

The International Design Magazine

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I.D.

New Faces

Six Rising Designers
from Athens to Vancouver


The Kids Are Alright

Winners of the
Student Design Review

Battle of the Bulge

Taking the Weight Off Combat Gear





The Young and the Restless Constantinos Hoursoglou designs for nomadic, energetic souls like himself.

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WANDERING INTO CONSTANTINOS HOURSOGLOU'S STAND at the Milan Furniture Fair last spring was like tossing back a double shot of espresso. Unlike so many designers who affect indifference to the swarms of press at this event, he had all the jadedness of a puppy. Rushing around the narrow booth, jabbering about "the modern condition," he deftly transformed a bed into a coffee table and then into a dining table.

Was it a caffeine high? A breakdown? Soon it became clear that Hoursoglou (pronounced HORSE-o-gloo) is just deeply turned on by design. In the vast, sober landscape of the Milan fair—and indeed, the design world—the vitality is refreshing.

Hoursoglou, 31, has short, dark hair; a mildly dorky grin that says "I'm harmless"; and an intensity around the eyes that says "And you believe that?" He grew up in Athens, where his mother worked as an interior designer and his father practices lighting design. His bloodlines make his choice of a career natural. His homeland makes it a bit maddening. Greece offered no university-level education for industrial designers when Hoursoglou came of age. Fluent in English, he enrolled in 1990 at University of Sunderland, outside Newcastle, England, for a bachelor's degree in product design and management. A school requirement to work for a year in the real world led him to an industrial research and development company in Athens. "It was hardcore engineering," he says. "We created systems for analyzing plasma concentration in nuclear reactors." By 1995, his portfolio was strong enough to admit him to London's Royal College of Art. He won the school's Design Age award for a neoprene purse that firmly attaches to the body by two velcro straps; it also vacuum-seals for watertightness and to prevent contents from shifting.

LIVING OUT OF THE BOX, 2003

Introduced at the Milan Furniture Fair, this convertible four-piece furniture system ships in two boxes that can fit through any standard door frame and double as armoires once emptied.



Shortly after graduating from RCA in 1997, Hoursoglou moved to New York, where the economy was beginning to crescendo. He freelanced for a few months for Ayse Birsell on a project that evolved into Herman Miller's Resolve office furniture system, then took a full-time position with Karim Rashid. At the time, Rashid's fame also was getting noisy. High-profile projects flooded the studio, and Hoursoglou had license to work on all of them—Tommy Hilfiger's Freedom Range, a packaging line for Prada, objects in crystal and metal for Nambé. He put his practical education in materials and manufacturing to good use in Rashid's office. In return, he learned how to listen to clients. "I learned the value of feeling dissatisfied," he added. "And I learned that you can always work more."

In 1999 Hoursoglou returned to Greece to fulfill an obligatory 18 months of military service. He thought seriously about picking up where he had left off in the States, but then he got the chance to design a 10-room hotel on the island of Syros in the Cyclades. "It is modest," he says, "but exclusive. And what convinced me was an opportunity to do something completely." As he speaks, he grows excited again, waving hands, shuffling objects. "The furniture, the interior structure. The entire concept, from start to finish." The idea is to help visitors feel at home on a tradition-bound island, whose most important family once occupied the 1800s building.

He compares setting up shop in Greece to moving from New York to the suburbs: It's not completely off the map, but pretty far out. The Athens design scene, in his opinion, lacks energy and relies too much on generic international styles. There are few professional model-makers who cater to industrial designers, and accessibility to new materials is limited by the small market; you can order huge quantities or tiny samples but not much in between.

Greece does offer some professional advantages. Hoursoglou likes the bracing feeling of being a

ZAK, 2002

When closed, this laminated-plywood secretary and chair set serves as a table. The stainless steel legs break apart for easy shipping. 39.4 X 19.7 X 31.5 in.





LIVING OUT OF THE BOX, 2003

Completely unpacked, the boxes contain: one Hiloly daybed/table, six Ellie bookshelf modules, four Mobi seats, and one Limi mirror/coatrack. Each piece can be configured and used in multiple ways.

pioneer. And there's something to be said about a sparsely populated career niche, especially with the Olympics coming to Athens. He's engaged in several projects for the 2004 games. And though he is constrained from disclosing exactly what they are, he says they account for 50 to 60 percent of his current workload, which also includes a furniture line for Modeco, a kind of Greek IKEA (though much smaller) that offers low-priced goods for people setting up their first households. Recently married to a photographer and art curator from Geneva, he keeps a second studio in the Swiss city that offers a more central base for attracting European clients.

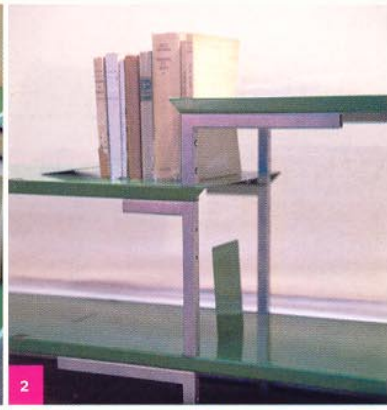
As for the furniture he was assembling in Milan, it's a fold-and-pack system for peripatetic urbanites called Living Out of the Box. Not only does the bed turn into a dining table, but the shelving system is modular and can be freestanding or wall mounted; the chair back is a collapsible sheet of scored and folded polypropylene; and the mirror is married to a light fixture and coat tree. Best of all, everything packs into two armoires for the next move.

Hoursoglou doubts the prototype will attract a Greek manufacturer; the concept fluttered out of another life—the Manhattan apartment that was too tiny for a dining table but not too small to be used as a crash pad by out-of-town guests. He understands the need to shed possessions while chasing ambitions. Even if the Greek market may not be quite ready to acknowledge it, it's what passes for today's international style.

Paul Bennett writes about architecture and design from Rome, Italy.



1



2

ELLIE
 1 When assembled as a freestanding shelf unit, Ellie's bookends snap into slots. Mounted on the wall, the structure's metal slats function as shelves. L-shaped brackets allow the modular pieces to be arranged in several configurations.
 2 51.2 x 13 x .8 in. per shelf



3

MOBLI
 3 Like the Mobius strip for which it was named, this chair's seat and back are formed from a single piece. The flat, polypropylene panel folds into position but can revert to its original shape for shipping. Removable legs allow users to sit at table height or rock on the floor.
 15 x 21.7 x 29.5 in. as shown



4



7



5



6

HILOLY
 7 Hinged-leg construction permits a single user to raise the table surface from lounge level to desk height.
 8 70.9 x 31.5 x 28.4 in.



8

HILOLY
 4 A combination coffee table, work table, and daybed, Hiloly's eight cushions can be arranged for on-floor dining or bed-level reclining.
 5 70.9 x 31.5 x 13.8 in.
 6



“I learned the value of feeling dissatisfied. And I learned that you can always work more.”

FLIP, 2002
 With just two upholstered components, Flip can be arranged as a sofa, loveseat, banquette, recliner, or daybed. Ellie shelving can be attached to the seat backs.
 47.2 x 30.7 x 23.6 in.

