and media fragmentation (it is difficult to imagine a new "event" like the Beatles happening again, when we no longer rely on the one radio or TV station, but can tune in to many according to our taste and culture), it is surprising when a newly designed object becomes generic. This may happen more in the products category, where the technological race and giant market forces act as catalysts and help to crystallize these new generics.

I do not think there should be a moratorium on ornament and decoration. However, in the tableware category, I found myself more interested in designers who create austere, minimal objects.

When I came to look at the textiles category, I was an outsider, a layman. I did not know the names and had no background knowledge of either the techniques or the history. I selected purely on gut feeling, reacting to the patterns on the page. It was interesting to be informed later that the designers whose work I chose to feature form a tightly knit group and belong to a narrow age band.



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14. Rocking chair *Size 10* 1988
Stainless steel, mild steel
Part of the first *Volume* collection of 1988.

15. *Misfits* 1993
Manufacturer: Moroso, Italy

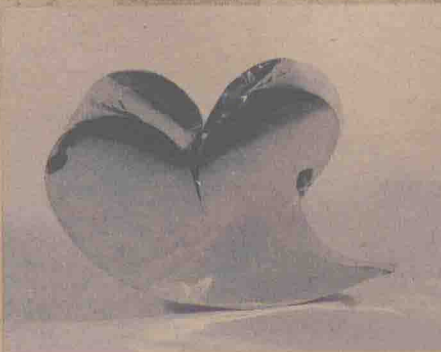
16. *Schizzo Chair* 1989
One chair that splits into two almost identical chairs.
Manufacturer: Vitra International, Switzerland



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17. Chair *Zigo* 1993
Burnished steel rod, rattan
Manufacturer: Driade, Italy

18. Chair, *Heart and Industry* 1990
Mirror-polished steel
Manufacturer: Structure Design, Switzerland



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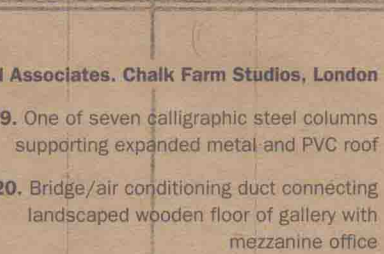
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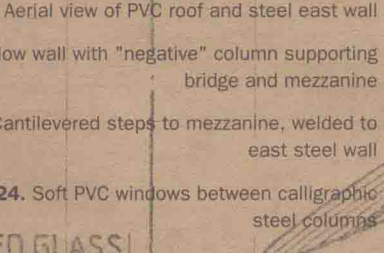
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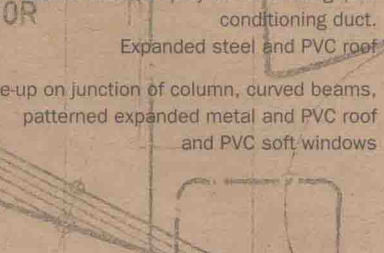
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After the selection meeting I was asked whether I was depressed by the exercise of sifting through an entire year's entries. The only depressing aspect was seeing a lot of misplaced energy put into ideas which are non-starters. Going through the entries was no different from walking through the Milan or Cologne Fair where you have to walk miles to find the few jewels. Not depressing, but to be expected.

The jewels in this selection

21 The production technique behind Pietro Arosio's *Mirandolina* chair for Zanotta (page 54) involves taking a piece of pre-cut flat aluminium and bending and stamping it into a chair in one stroke. There is a charm in the simplicity, economy and limitations of this process which I, with my own bucket-and-spade metal workshop, appreciate. There is something optimistic about machine production – tooling reflects a belief in the design. It shows that someone is serious about it and is willing to take the risk of investing in it. Design is all about imposing one's will on materials, and the Zanotta metal-stamping machine is the culmination of this process.

Philippe Starck's *Booox* shelving system for Kartell in recycled translucent coloured plastic is totally industrial and yet completely poetic (page 72). Plastic pigeonhole-style shelving has a distinct heritage in the post-war Italian design scene through Kartell's work: Simon Fussler and Anna Castelli Ferrieri have produced memorable work in this area in the past. But somehow Starck manages to take a familiar object and completely reinvent it with a different feel, light and colour quality. It demands a certain touch to take a simple grid of shelving and create a totally new product. Starck's use of extrusions and components such as integral sprung hinges and translucent supports produces an entirely new look.

Gaetano Pesce's glass bowls made out of recycled bottles (pages 124, 146–7) – the result of his technical experiments for the French government agency CIRVA (Centre International de Recherche sur le Verre et les Arts plastiques) – fascinate me because they have not lost their past. Pesce has always been an outsider, and I find there is something romantic in his view of what designers do. This design is based on new technology and old materials. There could be a choir of people singing "This is not design" about Pesce's work. The products of his creativity more often than not result in amazingly beautiful objects. He is still taking risks. He has not been tamed over the years.

Gijs Bakker's perforated wallpaper (page 30) reveals and frames the previous wall surface. Bakker's current theme in furniture and furnishings is holes. In making a hole he takes something away, he reduces – but in that same process of reduction, he also reveals.



27



28

Ron Arad Associates, Chalk Farm Studios, London

19. One of seven calligraphic steel columns supporting expanded metal and PVC roof

20. Bridge/air conditioning duct connecting landscaped wooden floor of gallery with mezzanine office

21. Aerial view of PVC roof and steel east wall

22. Hollow wall with "negative" column supporting bridge and mezzanine

23. Cantilevered steps to mezzanine, welded to east steel wall

24. Soft PVC windows between calligraphic steel columns

25. Furniture display on steel bridge/air conditioning duct. Expanded steel and PVC roof

26. Close-up on junction of column, curved beams, patterned expanded metal and PVC roof and PVC soft windows

BOOKSHOP



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E PLATE
R REGISTER

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Tel Aviv Opera House Foyer Architecture

27, 28. Construction work on the Tel Aviv Opera House Foyer, January 1993

29, 30, 31. Construction work on the Tel Aviv Opera House Foyer

All architectural projects by Ron Arad and Alison Brooks, Ron Arad Associates Ltd.