

New designers

Deputy editor **Michelle Robertson** is sent to London for the day to catch up with the future designer/makers of furniture at New Designers, an exhibition showcasing the talents of graduates from up and down the country

Picture the scene if you will: a large London venue filled with the bustle and noise of hundreds upon hundreds of cheerful, excitable and lively young people. No, I'm not referring to the latest gig at Wembley arena but the New Designers Show at The Business and Design Centre in Islington.

During the summer months each year, students graduating from a craft discipline are given the opportunity to showcase their work to the public, and perhaps pick up the odd award here and there. Split into two parts, the exhibition focuses on the talents of up-and-coming designers from a variety of courses including jewellery, ceramics, animation, spatial design and of course furniture design – the primary reason for my visit to this show.

To say that I was awe-struck by the quality and innovativeness of the work on display would certainly be an understatement; the place radiated with an abundance of skill and aptitude that would certainly give the professional maker a run for their money.

Graduate-makers from colleges across the UK were in attendance

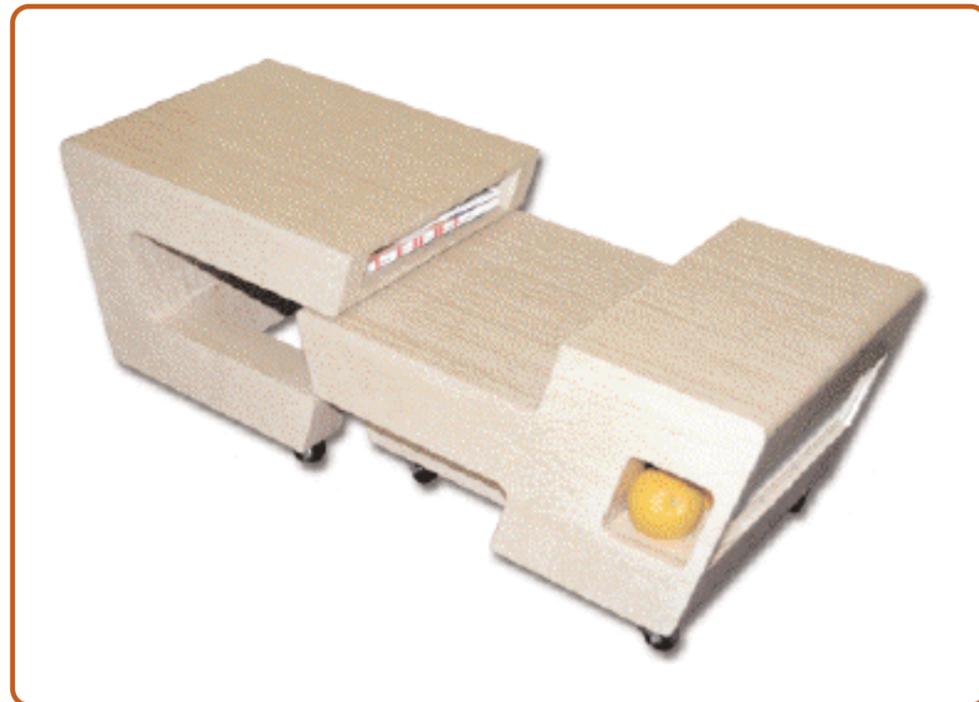
from places you would expect to see such as Buckinghamshire and Chilterns University College, and Rycotewood Furniture College – but what some of the smaller institutions lacked in numbers, they certainly made up for in the sheer quality of work on display.

All the graduates had an air of excitement and confidence about them when discussing their work, and what they hoped to be doing with the valuable experiences they had gained along their college years. Not surprisingly, most wanted to move further into the furniture industry, making and designing either with other makers, or setting up their own companies – judging by what I saw of their designs, I expect quite a few of their names to pop up now and then in the not too distant F&C future. In the meantime, I have included some pieces for you all to muse over – a difficult choice to whittle down to a few to appear over four pages – I could easily fill all 96 pages!

So sit back and enjoy, and if you missed New Designers this year, make sure you attend next year's – you could be looking into the eyes of our future stars!

Urvashi Patel, Nottingham Trent University – Slot Table (right)

This extending coffee table is made from birch-faced plywood and is CNC routed. Urvashi's brief was to design and make a table, which would increase in surface area when required, so she set about making a coffee table that would be easy to use and contemporary in style. Placed on coasters for ease of portability, this table is interactive and fun to use; it can be used as two separate tables or as a seat with a table, and contains many considered features to enhance the design and its use.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GIMCANTHONY BALEY

Geoff Carter, Rycotewood Furniture Centre – Gallery Bench (right)

Made from American ash, this striking gallery bench takes its inspiration from the skeletal forms of worms, snakes and shipwrecks. It has won Geoff an award from The Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers, and has caught the eye of the local city council in Oxford, who are interested in reproducing this bench in durable materials, to be situated around the city.



Toby Howes, Bristol City College – Drinks Cabinet (below)

This impressive and innovative Drinks Cabinet is the work of Toby Howes, and is constructed from burr oak and MDF lacquered, with the base from English oak. Coopered in style and fumed in ammonia, this piece is finished in teak and Danish oil. The top twists open to reveal a pleasing and well-thought out storage for glasses and drinks, which is lit by LED lighting.



Simon Austen, Rycotewood Furniture Centre – Austen Lounger (below)

This laminated birch ply, full body lounging chair is lightweight in design with a skeletal appearance. The concept behind this chair was to take away as much of the material from the body as possible, whilst retaining a fully supportive function. The narrow strips left are flexible to allow adjustment in supporting the human frame. Simon is from an engineering background and uses his knowledge to keep things as light as possible in terms of stresses and strains.





Matthew Tudgey, Falmouth University College – Bench on Beech Branches (left)

The top of this unique and interesting bench is constructed from beech, and is designed to fit within a gallery space. The cluster of leg branches towards the back of this piece represents the depth of a forest whilst the front thins out to suggest the clearing at the front of the forest.

Andrew Lupton, Buckingham and Chilterns University College – ‘3’ Sideboard 1250 x 950 x 402mm (below)

Constructed in sycamore, rippled sycamore and English oak, this attractive sideboard is designed as a drinks cabinet with glass shelves and seven drawers.



Kerry McLaughlin, Napier University, Edinburgh – Whiskey barrel chair (left)

This innovative chair is made from well-seasoned oak whiskey barrels. The maker wanted to emphasise the barrel's history with design to narrate and extend the life span of the wood laced with the unmistakable scent of malt whiskey. The idea behind this piece was that everyone would be able to find an appreciation, whether for its aesthetic value, its well-seasoned oak structure or simply with its association with whiskey! The staves have been sawn into long, narrow lengths, with the familiar curve of the barrel retained along the charred inner surface.



Mark Williamson, Buckingham and Chilterns University College – Sideboard 1200 x 900 x 320mm (left)

This American white oak sideboard was inspired by modern architecture and housing where minimalism is the key to achieve maximum effect. The drawers feature hand dovetailed mitred corners, with magnetic pivotal handles. The top houses a sliding feature, which doubles as a removable base.

Shiv Kumar, Arts Institute at Bournemouth – Coffee Table (below)

Made from moulded birch plywood, this innovative yet simple piece, is hand made with a peel away effect at the centre to reveal a choice of colours, in this case a vibrant green veneer. This distinctive opening, which can be used as useful storage, follows the smooth lines and clean edges, which are the defining features of this table.



Gareth Brown, Bristol City College – The Orbit Sideboard 1970 x 600 x 750mm (below right)

This stunning sideboard is inspired by the Art Deco period of the 1920-30s, and has a contemporary look with a retro twist.

The exterior shell is made from four parts – the two ends are laminated flexi-ply and fibreboard, placed onto a former and into a vacuum press, and shaped to achieve the curve. These are biscuit joined to the top and bottom pieces of MDF with an MDF lip on the front and back to conceal any joins, and sprayed with a white acrylic lacquer. The internal structure and drawers are constructed from solid American black walnut and maple with the top drawers lined with faux suede. The drawer fronts are made from MDF lipped with maple, whilst the maple on the end doors has been steam bent to accommodate the curve – these are then veneered with walnut on the back and Macassar ebony on the front. All the drawers and doors are fitted with push catch mechanisms for a sleek look that needs no handles. All this rests on four tapered stainless steel feet that were commissioned especially for the Orbit.

