

mix

design
colour & texture
interiors
architecture
industrial
automotive

International Design Trends Spring/Summer 2011 Part 1

Offices: Make Do & Mend

Norway Now

Stephen Burks Interview

Materials for 2010

Colour in Technology

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SHOW BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham interiors 2010 presented five full halls of exhibitors in spite of the recent panic induced by the highly publicised recession. A varied spread of large and lesser-known designers showcased their wares, treating visitors to everything from centipede-style sideboards to ceramic biscuits.

Designersblock provided an interesting alternative to the standard interpretations of all things design. Chris Eckersley's A-Frame Pavilion, a collaboration with Sitting Firm, came up with a great solution to the dolls house structures that usually pass for garden pavilions. At just under four metres in height, it is free from planning restriction complications and can be insulated to create a handy home office.

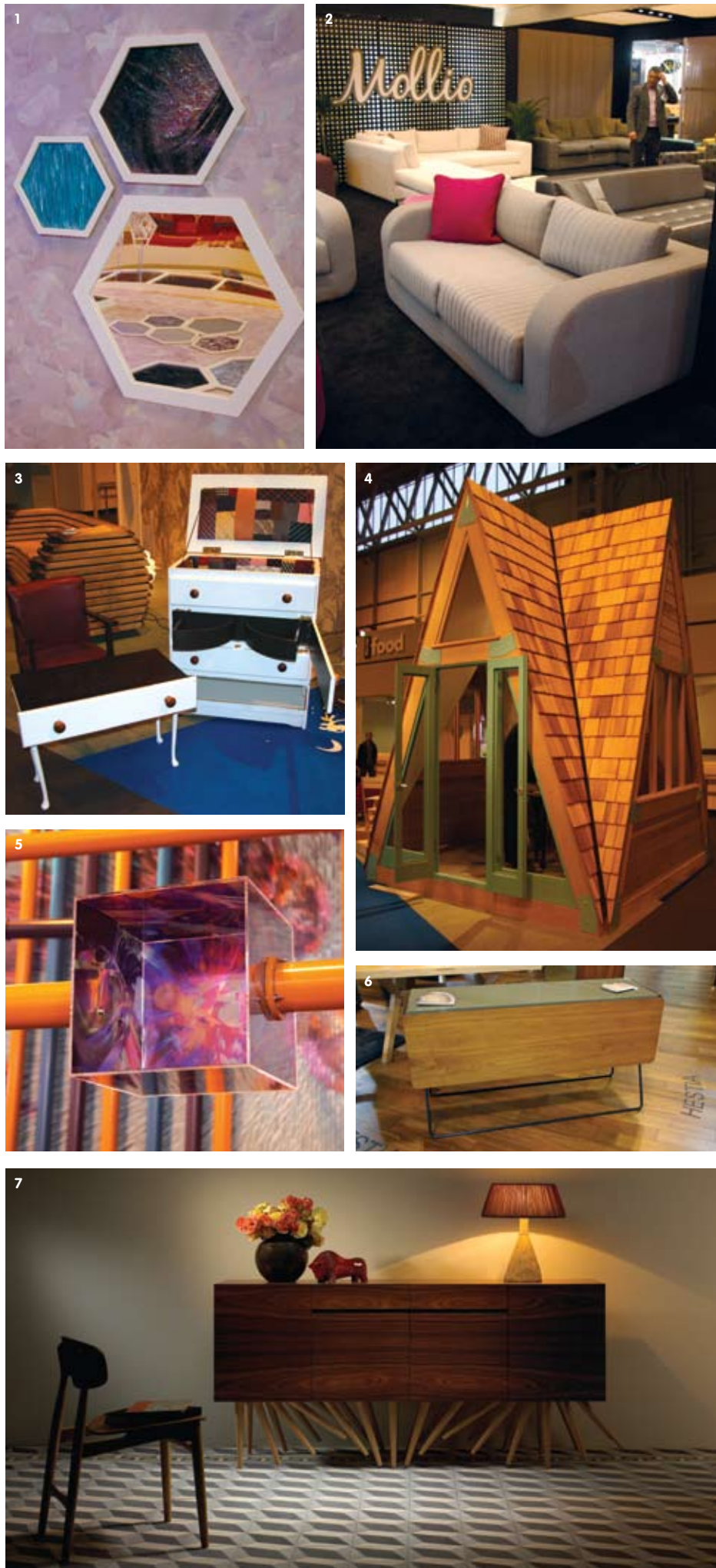
Also on show was Owen Gildersleeve and Thomas Forsyth's Aschenputtel, a modified chest of drawers with a fairytale twist that challenges the expected with its unusual alterations. With drawer fronts that open like cupboard doors and one section which slid out to reveal itself as a table, this reinvention of salvaged materials donated by the charity, Emmaus, underlined the creativity of those who work with discarded materials.

Portuguese design was represented by the Associative Design Group, which brought a selection of very different studios to British shores. Particular Mix magazine favourites were the two sideboards on display; Vouda from Hestia Mobiliário and Millepede from Paularte. Millepede's multiple legs created an imagined sense of movement within the piece while Vouda's high gloss finish and rounded forms hinted at retro forms, the contemporary palette of green-grey and natural wood preventing it from looking dated.

Citrus green, grey and fuchsia were definite colour themes amongst soft furnishings, Content by Conran and Mollio Sofa Studio both opting for strong forms in the colours. Birmingham City University's collaboration with Mix Trends proved a success and provided trend inspiration for 2011, the colour trend Spirit being a favourite with onlookers. Smaller than most, the city's annual event is often over-shadowed by larger exhibitions but for those willing to look, a selection of delights could be found. ■■■■

Contacts

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www.eveningtweed.com (3)
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CULTURE EHRENFELD

Cologne may not be immediately synonymous with cutting edge design but in the lesser-known areas of the city there are some interesting creative projects to be found. West of the city centre lies Ehrenfeld, a hub of independent studios and boutiques, small bars and converted warehouse spaces which make up Cologne's answer to New York's Brooklyn or London's East End.

The atmosphere is much more laid back than the main attractions of the city's Interior Design Week. Not obviously design conscious, the gems are hidden among the back streets and warehouses of the area, many left untouched by the often tiresome glitz and glamour of the larger exhibitions.

Locals are beginning to recognise a major interest in their homeland; the grassroots magazine, Ehrenfelder, is a result of this, claiming to discuss the creativity of the inhabitants with reserved skepticism and honest enthusiasm. Similarly, the Pecha Kucha event, held in a sparse arts space, smacks of innocent passion in spite of the handful of aloof, cooler than thou attendees. In short, nobody else cares.

Showcased in the same venue as the Ehrenfelder event during the design festival was the work of Lichtfront, a design studio specialising in moving visuals for events such as concerts fronted by Achim Schmitz. Absorbing and crafted with superb attention to detail, Schmitz's work, though most suited to electronica, is a glimpse into the exciting side of European club scene design.

It is not only the locals that have come out to play. Another roadside studio plays host to the Design East Collective, a group of young Eastern Europeans including Martin Zampach, who presented Káca, a glass bowl based on the classic shape of a spinning top. Unlike the peddlers of high-volume, low-cost, high-profit goods, the playful and inventive attitude here is uplifting and sits comfortably with the slower pace of the district.

Utensil is a not-to-be-missed highlight of the city's quarter. Housing utilitarian, sometimes surprising products along with a capsule collection of clothing, it pinpoints the recent trend in practical, well-made design that echoes the form follows function ethos of days past. Ehrenfeld's residents may be fashionable but the cut-throat attribute of many trendy suburbs is, thankfully, nowhere to be seen. ■■■■

Contacts

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Photos: Clare Acheson