

CORPORATE CULTURE MAGAZINE #2

POUL KJÆRHOLM
KASPER SALTO
CARR DESIGN
ARNOLDLANE
HAY
MILAN FURNITURE FAIR
FERGUSON DESIGN STUDIO



OFFECCT
SWEDEN

EXTREMIS
BULO
QUINZE AND MILAN
BELGIUM

FANTONI
ICF
ITALY

DAUPHIN
BRUNNER
GERMANY

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FALINC
PAUL MORRIS
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PENNY FORLANO
AUSTRALIA

W.O.G.G.
SWITZERLAND

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BUILDING A CULTURE

Just over eleven years old, Corporate Culture continues to evolve. New showrooms, fresh brands and a growing investment in local design all signal greater strategic sophistication. Managing Director, Richard Munao spoke to Paul McGillick about the new directions.

Corporate Culture showroom, Auckland, New Zealand. Photo: Pedrotti Photography
Inset: Richard Munao. Photo: Paul Lovelace

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On the cover:

'Nobody' chair from Hay
at the Horsens Art Museum
exhibition

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ONE OF THE WAYS OF MOVING FORWARD IS TO ALIGN WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE



Richard Munao does not believe in rushing to expand. He spent three years studying the New Zealand market before setting up the new Auckland showroom.

“The reason we went into New Zealand,” he says, “is that although you can get almost anything there, there’s not a saturation of competitors. In Australia, there’s a lot of people trying to get a part of the market, whereas in New Zealand – well, none of our direct competitors in Australia considers New Zealand as an important market. I just saw that as an opportunity.”

He adds that he was aware of a very high standard of design coming out of New Zealand and, therefore, saw the opportunity to support that and contribute to building a strong design community.

Corporate Culture shares the Auckland showroom with Designer Rugs, which Munao sees as an important strategic move – a “model”. It is a partnership which was tested at last year’s Saturday in Design. “We did a bit of research,” he says, “and saw that a lot of things that Designer

Rugs were doing – like working with Akira Isogawa and Julie Paterson – were really aligned with how we were working with our partners and designers. We saw how their clients were coming in with common elements, looking for a rug but at the same time saying ‘We didn’t know you did this’.”

“I strongly believe,” he says, “that one of the ways of moving forward is to align with like-minded people who can add value to you and you can add value to them. Because there is no ownership, it is very much about win-win.”

When it comes to expansion, Munao is very definite. “You can’t attack every market in the same way. You’ve got to respect each market. Brisbane, for example, is a city now, but they’re very loyal to the locals. So, you can’t pretend to be there and then fly out. New Zealand is very similar.”

The same applies to product range. “I’d like to continue that niche we’ve been in. I don’t want to do the workstation market. I know that’s the way to grow, but I don’t want to grow in revenue – I want to grow in the market we’re in.”

“There’s the perception,” he continues, “that we address the top of the market. But I don’t want to be just at the pinnacle. I want to provide top quality furniture and top quality solutions. But it doesn’t always have to come at a top quality price. So, I think additions like Hay, Quinze & Milan and Offecct are all good quality that don’t conflict with what we currently sell from a quality perspective and from an appeal to the market perspective. They’ve added elements to what we do. It is safe to say that we will continue to be middle to top end and continue to be the loose furniture provider rather than trying to do everything.”

YOU’VE GOT TO RESPECT EACH MARKET

As for trends, Richard sees a coming together of the commercial and domestic markets. “And,” he says, “there’s also the element of people who are actually using our furniture in their home using it as an office, and people

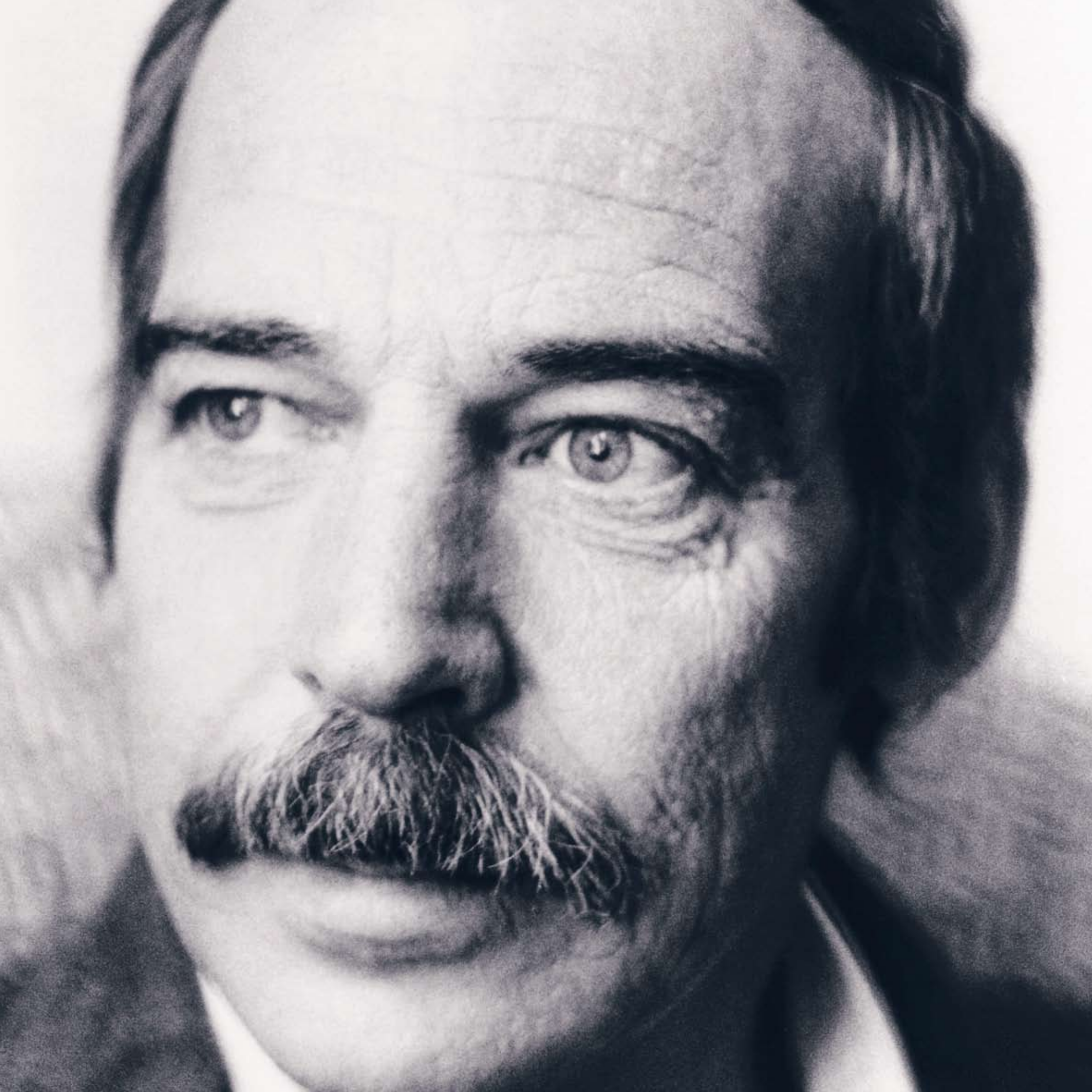
in the office using it as though it were their home.” It becomes clear in our conversation that loyalty features prominently in Richard Munao’s thinking, both because it is ethical and because it makes commercial sense.

“We’re in the unique position where we import and sell to distributors who then sell for us. So, one of the things I try to do is first of all be loyal to the people we work with. So, if a great brand comes to me, I look at it and ask: How does it compete? The partners know that they are working with someone who is not going to sell them out.

“The second thing is that they have to sit beside each other. So, we don’t currently have branded concept stores within our shops. If you bring in a Hay product, it must be able to sit next to a Fritz Hansen product. I see a lot of products which I know there is a market for, but I can’t see them fitting in with what we do.”



Clockwise from far left: Hay ‘Ray’ chair and ‘Nobody’ chair, Thomas Jacobsen ‘Tee’ table, Louis Poulsen ‘Snowball’ pendant light // Fritz Hansen ‘Space’ chairs and table, Fritz Hansen ‘Little Friend’ table and ‘WOGG 25’ shelf // Clients enjoying the Auckland showroom grand opening // Fritz Hansen ‘Series 7’, ‘CH24’ and ‘Gubi 2’ chair on plinth, Fritz Hansen ‘Ant’ chairs and ‘Span’ table, Louis Poulsen ‘Artichoke’ pendant light.



THE PERFECT CHAIR

According to architect Alex Popov, Poul Kjærholm was never out to make furniture in order to be a star – simply to make the perfect chair. And that, says, Popov, was actually his very first chair, the PK25. Here Popov reflects on his friendship with the great Danish designer.

PK25 chair // Poul Kjærholm

Designing furniture in Denmark can be daunting because it means coming to terms with a great and rigorous tradition of form, function, materials and finish. And no one exemplifies that more than Poul Kjærholm.

Himself a student of Hans Wegner, he took over from Arne Jacobsen and Finn Juhl running the furniture school (set up by Kaare Klint) at the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. It was here that Alex Popov met him. Alex was one of only 18 students admitted into the architecture programme. The furniture programme admitted only six!

Kjærholm did two or three sessions a year with the architecture students. "He gave us talks about the importance of placing furniture in a room," says Popov. "He would set up a room



PK22 chair

in the Palace – the school was in an old Dutch Renaissance palace and the rooms were old-fashioned with five metre-high ceilings – and he would bring his furniture in. The object was for you to set out his modern furniture in the 8m² room. And he would be a severe critic – how do you choose the distance from the wall, or how do you place a chair relative to another chair, are you aware of its weight and is that an appropriate thing to put against this wall? So, you began to be aware of the tactile nature of an object and of the way it wanted to be in the room."

"He was," says Popov, "adored by his students because he was so obsessed and absorbed in his own world. He didn't give a stuff about paper work or meetings. He became an icon."

Like all the others in the Danish tradition, Kjærholm was fascinated by materials and by the technologies available. It was about what Popov calls "testing the materiality of objects... searching for a novel way of using the same material."

"For example," says Popov, "that rubber on his plywood chair with leather – the piece the actual chair sits on – the little rubber piece, is off the engine mount of a Renault because he was fascinated that an engine could balance like that and have all those high revs."

Popov became close to Kjærholm and his wife, Hannah, and used to travel to the south of Spain every year with them for holidays. "I remember once," he says, "I sat facing him and he had his back to a bar. It was an old building

of two or three storeys, a typically rendered building in the south of Spain with ornate doors and windows. I said, 'How can you be sitting here all day, Poul?' And he said, 'Well, I'm thinking and don't disturb me.' 'Yeah, yeah, you're thinking,' I said, 'and you've had several cognacs.' 'Ask me anything about the building behind me,' he said. So, I said, 'What's the door lock like?' And he drew every detail. He drew the handles, the door lock, the window, the frame. He had it all in his little notebook.

HE WAS SO OBSESSED AND ABSORBED IN HIS OWN WORK

He knew every component of the buildings around him and he registered what he could use, put it down on paper – he drew beautifully with 6B pencil."

Like the other great Danish furniture designers, Kjærholm basically worked on just one thing at a time and, although he worked through some great manufacturers (notably Fritz Hansen), he always, says Popov "maintained his independence from the furniture companies." The result is a body of work which never seems to date – warmly minimalist, technically flawless and exquisite to sit on.

WARMLY MINIMALIST, TECHNICALLY FLAWLESS AND EXQUISITE TO SIT ON



PK9 Chair



PK24 Hammock Chaise



PK4 Chair



PK22 Chair



PK8 Chair



PK111 Room Divider



PK1 Chair



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Combining the tradition of Danish furniture design with a new international style, Kasper Salto creates carefully considered pieces that address the needs of a changing world. Penny Craswell finds out more.

Kasper Salto // Detail Ice chair





Kasper Salto is a designer who thinks outside the box. Coming from the strong Danish tradition of designers such as Hans Wegner and Arne Jacobsen, he admits that these large figures are a key inspiration for him, "They have indeed encouraged me to choose furniture design as my core business," he says. "Anyway I cannot run away from the fact that I have spent 40 years in Denmark."

Like the Danish masters, his work is about quality craftsmanship, but also equally about function. With beginnings as a cabinet-maker, which he practiced from 1985–1988, this experience gave Salto an appreciation for the way things are constructed, as well as for the quality of the finished object.

Having worked as a cabinet-maker, Salto then turned his attention to design, graduating from the Danish Design School in 1994. Unwilling to simply design another chair or another table, his work examines human needs, both of the present and of the future, and presents considered solutions that fulfil those needs. "I get my ideas from every day life," says Salto. "Or to be more precise, from the gaps in every day life."

I GET MY IDEAS FROM THE GAPS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

"For example, in Copenhagen we use bicycles a lot, so every time we need to lock the bike we need a lock, a key and a place to lock to. Why not integrate the lock when building the bike? Also: at night time we all need to remember a light on the bike, why not build it into the steering?"

These are the sorts of ideas the Salto has built into his products. For example, 'Little Friend', was designed to fit our changing lifestyle and workstyle – with more and more work done on the road or at home and using laptop computers and smaller and smaller spaces. "The laptop is the new 'office'," says Salto. "So we saw a



need for supporting when working; at home, in receptions, in airports... and so on."

Another product, the 'Ice' chair for Fritz Hansen, was designed to fill a need for a chair that is multifunctional. It needs to be light so that it can be mobile and it needs to be able to survive in indoor and outdoor environments.

"Without compromising weight, strength, comfort, cool/warmth properties, designing 'Ice' was a fine balance. The outdoor issue was what made the project very technical, – aluminium was chosen, together with a special plastic called ASA. To resist water, UV-rays from sun, heat and cold weather the coating of aluminum was crucial in the process. As one example there is designed small holes under the seat frame to lead out water before taking inside." A new version of 'Ice' in a full range of colours chosen by Salto's wife Rikke Ladegaard is launching in 2009.

Salto's most recent product is Kato for Engelbrechts which is a sofa that adapts to the space and the human body. "The seat bears your weight, while the back accepts your figure with extra upholstery. The arm rest defines and concludes the form with respect to space



and location. The volume of the block floats on a needle-slender frame that supports the solid body."

With a studio in uber-cool Copenhagen and products with some of the leading furniture manufacturers in the world, Salto's huge success, despite his young age (40 years) can be attributed to a subtle balance between

quality craftsmanship and a visionary outlook. "I see how people live and work, and, as a designer, I always want to improve life, or at least adapt to new changing lifestyles."

Kasper Salto
www.kaspersalto.com
www.engelbrechts.com
www.fritzhenzen.com

Opposite: Little Friend table // Series 7 chair
 This page: Ice barstool // Kato lounge chair and sofa

TAKE A SEAT

Now recognised as one of the most stylish interior design practices in the country, Carr Design keep their eyes fixed firmly on quality rather than fashion. Stephen Crafti met up with the principals for an insight into how they go about putting principle into practice.



Opposite: Daniel Stellini // Sue Carr // Deacons Law Tenancy, Melbourne
This page: Herald and Weekly Times Loft, Victoria // Transurban, Melbourne



In the foyer of the Carr Design Group are a couple of bentwood chairs. There's also a worn leather armchair and table, designed by renowned Viennese architect, Josef Hoffmann in the early 20th Century. These designer classics in brown hues are set in a minimalist office setting. "We're interested in design with longevity, as opposed to fads that come and go," says Sue Carr, director of the 45-strong Melbourne practice.

Carr, who established a design practice in 1971, steers away from fads. "There's a common thread to everything we do, whether a commercial or residential project," says Carr, whose commissions vary from bespoke housing to high-rise apartment buildings. "There's not a house style. Each project relates to its context and our client's needs," says Daniel Stellini, Associate Director.

"It's about 'detailing' and how things are put together in an almost scientific manner. Sometimes you can't articulate why something works and something doesn't. It's just a feeling you get when you walk into a space. The spaces feel right. There's a certain quality of light," says Carr, "and the furniture is appropriate."

An example, is the recent fit-out for legal firm, Deacons, which was awarded the Grand Prix at the 2008 Dulux Colour Awards. Here, the kinetic use of colour was appropriate for the context. "We wanted to bridge the different levels in the building. We also wanted to animate the work spaces," says Stellini.

EACH PROJECT RELATES TO ITS CONTEXT AND OUR CLIENT'S NEEDS

The fit-out for Transurban was deemed by Boss Magazine to be in the top six commercial renovations in Australia for 2008. The office's vivid yellow walls, evocative of the colour used for Melbourne's Gateway, are as dramatic as the spaces. The furniture, both built-in and free-standing, was carefully considered. Nylon chairs from the 1960s were selected along with Arne Jacobsen's 'Oxford' chair for Transurban's boardroom. "It's an extremely elegant chair, with its sweeping lines," says Carr.

The Carr Design Group's approach to furniture can be seen in their own office, in Flinders Lane, Melbourne. Most staff sit on an Aeron chair. "It's not just for aesthetics. It's about ergonomics, from posture to allowing blood to circulate," says Carr, pointing out the Aeron's mesh seat and backrest. Other chairs in Carr's office include the 'Aluminium' chairs and Poul Kjærholm's PK8 chairs. These four chairs were awarded to the Carr Design Group by Corporate Culture for taking out the 'The Designer of the Year' at the 2007 IDEA Awards. "Chairs have to be comfortable. There's no point in standing around a chair, too afraid to sit on it because it's too precious or uncomfortable," says Carr, who also looks for designs that are environmentally sustainable and design-friendly.

"It must have a certain level of aesthetics," says Carr. "But it must be functional as well and be in the appropriate budget for the client." And while a chair or lounge may be appropriate for a hotel lobby, the same design may not be quite right for an office. "You need to think about the duration of time a piece of furniture is in use. You can spend hours each day in an office chair, but just a fraction of time waiting to meet someone in a hotel lobby."

One of the more significant changes with furniture in recent times has been the blurring of lines between what was traditionally an office chair, and a chair designed for the home. "Offices require more flexible spaces. You wouldn't have included 'break-out' spaces in an office twenty years ago. Today, something like a beanbag can be as relevant to a commercial office as it is to an informal living area or rumpus room at home," says Carr.

Likewise, furniture selected for a hotel room, doesn't necessarily have to replicate a home environment. "We saw a need to include office-style furniture in hotels several years ago," says Carr. "Many hotels are supported by business people from Sunday night through to Thursday. They need furniture that's conducive to work. It's not just about the room service or view out from window."

Carr Design were the 2007 winners of the Idea Designer of the Year Award

Carr Design Group
(613) 9665 2300

Christopher Lane,
Kathy Arnold
of arnoldlane



Left to right: Lisa Dinham,
Angela Ferguson, Karen Garrett of
Ferguson Design Studio



PART OF THE FAMILY

The Design Journey is an annual competition sponsored by Corporate Culture inaugurated in 2004 to support the Australian design profession and to add to Corporate Culture's collection. The winning design is prototyped and shown at Saturday in Design the following year. Paul McGillick speaks to two past winners about what the competition meant to them.

Kathy Arnold and Chris Lane, the principals of arnoldlane, have won the competition twice – in 2005 with a compact lounge, 'Chest', and again in 2006 with 'Lipstik', a single-piece cantilevered chair.

An interior design practice, they had always been interested in furniture design – "always doodling and doing little sketches", as Kathy puts it – but hindered by the cost of prototyping.

So, winning the competition, says Chris, "was a fantastic opportunity without having yourself to invest in the prototyping and to get something to market...And there as the excitement thing because winning meant that you got to work with Corporate Culture's manufacturers." And, adds Kathy, "It made you realise 'Well, actually, we can do furniture design rather thinking you might be able to do it.'"

With 'Chest' (so named because it is a take on the traditional Chesterfield chair) they didn't have an idea before the competition, so the brief for a compact lounge started the whole process. "It was a very simple design, really," says Kathy, "because it was quite well-resolved in terms of proportion when it was prototyped. It went straight into production. The main thing was that it was very simple. Whereas with 'Lipstik' it's not a simple design and so is not a simple process."

Chris points out that 'Lipstik' needs a mold and they discovered that tooling costs, even in China, were anything between \$200,00 and \$500,000.

This means that it is difficult to keep the chair affordable for the target market and so it is still to go into manufacture, especially given there are a number of competing products out there.

Kathy and Chris believe that winning the competition has raised their profile significantly. "People take you seriously," says Kathy, "because you have actually got something rather than starting from nothing." This becomes very important say with hospitality clients who may be looking for customised furnishings.

WINNING MEANT THAT YOU GOT TO WORK WITH CORPORATE CULTURE'S MANUFACTURERS

"Design's really a problem-solving mission," says Chris. "And we'd always wanted to be a multi-disciplinary practice, able to say we have residential and we've done commercial. To be able to say we've done product design reinforces what we set out to achieve."

"And," adds Kathy, "the great thing about the competition is that Richard introduced us to his network of designers who have gone through that problem-solving and prototyping with larger companies like Fritz Hansen."

Ferguson Design Studio is just over four years old with a team made up of Angela Ferguson, Lisa Dinham, Karen Garrett and support staff and for them one of the great benefits of winning in 2007 was that it helped them develop as a team, because, says Lisa, "it has been doing something different to what we usually do."

And, adds Angela, "It gives you confidence – because we've got ideas about doing other things and it has given us the confidence to take that on."

The team had been used to specifying other people's products, but had never designed loose furniture themselves. The brief had been to design a modular lounge which would fit in with Corporate Culture's existing collection and which would have high sustainability values.

The competition was the trigger and they entered the competition, says Angela, "partly because Richard Munao encouraged us to do so and partly because we are a design-focused practice and it was an opportunity for us to explore design opportunities." "And," adds Karen, "it has given us a good basis to understand the manufacturing process and the prototyping process. We usually specify other people's furniture, but now we have an understanding from the other side of the fence."

Lisa went to the Milan Furniture Fair to get some inspiration and see what was coming up on the market. "I came back," she says, "with lots of ideas. Then we got together as a team and started brain-storming."

"We started quite broadly at first – like, what do you want a lounge or sofa to be? It wasn't just something to sit on and watch TV. It had to perform a number of different functions. Our working title was 'My Island Home', because it was like an island in that you could do almost anything on it."

IT'S BEEN ABOUT BROADENING OUR HORIZONS

"We asked ourselves," says Karen, "What do the sofas we have at home do or not do? My pet hate was I couldn't vacuum under mine because the base was too low. So, this is on a plinth. Lisa works on her lounge a lot, so she wanted some sort of pull-out cable for her laptop. And from there we went on to: What might separate us out from the other entries? And that was how this could be used as easily in a residential setting as in a contract setting."

Like arnoldlane, they had to address cost issues and this, they say, they were able to do at the prototyping stage.

"Dealing with the upholsterer and Corporate Culture," says Karen, "it became a bigger team which was good to be a part of, very educational."

So, what did they get out of it? For Angela it was "another facet of what we do – I mean,

the more you do, the more informed you are working on other projects. So, it's been about broadening our horizons."

"We had to find other ways," says Karen, "of achieving the same look because of cost factors, and that has been valuable. It has strengthened our relationship with Corporate Culture and we've seen how much they support us as an industry."

And like arnoldlane, says Lisa, the trip which was part of the prize introduced them to the wider international design community, making them feel they had become part of a family.

For details of the 2008 Corporate Culture Design Journey, including dates and the design brief, go to: designjourney@corporateculture.com.au or visit corporateculture.com.au



This page: Prince chair // Exhibition at Horsens Art Museum
Opposite: Blow seat

THE ART OF FURNITURE

Owned by clothes group, Bestseller and Rolf Hay, Hay has been re-invigorating the Scandinavian design scene. Launched at IMM, Cologne in January 2003, Hay aims to regenerate the innovative elegance we all associate with Danish furniture of the 1950s and 1960s, but without losing that sense of timeless contemporaneity that was the hallmark of 20th Century Danish design.

To this end, Hay have assembled a team of imaginative young Danish designers notable for their willingness to experiment.

If there is a common thread to Hay products it is their sculptural quality. Mixed with a flair for individualistic design, bold colours, material innovation and new production methods, this results in versatile products which are as aesthetically brilliant as they are functionally intriguing.

So, it was completely appropriate when, in November 2007, Hay invited dealers, potential dealers, architects and designers (including special guests from Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Germany) to a three-day exhibition of Hay

products in the Horsens Art Museum, one of the finest museums in Denmark, specialising in Danish art.

Here, outstanding Hay products – such as Louise Campbell's 'Prince' chair – could be seen set off against art such as the paintings of outstanding Danish artist, Michael Kvium.

Hay
www.hay.dk



CARLY TYRRELL'S MILAN HIGHLIGHTS

Corporate Culture Sydney's Business Development Manager Carly Tyrrell nominates some highlights from the 2008 Milan Furniture Fair.



'Egg' chair

Israeli-born, German-based artist, Tal R has helped Fritz Hansen celebrate the 50th anniversary of Arne Jacobsen's 'Egg' chair by designing fifty unique patchwork versions using recycled materials from all round the world.



'T No.1' table

He's New York-based, but Danish trained. So, Todd Bracher understands what makes Fritz Hansen so unique. Hence, the new 'T No.1' table with mirror polished aluminium or black lacquer legs and glass, white laminate, maple, walnut veneer or coloured ash veneer in black for the top.



Extremis

Belgian firm, Extremis, continues to expand its classy range of outdoor furniture. New products this year included the sleek 'ExTempore Still' table with ceramic or scratch-proof glass top, and the 'Bronco' bar stools.



Quinze & Milan

The Quinze and Milan stand typically combined the elegant and the funky. Among the new products was the 'Room 26' range of chairs. Made with an Oak frame, they combine "the familiar and the timeless" and come in fabric, leather or QM FOAM™.



Falinc

Melbourne design duo, Falinc, combine graphic, automotive and industrial design skills. They teamed up with UK design group, Designersblock, to show their new 'Holier Than Thou' range of indoor/outdoor furniture blending industrial materials with delicacy of design.

BEHIVE

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lounging furniture, fun³, ...

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