

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN YEARBOOK 1988/1989

Edited Arata Isozaki

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN YEARBOOK

1988/1989 Edited by Arata Isozaki

The twentieth century began with an arts and crafts movement in Britain and America. It seems poised to end with another – not with an earnest revival of handcarving, but with a movement that turns furniture into art.

Even factory-assembled pieces are being given hand-worked finishes; the effects of faux concrete, oxidized copper, rusty steel, sand-blasted glass and verdigris iron break up the uniformity of modern industrial materials. ■ The Modernists, however, are still with us. Their designs are functional, devoid of ornamentation. Pieces are often modular, adaptable, adjustable. ■ The Post-Modernists, in furniture as in architecture, employ irony – as much as their ironmongery, upholstery and woodwork will allow – in a self-conscious but original stylization of the past. This mimicry Arata Isozaki calls Simulation. Cerebral, or merely overwrought? It is often difficult to decide. ■ Some designers are more nostalgic in their retrospection. They choose an historic style and re-create its features. And of course manufacturers continue to issue re-editions of the classics. Sometimes they cause controversy; sometimes they show sensitivity to the spirit of the originals. ■ Minimalism is still around, but mutating. "Organic," "zoomorphic" and "anthropomorphic" are popular labels. A four-legged chair by Starck sprouts wings. The legs of Kinsman's table assume a fluid form. Serafini's chair has rabbit ears. Hilton gives a piece the poised legs of an antelope. The tide is turning against the minimalist precision of the last five years. Those

mass-produced, linear, matt black, tubular steel designs have become the equivalent in furniture of the little black dress – ubiquitous, but ultimately anonymous. Arata Isozaki is not interested in the fashionable novelty. As the century moves towards its final decade, he predicts an era of neo-baroque. Monumentalism, not minimalism.

F U R N I T U R E ■ Retrospection

In many countries, designers seem to be increasingly interested in reviving the spirit of other ages and cultures. In Britain, Derek Frost houses 1980s videos and hi-fis in pagodas and 1950s-style jukeboxes, and John Outram gives a chest of drawers in the Alma collection a monumental classical façade. Robert Venturi's clock for Alessi reproduces somewhat ironically the typical Swiss watchmaker's clock, complete with resident cuckoo. Jennifer Lee revives centuries-old techniques in her hand-built earthenware pots, which seem as ancient as they are modern. Sue Golden explores tribal influences in her *Shield* chair. And in Japan, Shiro Kuramata pays homage to Hoffmann with a new version of his chair illuminated with lights where the original had upholstery nails.

Derek Frost set up his own design consultancy in London in 1984, having previously trained and worked with Mary Fox Linton. His interior design projects, both commercial and residential, are wide-ranging. He also has an interest in one-off furniture design and works with some of Britain's best cabinetmakers and craft workers (133-34).



Derek Frost

Horn Chest

Wood, glass, granite, brass

A two-tiered cupboard concealing a mirrored, marble bar with glass shelves. The top and base are in cherry hardwood and the frame is clad in yew veneer showing contrasting heart-wood and sap-wood in striped patterns. The spear hinges are of gold- and bronze-plated brass. One-off.

H197.5 cm (77¾ in). W158.75 cm

(62½ in). D56.25 cm (22¼ in)

Manufacturer: Derek Frost Associates, UK

Derek Frost

Stereo cabinet

A stereo cabinet with three lift-up lids containing a counter, two turntables and mixing controls. Three sliding doors conceal a television on a swing arm, amplifiers, and storage for CDs and cassettes. The lower level has three storage drawers. Finished in blue matt cellulose with white-gold oil gilding. The silver doors are by Yumi Katayama.

One-off.

H98 cm (38½ in). W127 cm (50 in).

D55 cm (21½ in)

Manufacturer: Derek Frost

Associates, UK

34

Decorators who move into furniture design invariably bring with them a sumptuousness of finish and an extravagant use of colour and surface pattern. Derek Frost is no exception. His furniture collection is boldly derivative in its exaggeration of familiar forms from the past. A 1950s jukebox is the inspiration for a stereo cabinet with sliding doors that holds the latest in electronic sound systems, as well as a TV that pivots out on a swing arm.

