

# Simplicity

Ellen Lupton



A melody with few notes, a sentence with few words, or an object with few parts may appear obvious when you come upon it, but creating simplicity is rarely easy. Design thinking often includes the ruthless yet creative process of weeding out redundant elements. Concise forms and solutions appear everywhere from vernacular technologies to classical temples. Today, as designers strive to make spare use of materials and ground their work in natural processes, the quest for simplicity is shaping design's aesthetic language and its economic, ecological, and ethical purpose.

How does simplicity happen? Many designers study commonplace things and look for ways to merge parts and combine functions. Shigeru Ban's 10-Unit system, created for the Finnish design company Artek, employs a single L-shaped component to construct a series of different products: table, chair, bench (fig. 1). Soft curves modulate the system's basic unit, allowing the pieces to combine into varied and graceful objects. Employing a more severe geometric vocabulary, Cecilie Manz's Pluralis chair (fig. 2) is a single structure whose legs support multiple planes for multiple purposes: seat, table, step. In the Flax Project, Christien Meindertsma studied the traditional craft of rope making in collaboration with Thomas Eyck. Her ingenious hanging

Return to Sender artisan eco-casket. Greg Holdsworth, Return To Sender Eco-Caskets. New Zealand, 2007. Plywood, wool fleece



fig. 1



fig. 2



light merges the ancient archetype of the twisted rope with the modern archetype of the electrical cord. As wires disappear inside twisted strands of natural flax, the primeval rope appears to magically electrify the bulbs, which hang from it like postindustrial fruit.

Employing structure as decoration is a longstanding modernist principle. Like a jellyfish, Mikko Paakkanen's Medusa lamp (fig. 3) slowly changes shape, its body defined by glowing fiberoptic ribs. Like apple slices, Ryan Frank's Isabella stools (fig. 4) consist of brightly colored side planes and an exposed front and back, creating a pattern of contrasting conditions: covered and bare, colorful and neutral, soft and hard.

Simplicity affects not just how things look, but how we interact with them. A door with no handle or a light with no switch could present an elegant but bewildering experience. Designers today are developing smoothly functioning forms by examining the conditions of use. The gentle ridges encircling Karin Eriksson's Gripp glasses (fig. 5) help people comfortably grasp the vessels and hold them stable. Jorre van Ast's universal jar tops (fig. 6) and removable table legs yield flexible objects designed to assemble and disassemble. DBA's humidifier (fig. 7) can be emptied and filled as easily as a bucket. The Book LED lamp, designed by Goodmorning Technology, has a lampshade shaped like a book (fig. 8); the covers open and close intuitively to adjust the light's intensity.

Simple forms can be challenging to produce. To create its graceful line of disposable tableware (fig. 9), Wasara had to develop new ways to shape and trim molded pulp, avoiding the bent-around edges typically seen on paper plates and bowls. Meindert's hanging lamp exemplifies the widespread revival of traditional craftsmanship, as designers look to slow down production and create fewer products of higher quality. Jetske de Groot's Multiple Family chairs (fig. 10) are one-of-a-kind objects assembled by hand from discarded mass-produced furniture. Seeking quality over abundance, such products offer a grounded, earthly luxury suited to a culture of restraint.

Manufacturers are discovering the benefits of streamlining their production processes. The Danish company Mater, working with skilled craftspeople in workshops and small factories in Vietnam, avoids using toxic dyes and polished glazes in order to protect workers and the environment from harmful chemicals; the result is quiet, spare objects that honor their own means of manufacture. At Muji, the global brand whose name means "no brand," simplified production



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 7



fig. 8

processes help unify the company's vast product line. By minimizing packaging, reducing materials, avoiding dyes and finishes, revaluing waste materials, and creating objects that do not change from year to year, Muji embraces an economy of means that is reflected in the company's modest yet pleasing goods, which range from dried mushrooms to CD players and bedroom furniture. Muji wants to make products that are neither the best nor the most desirable, but are instead good enough, leaving people pleased but not sated into complacency. In place of products that are "idiosyncratic + expensive" or "ordinary + cheap," Muji hopes to embody the "naturally low cost of affluence and the inexpensive range of good judgment."<sup>1</sup>

Today, in place of the weary cliché of "timeless elegance," we might speak of relative durability. In place of the cynical strategy of "planned obsolescence," we might speak of planned impermanence. The projects discussed here connect to *our* time, not to all time. Designers engaged with the current state of the world seek to make things that will last for awhile, not forever. If things break, we should be able to fix them. When objects are no longer needed, they should gracefully degrade or regroup into other forms of value. These projects express a fundamental modesty. Limited-edition endeavors like Meindert's Flax Project (fig. 11) are grounded in elemental processes of making, speaking beyond the objects themselves to widely held aspirations. Mater's ceramic water jug, DBA's portable space heater, and Muji's seersucker bedding provide alternatives to super-minimal opulence or to sleek high-tech style. They embody an ethical, provisional pragmatism.

As people around the world seek to curb their impulses for overconsumption and waste, they are rethinking how they eat, sleep, work, travel, and learn. What more profound and enduring problem is there than how to bury the dead? Greg Holdsworth, outraged by the wasteful and intrusive funeral business, has created an artisanal, biodegradable coffin (fig. 12) designed not to defy time but to cycle back into the earth. In the United States alone, the funeral industry buries over 90,000 tons of steel, 30 million board feet of hardwood, 3,000 tons of copper and bronze, and 1.5 million tons of concrete every year. Bodies interred in sealed metal caskets in concrete vaults do not truly decompose; instead, they enter a "permanent state of advanced but unprogressive putrefaction."<sup>2</sup> Problems like this one are not only material in nature, but also spiritual and aesthetic. The future cannot solely be



fig. 9



fig. 10



fig. 11



fig. 12

engineered or legislated into submission; it must be designed, and that will require creative thinking—imaginative, poetic, and unexpected—from all segments of society.

- 1 Kenya Hara, *Designing Design* (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, 2007): 239–40.
- 2 Statistics and quote from correspondence with Greg Holdsworth, August 2009.



1

### 10-Unit System

Architect Shigeru Ban collaborated with the Finnish furniture company Artek to design an L-shaped element that combines in various ways to form chairs, benches, and tables. Subtle curves modulate the unit's profile, yielding assembled objects that feature soft, undulating planes and gracefully shaped members. Designed for compact shipping and easy assembly, the pieces are packed ten units to a box, together with attachment elements and instructions. Ten units combine to make a table or chair; twenty units make a bench. An added glass top extends the surface of the table. The box, emblazoned with the message "Art and Tech Forever," celebrates the creative marriage of aesthetic invention and industrial research.

The 10-Unit System is made from UPM ProFi, a durable, weather-resistant composite of recycled wood and paper. Developed by the Finnish paper company UPM, this new material combines plastic polymers with wood fibers recovered from the process of manufacturing adhesive labels. This waste material currently has no other uses. Polypropylene is added to the reclaimed plastic and paper, yielding a PVC-free substance that can be incinerated safely. In 2007, two years before the launch of the 10-Unit System, Shigeru Ban had designed Artek's "Space of Silence" pavilion in Milan, also made from identical units of UPM ProFi assembled into a larger structure. That architectural experiment was the basis for what is now an affordable, versatile consumer product.



2

### AlphaBetter Student Desk

Research on movement in the classroom is showing that having students stand while learning and giving them the freedom to fidget are helping them academically and physically. Realizing that movement is not necessarily a distraction, schools are looking for ways to help their students burn energy and focus attention. The AlphaBetter desk helps them do both. The height-adjustable desk gives students the choice to sit or stand during class, while the companion stool lets them sit down when they need a rest. The swinging motion of the patented Pendulum™ footrest bar allows kids to continuously move their feet to the school-day beat.

While children are twisting and turning to learn, they are also expending calories and excess energy. Having a desk that lets them be active in school helps students stay healthier. It may also enhance academic performance. Being able to fidget has been shown to increase student concentration, especially among students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

1 10-Unit system, bench. Shigeru Ban, Shigeru Ban Architects. Manufactured by Artek Oy Ab. Designed Japan, manufactured Finland, 2009–10. UPM ProFi (recycled paper and plastic composite)

2 AlphaBetter student desk. Tim Skiba, Sunway Inc. Concept: Abby Brown. Manufactured by Saeco Products Company. United States, 2007. Powder-coated steel, MDF, 3-D rigid thermoplastic laminate, phenolic sheet



3 CarryOn collection with porcelain prototypes.  
Jakob Wagner, Jakob Wagner Design.  
Manufactured by Mater. Handcrafted by Dong Guan  
Concord Pottery Co. Ltd. and The Bamboo Factory.  
Designed Denmark, produced China and Vietnam,  
2008. Porcelain, bamboo



3

### Angle Chopsticks, CarryOn Collection, and InOut Pitcher

Based in Denmark, Mater is a home-accessories company that supports traditional crafts, local economies, and natural materials. Mater is a member of the United Nations Global Compact, an independently audited framework that helps businesses align their practices with universal values in areas such as human rights, labor, and the environment. By applying creative thinking and ethical standards to product design and manufacturing, Mater seeks to leverage business to engender a more sustainable and inclusive global economy.

Mater worked with French designer Aurélien Barbry to introduce the Angle chopsticks, ergonomic bamboo implements inspired by Japanese *oki* table settings. The InOut pitcher, designed by American designer Todd Bracher, has a minimal barrel form and a beak-like spout. Bracher made the pitcher white in order to avoid using dye and employed a rough finish to avoid the use of potentially toxic glazes. Danish designer Jakob Wagner created Mater's CarryOn collection, a set of white porcelain bowls and plates fitted with nesting bamboo cutting boards for informal dining and serving. Like the InOut pitcher, the CarryOn collection employs white porcelain with a rough finish to protect workers and the environment. All three products are created by skilled craftspeople in small factories and workshops in Vietnam and China.

—Andrea Lipps



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4 Angle chopsticks. Aurélien Barbry, Aurélien Barbry Design. Manufactured by Mater. Handcrafted by The Bamboo Factory. Designed France, produced Vietnam, 2008. Bamboo

5 InOut pitcher. Todd Bracher, Todd Bracher Studio. Manufactured by Mater. Handcrafted by Dong Guan Concord Pottery Co. Ltd. Designed United States, produced China, 2007. Porcelain



6



7

### Ash Wood Bed, Cotton Bedding, and Torch Light

Muji, whose name means “no brand,” is a Japanese company that has become a global purveyor of low-cost, high-quality goods that respect the environment and express a low-key, functional point of view. Economy drives the Muji ethos. By seeking out simple methods of production and basic materials that are not excessively processed, the company creates objects that share a unified sensibility without professing to be stylish and of the moment. Looking at common needs such as lighting, sleep, storage, seating, and dining, Muji has created 7,500 objects suitable to urban living.

Muji's Ash Wood bed has a curved headboard that supports the body comfortably while reading a book, watching TV, or working on a laptop. The bed can be dressed for summer with Muji's line of seersucker cotton bedding, whose wavy surface results from warp tension during the weaving process. This structural decoration keeps the raised stripes away from the skin, cooling the body during warm weather, while the naturally crinkled surface needs no ironing. Muji's portable Torch light uses an LED to conserve power. Users can set the light on a table or carry it like a torch or flashlight. The milky white shell conveys a soft, warm glow.

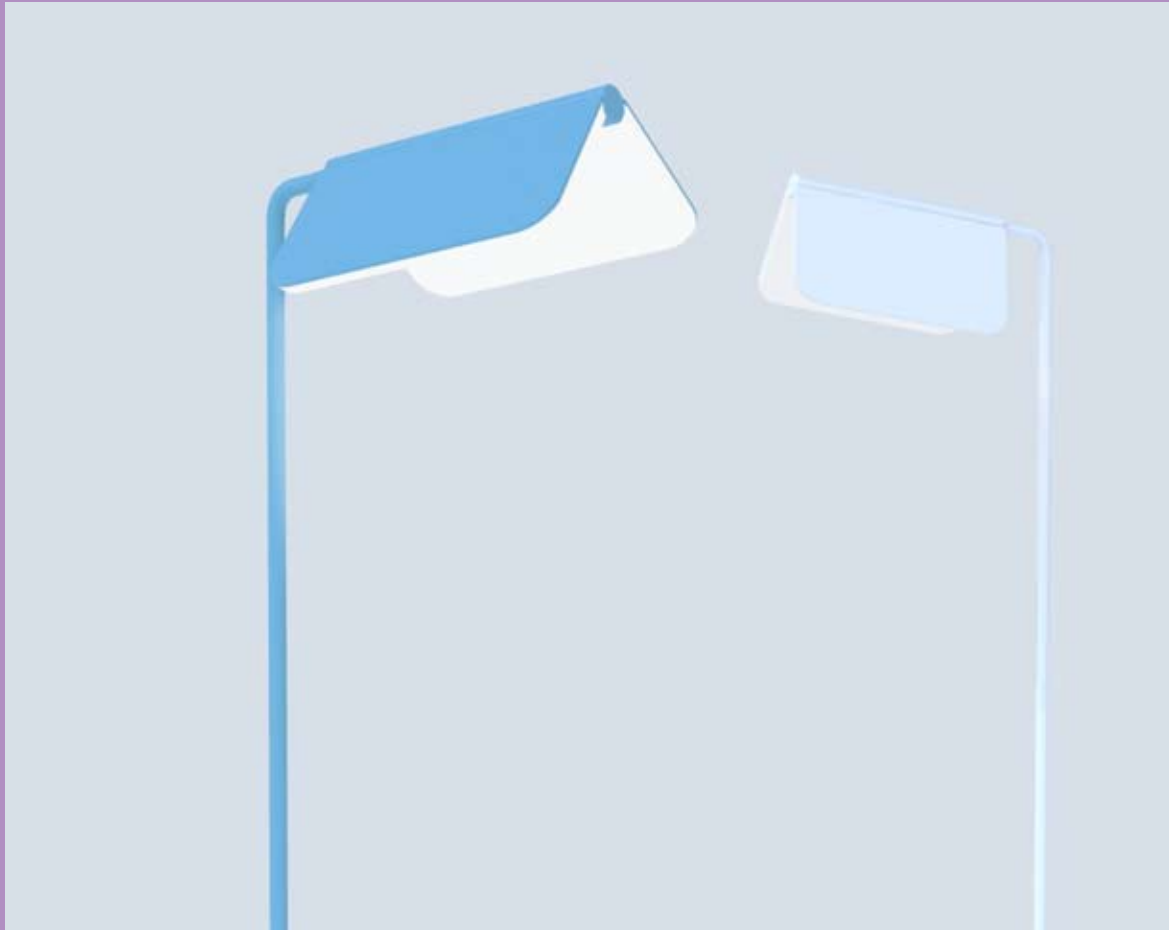


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6 Ash Wood bed. Naoto Fukasawa, Muji design team. Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku Co. Ltd. Japan, 2009. Ash wood

7 Cotton bedding (seersucker & double-loop stitch combination). Haruna Morita, Muji design team. Japan, 2009. Cotton

8 Torch light. Yohei Kuwano, Muji design team. Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku Co. Ltd. Japan, 2007. Polycarbonate, LED



9

### Book LED Floor Lamp

The Book LED floor lamp, designed by Goodmorning Technology, is part of a national effort to encourage Danish consumers to switch from tungsten filament bulbs to energy-efficient LEDs. The lamp's shade opens and closes like the cover of a book. As the shade opens wider, the light shines more brightly, and as it closes, it gradually dims and turns off. Made from recycled aluminum, the wide, flat planes of the shade help dissipate heat, a critical function in optimizing the efficiency and lifespan of LEDs. Inside the shade, plastic diffusers create a warm, even glow. This clever design employs familiar imagery and intuitive user interactions to rethink an everyday household object.



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9–10 Book LED floor lamp. Goodmorning Technology. Manufactured by DTU Technical University of Denmark, Department of Photonics Engineering, Denmark, 2008–9. Aluminum, acrylic, LED



11

### Cabbage Chair

The Cabbage chair was created for an exhibition organized in Japan by fashion designer Issey Miyake, who challenged his contemporaries to conceive of new products for the twenty-first century. What types of furniture and objects are appropriate, Miyake asked, for people who “don’t just wear clothes, but shed their skin?” He invited Oki Sato of Nendo to find a use for pleated paper, a material employed to process the signature fabric featured in Miyake’s garments. Vast amounts of this material are discarded as a by-product of the manufacturing process. The Cabbage chair is a compact roll of paper that the user opens up and peels back, layer by layer, to create a soft and resilient enclosure for the body. Resins added to the paper during the original production process give it strength and memory, while the pleats make the paper springy and elastic. The poetic and practical chair is a direct, minimal transformation of an industrial waste product. Its pod-like skin unfurls to reveal a luxuriant and expansive interior. It has no internal armature, and requires no finishing, assembly, or hardware.

11–17 Cabbage chair. Nendo. Japan, 2008.  
Pleated paper



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### Clamp-a-Leg, Jar Tops, and Nomad Table

Jorre van Ast is fascinated with connections, especially the elemental turn of a screw. This ancient mechanism makes a connection that is at once strong, reversible, and adjustable. Van Ast's Jar Tops are functional plastic lids that screw on to existing glass jars, enabling users to transform discarded containers into new sprinklers, decanters, and jugs. The tops correspond to the twist-off (TO) standard, a worldwide norm for the manufacture of screw-top food jars.

Clamp-a-Leg consists of a wooden furniture leg threaded into a simple metal clamp, allowing people to quickly transform any flat surface into a functional work surface. Clamp-a-Leg uses less material than a trestle and is easy to ship, store, and assemble. The Nomad table is a high-end, lightweight furniture piece whose legs screw in to the tabletop with a wood-to-wood connection. It is made entirely from wood; using no metal hardware, it returns, in essence, to preindustrial joinery techniques. The Nomad employs diverse woods for their different properties: hard ash for the legs; lightweight balsa, cellulose, and poplar for the tabletop core; and elegant oak veneer for the upper surface. The tabletop is thick enough at the center to receive the legs, and tapers outward to a knife-thin edge.

18 Clamp-a-Leg. Jorre van Ast/Studio for Product Design. The Netherlands, 2008-9. Metal, beech

19-20 Nomad table. Jorre van Ast/Studio for Product Design. Manufactured by Arco Contemporary Furniture. The Netherlands, 2009. Honeycomb cellulose, balsawood, thin poplar wood sheet, solid ash

21 Jar tops. Jorre van Ast/Studio for Product Design. Manufactured by Royal VKB. The Netherlands, 2005-8. Polypropylene



22



23



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22-24 DBA heater and humidifier. Leon Ransmeier, DBA. United States, 2008. Heater: recycled aluminum, heating elements, electronic components; humidifier: recycled polypropylene, RoHS- and EPEAT-compliant electronic components, high-efficiency ultrasonic transducer

### DBA Heater and Humidifier

DBA, a new design company in New York City, is developing a line of functional products for compact, sustainable living. Creative director Leon Ransmeier designs objects and appliances whose reserved, almost anonymous forms neither glorify technology nor try to make it disappear. The DBA humidifier, made of recycled polypropylene, is a cylindrical tank sitting on a low base. Mist escapes from a vent at the top of the unit. A clear removable lid allows users to glance down into the tank to check the water level. The tank lifts off the base and can be refilled as easily as a bucket. DBA's heater embodies similar clarity of purpose. Two wafer-thin heating panels are connected with a bridge that also serves as a handle and a spool for the cord when the appliance is stored.

Operating at the threshold of intuition, these pristine objects explain their own usefulness through physical and visual cues. Made from eco-safe materials, each piece is designed for long use and easy repair. DBA stands for "Doing Business As," reflecting the company's ethos of anonymity. By selling goods directly to consumers online as well as in limited retail settings such as micro-marts and instant shops, DBA seeks to control costs while keeping quality high.

25 Gripp glasses. Karin Eriksson, Karinelvy Design. Manufactured by Skrufs Glassworks. Sweden, 2008–9. Blown glass

26 Isabella stool, Free Range Furniture collection. Ryan Frank, Planet G Ltd. Manufactured by Pli Design. United Kingdom, 2008. Straw, wool



25

### Gripp Glasses

Karin Eriksson wanted to create elegant drinking glasses that nearly anyone can use, including people with limited hand function. Impairments of the hand—which are among the most common forms of disability—include weakness, shaking, lack of sensation, and pain from gripping and exertion. Many glasses are too heavy, wide, or narrow for people with even mild impairments to comfortably grasp and lift. Some purpose-made products for the disabled, such as double-handled plastic cups, create stigma by providing separate tools for different people at the table. Eriksson’s Gripp glasses have an expressed edge near their center point that provides a stabilizing handhold while imparting a graceful profile to each object. Eriksson’s lightweight, well-balanced glasses are designed for serving wine, beer, or water.



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### Isabella Stool, Free Range Furniture Collection

Ryan Frank is a South-African-born designer working in London, whose practice is inspired by reclaimed materials, sustainable systems, and his African roots. His phrase “free-range furniture” suggests his open, unconstrained way of thinking and his view of products as domesticated creatures that can be cultivated in humane and sustainable ways. Isabella, launched in 2008, is a totem-style stacking stool whose form is influenced by traditional African seating. Frank created his stools from strawboard, a formaldehyde-free material made of compressed straw that is an alternative to wood particleboard or fiberboard. He wrapped the curving side planes in brightly colored felt, creating a tactile, comfortable seat, while leaving the front and back surfaces unupholstered, exposing the strawboard. Isabella stacks to form a totem structure whose alternating felt and strawboard skins highlight the seat’s iconic form.

—Andrea Lipps



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27–29 Medusa lamp. Mikko Paakkanen, studio Paakkanen. Manufactured by Saas Instruments. Finland, 2007. Coated optical fiber, 16 high-power LEDs, microprocessor-controlled motor



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### Medusa Lamp

The Medusa lamp gently swells and contracts, its movement inspired by the motion of a jellyfish. A set of flexible, side-emitting fiber-optic rods, held together at top and bottom, define the volume of the lamp. A high-intensity LED housed in the top of the unit transmits light along the rods. A small motor controlled by a microprocessor causes the ribs to pull up and extend back down, creating a fluctuating shape defined by linear bands of light. Users can choose to halt the motion of the lamp, fixing it in a desired shape. This energy-efficient lamp uses technology to create a malleable, motile form that emulates nature.





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### Multiple Chairs #17 and #23, Multiple Family Series

Rather than make new objects from raw materials, Dutch designer Jetske de Groot creates furniture out of things that already exist. Seeking out well-worn chairs, tables, and cabinets, she carefully disassembles each piece and recombines the elements into new pieces that openly declare their mixed heritage and their long years of service. She connects them with visible epoxy bonds that celebrate the act of attachment. In these late-life second marriages, divergent materials, colors, and vocabularies join together, yielding painterly objects whose familiar parts yield surprising wholes. Calling her series Multiple Family, de Groot has created singular, handcrafted objects recovered from the realm of everyday mass production.

30–31 Multiple chairs #17 and #23, Multiple Family series. Jetske de Groot. The Netherlands, 2008–9. Recycled materials, epoxy reinforced by fiberglass

32 Pluralis chair. Cecilie Manz. Manufactured by Mooment. Denmark, 2009. Solid Oregon pine

33 Return to Sender artisan eco-casket. Greg Holdsworth, Return To Sender Eco-Caskets. New Zealand, 2007. Plywood, wool fleece



32

### Pluralis Chair

Human beings are drawn to flat planes: we sit, sleep, and build on them; we work, eat, and drink at them. Cecilie Manz plays with the language of planes to expand the functionality of familiar objects, from tables and chairs to ladders and shelves. In her Pluralis chair, three staggered surfaces share legs, merging a cluster of furnishings into a single artifact: seat, stool, table, and step. Drawing on the tradition of minimalist art, the chair contemplates the nature of cubes, lines, and intersections. It is also supremely functional, offering a convenient place to sit with a child or set down a glass.



33

### Return to Sender Artisan Eco-Casket

Death is a biological fact, yet many modern customs act in denial of death while degrading the environment. Coffins typically are expensive objects designed for permanence in the ground or made of composites and plastics that release toxins into the air during cremation.

Greg Holdsworth set out to create a simple, nontoxic, biodegradable casket. Metal and hardwood caskets consume precious resources, and others are made from wood composites covered with artificial wood grains or PVC. Many handles and decorative elements are made from metal-coated plastic, while linings are typically synthetic. Holdsworth chose instead to use plywood, a light material with an attractive grained surface. The low sides of the casket allow bodies to “lie in state” rather than requiring mourners to peer down into a deep box. Handles are integrated into the base of the coffin, and a wool fleece mattress provides a soft, natural cushion that harmonizes with the casket’s lightly oiled finish. Holdsworth describes the casket as “an elegant, eco-iconic form that honors the deceased and allows their final footprint to be a small one.”





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### t.e. 83 Hanging Lamp

Design producer Thomas Eyck commissioned Christien Meindertsma to create a series of products inspired by the traditional Dutch rope-making industry. Meindertsma conceived a rich line of objects using flax, a versatile fiber derived from a plant that grows plentifully in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Collaborating with a master rope maker, she used flax harvested from a local Dutch farm to create simple objects for contemporary life. In a series of hanging lights, the rope maker wound strands of flax around the electrical supply cord, combining power delivery and functional support into a single element. The connecting pieces were created in a specialized wood-restoration shop. Other works include a stool that resembles a ball of string, a rug made from a bound length of rope, and a power cord wrapped with rope. Meindertsma's Flax collection is part of a family of products that Eyck is building in collaboration with contemporary designers, who are working with special materials and skilled craft workers to create limited series of objects.

34 t.e. 83 hanging lamp. Christien Meindertsma. Manufactured by Roperij Steenberg for the t.e. collection. The Netherlands, 2009. Flax, porcelain, rubber

35–38 Wasara tableware, compote bowl, maru plate, and kaku plates. Shinichiro Ogata, Wasara Co. Ltd. Japan, 2008. Reed, bamboo, bagasse pulp



35

### Wasara Tableware

The phrase “paper plate” usually conjures images of haste and waste, not spiritual enrichment and ecological awareness. The Wasara collection of disposable tableware speaks to traditional Japanese hospitality, which employs diverse plates and bowls to focus attention on individually prepared food items. Wasara's serene, inventive forms enhance the sensual experience of dining while offering the convenience of disposability.

Paper tableware must be made from virgin pulp, owing to the impurities in recycled material. The Wasara collection is made from a mix of reed pulp, bamboo, and bagasse, or sugarcane pulp. Bagasse is a waste product of the sugar-processing industry, while reed and bamboo are fast-growing, non-timber plants.

The molded pulp takes myriad forms, bending and warping to add functionality and beauty to each piece. Designed to stack on the table in sculptural configurations, these paper dishes present a pleasing play of light and shadow. The handle of a coffee cup is also a pouring spout. The undulating edge of a plate makes it easy for a guest to hold it at a party. The texture of the material makes it feel comfortable and artisanal in the hand. Designed for single use, followed by natural decay, the Wasara collection celebrates “ephemeral beauty,” a strong current in Japanese culture.



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## Authors

**Ellen Lupton** has served as Curator of Contemporary Design at Cooper-Hewitt since 1992. She has contributed to numerous books and exhibitions at the Museum, including *Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office, Skin: Surface, Substance + Design*, and the *National Design Triennial* series. Lupton also serves as Director of the Graphic Design MFA program at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore. As a leading authority on design education, she has authored books that have become standard texts in classrooms worldwide, including *Thinking with Type* (2004) and *Graphic Design: The New Basics* (2008). A 2007 recipient of the AIGA Gold Medal, she is a frequent lecturer on design topics.

**Cara McCarty** has served as Curatorial Director at Cooper-Hewitt since 2007. During her twenty-seven-year career, which began at New York’s Museum of Modern Art, followed by her tenure at the Saint Louis Art Museum as Head of Decorative Arts and Design, she has written catalogues and articles, built collections, and organized numerous exhibitions that have expanded the way we think about design. Most of her exhibitions have focused on innovation and the overlap between design and technology. These include *Mario Bellini: Designer, Information Art: Diagramming Microchips, Designs for Independent Living: Products for People with Disabilities, Masks: Faces of Culture*, and *Tadao Ando: Architect*. A leading expert on contemporary design issues, McCarty was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, and has served on a number of international architecture and design juries.

**Matilda McQuaid** has been at Cooper-Hewitt since 2002, and serves as Deputy Curatorial Director and head of the Textiles department, one of the premier textile collections in the world. She has organized exhibitions and publications on textiles and contemporary architecture and design, including *Solos: Tulou/ Affordable Housing for China, Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance*, and *Josef and Anni Albers: Designs for Living*. McQuaid previously served at The Museum of Modern Art in New York for fifteen years, where she curated numerous exhibitions relating to modern and contemporary architecture and design, most notably *Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles* (with Cara McCarty) and *Shigeru Ban: A Paper Arch*. She has lectured and published widely on art, architecture, and design.

**Cynthia Smith** serves as Cooper-Hewitt’s Curator of Socially Responsible Design. Trained as an industrial designer, for over a decade she led both multidisciplinary planning and design projects for cultural institutions. After earning a graduate degree at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, she joined Cooper-Hewitt, where she integrates her work experience with her advocacy and activism on human rights and social justice issues. She co-authored *The Politics of Genocide: U.S. Rhetoric vs. Inaction in Darfur* for the *Kennedy School Review*; curated the 2007 exhibition *Design for the Other 90%*; and is working on the next exhibition in the series. Named a “20/20 New Pioneer” by *Icon* magazine, she has served on several international design juries and lectured widely on socially responsible design.

**Andrea Lipps** is a Curatorial Assistant at Cooper-Hewitt, where she is currently working on the next exhibition in the *Design for the Other 90%* series with Cynthia Smith. Before joining the Museum, she worked in the Architecture and Design department at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, assisting on *Design and the Elastic Mind* and *Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling*. Lipps served as curatorial intern on *Design for the Other 90%* and wrote her master’s thesis in design history on twentieth-century post-disaster design, integrating her interest in design with earlier work in international human rights. She has published articles in leading design magazines and teaches in the master’s program at Cooper-Hewitt.

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