

PRESS RELEASE

The State of Things: Design and the 21st Century

Design Museum Holon, Israel

www.dmh.org.il

4th March – 15th May 2010

The State of Things: Design and the 21st Century, the opening exhibition for the Design Museum Holon, Israel, commenced on 4 March 2010. It presented over one hundred products, which collectively exhibit issues of practice, consumption, and cultural impact of contemporary international design, within the celebrated iconic building designed by Ron Arad.

Leading international curators and writers, Barbara J. Bloemink, Phd (Head Curator), Julie Lasky, Aric Chen and Garth Walker, were invited by the City of Holon to curate the opening exhibition, which investigated contemporary practices and thinking in design culturally significant in 2010 - the inauguration year of Design Museum Holon.

Eight categories including: New Essentialism, Mutant Remix, Of the Body, Social Anxiety, Beyond the Designer, Super Beauty, Craft Economy and Design Lab formed the exhibition, showcasing objects ranging from ordinary household items such as plastic chairs and printed wallpaper to life-enhancing and life-saving technologies, such as a jewel-like hearing aid and an efficient water filtration device. All of the objects, through either the materials employed, the concepts conveyed, or the uses intended, reflected modern times so acutely that they could only have been made in the last few years.

Design Museum Holon Creative Director, Galit Gaon comments: *"The museum is committed to showcasing the importance of quality design and its relevance to our lives at this particular point in time; the objects in the exhibition revealed the same ingenuity and poetry evident in the new Ron Arad building that housed them."*

"We have been delighted to host such a significant exhibition at the Design Museum Holon. The exhibition has brought together the work of some of the most important figures in the field of design today. The remarkable success of our first exhibition has forged a path to putting Holon on the international design map".



Editor's Notes:

"The State of Things: Design and the 21st Century" Categories:

New Essentialism: This new millennium has seen a number of aesthetically straightforward objects that call attention to their materials or function without the distraction of ornament or complicated functioning. The works reflected the legacy of modernism, which has endured a long, steady revival in recent years. Nendo's *Hanabi* light, made of a shape-changing metal that expands when heated, and is one example of "New Essentialism".

Mutant Remix: Our global economy and the widespread use of the internet has produced a mixing and combining of historical styles and aesthetic motifs in a single object. This remixing creates works in which each element retains its meaning, while at the same time provoking new themes and meanings through the juxtapositions. An example of this "Mutant Remix" is Maarten Baas's *Chankley Bore* collection that mixes 1960s pop styling with references to space aliens to create furniture.

Of the Body: The human body has always been a source of perpetual obsession for designers. Today with the development of sophisticated prosthetics and increasingly humanlike robotics, it has also become a site of complex issues. *Of the Body* features designs that relate to human anatomy or performance, celebrating life-extending and life-enhancing technologies. At the same time, many of the works demonstrate a general anxiety, questioning where flesh-and-blood ends and artifice begins. For example, the *Lunocet fin* dramatically enhances swimming performance, but when worn, appears like an alien, robotic extension of the leg.

Social Anxiety: Design has always acted as a barometer, reflecting cultural desires, and a tendency to alternate between minimalism and aesthetic abundance. Good design has also been historically bought by the upper classes with disposable income and a heightened awareness of style, taste, and aesthetics. Today, across the globe, we are experiencing greater social anxiety than ever before. From terrorism, environmental issues, natural disasters, disease, famine, and failing economies every country in the world is affected by one or more of these issues. For the first time, many designers are directly addressing these issues, reflecting the perceived and very real experience of inhabiting an increasingly dangerous world. In this category, examples range from Yael Mer's inflatable *Evacuation Skirt*, to Fabric Nation's textile decorated with a pattern of AIDS cells.

Beyond the Designer: A growing interest in fabrication processes coupled with new technologies has resulted in a class of objects that almost design themselves. In such cases, the designer acts as facilitator, initiating the process and then stepping aside to allow a result that is either self-directed or shaped by its use or user. Ugobe's programmable *PLEO* robot, for example, is intended to



be "hacked" by the user who can design new behaviors for the robot to interact and perform.

Super Beauty: Until last year, global prosperity at the turn of the millennium resulted in new attention to the decorative potential of objects, even humble ones that had previously been overlooked. The resulting objects are ornate, and even rococo in their design, beyond their actual function. Joris Laarman's ornate *Wirepod* is an outlet for electronic appliances, for example, however its sinuous curves and decorative nature make a usually hidden and unattractive object, beautiful, and intended to be seen.

CE: Craft Economy: Craft, a discipline that has long been segregated from art and design, is undergoing a revival and redefinition, particularly in its potential to support the economies of developing nations. A number of designers, in some case whole villages, are using traditional, indigenous craft techniques to create beautiful objects, some of which directly confront significant contemporary issues and styles. As such they encourage entrepreneurship, and help with global economic development. One example of this is Stephen Burks's *Love Furniture* that is made from recycled shredded magazines by African workers.

DL: DesignLab: A category that particularly reflects the "Only Now" thesis of this exhibition, "DesignLab" encompasses new materials, processes, and technologies that have never before existed. Many of these works remain in prototype stages including nanotechnology, and exciting uses of new materials such as carbon fiber which provides incredible lightness as well as strength. The designs in this category showcase recent advances in both areas. Rapid-prototyping technology, for example, is used to create Patrick Jouin's *One Shot* stool.

More about Design Museum Holon: Design Museum Holon, a building by Ron Arad, accommodates two primary galleries and a number of diverse alternative exhibition and education spaces in-between. The Upper Gallery (500m²) celebrates the abundance of natural light in Israel and the qualities it can bring to the display of three-dimensional objects, while allowing curatorial flexibility by modulating light levels. The smaller, Lower Gallery, (250m²) is taller inside but offers a more intimate, personal relationship between the visitor and the object on display.

Constructed of five sinuous bands of varying shades of COR-TEN (weathered steel), Design Museum Holon is Arad's first architectural project of this scale and the pinnacle of a sixteen-year urban regeneration programme, a process which is transforming the city of Holon, central Israel, into a global epicentre for culture and education.

For more information or images of Design Museum Holon or its exhibitions, please contact Sameera Hanif, Jacob Peres or Michaella Quinn at LUCHFORD APM: + 44 (0) 20 7631 1000; firstname.surname@luchfordapm.com

