

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN MAGAZINE — **The I.D. Forty** ... Niels Diffrient's Ultra-Simple Office Chair ...
James Dyson Rants About Education ... New Training Ground for the New York Jets ... Desktop 3-D Printer

January/February 2009 — www.id-mag.com

I.D.

40

**Bright, Young
International
Designers
(and the
Clients Who
Love Them)**



ORTY

F+W MEDIA, INC. — \$7.99 US



0 74808 01511 5

Display until February 23, 2009

...note



From left Three members of the London-based OKAYstudio collective: Jordi Canudas, Tomás Alonso, and Mathias Hahn. See p. 74.

by Julie Lasky

Pick a Peck of Practitioners

Assembling the I.D. 40 is a lot easier than it used to be.

In 1993, I.D. introduced "an insider's guide to America's leading design innovators," which became an annual event known as the "I.D. 40." Forty eminences, from the aviation pioneer Paul MacCready (his company was called Aero-Vironments, so he led off the list) to the Los Angeles-based graphic designer Lorraine Wild, were honored in a string of short essays that

stretched across the feature well. The point, said the editors, was to celebrate personalities, not just products and technologies, which had been I.D.'s lifeblood ever since it was launched in 1954 as *Industrial Design*: "[These are] the people," the editors wrote, "who make things happen, have the courage to take risks, enrich the profession with fresh ideas and possibilities or who just do what they do exceptionally well."

At that time in its history, I.D. was enriching the profession with fresh ideas and possibilities in its own right. Under the direction of Chee Pearlman, it was quickly turning into the premier magazine of interdisciplinary design innovation. Before *Wallpaper* made good design cool and *Dwell* made good design seem accessible to the every-resident, I.D. showed how design could be smart, beautiful, and blessed with the potential to easily conquer hearts. The I.D. 40 concentrated and personified those qualities.

But trouble quickly set in. Every year, I.D. had to get up and do it again: find two-score fresh American innovators, as if they could be scooped up in a cranberry bog. The list went global, looking abroad, and then regional, confining its 40 to the West Coast. It focused one year on design-conscious corporations and another on designers under 30, and even when I.D.'s editorial leadership changed, the I.D. 40 soldiered on: socially responsible design, the best and worst design ideas. When I became editor, not long before the magazine's 50th anniversary, we upped the sacred number by 10 to celebrate that milestone and featured a single designer from every U.S. state. We presented the 40 most influential design-world people and the 40 who seemed most overlooked, 40 design collectives, and 40 creative-studio interiors. And just when we thought we had run out of ideas, it dawned on us: After more than a decade of proliferating design education programs and popular media coverage, designers were growing as thick as cranberries. And thanks to an intricate network of global friends and contributors, not to mention the research capacities of Google, we could collect stellar examples on a regular basis.

So we've come full circle. We're back to showcasing innovators. But given that I.D. routinely honors new ideas with every page of every issue, we're concentrating on breakthrough practitioners from around the world. Most of our honorees are in their twenties and thirties, but we impose no age limit, no only-so-many-years-out-of-school boundary line, no disciplinary pigeonholes, only the litmus test of pleasant surprise and a conviction that these designers are worth watching.

And while you're enjoying the issue, we'll have begun searching for next year's crop.



Take nine recent Royal College of Art design graduates from seven different countries. Place eight of them in a drafty, sub-and-sub-divided-again studio in nondescript North London (save one all by her lonesome in Tokyo). Add a decent workshop, an upbeat, umbrella title—OKAYstudio—hold a few joint exhibitions, stand back, and see what happens...
www.okaystudio.org — FIONA RATTRAY

Mathias Hahn

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Lantern lamps / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: "Seemingly trivial details, like the haptics of materials, or people's behaviors and quirks" / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "I hope to be a happy man who still enjoys making things." / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN...: "Life and design go quite well together. I don't intend to change that."

At OKAYstudio's "Under the Same Roof" show at London's Aram Gallery last fall, Mathias Hahn's Odd cabinet bucked the current yawn-inducing trend for minimalist slabs of cupboard. The height of its jaunty splayed legs meant no more reaching for low-slung shelves, while the powder-coated-metal doors offered deliberate glimpses of the clutter within. "I wanted the doors to have a 2-D graphic quality," says Hahn, 31. "I like the idea of furniture that gives you something more than rationalism." There may not be any direct overlap in the work of the various members of OKAYstudio, but the young German designer is not alone in using the word "playful" while talking about his own. Fortunately, this translates into original thinking—his glass-and-copper Lantern lamps, for example, are suspended by way of a simple peg rise-and-fall mechanism that places them somewhere between a pendant and a floor light—rather than tired one-liners.



above Hahn's Lantern lamps, presented as part of the "Under the Same Roof" show at London's Aram gallery last fall below His Odd cabinet, also from the Aram show



OKAYstudio



The OKAYstudio team, from left: Yael Mer, Mathias Hahn, Peter Marigold, Oscar Narud, Tomás Alomo, Shay Alkalay, and Jorre van Aat right Alkalay's Pivot table for Arco



Raw-Edges

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Stack for Established & Sons / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: Animated films (Alkalay); geometry, materials, contemporary dancing, and fear of boredom (Mer) / TITLE OF IMAGINARY MONOGRAPH: After All (Alkalay) / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN: A coffin

With a pair of plaudit-loaded designs to his name (the multicolored Stack chest of drawers for Established & Sons and Pivot, the accordion-style nested console table for Arco), Shay Alkalay, 32, formally joined forces with his partner, Yael Mer, also 32, to create Raw-Edges. There's no danger of either half of the Israeli couple losing sight of their own identities, however. "I'm into moving objects and Yael's into folding," Alkalay says. Their recent collaborations include the Tailored stool, which combines expanded foam with paper-backed wood veneer to create sturdy-but-lightweight seats with the look of a blown-up padded envelope. Mer attended evening classes in pattern-cutting to learn the required technique (the paper is scored, then folded into shape). Both a long bench and a made-to-measure version are in the pipeline—send them your height and hip stats and they'll make you a stool to fit—and they hope to find a manufacturer who can back their comfy new Cavities seats, exciting alternatives to labor- and material-intensive upholstery techniques featuring screw-together sheets of folded polypropylene.

Jordi Canudas

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Less Lamp / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: "A raindrop hanging on a window frame—anything that grabs my attention can be the starting point for a project." / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "To be retired! But designers never retire, so I'd just like to be making more money." / TITLE OF IMAGINARY MONOGRAPH: How to Make Money Designing What You Want / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN...: "The weirder the thing I'm asked to design, the better."

A lot of stuff gets mistreated in the name of a Jordi Canudas design: Ceramics are smashed, paint is dripped, people find themselves rubbing up against complete strangers. But

inanimate objects don't really do it for OKAY's newest member; what he wants is interaction, for something to change and for someone to be changed. For his part in "Under the Same Roof," the malleable subject was chocolate: Suspended above an illuminated globe and heated by a lightbulb, a melting bar slowly dropped globs to create a shade. Buy one of Canudas's egg-shaped ceramic Less Lamps for Metalarte, and you'll receive a little pointed hammer to tap tiny holes for the light to shine through. The lamp's final form—and its success or failure, depending on how hard you tap—is in your hands. Lean back in his two-sided Wallfa seat, made from tough sportswear fabric, and your shoulders are likely to meet someone else's. "Cities can be a bit intimidating," says the Barcelona-born designer, 33. "I liked the idea of a room divider where you could relax and then maybe have something happen that would make you laugh."

Tomás Alonso

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: No. 7 chair / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: People, and how they interact with things: reading; cycling; cooking; flying / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "To be doing something similar but hopefully with a little more money, and maybe between Spain and London." / TITLE OF IMAGINARY MONOGRAPH: Extraordinary Ordinary / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN...: "Given the right situation, I wouldn't mind designing anything, including a coffin."

Tomás Alonso knows what he gets out of being in OKAYstudio: camaraderie. "It makes the everyday annoyances of what we do feel a bit less hard," says the 34-year-old Spanish designer. Technical frustrations, making contact, and working with manufacturers—these things are better shared. Though with a big prize win behind him and U.S. gallery representation in the offing, Alonso himself is riding high. His No. 7 chair, a three-legged, five-component interpretation of the classic Thonet seat in bold



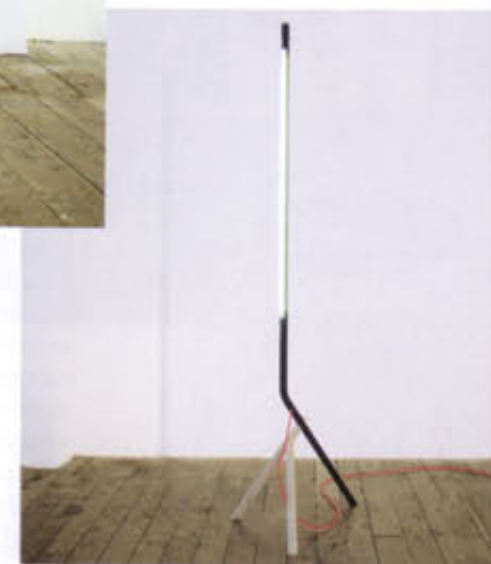
Left The screw-in legs of Van Ast's Hexagon Ensemble table are themselves hexagonal, for additional strength and elegance. Far left, and below Van Ast's universal Jar-Tops for Royal VKB



primary colors, took first prize in the 2008 Promosedia International Design Competition. It was, he says, an existing typology ripe for the picking. And while Alonso is comfortable with historical references—his three-arm Pond table has the look of a Calder sculpture, while the new wall-mounted edition of his Mr. Light series hints at Jean Prouvé—he keeps things fresh with new technologies and forms.



Left Alonso's Pond table recalls a Calder sculpture, above Alonso's No. 7 chair is based on the classic Thonet design. Right His LED-lined Mr. Light floor lamp



Jorre van Ast

LOCATION: London and Winterswijk, The Netherlands / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Jar-Tops / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: Everyday mechanical objects like clamps and threads; production processes; the factory as a playground / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "To not have become one of those designers that discovers a trick and keeps repeating it." / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN: A fruit bowl

When your family has been in the furniture business for more than a century, you might want to get as far away from the design industry as possible. Fortunately, that's not the case for Jorre van Ast. The Dutch company Arco, his family's firm, put Alkalay's Pivot table into production, and his own table designs, shown at "Under the Same Roof," will surely follow one day. Inspired by the simplicity and ingenuity of a screw thread, his Hexagon table features elegant screw-in legs of brass or wood that resemble outsize hardware: not just easy to assemble, but individually height adjustable, too. Van Ast, 28, has a thing for such mechanisms—his plastic Jar-Tops (now made by Royal VKB) turn glass food containers into desirable kitchenware such as oil-and-vinegar dispensers or sugar-shakers. What appealed to him was not so much the recycling/sustainability issue ("that wasn't really an objective in the design," he says) as tapping into an "infrastructure that exists all over the world" in the seven or eight screw-top sizes that are a worldwide standard.



above Canudas calls his Wallfa chair a "vertical hammock" for encouraging interaction between strangers.

Hiroko Shiratori

LOCATION: Tokyo / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Unusual Objects from Japan 1868-1945
 BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: People, and how they interact with others and react to objects and situations / TITLE OF IMAGINARY MONOGRAPH: "Shirotrical, like 'theatrical'—or maybe that's too cheesy." / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN: "Anything that would cause me a moral dilemma and torture me until the end of my life."

As the sole representative of OKAYstudio's satellite outpost in Tokyo, Hiroko Shiratori routinely tests her colleagues' inventiveness

in staging group portraits. But looking at her beautifully realized output—the fake-historical Unusual Objects from Japan 1868-1945, for example, which include Western cutlery made from bamboo to help Japanese adapt to the sharp new eating utensils—it's clear that she shares the group's offbeat sense of humor. Unusual Objects reflects the designer's condition, strung between her Japanese heritage and European education (not to mention colleagues and clients). The same is true of recent work: Her Here and There seats, sculptural objects that fold flat into unassuming planks, reference both West (Gerrit Rietveld's ZigZag chair) and East (paulownia wood, traditionally used for Japanese flip-flops and chosen for its lightness). Which suggests that design-wise, at least, a bit of alienation can be a good thing.



clockwise from top right Marigold's Make/Shift shelving for Movisi; his one-of-a-kind END table, made from hardware-store scrapwood; two views of Shiratori's Alone coat hanger; Chundou Sandals from Shiratori's Unusual Objects from Japan 1868-1945



Peter Marigold

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Make/Shift shelving / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: Hunger/greed/fear of house collapsing / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "I imagine I'll have a kid. Hopefully one who can weld." / TITLE OF IMAGINARY MONOGRAPH: I'm working on a sponge-covered, bathtime book for children, titled Why Capitalism Is Evil / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN: "An enclosure for smokers. We need to design remote-control sprinkler systems to prevent them from appearing anywhere in public. The Swiss have these high-frequency devices that scare young people away—we could devise something that uses retaliatory smells."

Peter Marigold has been making quite a name for himself with his cerebral-yet-low-tech designs—not least since Movisi put an Arpro-foam version of his wedge-shaped Make/Shift shelving system into production in early 2007. A previous career in set building means the 34-year-old Brit is a pro in the workshop (the wry note pasted to the OKAY off-cuts bin—"This is not a dustbin: Fill it with intelligence"—is from him). For his new TAN wall mirrors, he even spliced his own rope loops to create a simple hanging mechanism that runs around a groove in the circular frame. According to Marigold, the variable-height mirrors are inspired by the fact that his mother is much shorter than he is, but they also explore the "incredibly powerful phenomena that are controlling the world." A self-confessed frustrated mathematician, Marigold calls his experiments with reconfiguring shapes and materials "an idiot's way of exploring geometry." Though since his forthcoming set of shelving is inspired by the golden mean principle, that "idiot" tag is looking just a tad unconvincing.



clockwise from right Pick-a-Stick, a set of removable coat hangers with ends that imply bizarre functions; (Bed)Side Table; Hoist coat hangers, which use pulleys to store garments at varying heights

Oscar Narud

LOCATION: London / BEST-KNOWN PROJECT: Pick-a-Stick / BIGGEST CREATIVE INSPIRATION: The quirkiness and oddities in all of us / GOAL FOR THE YEAR 2020: "I hope to be doing something similar to what I'm doing now but with 12 years more experience and wisdom to draw on." / WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DESIGN...: "If it really came down to that, I'd even design a contraption to get rid of the rest of the studio. There's a good chance the prototype would misfire anyhow and we'd all live to have another beer together."

Oscar Narud's sketchbooks are teeming with characters. In one sketch, for his new Slap Dash "scribble"-top table, pencil-wielding elastic arms emerge from beneath the tabletop to draw their own surface design. The actual tables, decorated with a deliberately childish wood-effect scrawl, are a witty expression of Narud's personality. "I wanted to find a way to let my style of drawing inform my products," says the Norwegian designer, 30. Bish Bosh, his build-it-yourself furniture system based around a decorative-metal corner plate, has a similarly jolly—even folksy—aesthetic, grounded in rigorous functionality: The same bracket can be applied to make both 90- and 45-degree angles. At the (warm) heart of Narud's work is the search for original solutions to everyday needs, a concept encapsulated by Pick-a-Stick, the bench/coat rack that combines functionality with fun. The removable-stick coat hangers have ends that imply usefulness, "like for fending off burglars," he jokes.