



MOTORING
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pocket
rocket L16



FOOD
The great
flavour of
fresh nutmeg L17



TRAVEL
China's
Muslim
far west L18



WINE
The year's
vinous
high points L19

Life & Leisure

DECEMBER 5-7, 2008

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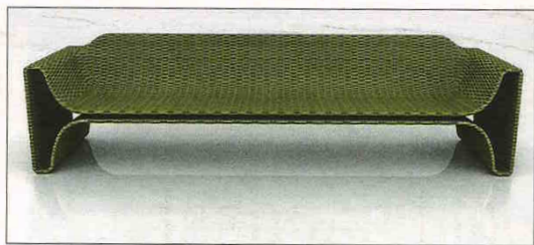
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PORSCHE

DESIGN



Flexible pieces for small spaces

Creative designers are recognising the need to create furniture that works on many levels, writes **Stephen Crafti**.

With indoor and outdoor spaces becoming smaller, finding furniture that's flexible is paramount. "People are looking for versatility, whether it's a piece of furniture moved between rooms or moved outdoors," designer Helen Kontouris says. "Furniture has to work harder . . . It often has to provide several functions."

Kontouris's designs include lighting, candelabra, vases, chairs and sofas, and she has just completed a new range of indoor and outdoor pieces for Hong Kong-based company SunWeave. "They were looking at furniture that could be used both indoors and outdoors," she says. "But they didn't want the designs to appear as though they were simply brought into the living room when it rained."

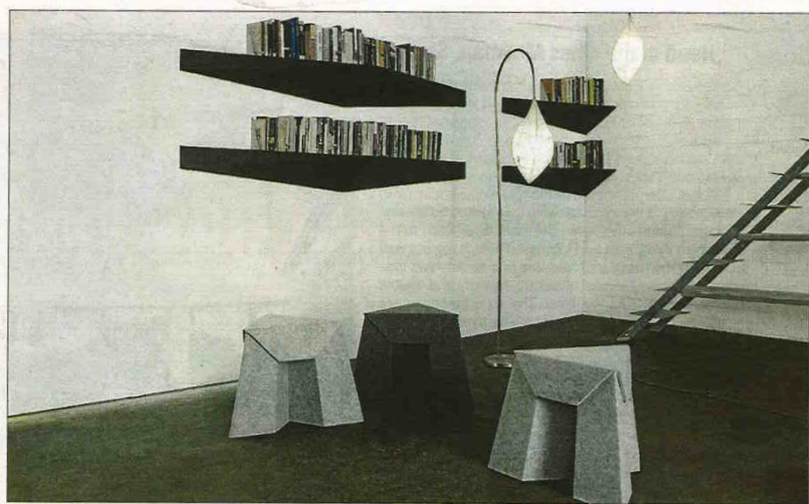
Kontouris's Breathe sofa for SunWeave is made from woven polypropylene strips, 5mm wide and 1mm thick. Covering an aluminium frame, the sofa casts a curvaceous and organic silhouette. Along with the sofa, there are 25 other products in the Breathe range: daybeds, deep armchairs, sun lounges and coffee tables.

There's also a dining table and chairs in the same weave. "The brief was for something timeless – not a fashion trend for the moment," Kontouris says. The range is designed in a variety of colours, from gun-metal hues such as bronze, to chocolate and white.

"I didn't want the furniture to appear as though it was designed primarily for the outdoors," she says. "Covering the aluminium frame gives it a more lounge room feel." She has also designed a range of rectangular and geometric cushions for the collection.

Another of Kontouris's sculptural designs demonstrates her flexible approach; a porcelain candelabra can also be used as a vase. "It's great if you can give people a choice," she says.

Oliver Field's Hedge furniture collection, designed for Schiavello, is equally versatile. The Hedge is a



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Helen Kontouris, designer

collection of lounges with accompanying Nestling tables with varying-length cushions. Made from steel, polyurethane foam, and covered in a knitted fabric, the Hedge can be used as a seat, a lounge or as a sculptural piece in an entrance way. Each fold expands, depending on how it's used. "It was conceived for transient spaces, whether in a living room at home, or an office, home or work environment," Field says.

Available in several colours and several lengths, (from 1150mm to 2790mm), the Hedge can be accompanied by the aluminium nest tables or used on its own.

Field is also working on a range of loose furniture designed for open plan offices for Schiavello. "Whether at home or work, people want to be able to change and move things around," he says.

Designer Anthony Dann also recognises the importance of flexibility when designing furniture. He has created the Paper Tiger stool for use in a variety of situations. Manufactured

Above left, the Breathe sofa designed by Helen Kontouris and made by SunWeave; above, Prism Bookshelves and Paper Tiger Stools by Anthony Dann; Below, Oliver Field's Hedge collection, designed for Schiavello. Photos courtesy Helen Kontouris, Oliver Field, Anthony Dann.

by VisyBoard and available in stores early in the New Year, the stool has a triangular form and arrives flat-packed.

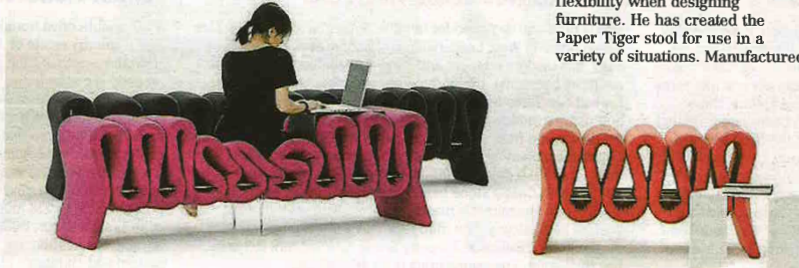
Slots and tabs eliminate the need to use a screw driver, and the chair can be assembled to either show a printed or a plain seat, with three different patterns to choose from.

Dann has also designed bookshelves made from a felt-like board. Completely recyclable, these shelves are also flat packed and, like the stool, can be snapped together. "The shelves are designed to be added to," he says. "They're ideal for open-plan warehouse-style apartments or informal living areas at home."

The felt-like material, as opposed to the cardboard, creates a sense of luxury to the product. "It's important to offer choice," Dann says. "These shelves can find their way into several points in the market, rather than being pigeon-holed into a specific furniture niche."

Whether used inside or outside, at home or in the office, these designs aren't fixed to a specific location.

And like their environments, they can take on different characters, depending on where they are placed.



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