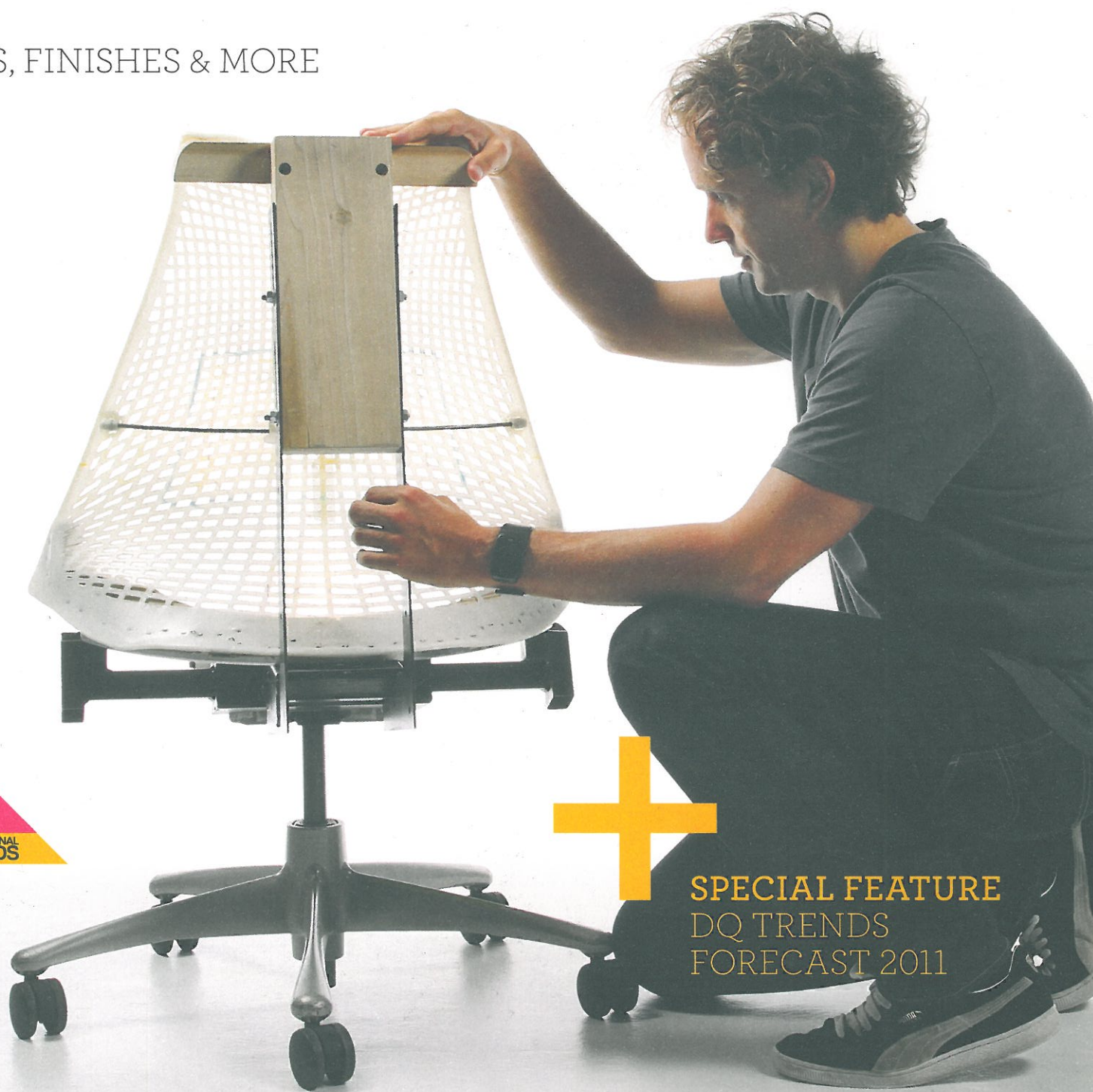


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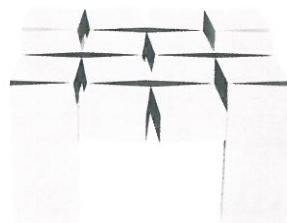
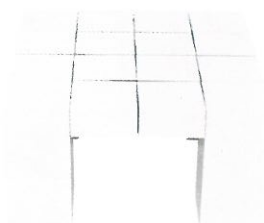
'Drop' by Paul Cockesedge at London Design Festival. Photo: Susan Smart Photography

FESTIVAL WITH ATTITUDE



“The Anti-Design Festival was an unpolished, this-is-what-you-get, fingers-up to the design establishment”

Clockwise from top left
» Anti-Design Festival, Photo: Susan Smart Photography
» Matilda exhibition of Australian design
» 'Quilted Dollar' by Ed Vinca, Photo: Courtesy of Payne Shurvell
» 'A Gust of Wind' by Paul Cocksedge, Photo: Mark Cocksedge
» 'Rotating Squares' table by Tom Cecil





Design festivals can make you laugh or cry. At their best, they showcase experimentation and genuine innovation and leave you hopeful for the future. At their worst, they're a mundane mishmash of so-so products, restyled bookcases, tables and chairs, seen and done a thousand times before.

Thankfully, the 2010 London Design Festival with its 200-plus events, had a rich and varied program that catered for a broad spectrum of interests. It was certainly made richer this year with the addition of The Anti-Design Festival in East London, the brainchild of famed graphic designer Neville Brody. An unpolished, this-is-what-you-get, fingers-up-to-the-design-establishment experience, visitors were encouraged to rummage through barely curated work, bring in their portfolio for an honest critique or simply come along and have a go.

A stone's throw away on Brick Lane, TENT and TENT Digital confirmed itself as the most diverse event of the festival. From Alex Randall's taxidermy 'Rat Swarm' lamp to Jung Myung Taek's sprung metal furniture, many of 2010's exhibitors combined traditional techniques with new technologies.

Nearby, Matilda showcased for the first time in the UK, spotlighting 13 of Australia's best designers. This inaugural exhibition featured designs ranging from Husque's recycled macadamia nut bowls to Volker Haug's 'Antler' range of porcelain lighting. Tyler Brûlé (founder of *Wallpaper** and Editor-in-Chief at *Monocle*) described Australia as the country that exported 'lifestyle' to the rest of the world. Matilda proved that the Australian environment of infinite space, sky and sea provides a backdrop for design that is simple, authentic and full of hope.

Across the Thames, Designersblock delivered a convincing return to form, taking over five floors of the Bargehouse at Oxo Tower Wharf on the South Bank. Imogen Luddy's laser cut stainless steel 'Cross Stitch' table and other interior products used antique lace, doilies and embroidered samplers, digitalising their structures and reproducing them in unexpected ways. Royal College of Art graduate Ani Rao is surely onto a winner with his 'Kranium' cycling helmet, laser cut from cardboard. It is four times more impact-absorbent than a conventional helmet, 100 grams lighter, recyclable, cheap to produce, and is custom moulded to your head via a nifty balaclava 3D scan. Its potential for use with community bike schemes in cities across the world is huge.

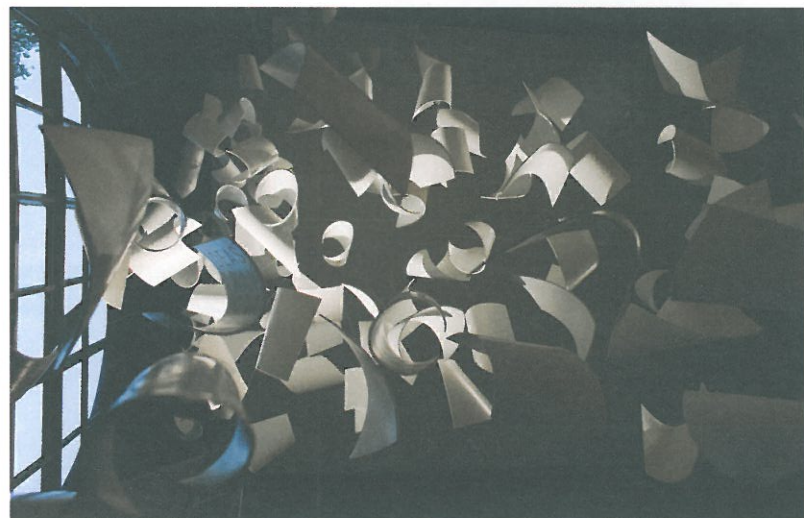
100%Design celebrated its 16th birthday and brought us a varied bunch, including 14 dedicated



international pavilions (Australia was conspicuous by its absence). The strength of this year's offering came from those who emphasised risk-taking and possibilities for the future. Tom Cecil's 'Rotating Squares' table was a favourite, drawing crowds to see this 480-millimetre square table rotate to 1.4 times its size through clever manipulation of geometry and hand-stitching of wood with nylon. Equally engaging, his two-metre-long stretched steel-top table was held in place under 30 tonnes of tensioned force by a single ratchet strap.

From the useful to the joyful, renowned UK design practice Paul Cockledge Studio presented 'A Gust of Wind', exhibited for one day only at the V&A Museum. Three-hundred curvaceous pieces of Corian – perceived to be a heavy material – were transformed into lightweight pieces of paper, seemingly blown into the air by a gust of wind. Equally delightful was 'Drop' an oversized coin "which has fallen to earth from a giant's palm", an interactive sculpture whose magnetic pull had crowds pouring to South Bank. For every penny given by the public, £1 was donated by sponsors to charity – a fitting end to a festival characterised, refreshingly, by purposefulness and a healthy attitude towards risk. ●

Text by Jackie Hawkins



LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

What: Festival

When: 18 – 26 September 2010

Where: London, United Kingdom

» londondesignfestival.com