AN OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH DESIGNER-MANUFACTURERS:

AN EIGHTIES PHENOMENON OR A NINETIES INDUSTRY?

Dissertation Produced in Part Fulfilment of

BACHELOR OF DESIGN IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

Tutor: Dr. Frances Ruane

Submitted to:

FACULTY OF ART AND DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

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MARCH 1992

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the furniture from England that captured the headlines in the 1980s was extravagant, flamboyant and highly inventive. This was due to the work of designer-manufacturers. In the early eighties, a new industrial phenomenon was emerging in England. Contemporary furniture was being produced by designers in their own workshops or through small workshops dotted around the perimeter of England's major cities. These individuals were working outside the mainstream design activity. At the Royal College of Art, design students learned to carve, sculpt, forge, panel beat and cast in materials such as aluminium and bronze. From these workshops furniture was produced to the highest standards and quality. Many young designers had given up trying to change the indigenous attitude of the furniture industrialists to design. The view of British furniture industrialists and the picture of the industry is outlined by Mike Jones:

> British manufacturers have stubbornly refused to give up either their chipboard, cheap fabrics and staple guns or their assertions that what the public wants is what the public had a century ago. It's a stereo-typical image of the tattered remnants of the British furniture industry, now reduced to a small, come-hither sandwich board selling cheap copies of yesterday's designs on street corners. (Jones, 1992, p.22).

What occurred in the furniture industry in the eighties - and even now more vigorously in the nineties - amounts to a mutiny by young furniture designers. It is as if manufacturers became deaf to the ideas of some of the most creative designers, and they in turn, have decided to seek other manufacturing means that would allow them to produce contemporary furniture in England.

This dissertation will examine the efforts and achievements of designer-manufactures in the context of today's British furniture industry, and how it relates to other industries in Europe. The

first two chapters will discuss the work of Ron Arad and Danny Lane: exponents of the new designer-manufacturer approach. The development of Arad and Lane is traced from their initial workshop setup until the present. The ambiguities of their work are examined and compared to the approach and efforts of the traditional furniture manufacturers. Arad's and Lane's design ethics and approaches are considered in relation to the functional, material and compositional aspects of their furniture, concluding with an estimation of the influence, achievements and success of their approach.

In Chapter 3, a comparison will be made between the relationship of traditional designers and industrialists, their approach to design and manufacture, and the designer-manufacturer's approach to design and manufacture. This chapter will highlight the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. It will then attempt to demonstrate that the latter's approach is more beneficial - to both the designer and manufacture - than the former approach. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that one of the reasons the Italian furniture industry has been so successful is because in Italy designers and manufacturers achieve a special working relationship. Such relationships are now common between many European furniture manufacturers and designers who would wish to follow the Italian success.

Many examples exist of such successful collaborations between English furniture designers and foreign manufacturers, i.e. Ron Arad and Vitra (Germany), Danny Lane and Moroso (Italy). This chapter hopes to highlight the question as to why English contemporary furniture designers cannot achieve such successful collaborations with their own furniture manufacturers.

Chapter 4 will focus on the designed object and how it is perceived both by the English industrialist and the designer-manufacturer. Designer-manufacturers believe that aesthetic distinction is vital in European furniture and product design, and that the

expressionistic quality of the designed artifact is paramount in giving European manufacturers the competitive edge over Eastern manufacturers, whose products are now becoming more regionalised globally, i.e. American products for American markets, European products for European markets etc. This chapter cites the example of the difficulties designers, Daniel Weil and Gerard Taylor, experienced with English industrialists in trying to prove to them that the above approach to the designed artifact is beneficial to them in a market sense. Weil and Taylor discuss the reasons why they believe the 'idea' and 'expression' is vital in the design, manufacture and retail of furniture. The chapter concludes by demonstrating how this approach to design has contributed to the emergence of designer-manufacturers.

The size of the market for contemporary furniture in England is discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter discusses the opinions that several individuals, who presently operate in the manufacture and retail of contemporary furniture in England and in Europe, have about the English and European market for contemporary furniture, and about how the situation could be improved for the growing number of designer-manufacturers of furniture. S.C.P., the only English firm that both manufactures and retails contemporary furniture is taken as an example of how future furniture might be produced and retailed. As much of the work designer-manufacturers do is on commission, how successfully they collaborate with architects and interior designers will also be examined. The chapter will conclude by looking at The Edge - a designer-manufacturer company that has been operational for two years - considering their success and the general prospects for their company and for contemporary furniture abroad.

Chapter 6 will look at the success of Italian design and how this is due to Milan's unique industrial fabrication.
Designer-manufacturers of contemporary furniture in Britain are now becoming organised into groups of small workshop companies, rather than large industrial conglomerates: a fact which gives the

contemporary furniture industry in Britain a point of contact with Italy. The chapter highlights how the Italian success is due to low production investment and how a similar situation is occurring in England in the design and manufacture of contemporary furniture. High production and retail investment is weighed against low production and retail investment. The advantages and disadvantages of both approaches will be examined. The chapter will conclude by looking at the advantages to the designer-manufacturer remaining small and independent, considering why some designers prefer this particular approach.

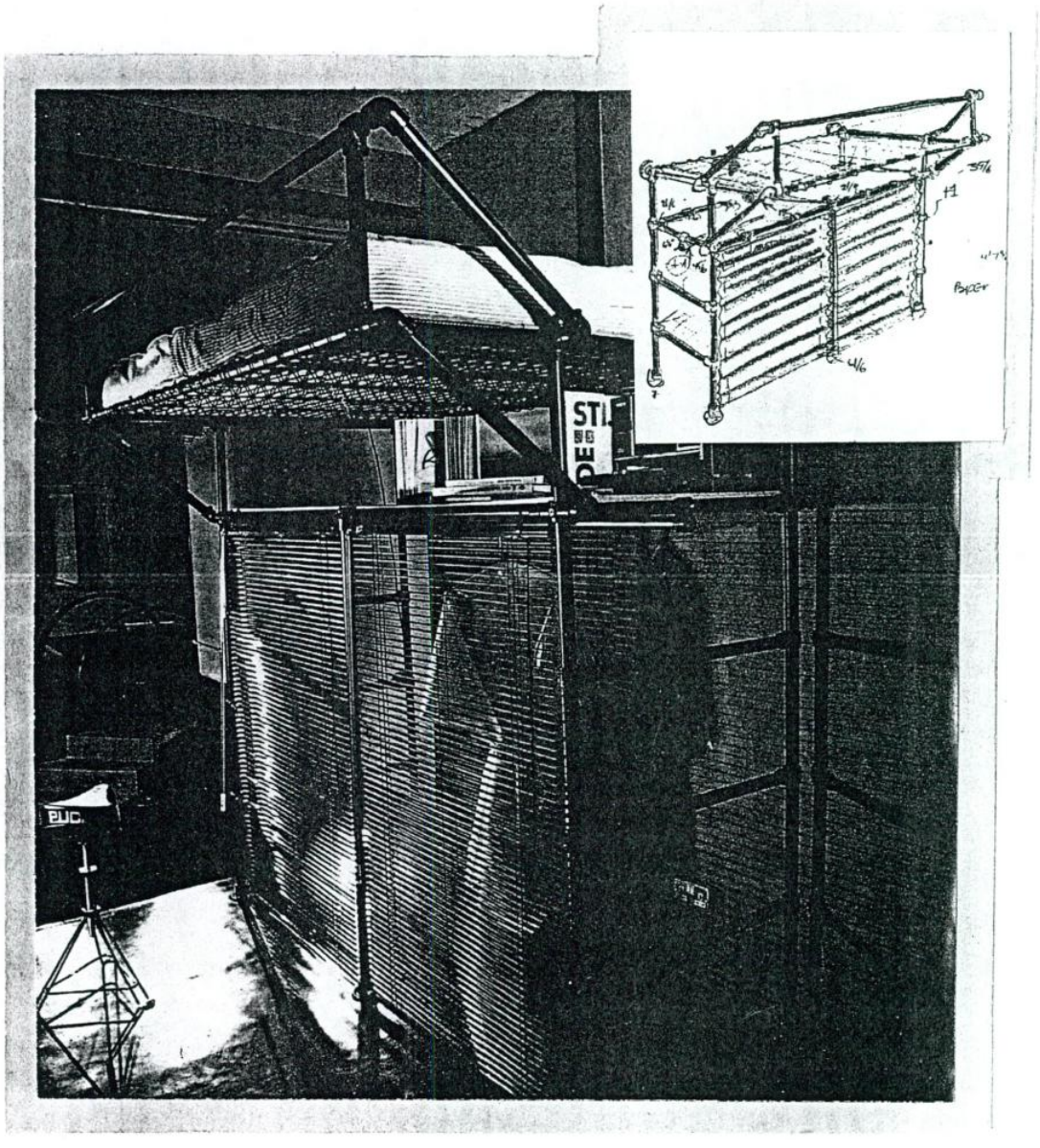
CHAPTER 1

RON ARAD AND THE START OF 'ONE-OFF' LTD.

Ron Arad was born in Tel Aviv in 1951, the son of a painter mother and photographer father. After studying at the Jerusalem Academy of Art, he came to London in 1974 where he studied at the prestigious Architectural Association until 1979. He left the Association before completing his studies. Arad felt 'it was too conservative and in the main its solutions were too traditional and boring'. (McDermott, 1987, p.116).

After a less than happy period with Archigram, a small architectural practice in North London, he became involved with design in the most pragmatic way possible through a chance encounter with furniture entrepreneur, Dennis Groves. Arad had been commissioned to decorate a flat in London. He proposed to use a proprietary scaffolding system from which much of the interior's contents, i.e. chairs, beds, storage space, wardrobes etc. would be made (illus. 1). The system, normally deployed on building sites, known as Kee Klamp, was also being looked at by Groves. He had just finished an energetic career popularising foam seating and was also looking at ways of using the system for furniture. The two met and started the 'One-Off' business in a small shaky showroom on Sicilian Avenue, London.

It was during this time that high tech design was being popularised in London. This impulse was basically the domestication of industrial objects by putting them to use for ends never envisaged by their original creators. Joan Kron and Suzanne Slesin's book, High-tech - the Industrial Style and Source Book for the Home, introduced rubber studded floor mats and perforated metal into domestic interiors. Arad was seen to belong to this clique. The use of industrial items in domestic environments meant that reasonable low cost materials were readily available to be put to



(Illustration 1).
One of Arad's early installations which uses the Kee Klamp system to create storage space, wardrobes etc.

use by the designer, whatever way he desired. This allowed One-Off's severely unsure future to get off to a reasonable start, otherwise the cost levels would have been impossible for such a modest enterprise as Arad's.

Arad started to make his furniture from this Kee Lamp system in his own workshop. It was his first step as a designer who designed and manufactured his own furniture, independent of industrial input from manufacturing firms. Arad became a designer-manufacturer producing his own furniture pieces in small numbers and mostly by hand but whose base did not belong to the craft tradition. He produces his own furniture in workshops because he does not have the means to sustain production in any other manner. Because of this, he is associated with craft traditions and with artists whose furniture is a means of artistic expression.

Arad found himself in a previously undefined area of design, surviving on his wits and working in what initially came to be known as creative salvage. The use of salvaged pieces is one of the many continuous strains that can be found in Ron Arad's work.

Arad and Groves continued to work with the Kee Klamp system until 1981. Arad moved the studio to Covent Garden and decided that this approach to design suited him. The direction which Arad decided to take was different to the more obviously business approach Groves had in mind. Groves left, leaving Arad to continue the development of One-Off. With the workshop, his own studio and his own retail outlet, Arad found himself in a position enjoyed by very few designers, that of being able to assume responsibility for every aspect of the design, manufacture and retailing of a piece of furniture.

THE WORKSHOP AND STUDIO ENVIRONMENT OF 'ONE-OFF'

The Covent Garden premises that Arad had now found himself became a studio, drawing office, laboratory, showroom, shop/gallery and workshop. Economic necessity forced this arrangement on Arad. It also echoed the number of roles he had to play at once, that of van driver, art director, book keeper, manufacturer, as well as designer and sales person, while also having to take care of the administrative and entrepreneurial side of the fledgling One-Off design and manufacture business.

One-Off's approach to design was and is fairly experimental. Its dual strands, that of combining studio and workshop, not only emerges because of the lack of space but it is an essential part of Arad's working ethic. Projects may start in the conventional way from the drawing board to concept generation, from model making to prototype, then to the eventual model. Other times, the idea could just be sparked off on the workshop floor and synthesised by pieces of materials spontaneously juxtaposed in a certain manner, or from salvaged pieces of found junk. Each method is a legitimate approach. Arad believes that designing should not be restrained by a set approach.

> In the same way that the studio avoids over-rehearsed solutions, the workshop avoids specialising and becoming a craft studio.
> (Arad, 1988 Catalogue to the Metropolis Exhibition at the Inst. of Contemporary Arts, London)

One-Off is a very unique place, where the ad hoc, spur of the moment approach is vitally important in the designing and manufacturing the actual products, be it chairs, lamps, shelves etc.

While the workshop side of One-Off carries out the bulk of the manufacturing, at times Arad sub-contracts more complex or

demanding pieces to small back street workshops, dotted in and around London. This aspect of One-Off is interesting because the designer-manufacturer is not restricted by the capabilities of any single manufacturing process. He is free to seek out and use a wider range of smaller firms that have unique machining processes unforeseen in everyday design and at reasonable costs. The richness and quality of the end product depends not only on the design but also on the designer's intuitive alertness to the wide number of other services available.

A considerable number of small scale engineering firms exist. From these, the designer-manufacturer gains an insight to a wider catalogue of finishes, materials, construction methods and bending processes etc., that could some day be used or required by him in the production of his furniture. Often in the case of mainstream furniture design the designer is restricted by fixed manufacturing methods.

Jasper Morrison, another designer, that works along the same principles as Arad, outlines the position of the designer-manufacturer:

> The designer who is free, (unlike the designer-craftsman, fettered by his role as a carpenter, or the manufacturer with his factory) can take advantage of the variety of facilities and mix them... In the designer's mind, these materials and methods will surface intuitively and simultaneously to marry, at one blow, all the variables of a product's manufacture with the concept of its final appearance.
> (Dormer, 1987, p.137)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ONE-OFF'S SHOP/GALLERY AND THE WORKSHOP ENVIRONMENT

Arad could only get a lease for six months at a time on what was once a vegetable warehouse in Covent Garden. After spending almost three years there, he decided to move again. The gallery/shop moved to Neal Street and again to Shelton Street, formerly a Conran Associates Office. The workshop moved to Northington Street in Holborn. Arad and his workshop team redecorated the Shelton Street premises in what could only be described as Arad style (Illus. 2).

Shelton Street was a piece of design improvisation by Arad's Northington workshop team on an architectural scale. The interior emerged without any preliminary design on paper. The walls of lapped sheets of steel, decorated with ornate fretwork patterns were cut and applied on site. The reception counter took three attempts before Arad was pleased with the final solution. The first two attempts are cocooned inside the final one.

One hundred sheets of steel were used to create a new skin for the space in Shelton Street, which eventually turned into a metal cave. For three months, Arad and his team of assistants worked on the 2500 square foot space. The sheets were cut and welded in a patchwork pattern. The collaging technique that was used did not meet with the approval of one of the assistants. He was unable to accept the project's lack of forward planning and, after working with Arad for six years, he left. The project was chaos in the making. It was started without any clear idea of how it would finish, it involved the manipulation of space to such an extent that it amounted to architectural design. However, it looks like a large and elaborate installation rather than conventional architecture.

The new workshop location in Northington Street is an old

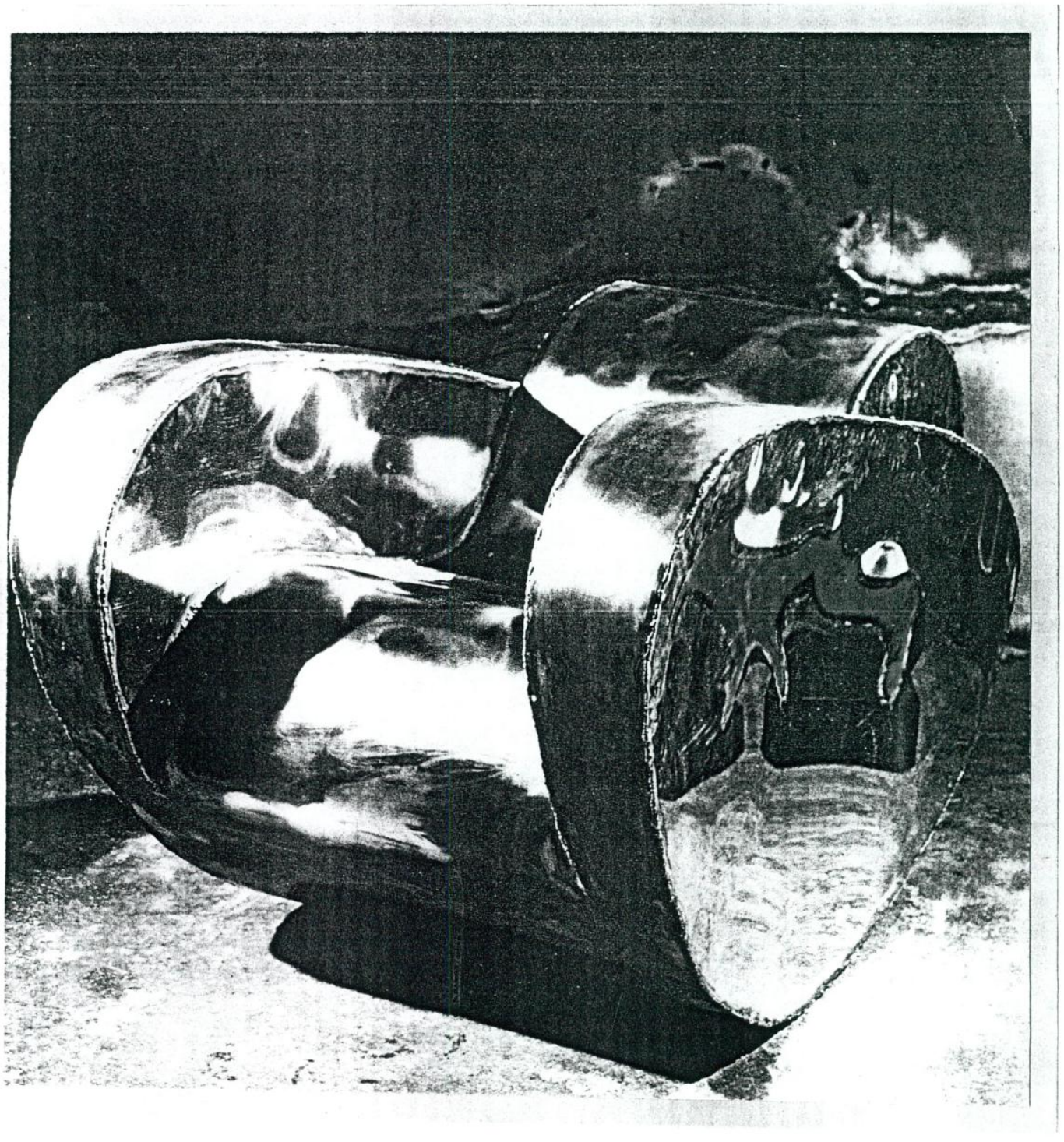
(Illustration 2).
Arad's shop/gallery in Shelton St. is a piece of design improvisation on an architectural scale. Completed without drawings, the welded metal walls took shape on site.

industrial building with a range of different users from craft workshops to architects. On the ground floor One-Off's space is confidently disordered. Finished products for various national and international outlets sit among other orders being welded or grinded, with sparks spraying in all directions. (Illus. 3).

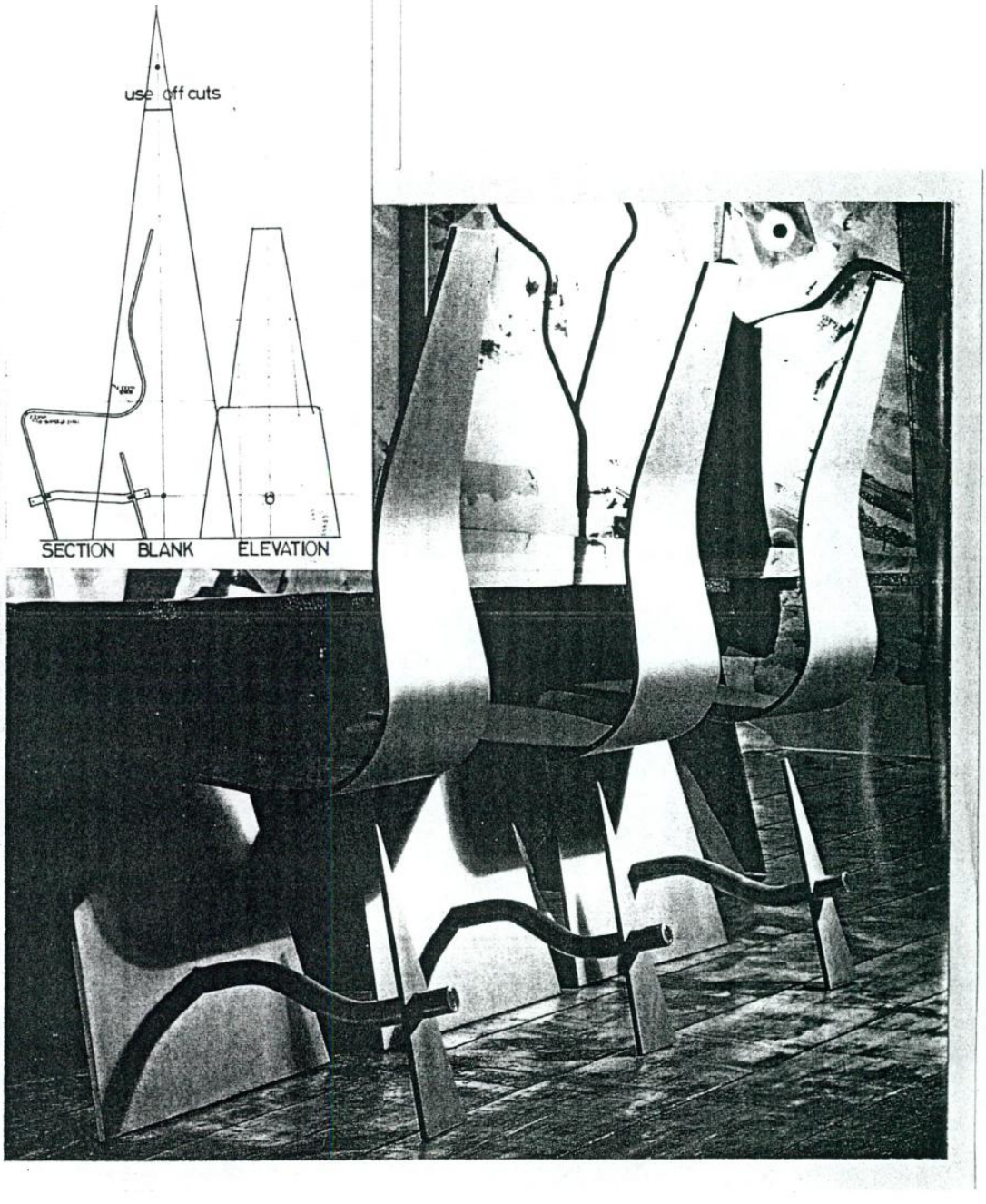
The workshop is equipped with simple machines that can bend, cut and join metal, etch and grind glass and assemble basic electrical fittings. Cutting and forming sheet steel can give a volume and a weight to a chair that is impossible to achieve from low budget bent tubular steel. The Big Easy Volume 1 chairs demonstrate this more generous scale. (Illus. 4). If we look at the Horn Chairs, (Illus. 5), we see they are made from tense looking sheets of folded metal. These processes used by Arad in the production of his furniture previously did not exist. They were developed by Arad and his One-Off workshop team.

The workshop has even attempted working with concrete in a surrealistic, commercial sense (Illus. 6). However, Arad lost interest in the use of such imagery. Soon after he launched the hi-fi system, copies had begun to appear in knock-off forms in novelty shops.

(Illustration 3).
Inside One-Off's Northington Street Workshop.



(Illustration 4).
Big Easy Volume 1 - Designed by Ron Arad.
An imposing piece of furniture in any room. This is a rocking chair made from mild steel and stainless steel welded together. It is hollow on the inside, partly filled with sand which can be shifted to alter the centre of gravity. Distorted reflective surfaces are emphasised by the chair's movement.
Produced by One -Off Ltd.



(Illustration 5).
Horn Chairs - Designed by Ron Arad.
In this series of furniture, Arad has fully exploited the natural flexibility of sheet aluminium to create an elegant solution.
Batch produced by Vitra (Germany).

(Illustration 6).
Concrete Hi-Fi System - Designed and manufactured by Ron Arad and One-Off Ltd. A complete concrete hi-fi is encased in a tough resin and embedded in concrete.

THE ENTIRE ONE-OFF TEAM

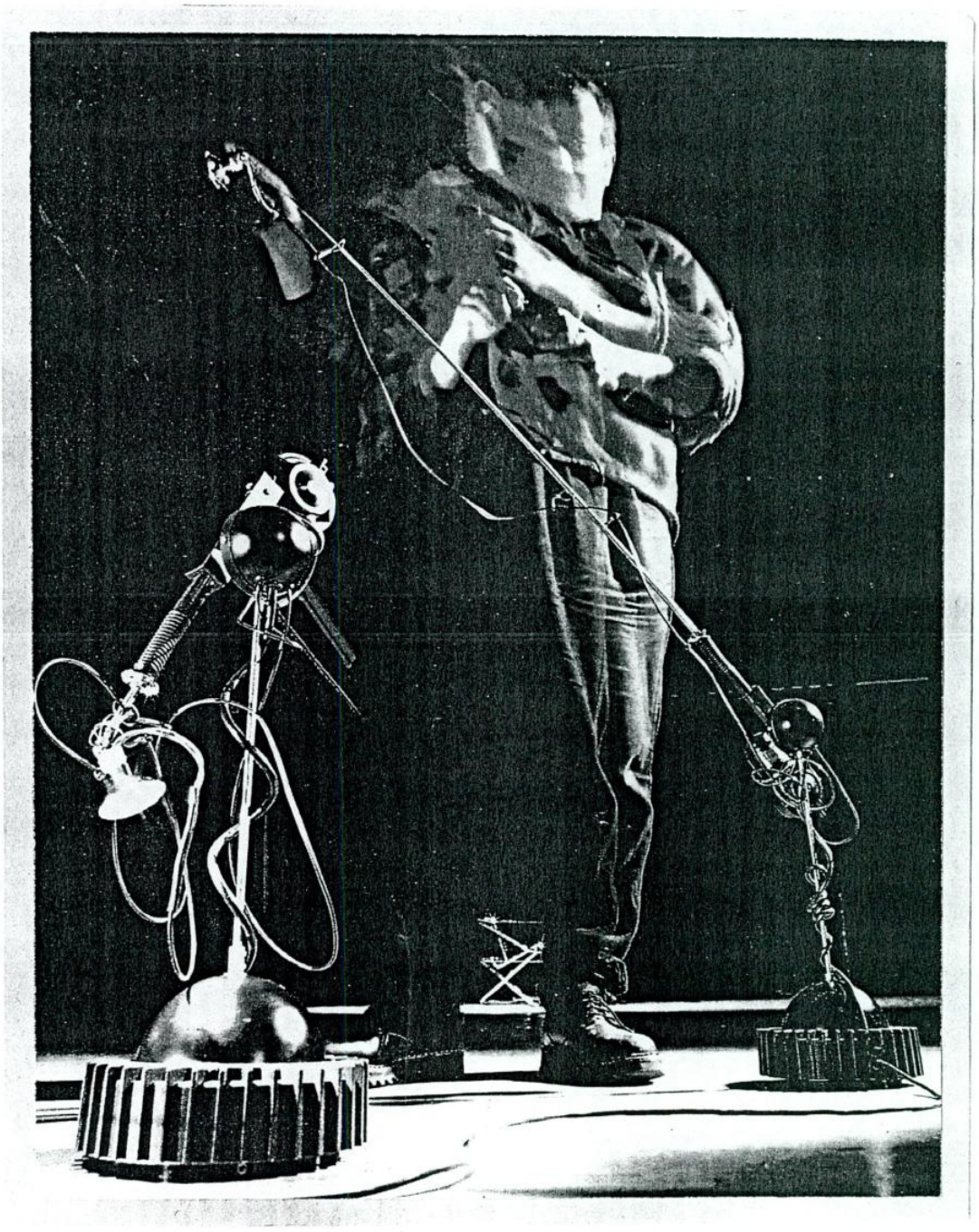
Today, One-Off exists not only because of Arad but also because of the fluctuating team of talents he has assembled. Caroline Thorman is the company's manager, copywriter, sales force and export director. One-Off constantly has people flowing through that add to the idea of 'One-Off' and extract experience from that idea.

One such collaborator was Danny Lane with whom Arad had a fruitful association. Danny Lane, an American-born designer, also designs and manufactures his own pieces. Arad and Lane carried out a number of projects,(Illus. 7) and (Illus. 22), together. Arad made the metal bases while Lane designed and made the glass tops with irregular fractured outlines. The fractured outline became a distinctive feature in Lane's work. Lane and his projects are discussed in Chapter Two.

When the workshop moved to Northington Street, necessity for more space dictated the move. Since then the One-Off phenomenon has grown, going from strength to strength. As it stands today, nine people are working in the workshop full time, all play an active role in the design and manufacture of the products. All of them, however, come under the editorship of one individual, Ron Arad. Everyone who works there has an art school background, including Bob Booth and Shaun Crown, who are skilled sheet metal workers, and Ian Whittaker, who specialises in welding and sheet fabrication. Peter Keene, an electronics enthusiast, takes care of the electrical fabrication of One-Off, having first joined Arad's small team on the Aerial Light Project (Illus. 8).
Others include Rachel Reynolds, Matthew Stanwix, Jules Goss, Duncan McVean, and Jacinta Lynch.

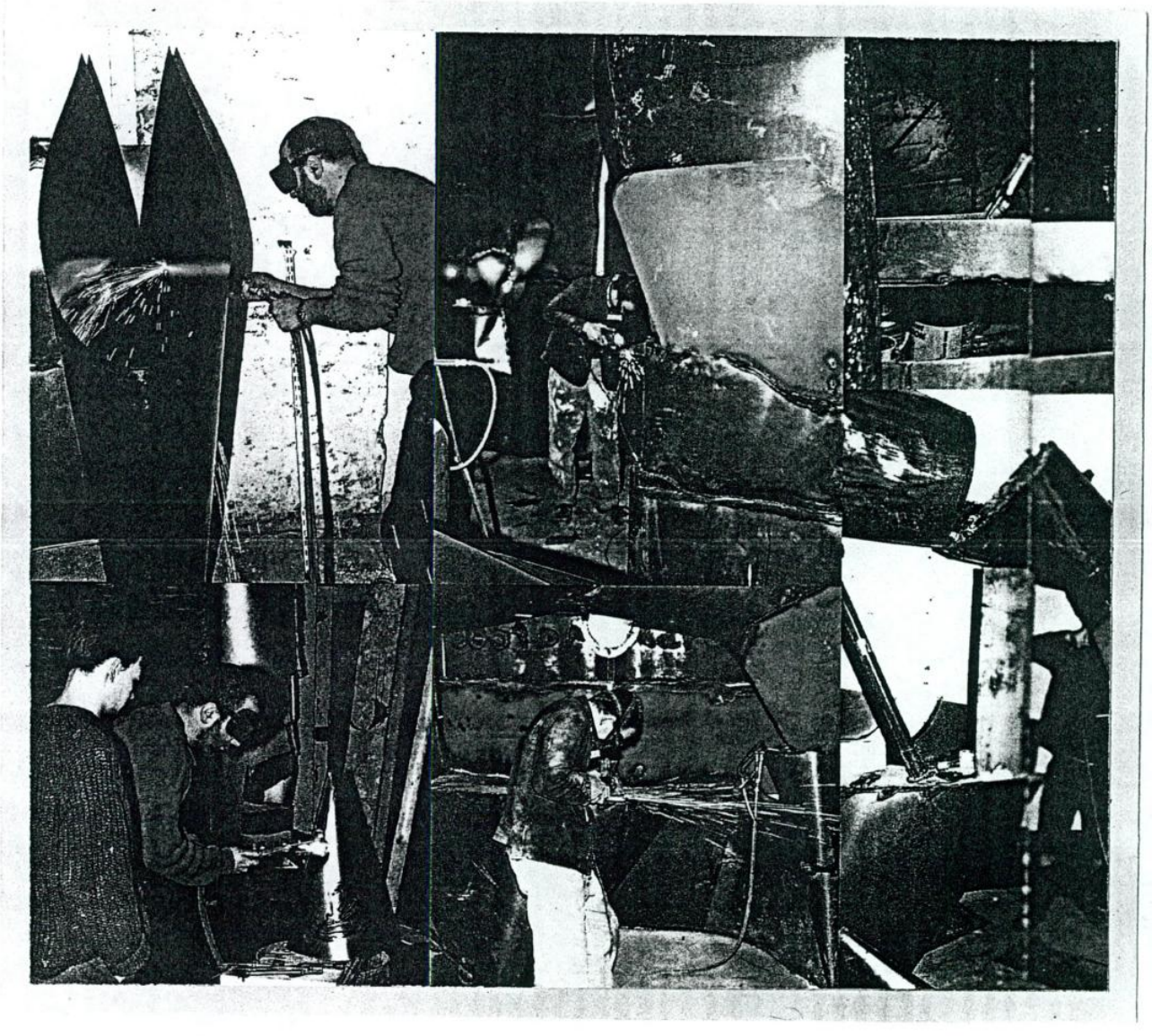
Arad himself plays a very active role in the workshop. A pencil can be found in one of his hands, working on a piece of paper over

(Illustration 7).
Tables designed by Ron Arad and Danny Lane.
Lane's Angaraib Bed II can be seen in the background.
Manufactured by One-Off Ltd.



(Illustration 8).
Aerial Light - Designed by Ron Arad.
Electronics and ad hoc aesthetics combine to produce the Aerial Light. Standard car accessories were used to make this remote-controlled light which was launched at the Milan 1984 Furniture Fair. It is made from metal, rubber, plastic and an infra red controlled electric car aerial.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

a pile of sheet stainless steel while he holds a 'live' oxyacetylene torch in the other. His role is central to everything that emerges from the workshop, having been actively involved at all stages (Illus. 9).



(Illustration 9).
Arad in the Northington Street Workshop.

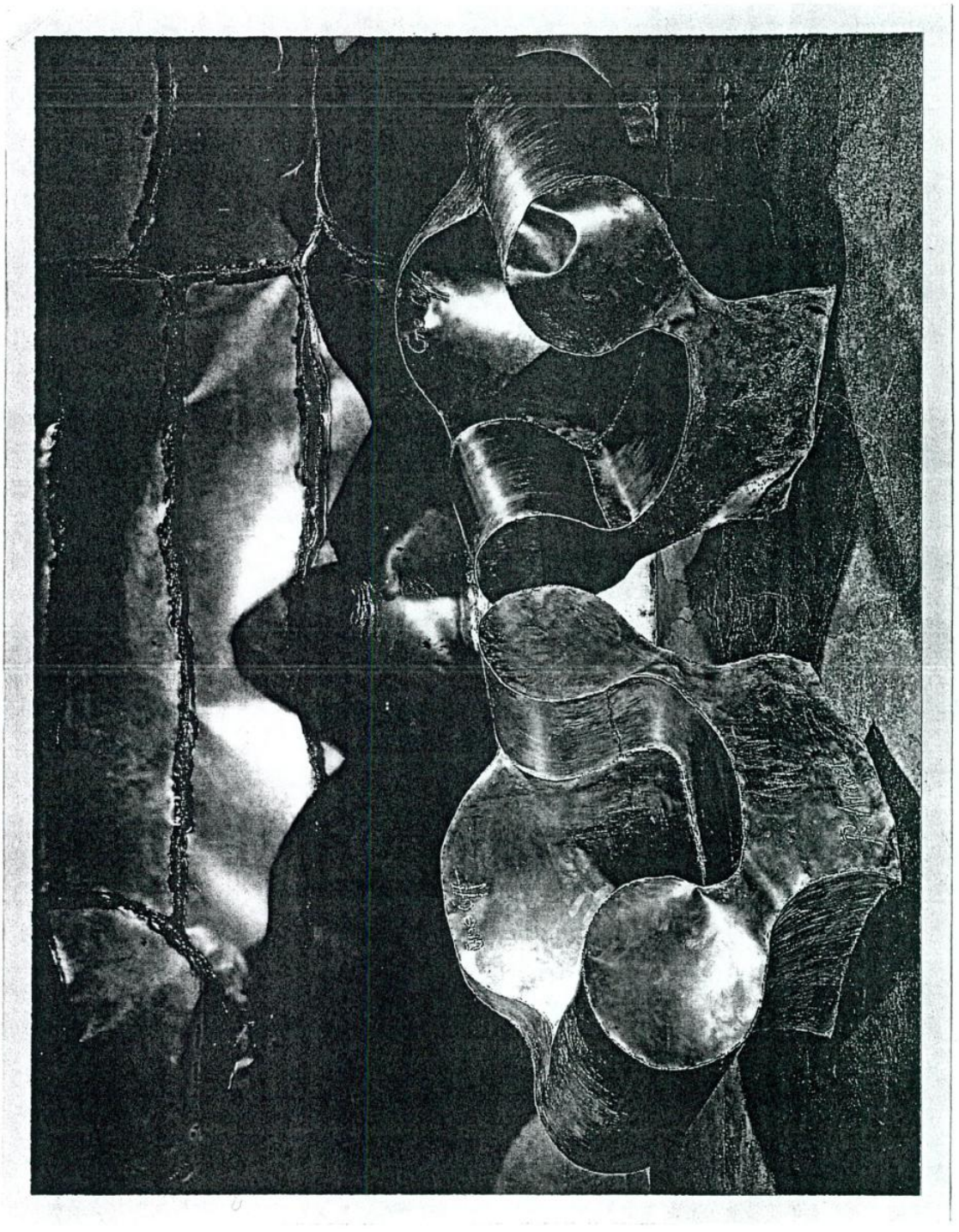
THE PRODUCTION PROCESSES OF ONE-OFF AS COMPARED WITH CRAFT PRODUCTION

One of the processes developed by One-Off has become close to dress making. For the Big Easy Series Volume 2 (Illus. 10), shapes are cut out of the sheet steel sometimes from templates, sometimes by improvisation. The accidents and idiosyncrasies of the process are relished by Arad: very seldom are any two designs identical. All chairs are treated equally but the seemingly free and easy nature of the pattern created from a blow torch on the surfaces of raw steel are not intended to be reproducible. They are, in fact, the one-offs! It must be remembered even though the chairs are not exactly identical, they are produced in numbers.

Arad's production processes can be best described as a level of production that involves participation between the use of machinery and the human hand. The process is comparable to a production line, where one individual cuts the metal and passes it on to another individual who joins the metal. Then the assembled piece moves on to another who grinds the welded seams, followed by another one who polishes and packs the piece ready for shipment. A number of people are involved in the manufacture of any one furniture piece.

If we compare this to the practice of craftspeople; one craftsperson carries out all tasks from start to finish. His or her involvement is more personal, finding in the creation of finely hand finished piece an intimate, and personal, form of expression. Craft work has been described as a mediation between the purely practical and the purely artistic. 'Handcraftmanship', wrote Octavio Paz, 'is a sort of fiesta of the object: it transforms the everyday utensil into a sight of participation'. (Garner, 1980, p.74).

One-Off does not labour in the process of making in the manner of a



(Illustration 10).
Big Easy Series Volume 2 - Designed by Ron Arad.
No two of these chairs are exactly alike. Variations occur during welding the seams and are accentuated by polishing, making the welds stand out against the blackened steel of the rest of the chair. The chairs are produced in numbers but no two are identical.

Produced by One-Off Ltd.

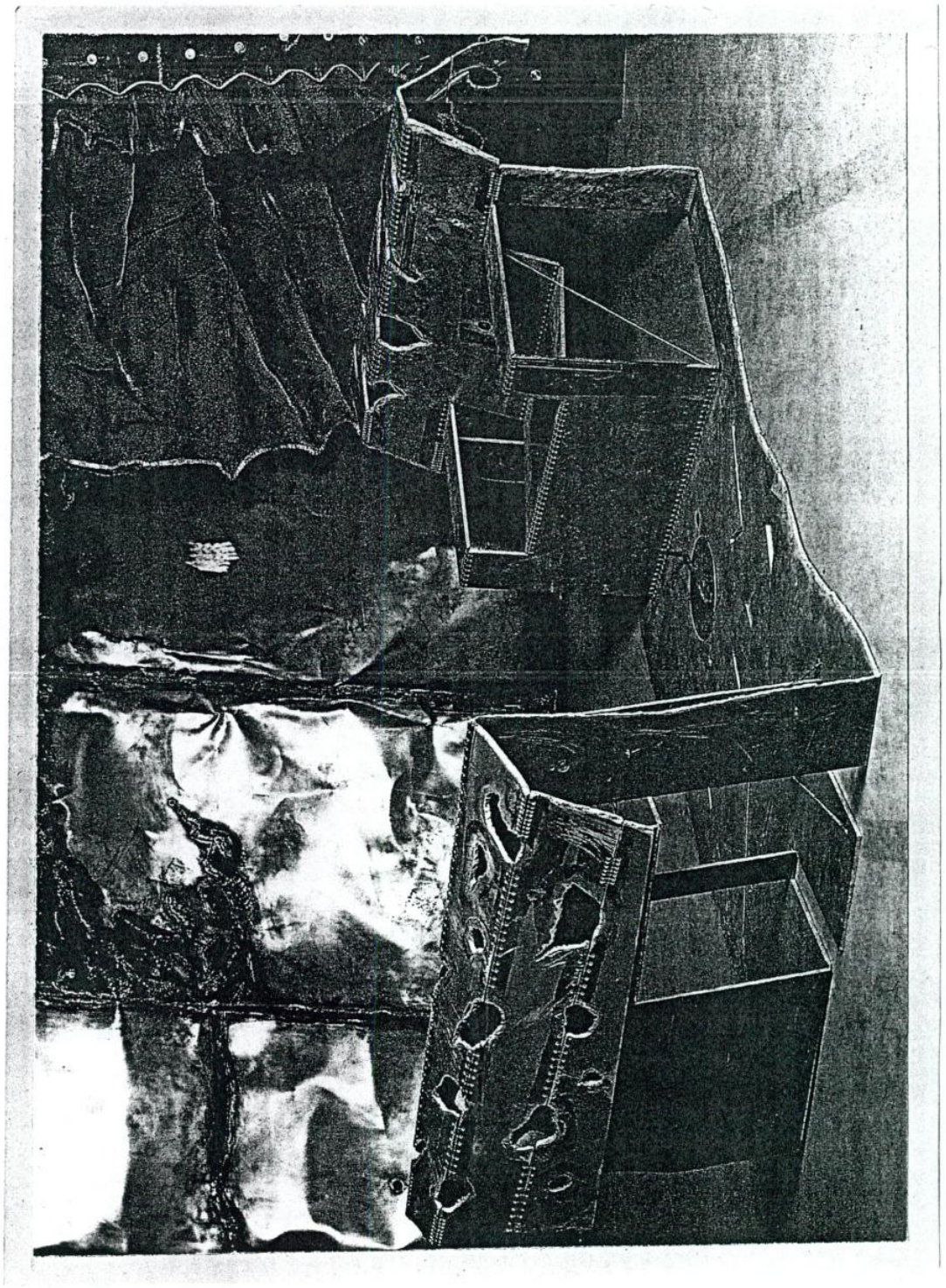
craftsperson. Arad does not glorify in the hand finished piece, nor does he believe in the slow, meticulous, hand working processes such as carving or sculpting. He believes that over working an idea can destroy the original intention behind creating a piece of furniture. As Arad puts it,

> One-Off is constantly speeding through ideas, sometimes merely noting them by crude artifact, sometimes processing them to a greater degree. The more refined and laboured a design becomes, the more it is in danger of losing its original raison d'etre.
> (Von Vegesack, 1991, p.15).

For Arad the ideas that furniture can represent are often more important than the objects themselves. Whereas for the craftsperson, the object is the ultimate expression of his physical efforts in harmonising his abilities and materials into a unified whole.

A craftsperson is a woodworker who has the sensitivity that wood needs. The only way to work with wood is with total concentration, absolute single-mindedness. It is a material with which you must interact whereas Arad works with a finesse of a Frankenstein. Arad's approach in the extreme can best be seen in a project he did for Kassell's Documenta 8 Exhibition in West Germany in 1984. He and the assistants at his London workshop, gouged, slashed and fractured a sheet of raw aluminium to create the outline from an armchair out of a flat sheet of metal (Illus. 11).

To Arad, the idea is paramount and not the actual process of making and interacting with the material. In this case the idea was the realisation of a persistent 1960s dream, that of dematerialising furniture, turning something designed to sit on from an object with a massive, imposing presence, into something much more ethereal,



(Illustration 11).
Full House - Designed by Ron Arad.
Arad's project for Documenta, the dematerialising of the armchair. The armchair folds down flush with the metal sheet, rendering the chair almost invisible.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

invisible and neutral. With makeshift hinges and a system of winches, he ingeniously allowed the metal sheet to rise from its prone flat position on the floor level, and resurrect itself in a three-dimensional armchair. You could just about sit on it, and then winch it back down to floor level, folding back the winch handle itself flush with the metal sheet. Arad's characteristic use of metal was given over to the idea and not in the regeneration of a traditional skill.

REDEFINING DESIGN FROM AN ARAD STANCE

Arad's work contains elements of the industrial designer and the craftsman (albeit a craftsman who does not delight wholely in the ideals of the hand-finished product). His furniture is of easily understandable forms, you know you can sit on his chairs, read by his desk light and so on. Arad, however, has transversed the boundaries of design and art. He represents design-art, rather than art in craft. His work could be called contemporary design art. He produces objects that can be used but can also be taken seriously as art objects.

His work enjoys the experience of flaw in function. One client remarked that the flaw or malfunction made him more careful and aware of the object. As Deyan Dudjic pointed out,

> The Big Easy Volume 1 (Illus. 4)), almost threw him over his head as he attempted to sit on it in a hurry as he was trying it out in the shop on Neal Street. He said he bought it because of that same reason. It obliged him to pause and think about sitting and what he was sitting on.
> (Sudjic, 1989, p.63).

Something similar was apparent in the work of Mies Van der Rohe. The American architect and theorist, Charles Jencks explained that in buildings by Mies van der Rohe such as Farnsworth House, the beauty of the ideal form is possible only by compromising the function of the building. 'Mies, for instance, made wonderful buildings only because he ignored many aspects of a building. If he solved more problems, his buildings would have far less potent'. (Jencks, 1973, p.13).

The same was sometimes true of his furniture, Tom Wolfe noted that, 'Mies van der Rohe's S-shaped, tubular steel, cane bottomed chair was designed so that by the time the main course arrived, at least

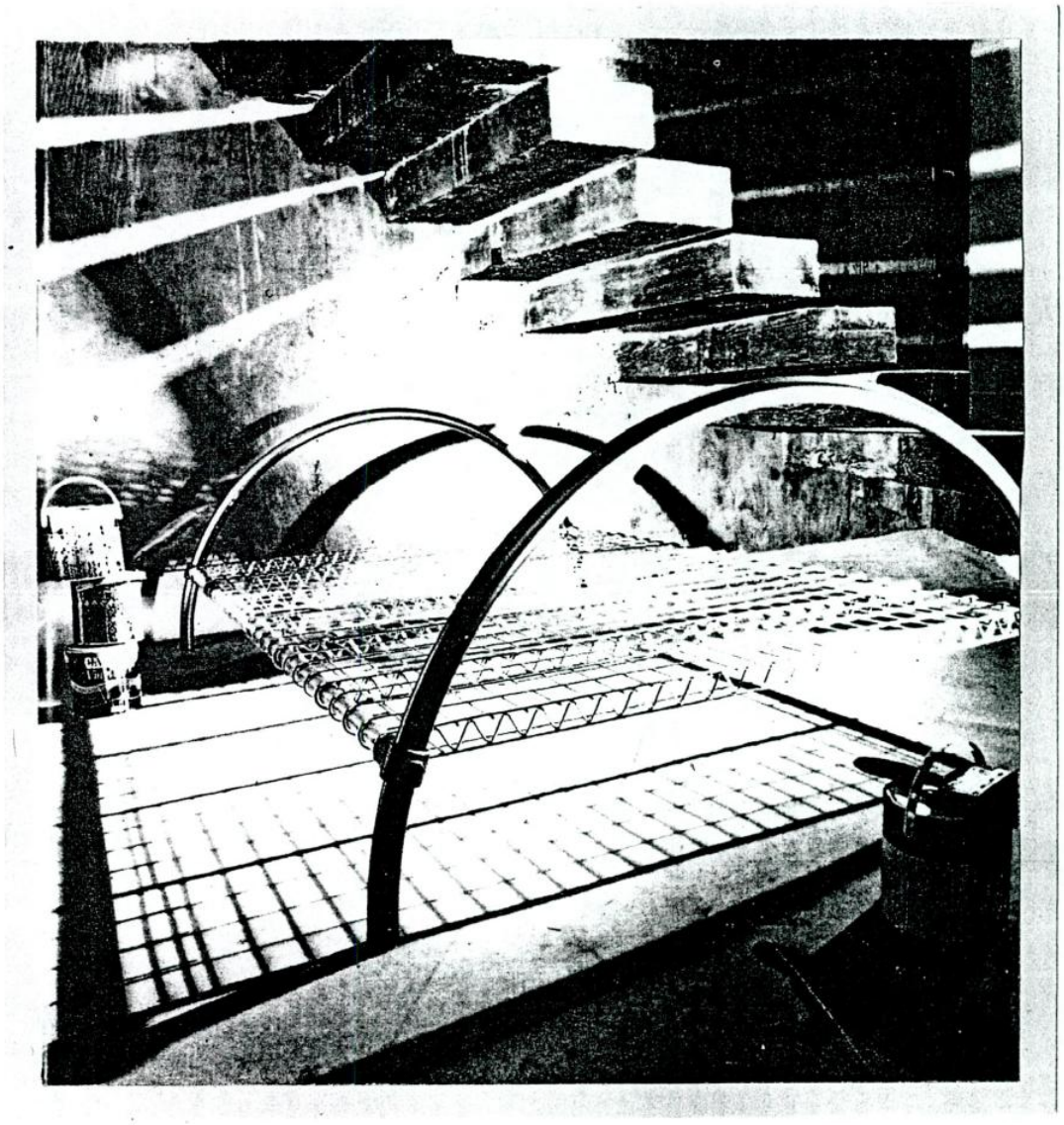
one guest had pitched face forward into the lobster bisque'. (Wolfe, 1981, p.22).

It is important to recognise that although much of Arad's work is functional, this characteristic is much further down the list of Arad's priorities than would be acceptable in mainstream design. There remains for many designers and furniture makers the idea that good service to the client rests in the fact that the object performs well.

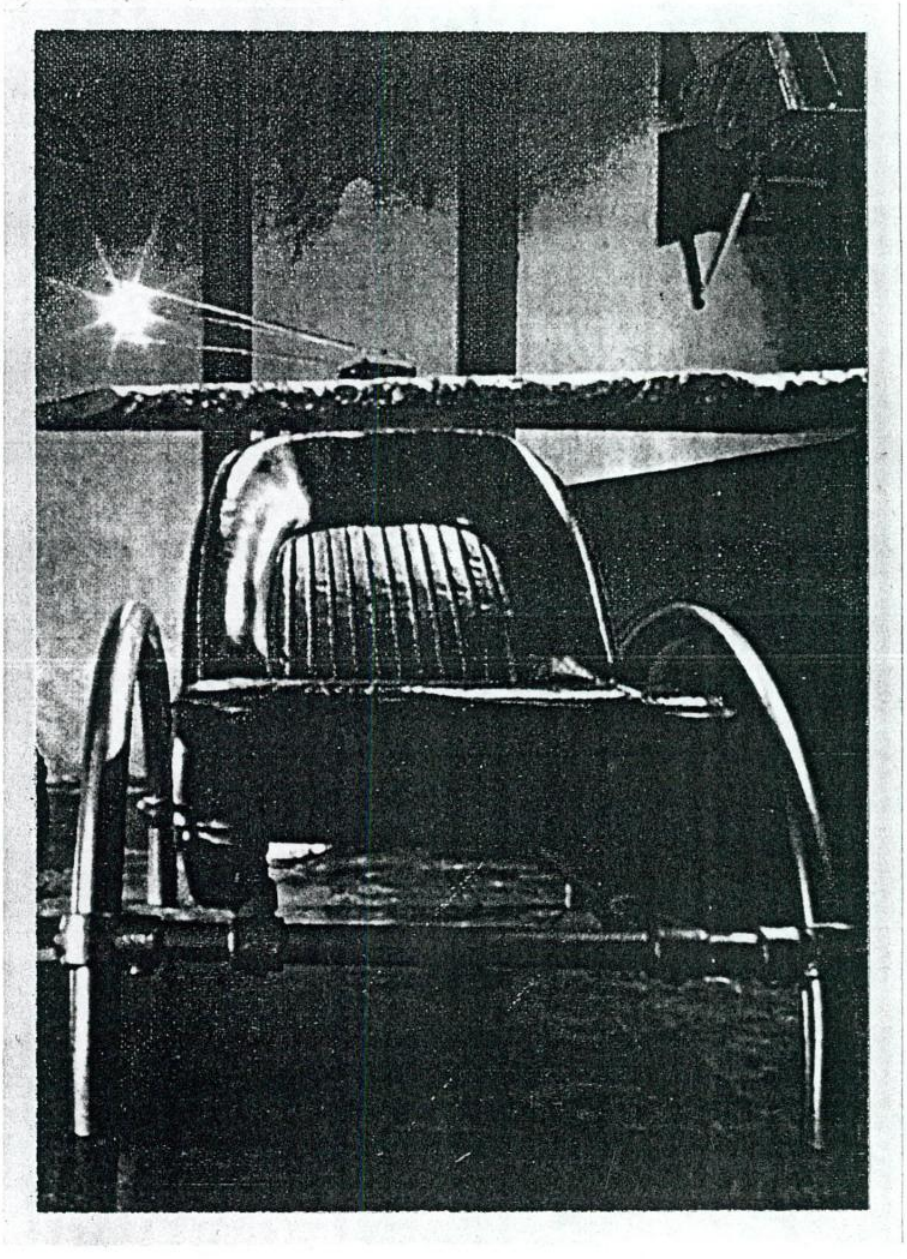
However, function for Arad has not been set aside completely; it still remains important. His pieces are not bought for their aesthetic content alone. In fact, in observing his work one sees that the function, the human body, the idea or concept and the message are metamorphosed in the physical sense into one piece. Once function has been set aside furniture might as well take any form that is fancied.

Based on his architectural background, Arad's early designs contained more environmentally conceived elements rather than single isolated objects. He used the Kee Klamp system, (in which there were over 100 different joints), with steel tubes used to create storage units that combined shelved wardrobes and beds. Utility was one of his main objectives in using the Kee Klamp system. However, the means for self expression were obviously limited even though the system was endlessly versatile. Arad produced the Round Rail Bed (Illus. 12), after which he designed the Rover Chair (Illus.13). Having conceived the latter, Arad gradually left behind his utilitarian approach and moved towards more expressive designs. However, the low budget customised capabilities of the Kee Klamp system helped give Arad the financial leeway he needed to pursue more radical and provoking ideas.

The Round Rail Bed and the Rover Chair were the initial steps in lifting the restrictions of the Klamp approach, slowly moving towards producing individual objects. The initial idea behind



(Illustration 12)
Round Rail Bed - Designed by Ron Arad
The Kee Klamp and scaffording tube, coupled with the wire mesh base gives it structural stability. All components in the bed. construction are construction-site materials.
Batch produced by One-Off Ltd.



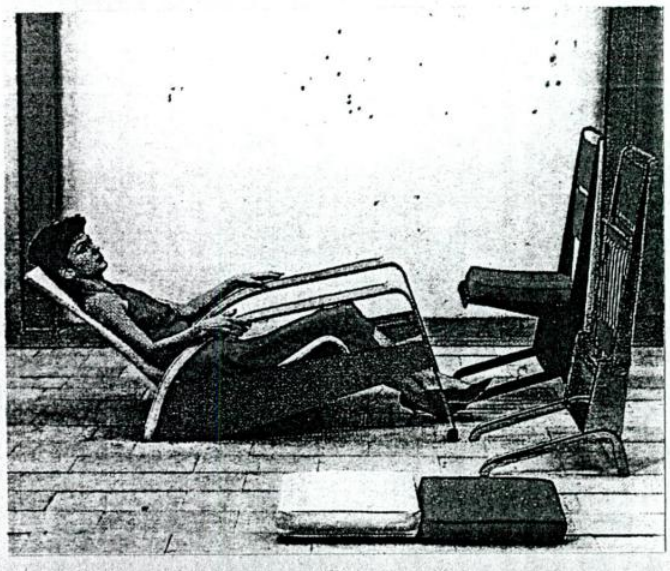
(Illustration 13).
Rover Chair - Designed by Ron Arad.
The Rover Chair is made from Rover V8 front seats with leather coverings, mounted on epoxy-coated tubular scaffolding steel tubes, used on construction sites. The basic structure is held together with Kee Klamp joints.
Batch produced by One-Off Ltd.

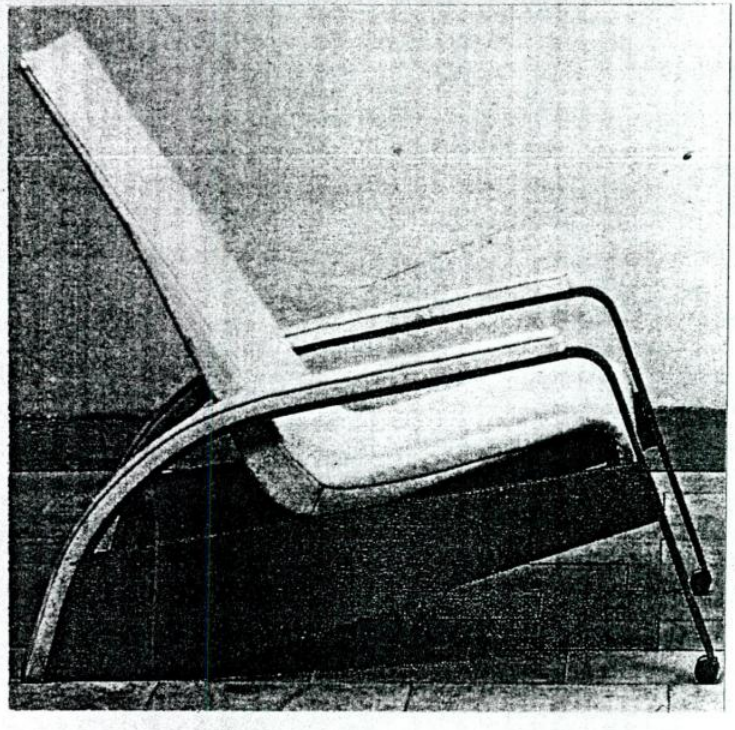
recycling the leather seats of the now out of production Rover cars was to provide low cost seating. Removed from its original context the upholstered and mechanically sophisticated car seat became something very new. A new aesthetic code was created, which echoed the Jean Prouve D80 Chair (Illus. 14), with his high back armchair of 1930.

Arad's Rover Chair has become a classic demonstration of what can be achieved though successfully recycling deposed design. It is, in a sense, living off the land and making imaginative design based on what the land can offer, materially and visually. The same kind of thinking in terms of recycling and using past materials and ideas went into The Transformer (Illus. 15). Arad's intentions were to produce a modern '80s version of the '60s inflatable chair by Italian designers, Scolari Lomazzi, D'Urbino and De Pas, called the Blow Chair (Illus. 16).

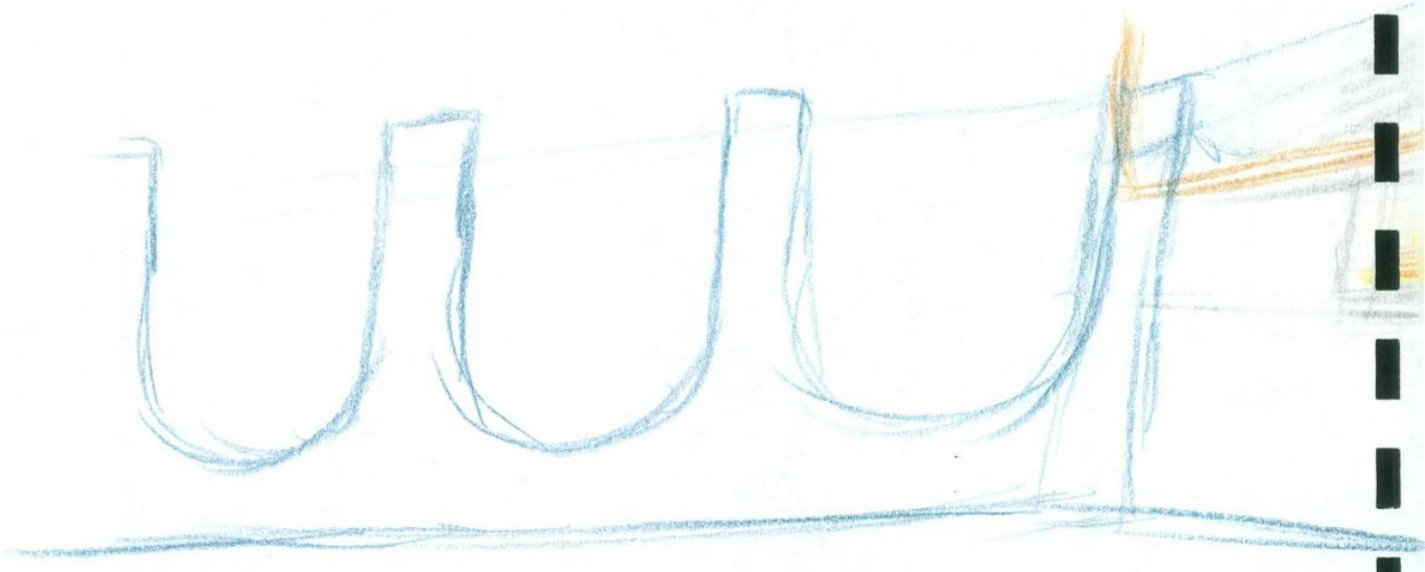
The idea for the transformer stemmed from vacuumed food packs which are bought in bricks and are initially extremely hard but do go soft when pierced. Arad adapted the idea to the Transformer Chair. He constructed large, brightly coloured plastic cushions, which would form around the sitter as a kind of body print. The idea was a bean bag made from flexible PVC, into which the sitter would sit; his form would be made in the bag. Afterwards, an ordinary domestic vacuum cleaner would suck the air out. When the sitter got up his form would be left in the seat.

Elements of Duchamp's approach can be found in Arad's work. Duchamp made useful objects useless by calling them art: here, Arad reverses the process, re-using objects and materials that were deemed useless. Redeploying these objects and ideas in unforseen and unfamiliar ways makes them regenerate with energy. In doing so, Arad has created a new aesthetic vernacular based on ready-made

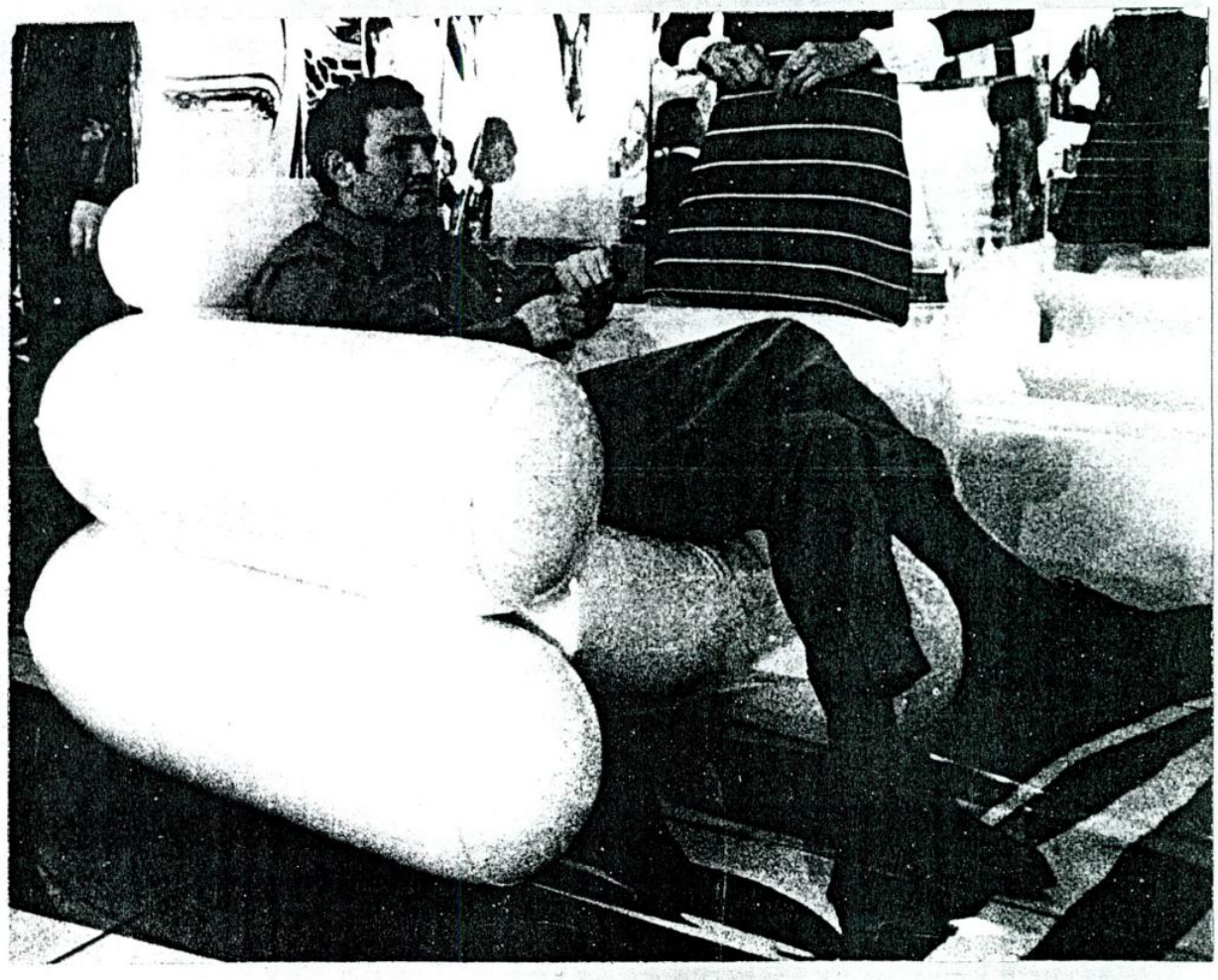




(Illustration 14).
D80 Chair - Designed by Jean Prouve.
Prouve was more an engineer than a designer. From 1929 onwards, he experimented with folded sheet metal, electrical spot welding and stainless steel. The D80 is more of a sitting machine than an conventional chair. The whole body of the chair can be tilted back by virtue of guide tracks on the inner surface of the base plates. The formal idiom is industrial and dynamic.
Produced by Teeta (Germany)



(Illustration 15).
The Transformer - Designed by Ron Arad.
A domestic vacuum cleaner was used to mould unexpanded styrofoam granules into rigid shapes which could be then reformed by releasing the vacuum.

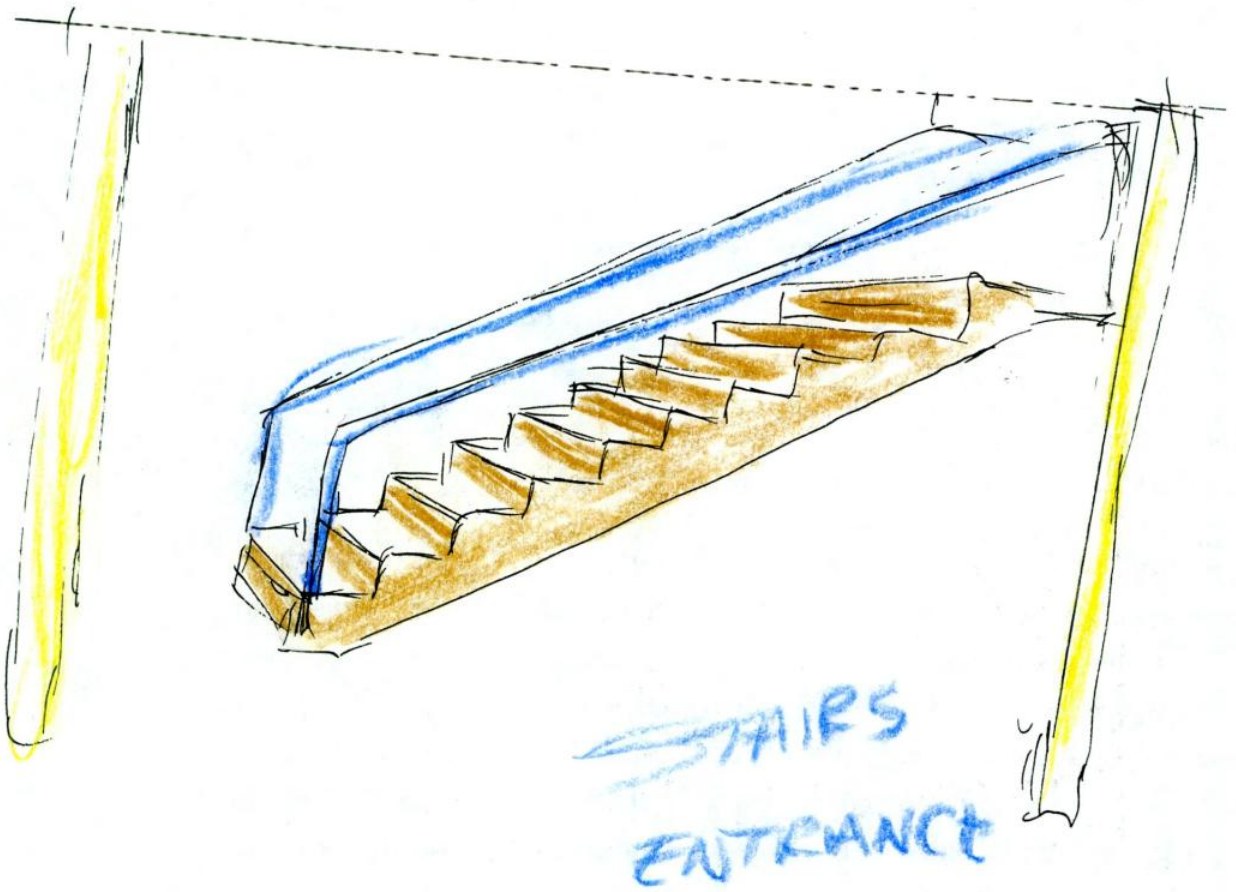


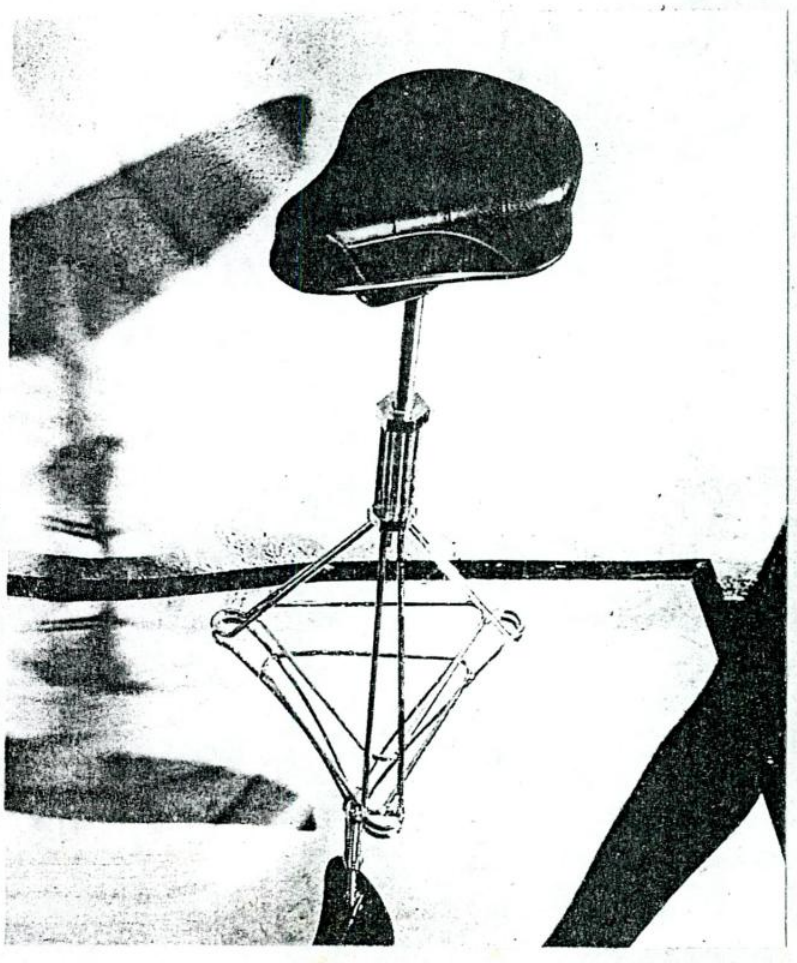
(Illustration 16).
Blow Chair - Designed by S. Lomazzi, D'Urbino and De Paz.
Produced by Zanota (Milan)

industrial components.

Arad used this surreal transformation of discarded objects in several other objects he created. His Punch Stool utilises a seat from a Punch Motorcycle (Illus. 17). His Aerial Light (Illus. 8) takes its form from a miniature spotlight and attaching to it a ready- made car aerial. Circuit boards for this product were designed by Peter Keene to give it remote control robotic movements. . Arad also transformed brickies' hods, normally used to carry bricks, into bookcases.

Elements of similarity can be drawn between the way Arad re-uses salvaged objects and the way they are used by Third World artisans, i.e. Victor Papanek, who transforms petrol cans into furniture or used tractor tyres into footwear. Obviously it is good to see such developments occurring in design because it points out to other designers of furniture and industrial products the rich potential that exists in the plentiful objects of industrialisation which in the present climate of apparent abundance are too often readily abandoned. The recycling of objects can obviously be most beneficial to our ecological environment. It also strongly highlights our attitude to taste and our lifelong relationship with 'newness', 'quality' and those things that we assume are useless.


STAIRS
ENTRANCE



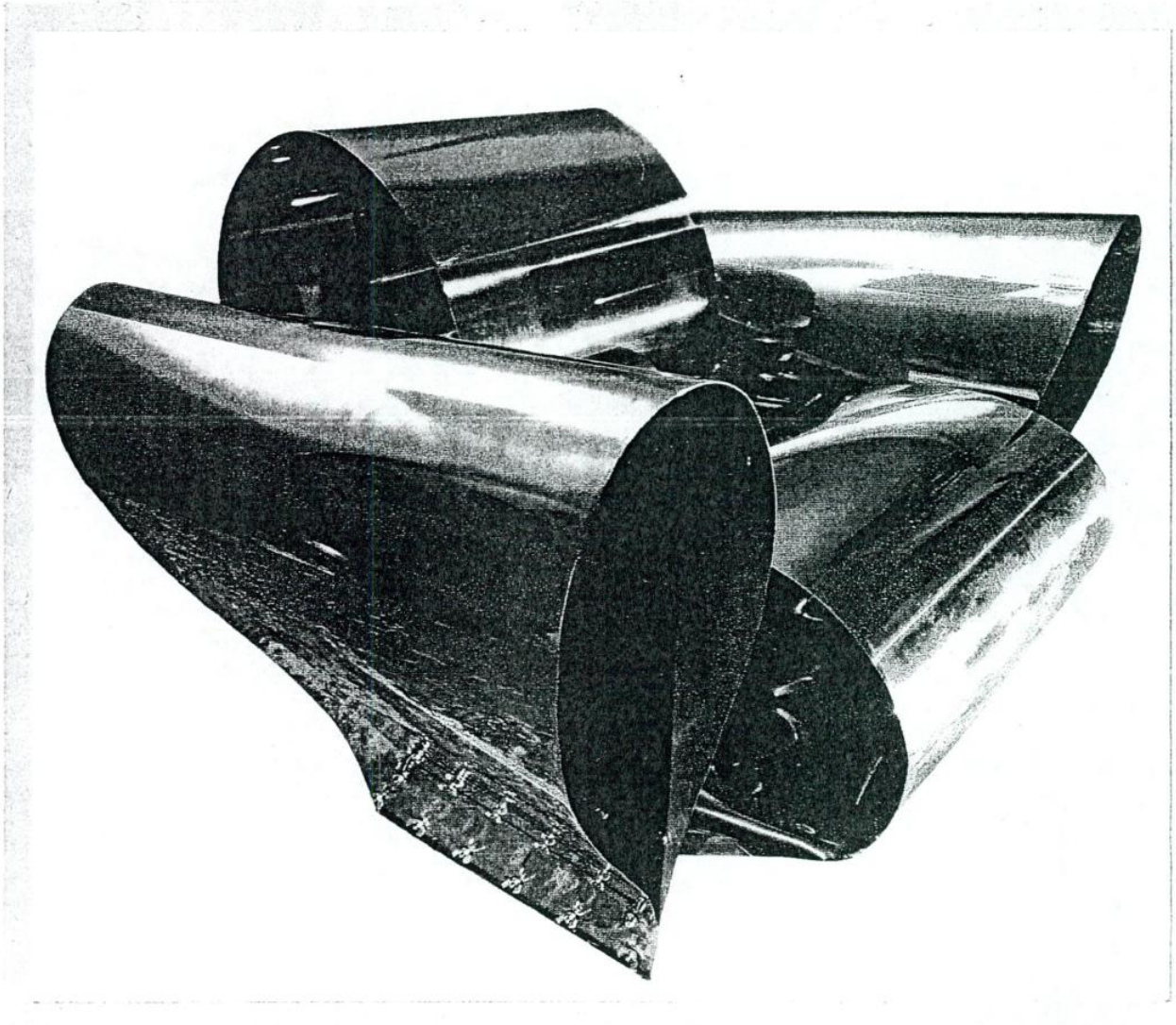
(Illustration 17).
Punch Stool - Designed by Ron Arad.
The Punch Stool utilises a seat from a Punch moped motorcycle attached to a pyramidal wire base.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

ARAD'S VERNACULAR

The accepted visual canon of industrial design, as it has evolved over the years, is one which is measured by mechanistic perfection, smoothness, precision and clarity. The resulting artifact produced by the machine belongs to a purer more refined world and, to a certain extent, is alien to the material reality of our less than pure, less than smooth, clean environment. Arad's response seems to suggest that design has lost its awareness of our material reality. His response mirrors the techno-design approach of today's design by producing that which seems designed and manufactured within industry. He does this by producing archetypal furniture pieces in industrial materials and in exaggerated forms. In this manner he questions assumptions that designers, manufacturers, retailers and consumers have always had about comfort, form and material. Even though there is a strong subversive element in his work, it is portrayed humorously.

In a chair he has done for the Vitra Edition, 1986/87, known as the Well Tempered Chair (Illus. 18), Arad toys blasphemously with middle class ideas of furniture. He reanimates the conventionally shaped chair suite (Illus. 19), as the Well Tempered Chair. The conventional chair,normally a well padded upholstered chair, exudes softness and comfort. The feeling the materials portray is one of security, warmth and snugness. The chair is completely cushioned, filled and padded with soft stuffing, even in areas which are not used by the sitter. The volume of the chair is immense for the function it performs. Arad's Well Tempered Chair is made of large metal sheets formed and bent to give the same impression of volume. The sheets of steel are looped and riveted to create the likeness of a well stuffed armchair in the classic tradition. The materials themselves are cold and insensitive. They give the impression of being razor-sharp, eradicating any impression of security, warmth and snugness. It is as if a futuristic stereotyped image of the armchair was produced by machines (robots)

Tissues can be removed



(Illustration 18).
Well Tempered Chair - Designed by Ron Arad.

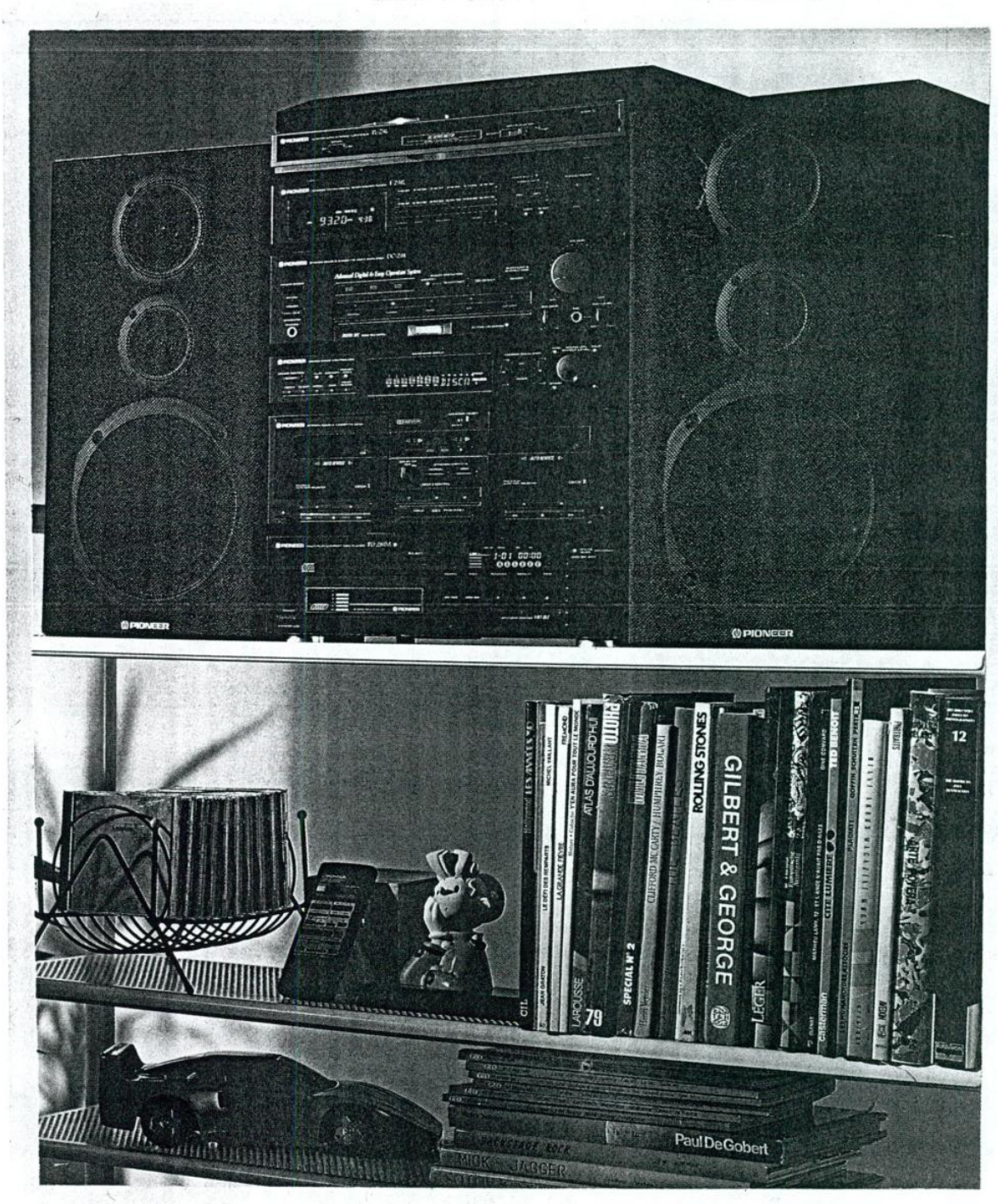
(Illustration 19).
Conventional Chair Suite - Designer anonymous.

for machines. The aesthetic of the conventional chair is totally reversed! The Well Tempered Chair has a lively bearing, an alien texture but it is quasi-traditional in form. Dr. V. Fischer, commenting on the chair says, '... visually it both evokes and negates the comfort which it in fact genuinely offers'. (Fischer (ed), 1988, p.60).

This chair is a provocative study of one type of furniture that had been produced and retailed on the high street for years. But Arad's design also demonstrates a unique method of furniture fabrication unused and unseen before. It is an ideal piece easily suited to mass or batch production. The tooling required and materials used are quite basic and simple. The cost involved in producing such a chair would be relatively small. To summarize the ideas in this chair, it can be said to be based on the archetypal residue which has been left behind after years of design and art. The theme in this piece of furniture is the recasting of past cultural periods and styles of furniture, while exploring new manufacturing approaches.

This chair has elements of industrial society and high technology, portrayed as if they were archaeological souvenirs of a vanished past, reproduced somewhere in the future. His objects, by their very presence, seem to turn the home into something else. They make the traditionally familiar seem strange and alien. One would approach such furniture in the manner of a shy child approaching a stranger, with small, quite cautious steps.

Arad overturned the conventional reassurance provided by sleek technocratic packaging (Illus. 20). The exterior design of such products always assured us that the contents were as equally technically excellent as the exterior packaging. Arad challenged the territory of the 'designer' appliance and embedded a complete hi-fi system into castle-like grouping of concrete edifices (Illus. 6). Its impact had the same kind of power as that archetypal surrealist icon, the fur-lined tea cup by Meret

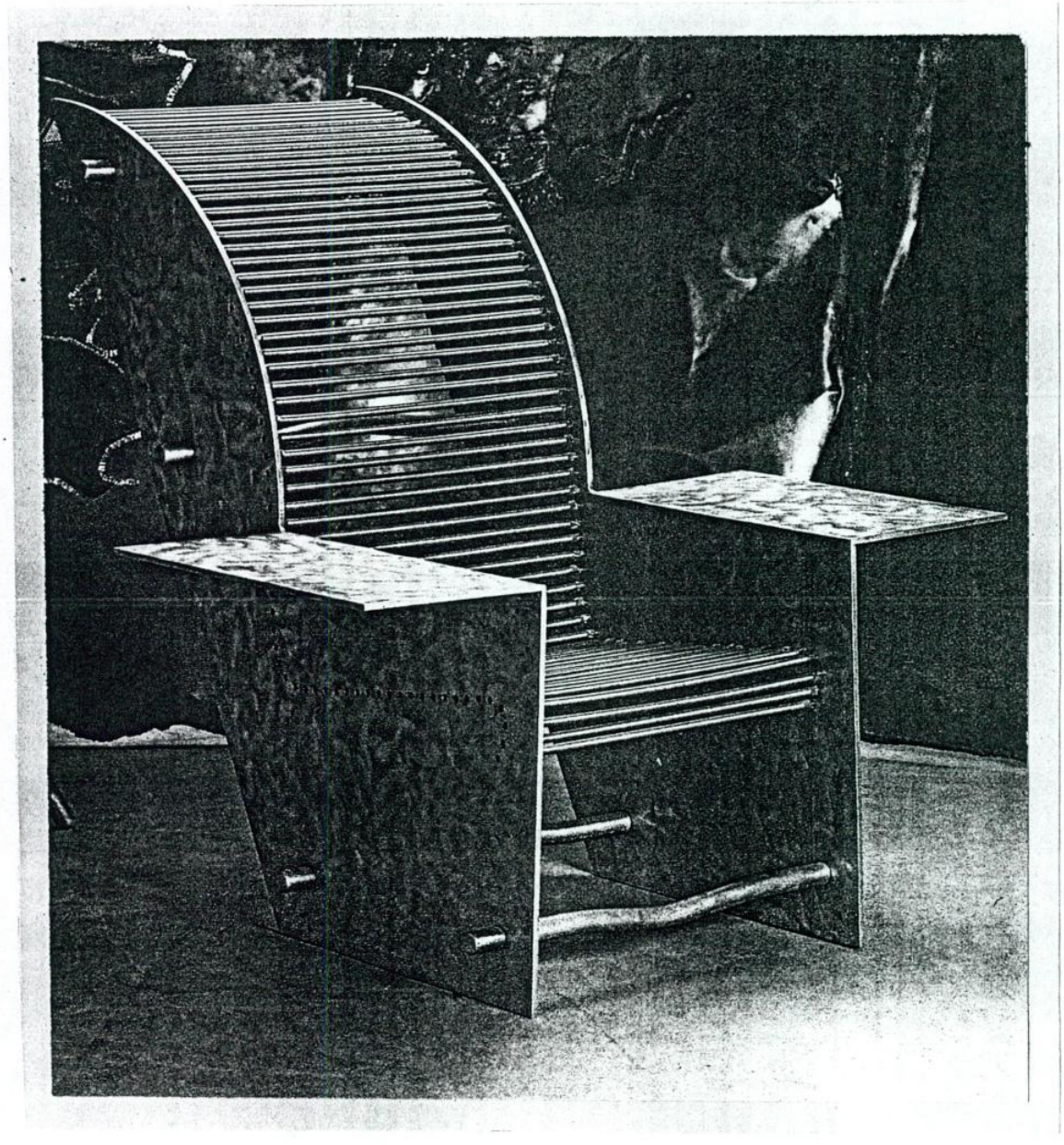


(Illustration 20).
Pioneer Hi-Fi System - Designed by
Pioneer in-house Design
Manufactured by Pioneer (Tokyo)

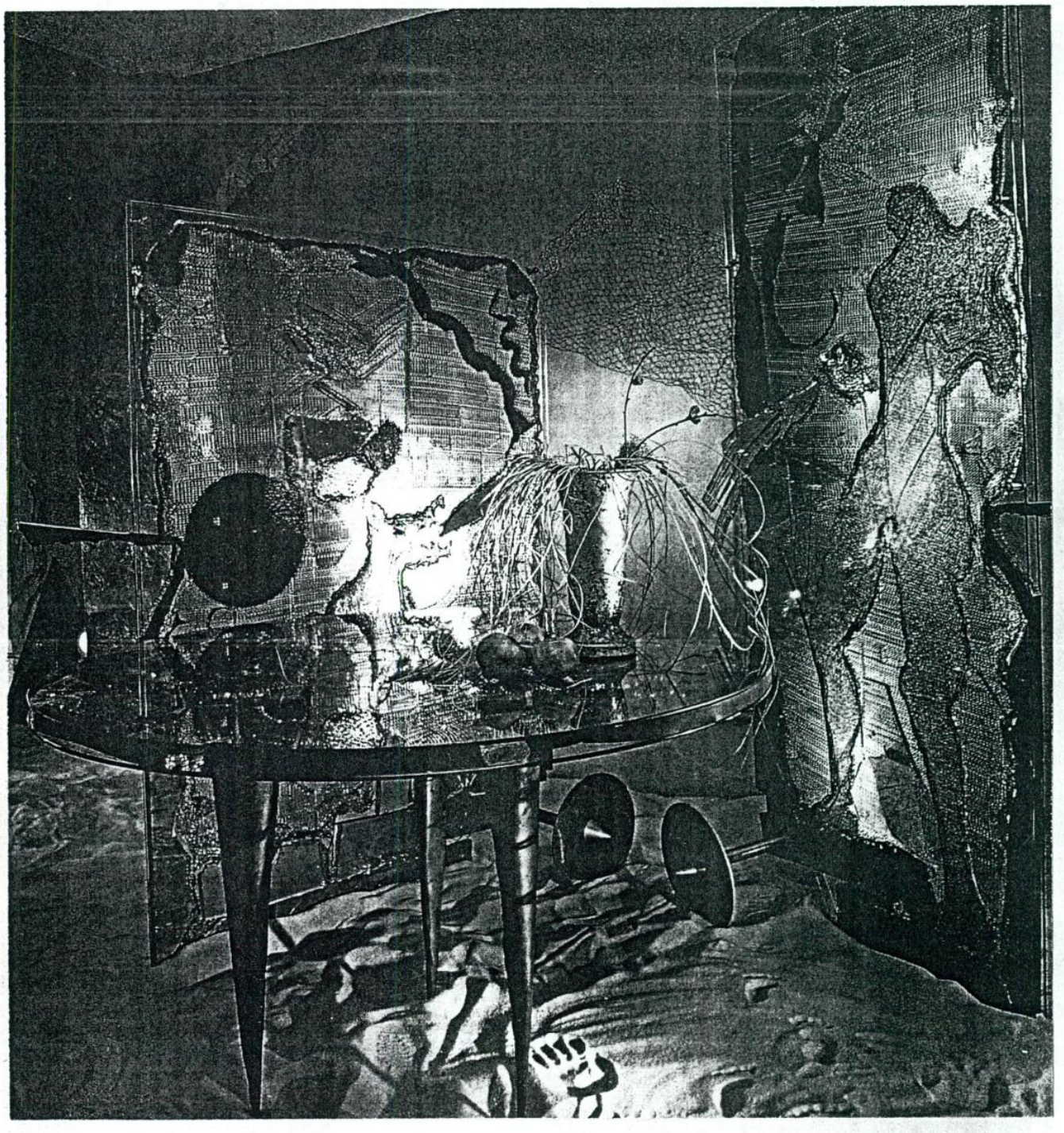
Oppenheim. The hi-fi system was bought in kit form, encased in a tough resin barrier and cast into concrete slabs with jagged edges, showing rusting, reinforced steel.

High tech processed materials were later employed by Arad and suffered radical transformation from the ways originally envisaged by their manufacturers. The Horn Series II (Illus. 21) and the Well Tempered Chair were cut from sheets of aluminium and steel, using very simple cutting and bending tools. The results are remarkable examples of what is possible when a low budget base restricts the means of manufacture. Arad also made use of structural honeycomb aluminium foil, that was created as a result of an industrial process associated with the aerospace industry (Illus. 22). He designed several pieces that married this material with glass, concrete, and steel.

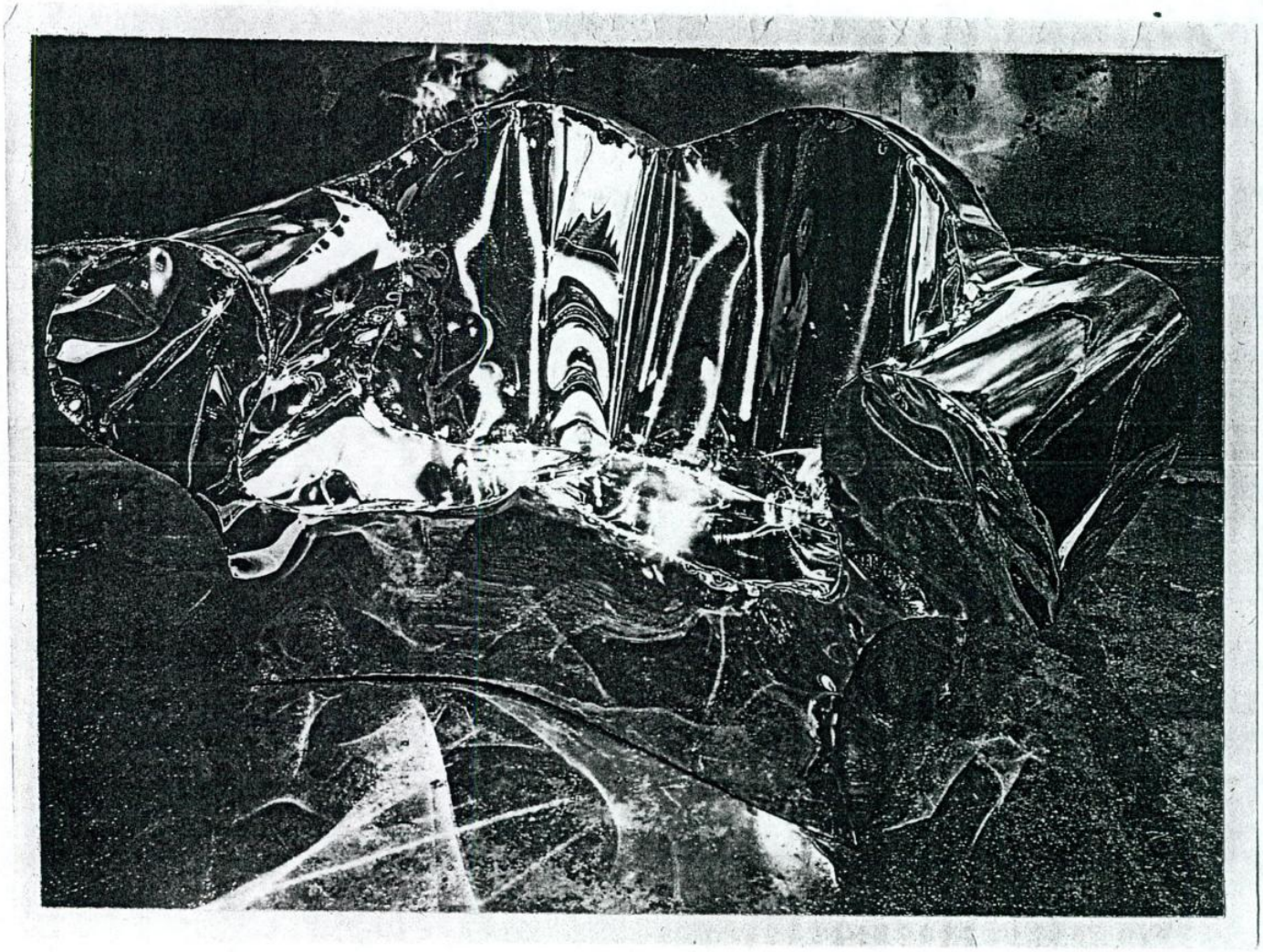
For the 1988 Milan Fair, Arad produced armchairs that were much weightier and massive pieces. His Big Easy Sofa (Illus. 23) series made use of high grade stainless steel. The patterns were simply cut from sheets of stainless steel, using a blow torch and were seam welded. With this chair, we can see the quality of finish has matured at One-Off. Earlier furniture pieces were finished with speed and dispatched immediately. The polishing of his Big Easy Sofa is carried out using buffing tools. There remains, however,an untamed roughness that certainly would dissuade certain buyers from purchasing this piece.



(Illustration 21).
Horn Series II - Designed by Ron Arad
Arad's opulent-looking armchair is part a statement of commitment to exploring new directions in furniture materials and production processes and part, a directly commercial product.
Batch produced by Vitra



(Illustration 22).
Cone Table (foreground) - Designed by Ron Arad
Deepscreen I & II (background) Designed by Ron Arad and Danny Lane
Deepscreen I & II are constructed from toughened glass and industrial aluminium honeycomb, stretched between steel frames to create a double-sided divider. The glass is opaque when viewed from one side but reveals silhouettes when viewed from the other. There is a strong element of Lane's imagery in Deepscreens I & II.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.



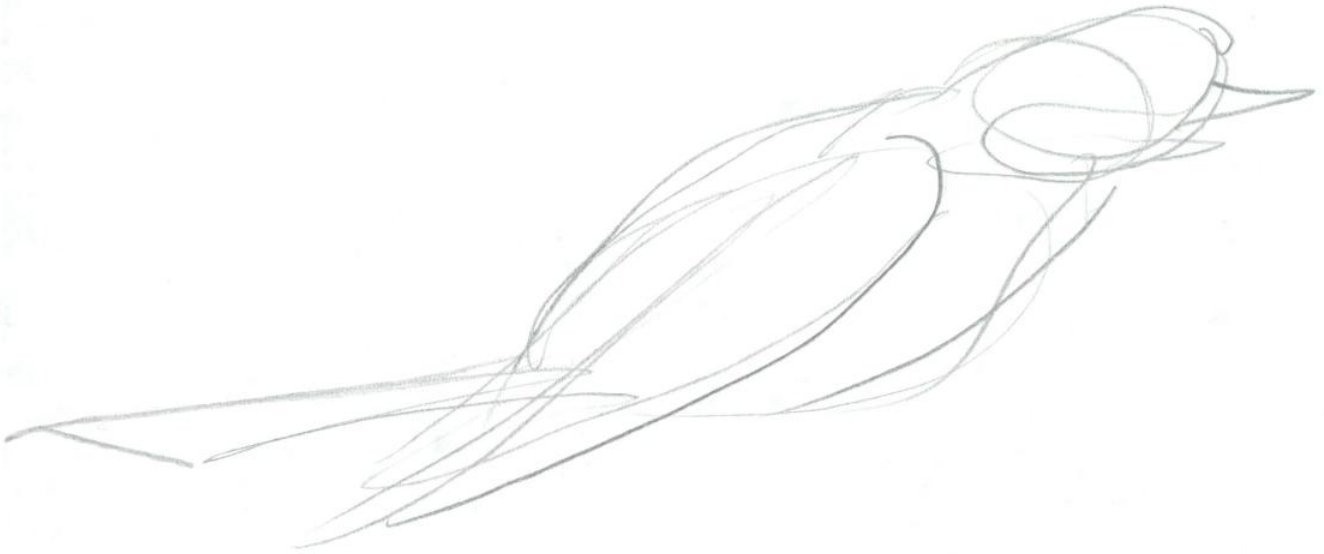
(Illustration 23).
Big Easy Sofa - Designed by Ron Arad.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

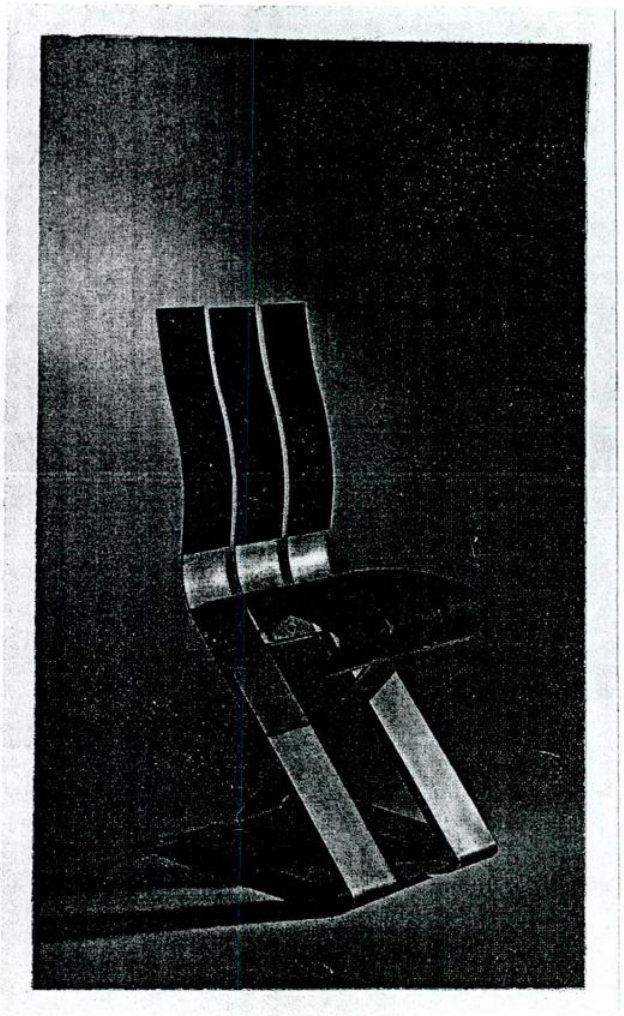
Ron Arad's inventive mind has been put to play with various materials. This can be seen if we compare his School Chair (Illus. 24), in aluminium and rubber for Vitra International (Special Edition) and his Crust Chair in plywood and rubber (Illus. 25) now produced by Samaya and Moroni. These examples demonstrate his remarkable versatility. Arad explains the comical thought behind his Italian Fish Chair and Tinker Chair (Illus. 26):

> 'In the USSR there is a fable called catching a lion. Well there aren't too many lions around in the USSR so they say that when you catch a bear, beat it until it becomes a lion.
> (Tusquets Bianca, 1990, p.18).

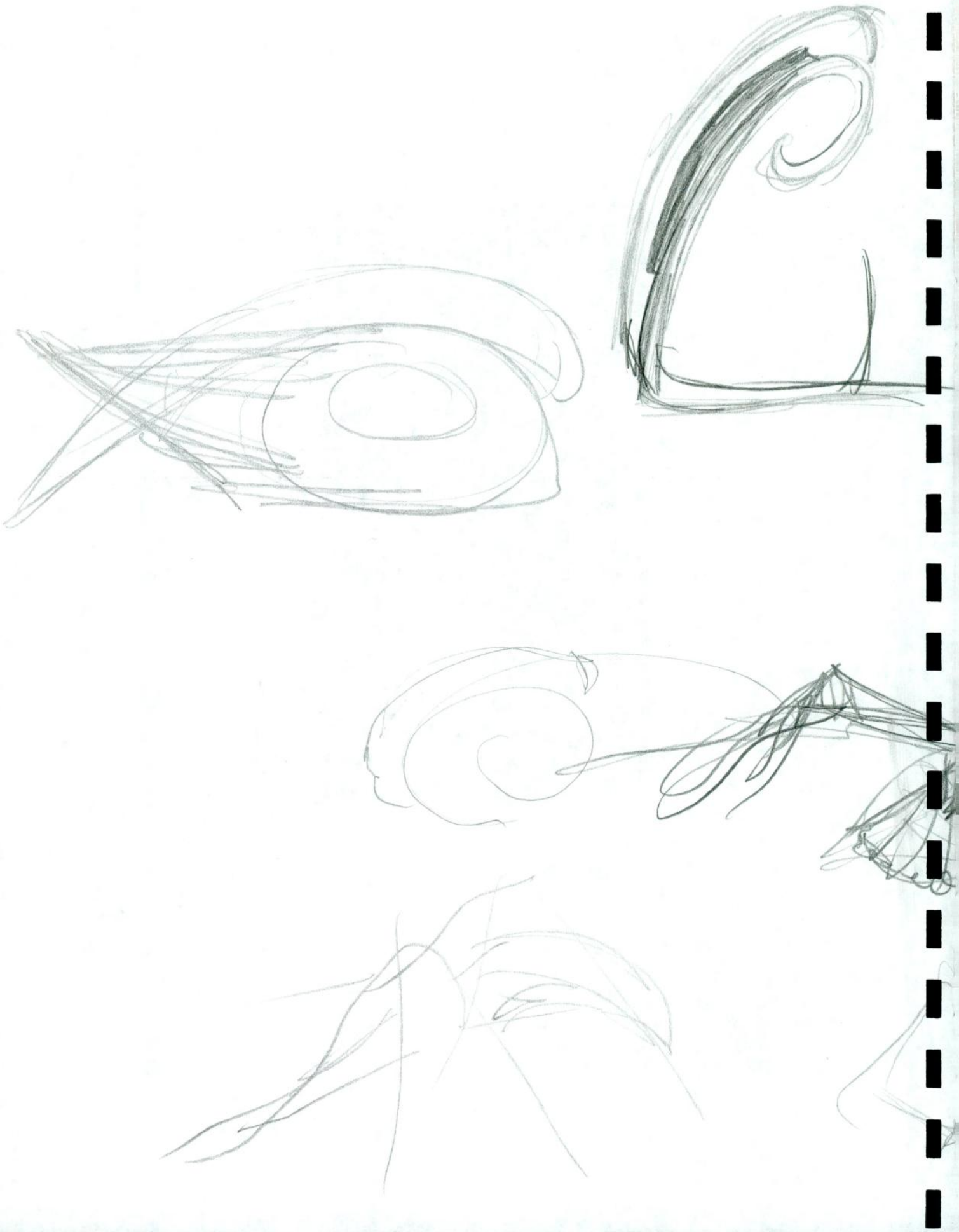
Arad has tigue-welded stainless steel to mild steel, butted against each other, for his Vitra Special Editions collection. For Tinker Chair, red gussets inserted along the edges and then flame-welded to give the paint a blistered contour signifies a new production method.

Arad has no less than 11 chairs in mass production by Moroso (Illus. 27). The collection was launched in 1991 and has since captured a wide audience in Italy, France and Germany. Critical success has brought Arad an increasing workload. The economic recession has little effect on either his design or furniture business. 70% of his work is sold abroad to customers for whom £1,000 for a chair is not unduly expensive. In Britain, his work is bought largely by collectors who have already seen the first successful auction of contemporary furniture. A One-Off Arad chair is not only a good talking point, it is also a comfortable investment. Arad designs that have cost their buyers from £2000 - £8,000 doubled their value at Christies early last year.

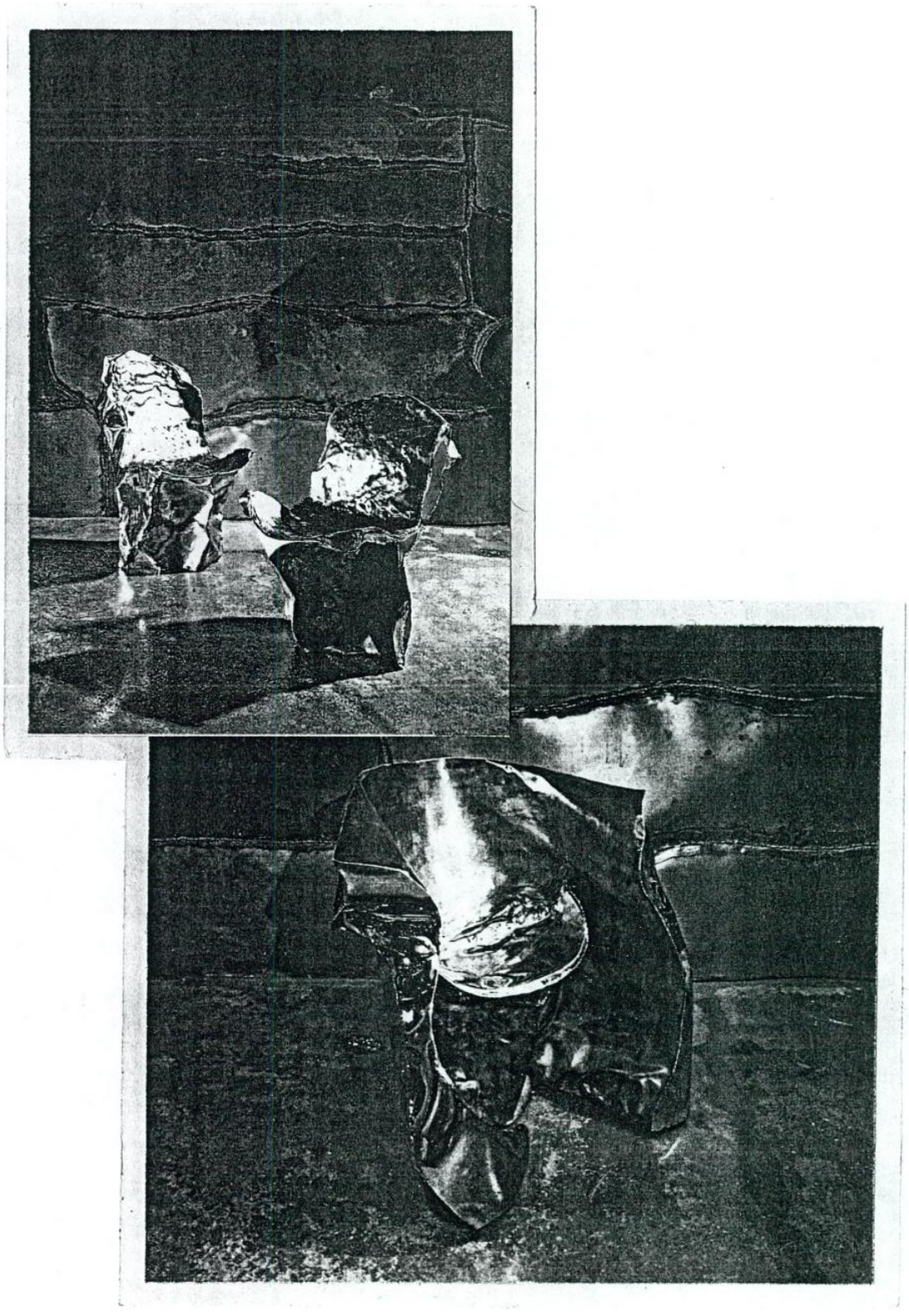




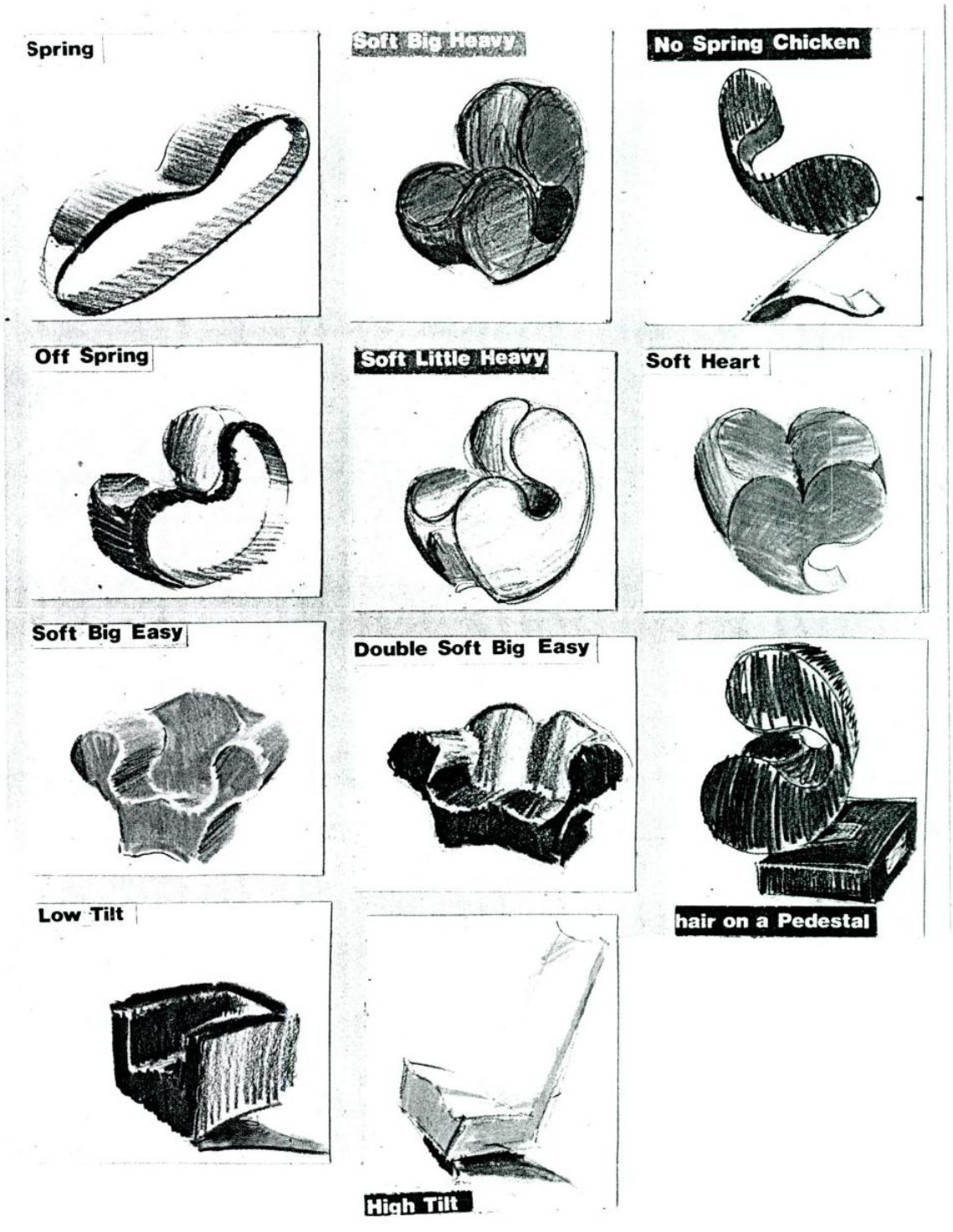
(Illustration 24).
School Chair - Designed by Ron Arad
One-Off produced six prototypes of this chair in various metals and upholsteries before settling on aluminium and rubber.
Produced by Vitra (Germany)



(Illustration 25).
Crust Chair - Designed by Ron Arad.
The aptly named Crust Chair by Samaya and Moroni, has rubber sandwiched between stained plywood sides. It takes its form from a conventional club chair. The element of subversion always apparent in Arad's work is gentle here, but it has lost none of Arad's capacity for catching people by surprise.
Produced by Samaya and Moroni (Italy)



(Illustration 26).
Top: Italian Fish Chair
Bottom: Tinker Chair
These chairs are manufactured from welded sheet steel and stainless steel. They are then afterwards panel beaten into shape.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.



(Illustration 27).
Ron Arad's Furniture Range for Moroso, Spring 1991.
Produced by Moroso (Milan).

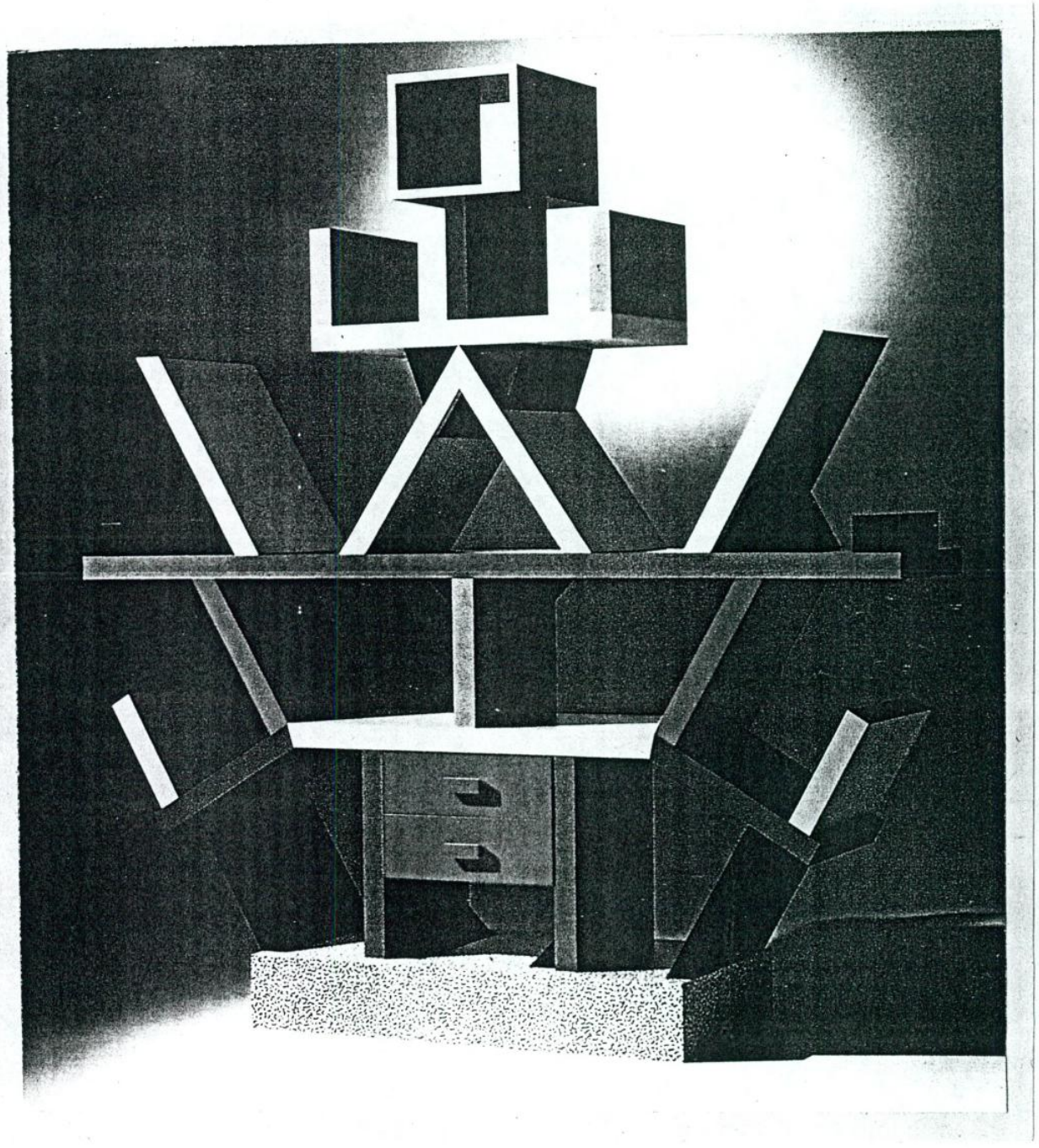
RON ARAD, A SUMMARY

Ron Arad alienates, exaggerates and caricatures; above all, he is an extremely accurate observer. His spontaneity, his ability to improvise in and out of mimetic situations and his design approach, help to illustrate his personal design philosophy.

Early in 1981, audiences interested in design made the pilgrimage to Milan. Memphis and Alchimia ruled the gazettes. Even in the most outlying provinces brightly coloured deconstructions a la Sottsass were in fashion (Illus. 28). It was at this time that Arad assembled his first design collection by welding together tubing, pipe collars, automobile and motorcycle seats, wire mesh baskets and telescoping antennae, (see Illustrations 1, 4, 6, 8, 12, 13, 17). The Rover Chair, Aerial Light, a remote-controlled table lamp and the universally adjustable Big Easy Volume I rocking chair were all created between 1981 and 1984 are some of the most memorable highlights from these early years.

Arad was engaged in a pragmatic version of ready-made design, a style which would reappear again and again in many of his later works. These component transformations never seem static nor motivated solely by content; and neither are they humourless, as we can see in the amusing works he created as part of the Kassell's Documenta 8 Project in Berlin in 1984 (I,,us. 11). Nor are they merely allusions to objects by Jean Prouve. Arad makes use of similar principles, and like Prouve, he too is fascinated by the mechanical functions of the components and parts employed. The Rover Chair = pipe collars + pipes + car seat; the Aerial Light = antenna + halogen light + remote control motor. The works are reduced and concentrated to their essentials and never figuratively over-nuanced or deformed.

Arad doesn't like repetitions and he especially avoids the continual reproduction of the same objects, no matter how successful those reproductions are. One-Off (the name and the



(Illustration 28).

Memphis Design - Designed by Ettore Sottsass.

theme of Arad's workshop) refuses to specialize or become a strictly artisan business. He never stands still: sooner or later, particular themes and objects are over and done with. The end of Arad's well known Rover Chairs mark not just the end of the line for one of the most popular design icons of the Eighties, but the end of the repetition of the Eighties for Arad. Arad gesticulating towards the shelves of the last 20 leather car seats and stacks of spray-painted tubular steel frames says,

> I get bored with making the Rover Chair, so that is the end of that. I get bored with my designs and want to keep experimenting. I was a little sad when the interior of the Jean-Paul Gaultier shop I designed and made in South Molton Street was destroyed and the fittings sold off like a car boot sale; but then I thought so what? It's time to move on again. (Glancey, 1991, p.34)

If others want to manufacture them, that's okay for Arad, 'Now I'm lucky that the popular designs are made for me by European furniture companies, leaving me free to concentrate on One-off's experiments'. (Glancey, 1991, p.34).

This has become the case with Moroso, Sawaya and Moroni (Italy) and Vitra (Germany). Remaining independent of any and every production or marketing strategy, allows Arad's original creative qualities to continue his tireless search for the objects' essences. He is eager to discover more about the materials themselves, about their special attributes and processing possibilities.

During the mid 1980s, expressive and organic elements began to infiltrate into Arad's work. Horns, bent steel tubing, cubes of broken concrete, veiny welded joints, dented sheet steel and twisted aluminium mesh were expressions of Arad trying to free himself from the restrictive corset imposed by the ready-made functionalist handicap. Works were created like Horns Chair (Illus. 5), Shadow of Time (Illus. 29) and Cone Table (Illus. 22),

(Illustration 29).
Shadow of Time - Designed by Ron Arad.
It is a hollow cone containing a halogen lamp which projects a working clock face onto the preferred surface.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

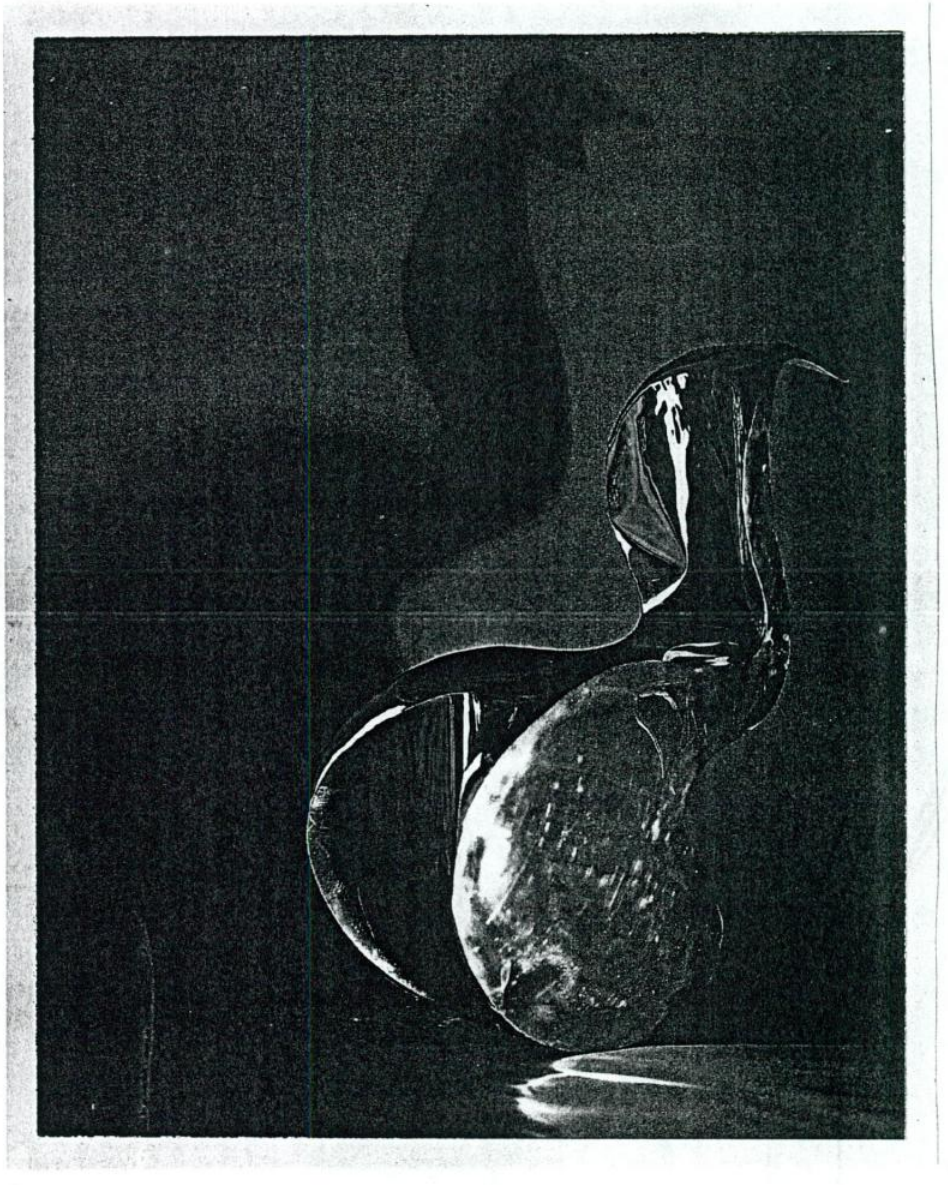
all between 1984 and 1986.

The Shadow of Time is a stunning and almost frightening conglomeration of truncated conic segments welded irregularly together and out of which a beam of light is projected onto walls and ceiling. One could dimly discern the vague shapes of the numbers 3, 6 , 9, 12, while ghostly clock hands of light marked the passage of time. This is territory which so far only Lazzio Moholy-Nagy seems to have pursued, where solid object, light, message and effected space are together in some instrument. However, Arad should not be regarded as a convert to Expressionism or Surrealism. In retrospect, these lamps, chairs, tables, seem more like studies, enquiries into experiments on metal. Questions such as: How can I overcome its stiffness? How can steel be formed? How can one best exploit its elasticity? What surface effects can I achieve through corrosion or polishing? It was during these years Arad began to enlarge his own repertoire.

Beginning with Well Tempered Chair (Illus. 18), Spanish Made (Illus. 30), and A.Y.O.R. ('At Your Own Risk') (Illus. 31), Arad explored a number of variations on the theme of balance. In A.Y.O.R., this exploration went so far as to render the object virtually unrecognizable in the resting position. Expect the unexpected! Keep alert! The A.Y.O.R. chair reclines under the sitter's weight until it reaches a precisely predetermined balance point where it comes to a safe resting position. One can sit quite comfortably unless one dares to move suddenly or push the seat back still further. The biggest risk comes when an attempt is made to stand up again because one's inertia had been stored at the centre of gravity, A.Y.O.R. whips quickly forward as if it were propelled by a coiled spring.

What matters for Arad is the fact that we can actualise our latent abilities through contact with the objects that surround us. No sooner is one seated in Spanish Made than one begins to stretch one's muscles. What at first glance seemed to be nothing more

(Illustration 30).
Spanish Made - Designed by Ron Arad.
The chair tips forward when not in use. When a person sits on it, the back leg hits the ground.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.



(Illustration 31).
A.Y.O.R. - Designed by Ron Arad.
A very heavy chair which, when not in use, tips forward and does not read as a chair. When in use, it looks as if it should fall backwards and not support the sitter but it does. Lead inside counterbalances the sitter's weight.
Produced by One-Off Ltd.

than a plaything or a joke soon proves to have an earnest and utilitarian function. We need not use these pieces of furniture as purely servile things. We can instead begin to comprehend them as active contributors to the activities we are performing. This can also be said about Arad's past works. The Aerial Light can follow and trace our movements via a remote controlled device, and give light to whatever activity we are engaged in.

These attributes are by no means intended to make these objects into fetishes. The design and functions are neither fictionally thought-up nor are they designed without consideration. The plans develop and evolve through daily use and actual observation. Such enquiries into the capabilities of materials, the exploration and discovery of design solutions, and the reflective ways objects can be part of us through function and visual performance, has earned Ron Arad a place among designers whose work is regarded as epitaphs that metamorphoses design into a faithful friend. Thus it is design that will last far beyond the time of its immediate popularity.

(Illustration 32).
Ron Arad.

CHAPTER 2

DANNY LANE

INTRODUCTION

Danny Lane was born in America in 1955 in Urbana, Illinois. He came to England in 1975 to study with the stained glass artist, Patrick Reyntiens, a prominent artist in his own right. Lane did a Foundation Course at the Byam Shaw School of Art in 1976-77. From 1977 to 1980, he studied painting under Cecil Collins at the Central School of Art in London. In 1981, he set up his own studio in the East End of London and gained practical knowledge of the traditional techniques of the glass trade with companies such as the Hackney Glass Refractory.

It was through working with glass smiths that Lane learned and developed techniques for etching and assembling clear 'float glass'. In 1983, he formed a studio workshop with the master glass blaster, John Creighton. He demonstrated to Lane the potential of drawing directly into glass with sandblasting. This technique was originally used by John Hutton to create his wonderful graphic angels on the huge windows of the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral in the late 1950s.

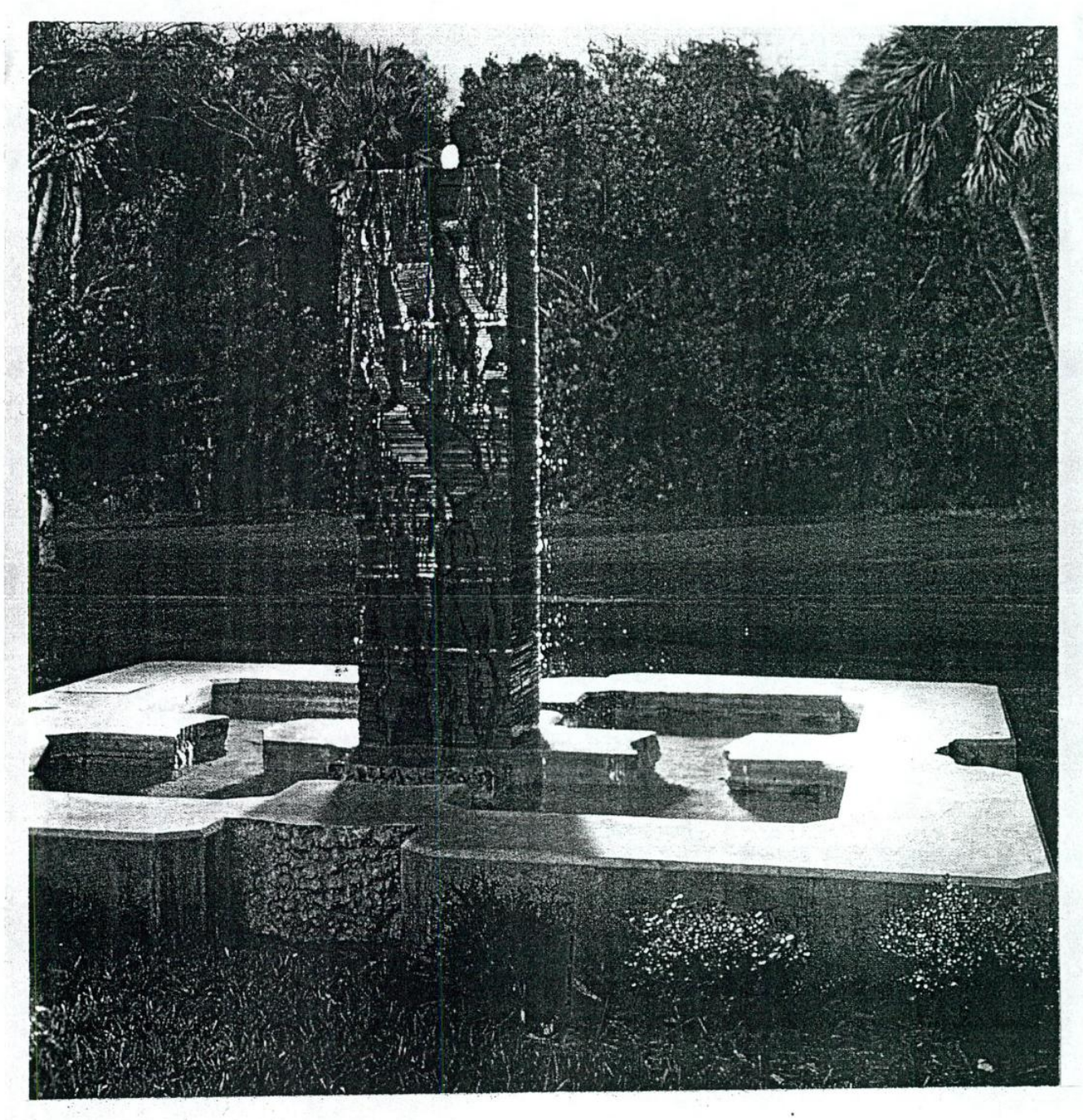
Danny Lane and John Creighton worked together on tables, windows and mirrors, which they retailed through their shop in Camden Town. It was here that Lane and Arad met while Lane was selling figurative etched glass screens. Lane subsequently made a number of projects with Arad (Illus. 7 & 22). As the area for commissioned and larger works developed, Lane found himself in the position to open his own studio which he called 'Glassworks'. Consequently, Lane continued to work with glass. This material is a natural material, a perfidious substance prone to scratching, breaking and inflicting injury if misapplied. Ironically, Lane

started to make furniture completely in glass, something that previously was unheard of. His new and exciting ideas found an appropriate exhibition and selling point in Arad's avant garde shop of One-Off Ltd., situated at that time in Covent Garden in a disused vegetable warehouse. This move brought Lane's work to public attention. His pieces sold well, which meant the scale of his output increased further.

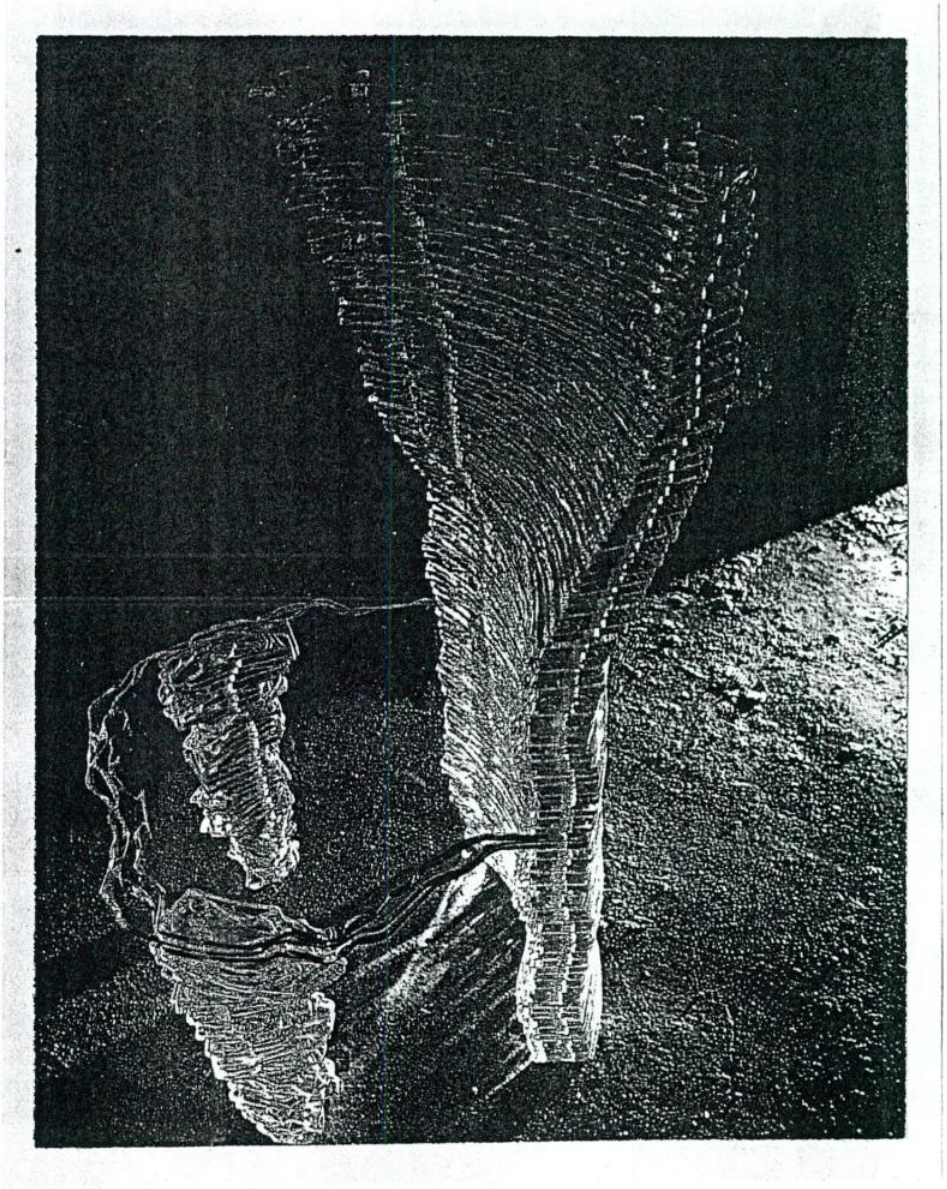
In September 1985, Lane moved into a larger premises in the old x-ray unit of the Metropolitan Hospital (now workshops) in Enfield. In 1986, he was awarded a Crafts Council 'Setting Up' grant, with which he equipped his studio to handle large scale architectural installations.

Glassworks provides a production facility for multiple customers and retail outlets. Work is done in collaboration with architects or interior designers or for private clients. Lane has created many diverse furniture pieces in glass and steel such as screens, tables, bars, shower stalls, seating, shelving, lights, mirrors as well as sculptured pieces (Illus. 33) for water fountains, door entrances and hotel lobbies. While work is being done for the above, he produces pieces for several retail outlets in London, Paris and Milan on a batch production scale. Lane also designs for furniture manufacturers. Several manufacturers such as one Italian firm, Fiam, produce tables by Lane on a volume production scale.

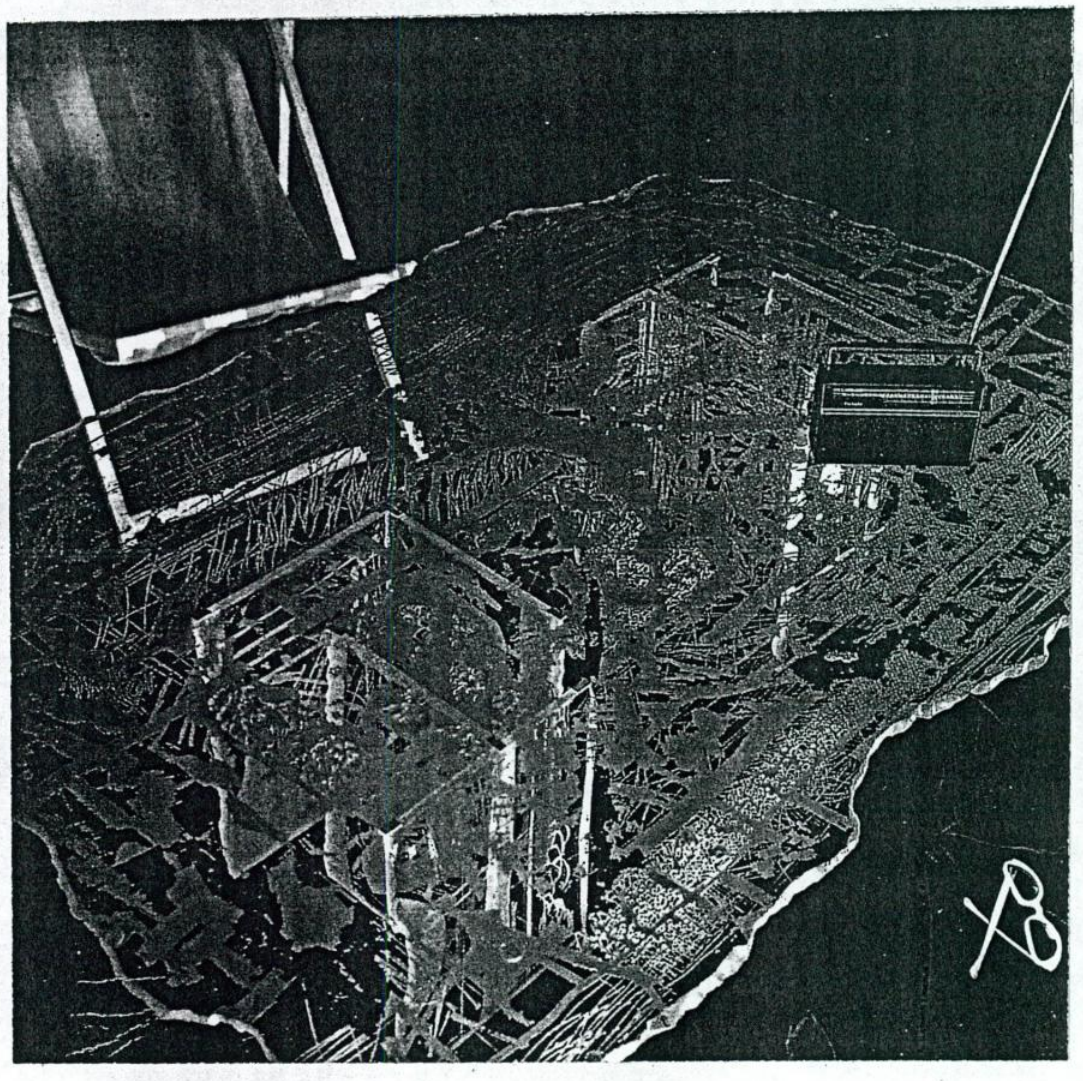
The glass for his tables, chairs and towers is made through a controlled system of random breakage; various techniques are applied afterwards as decorative motifs. Stacked Chair (Illus.34) is a classic example of how the structure of the chairs is built up, layer by layer, using fragments of float glass. The structures are reinforced or stabilised with glue or steel bars. The table, known as Romeo and Juliet (Illus. 35), is made from float glass, 15mm thick. It has sandblasted artwork on it. The



(Illustration 33).
Memorial Fountain - Designed by Danny Lane
This piece of work is governed by a poetic interpretation of the role of the fountain and the significance of water - an element which visually is very close to glass.
Produced by Glassworks



(Illustration 34).
Stacked Chair - Designed by Danny Lane.
The chair is constructed from layers of float glass, glued on top of one another. The edges of the fractured glass have been smoothed down. However, it is still a piece of furniture to be treated with due respect.
Produced by Glassworks



(Illustration 35)
Romeo and Juliet - Designed by Danny Lane.
Here, sandblasted float glass rests on a structure of glass.
Produced by Glassworks.

entire table is constructed from glass, which in itself is quite unorthodox. The broken edges of Lane's tables and chairs were an accidental discovery. While working with Arad making tables, Lane had trouble with the edges that chipped until it occurred to him to sandblast them all down. Hence, the distinctive feature of Danny Lane's furniture was born.

LANE AND HIS COLLABORATORS

When Lane moved to the Metropolitan, he initially collaborated with Paul Anderson on glass and steel pieces. However, as 'Glassworks' developed, Lane's team increased in numbers.

> Because of the nature of the materials and the objects, I make, (by this I mean the scale, the function, the various materials and the processes), a group of people are required to create the objects. It therefore becomes difficult to retain the spontaneity and control normally found in creations conceived and made by one person. A working team has evolved around my work that is responsive to quick changes and sudden decisions. (Ramshaw, 1987, p.64).

His team consists of Larry McDonald, Peter Greenwood, Frank Delano and Philip Hickman, all of whom are there on Crafts Council Advanced Training Grants. Sylvia Starshine, blacksmith welder, collaborates with Lane on the tables. Sylvia Starshine makes the bases of twisted metal and welded structures. According to Lane the 'most important instruments are myself and the team of people who are involved with me on the various projects'. (Ramshaw, 1987, p.64).

Graham Vickers visited 'Glassworks' and described Lane and the relationship he has with the other people working with him:

> Indeed Glassworks is the sort of workshop studio that quickly identifies its owner as an unconventional man. The informality and enthusiasm among his multi-national band of workers is immediately apparent although perhaps slightly deceptive: Lane may be a man driven by emotion on every level, but his unfailing appetite for conflict means that he can be ascetic too, demanding hard work and self-discipline from himself and from others. (Vickers, June, 1988, p.14).

DANNY LANE - WORK METHODS

The dramatic scale and optical surface decorations of Lane's pieces are ideally shown in large, uncluttered spaces. The details and general form suggest that the approach is order out of chaos; but the process must be the creation of highly controlled chaos out of order. The edges of the glass pieces have irregular, fractured outlines. This distinctive feature is to be seen on his screens, chairs, tables and sculptural pieces. The torn edge, which is skilfully polished to remove all sharp edges, is the result of heavy float glass being shattered under specially controlled processes that Lane has developed.

These pieces are then assembled in various ways. The materials he combines are glass, steel (usually forged), wood, stone, marble and terrazzo. The large glass pieces are sometimes stacked, (thickness is 10 to 20mm) and are glued solid. They are also combined with forged steel. Holes are drilled into the glass and large bars are put through them and a nut tightens them together (Illus. 36). The fractured glass is empahsised further when combined with bent and tortured-looking metal frames, expressing the strength of the metal and the fragility of the glass. The pieces are made fit for daily use by long polishing processes which involve sandblasting the edges and then sanding them down, using different grades of sandpaper until a smooth and polished edge is achieved. Lane states that,

> Since the beginning of my working life, I have sought the route of least resistance. Glass breaks - break it first, it scratches - scratch it first...
> (Ramshaw, 1987, p.64).

This approach is apparent in the random, fractured edges and free, non-repetitive sandblasting decorations of the glass surfaces. Lane's working manner is similarly random in that it is quick,

(Illustration 36).
Etruscan Chair - Designed by Danny Lane.
Lane has pushed glass to the technical limits of what the material is capable of, and Etruscan Chair is no exception. The chair uses the basic elements as a starting point of a piece of furniture. The legs have been attenuated and abstracted to become solidified wires, the back and seat are eroded sheets of glass bolted to the metal components of the chair.
Produced by Glassworks.

chaotic and spontaneous. There is a strong element of panic, excitement and emergency to everything that he does. To Lane this is a vital component of his work. He believes that his work, which is highly expressive, indicates his conviction that,

> ... the infusion of any object with art requires a process which is both direct and spontaneous, allowing the artist's complete control over its development.... I see the work as an ongoing thing which has yet to be defined. I live by my emotions and make my decisions accordingly. I enjoy the feeling of crisis. Poverty and deadlines have produced my best work, leading me to believe that adrenaline in response to need is an active component in the creative process.

Such intensity also applies to the team of people who are involved with the work,

> We have to keep tuned and sharp just like any other tool designed for a specific purpose. When we get blunt, we need sharpening. (Ramshaw, 1987, p.64).

Lane's work is accented with spontaneity, which is vital to his work ethic. In his workshop the most basic tools are to be found. He uses sandblasters (which are powered by compressors), welders, grinders, kilns and sanders (used to polish the glass). These tools are put to work on the materials to create spectacular pieces of furniture and art.

LANE'S VOCABULARY

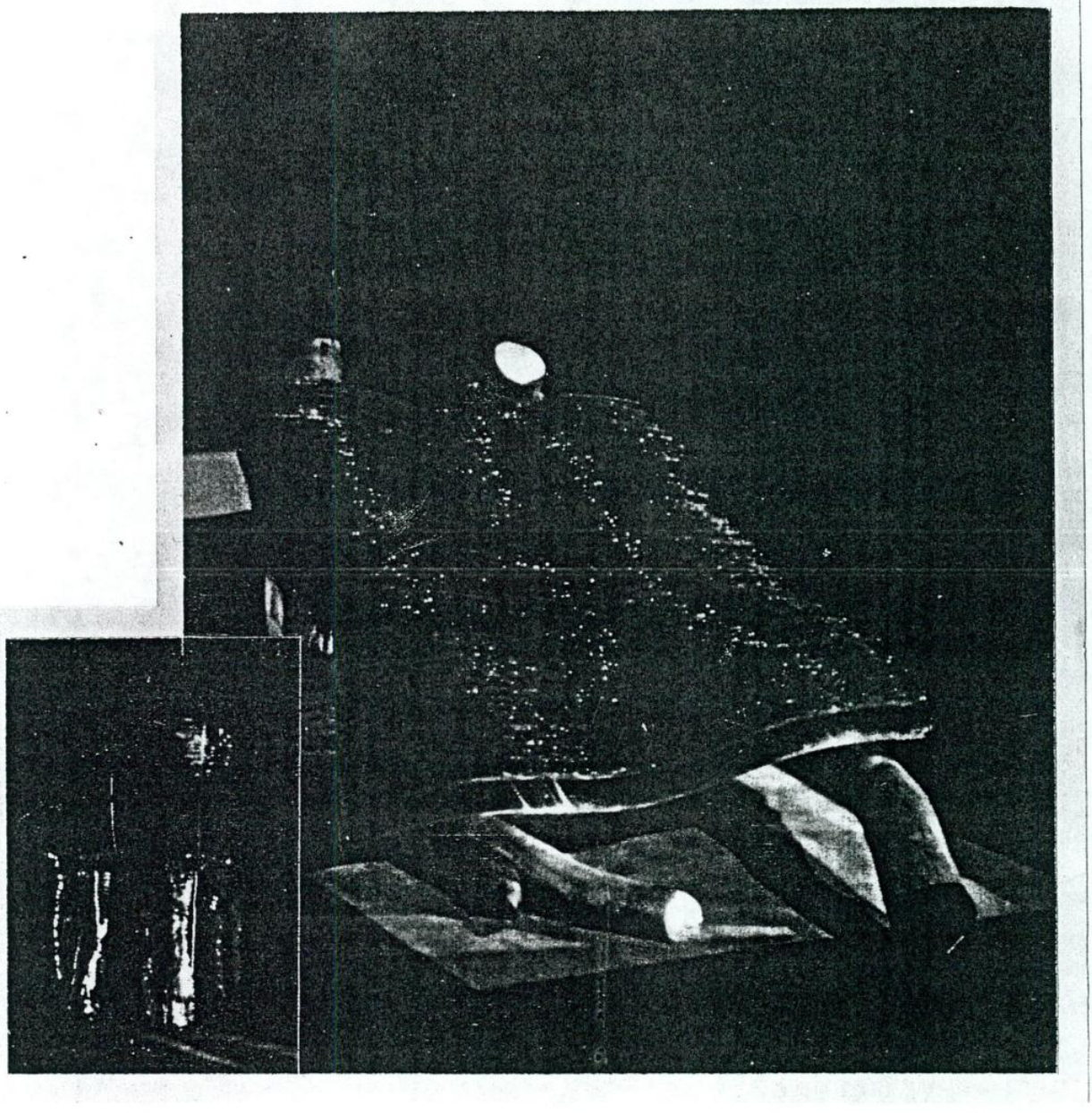
Danny Lane can best be described as a designer with certain fine art principles. In describing himself, Lane says, 'I'm not a designer's designer, I'm more about expression and telling a story'. (Vickers, 1988, p.14).

Certainly Lane's art training reflects the influences of certain fine art sensibilities. He studied under Patrick Reyntiens, the man who translated John Piper's drawings into stained glass for Coventry Cathedral. He went on to eventually study under Cecil Collins, who has been described as a 'mystic painter of angels and fools'. (Poynor, 1988, p.14). These fine art tendencies are inherent in Lane's approach to creating objects. He admits,

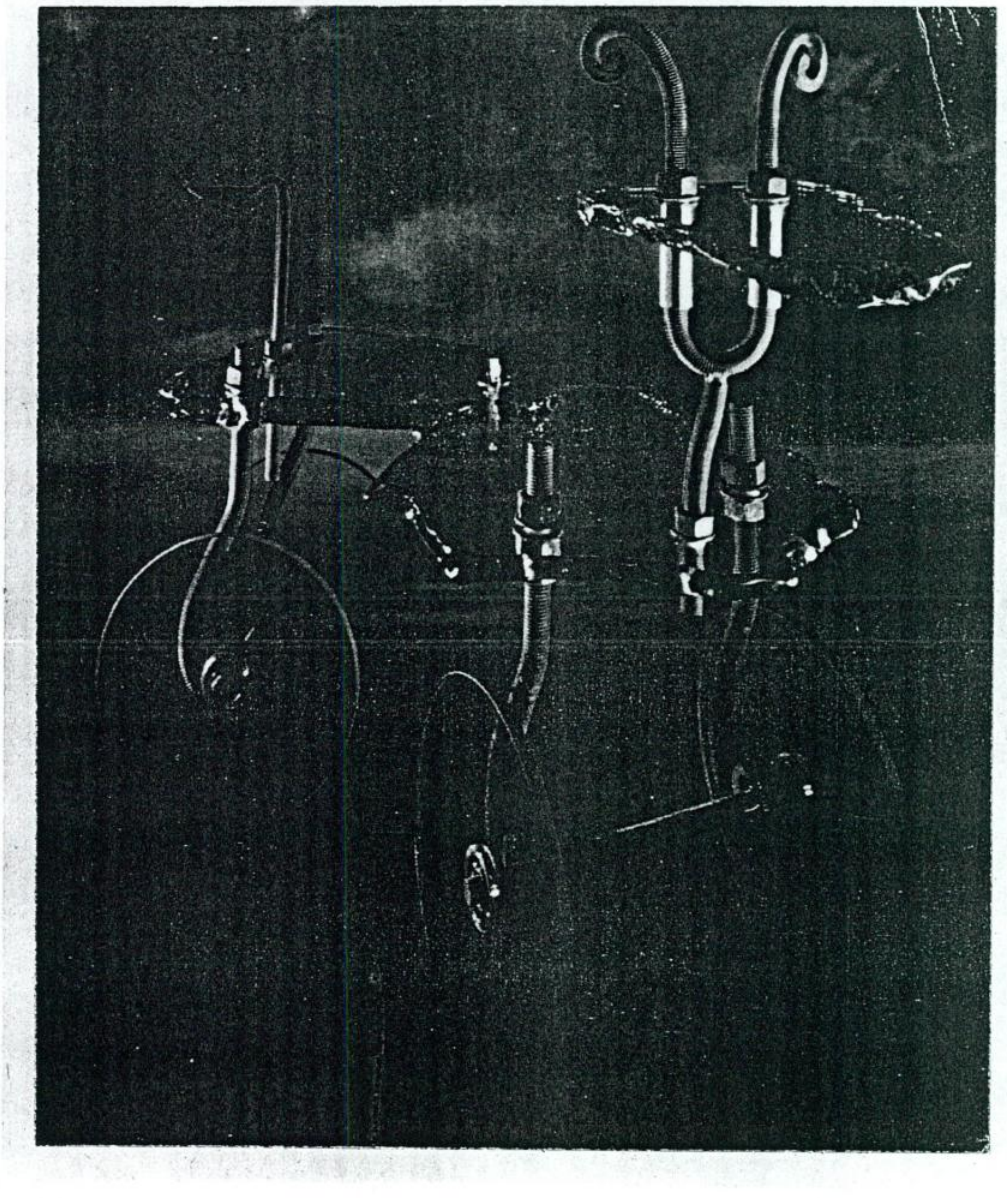
> I have what you could call an evangelical nature. My motivation comes from a basis of feelings and enthusiasm and this all exists independent of any design concept. The way I see it, you learn through your work, it makes things grow and it makes things happen.
> (Vickers, 1988, p.14).

Lane studied and worked as an artist during his years at College. He was fascinated with Sufi mysticism, biblical imagery and neo-Romanticism. They are probably the greatest influences on his work which be described as an enthusiastic bid to fuse art and design and self-fulfilment.

Angaraib (Illus. 37) is a bed based on a traditional Sudanese rope bed, draped across two parallel branches from a storm damaged tree. His rough-hewn float glass shapes are held in position by metal bolts and gravity; the branches are bound together with hemp. The inspiration for Angaraib came to Lane from his interests in biblical imagery. According to Lane, 'It wasn't designed, it just happened'. Scapegoat (Illus. 38), a movable construction on glass wheels with forged steel horns and a tail, is similarly endowed with biblical imagery. According to Lane, 'I got this image of a



(Illustration 37).
Angaraib - Designed by Danny Lane.
Stacked Chair also by Danny Lane can be seen in the foreground.
Produced by Glassworks



(Illustration 38).
Scapegoat - Designed by Danny Lane.
Scapegoat is reminiscent of a three-wheel bicycle with trays. It is Lane's idea of a drinks trolley embossed with his own personal imagery.

Produced by Glassworks.

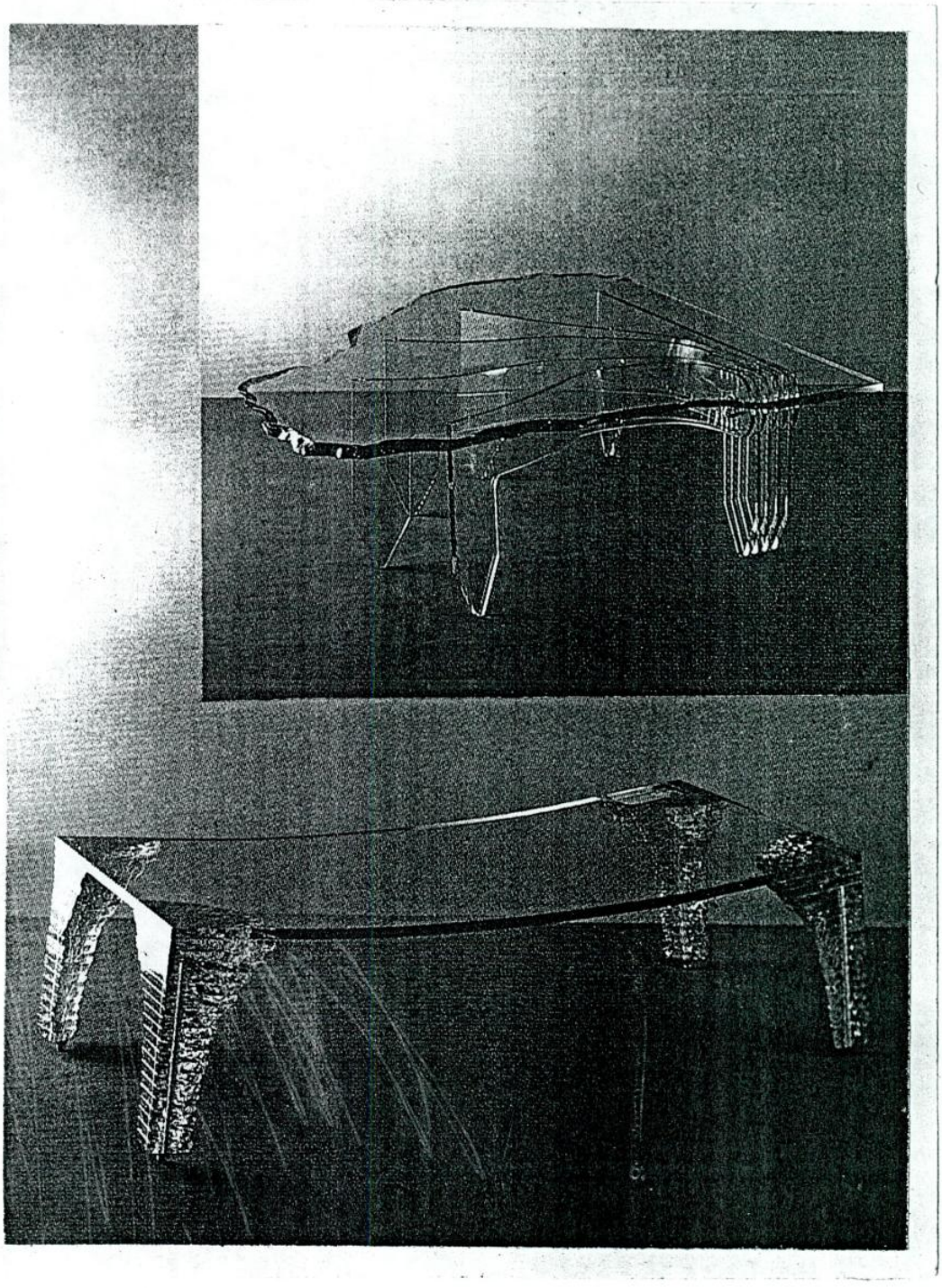
wolf and lamb, I forgot about the wolf and developed the lamb'. (Vickers, 1988, p.14).

Lane also draws inspiration from the landscape. His Shell (Illus. 39) table for Fiam in Italy can be described as seaweed tendrils of glass floating beneath a layer of ice water. In another piece by Lane, running streams of glass form the top of a table, which is held up on slivers of ice, opalescent twigs that are 'timeless as Stonehenge' in his Michael's Desk with Bird's Legs (Illus. 40).

Whether such pieces as Angaraib, Scapegoat and Solomon's Table (Illus. 41) fit into any dictionary definition of art, design or craft is hard to say. In the light of such work these questions are only relevant when discussing the quintessence of them individually. They are, however, examples of a new 'hybrid' form of expression which is emerging in artifacts that are produced in a similar manner by other designer-manufacturers.

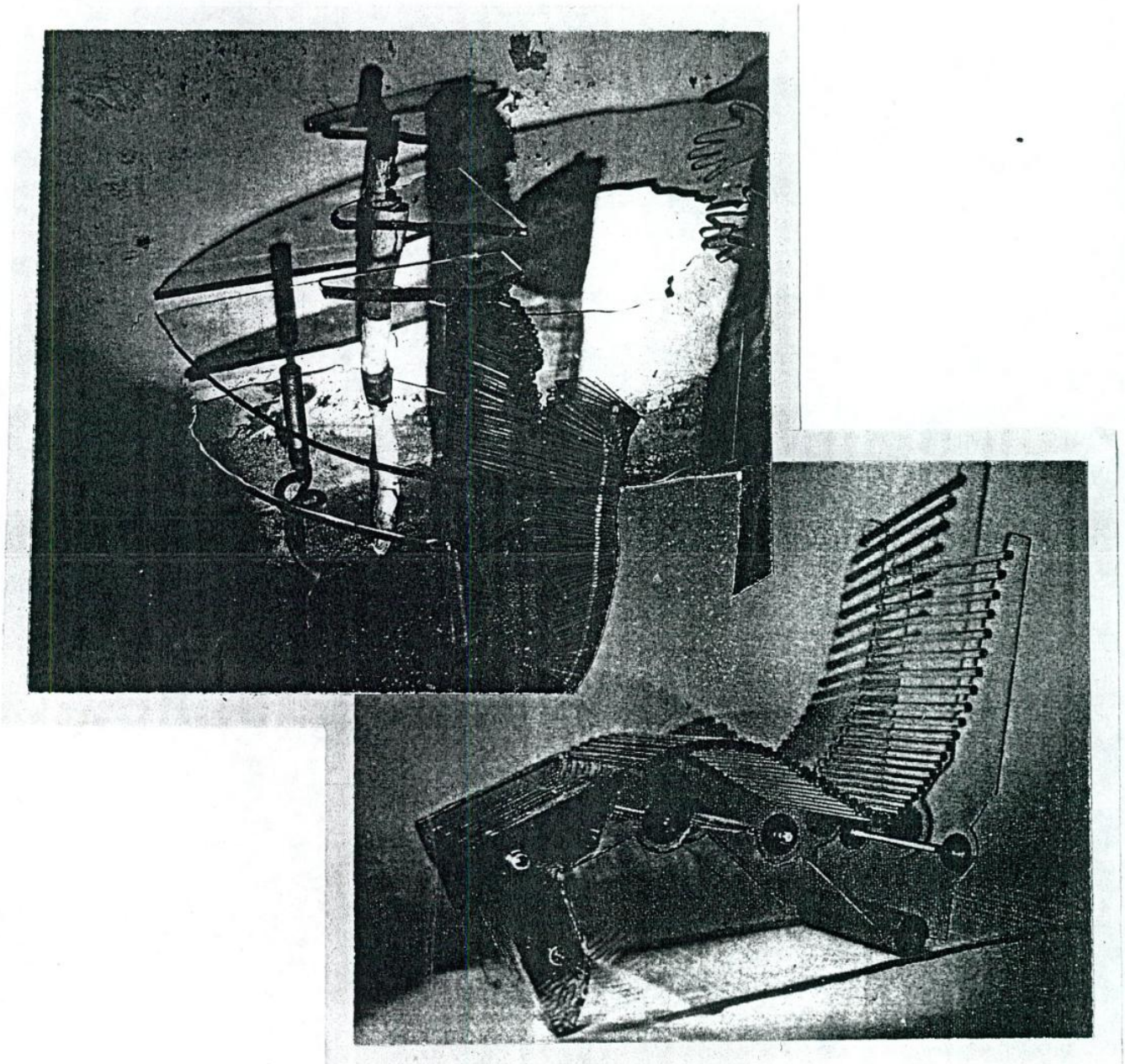
As with Arad's borderline experiments, Lane's glass pieces fluctuate: they remain to a large extend unclassifiable, as does Lane's position in the scheme of things. Massimo Morozzi said to him in Milan, 'Danny, you are not a designer'.. Probably other designers would say the same. There are doubtless many who are frustrated by all the media attention that Lane's work has been receiving. His work has been acclaimed as if it were 'the acme of design's achievement'. (Poynor, 1988,p.14).

Lane himself is aware of the contradictions in his position. He is not preoccupied by questions of comfort and utility: for him 'expression' comes before 'application'. Yet Lane does not see himself as an artist. The self indulgence of artists who wilfully depend on their own resources with no subject matter other than that what they find in their own heads, unsettles him. He sees such pursuits 'as energy, but it's energy with no purpose, no form'.

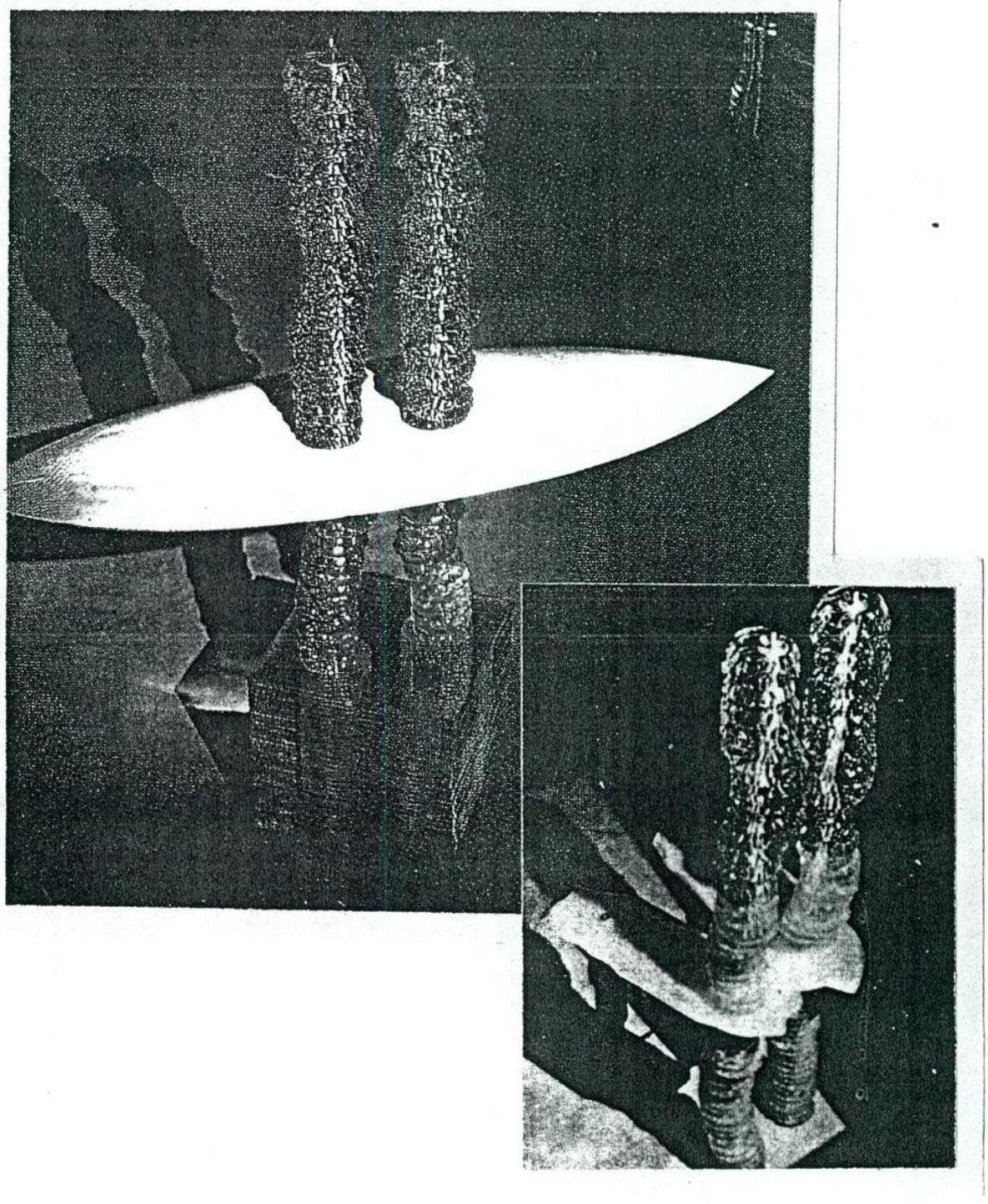


(Illustration 39.)
Top: Shell
Bottom: Atlas - Designed by Danny Lane
Seaweed tendrils of glass float beneath a pool of glass in Shell, a pencil placed at the corner will roll gently towards the middle on the top of Atlas.

Produced by Fiam, Italy



(Illustration 40).
Top: Michael's Desk with Bird's Legs
Bottom: Chaise Longhi - Designed by Danny Lane.
Produced by Glassworks.



(Illustration 41).
Top: Solomon's Table
Bottom: Solomon's Chairs - Designed by Danny Lane.
Solomon's Table is made up from two spiral columns of layered glass with a fin of etched marble sandwiched between.
Also available in this series are Solomon's Chairs.
Produced by Glassworks.

Lane's work, however, has both formal and social framework. He can balance the constraints set by commission with his smaller scale, more personal work. His design services are widely sought, particularly in the architectural area. He has on his client list for interior design and architectural work, Lloyd Northover, for whom he has designed the now famous Moscow Club, the Trusthouse Forte and Raymond's Revue Bar. Working in the architectural area, Lane says,

> That's something I feel happy with - they buy me for what I can really do. I like being brought in during the construction of a building to contribute something that's part of it, not just some piece of art. (Poynor, 1988, p.15).

He employs people, full and part time and so his responsibilities extend beyond his own artistic indulgence. Lane is also critical of the approach taken by the traditional designer. To him, 'working in a planned, very cerebral way, almost certainly takes all the life - all the mystery - out of work'. (Margetts, 1986, pp.36/37).

According to Abigail Frost, Danny Lane's approach is a

> ...refreshing antidote to the common design-school attitude, where nothing may be tried that can't exactly be specified. Lane's style demands a relaxed acceptance of what can't be controlled. (Frost, 1986, p.32).

LANE AND INDUSTRY

Nie Niesewand wrote in his introduction to the International Design Yearbook 1988/89 that,

> Technical ingenuity is especially evident in Britain, manifested in an almost disturbing tendency to fragment industrial hardware. Fractured glass, tortured steel and bent metal feature in many pieces - a characteristic that Arata Isozaki (ed) finds to be an interesting reflection of the frustrations of young designers. Years of poor relationships with manufacturing industry, and experiences of sluggish retailing in Britain have continued to put inventive designers graduating from art colleges on the defensive, and this shows ultimately in the aggressive shapes and materials of the work.
> (Niesewand, 1988/89,p.9).

Certainly Danny Lane and his originality in the challenging medium of glass has opened new doors for the material in the production of furniture. His technical virtuosity is clear: he pushes the material to its limit and beyond. He now has two tables made entirely of glass in volume production.

Lane has had to turn to foreign manufacturers outside Britain to produce his work. This, to an extent, demonstrates what Niesewand said about the 'poor relationships' designers in England have with industrialists. Certainly to manufacture such pieces requires no special tooling; the initial prototypes were produced in Lane's own workshop which is equipped with the most basic machines and implements. It seems like another lost opportunity for British manufacturers. Insofar as designers are on the defensive and reflect that in their work, Peter Dormer shares the view taken by Niesewand:

> ...presently several younger British designers want to believe in the excitement of chaos offered by an apparent collapse of Britain as a manufacturing power. Collapse implies the disintegration of order, suggesting scope for irresponsibility and its attendant romance. (P. Dormer, 1987, p.135).

In his opinion, Danny Lane belongs to this clique of designers. He goes on to say;

> Yet most individual designers, working on their own and trying to make an impact, are drawn, almost inevitably to create an affront; they are almost drawn to violence. Violence is the most traditional form of opposition. In this light, Danny Lane is interesting because his 'expressionist' work has the ghost of violence in its rough, crafted metal and 'broken' glass. But the violence is artificial and gives the thrill of threat without the actuality of assault: the glass is usually smoothed off.... It is a kind of designer, soft sadomasochism.
> (Dormer, 1987, p.130).

Glass is an innovative material for the designer to work with. It is also one that suggests danger and coldness. Lane, like Arad, is toying with our sensibilities to certain materials and how we have in the past perceived them. Glass as a material is transparent and this annihilates dimension. It suggests great fragility, and it is cold in expectation and in reality. As a material for furniture, it trades the image of relaxation and comfort, which we have always got from furniture, for that of caution. This may reflect why Dormer sees the work of Lane in the above manner. The imagery of Lane's work is also one which seeks the affection of our inner senses.

> In London it fits with the feel of the times and suggests that a world of shattered technology would not be without beauty should the individual know how to find solace in such images.
> (Ramshaw, 1987, p.64).

The Italian industry, 'the most dynamic manufacturing nation' (N. Niesewand) is open to producing designs like Lane's. His furniture requires a certain amount of hand finishing as well as production processes. English industry does not have this industrial flexibility. The success of the Italian industry is largely due to this flexibility.

Italy and its industrial foundations are discussed further on. It

is sufficient to say at this stage that Italian accomplishments in design and industry are based on a culture of workshops. Much of what it produces is a result of a mixture of handwork and production processes. Such processes have meant that, 'Italy has continued to succeed industrially in a fashion unlike other industrial nations', (Peter Dormer).

It is for this reason the work of English designers like Arad and Lane are produced abroad and not in Britain. British industry has not yet come to that stage of industrial production flexibility. Nie Niesewand points out that the hand finished piece has increased in popularity with consumers. He says, 'There is a demand for and a trend towards such handwork and finishes, as designs in this volume clearly show, International Design Yearbook, 1988/89. (Niesewand, 1988/89, p.11).

The following quote demonstrates that certain manufacturers are taking heed of this change. These industrial methods are influencing the previously automated-base industrial processes. According to Arata Isozaki,

> The Twentieth Century began with an arts and crafts movement in Britain and America. It seems poised to end with another - not with an earnest revival of hand-carving..... factory assembled pieces are being given handworked finishes: the effects of faux concrete, oxidized copper, rusty steel, sandblasted glass and verdigris iron break up the uni-format of modern industrial materials.
> (Isozaki, 1988/89, p.5).

Lane used to be classed solely as an artist-craftsman, producing furniture pieces sculptural in form and that one could arguably use. Like Arad, Lane produces pieces in his own workshop and he contracts other pieces out to other workshops.

Fiam in Italy produce two of his tables, Atlas and Shell (Illus. 39). Forty years ago, sheet glass could be stretched no further than that of an ordinary window pane. Fiam's achievement in the manufacturing world has demonstrated that glass is a

material that can be mass produced. The pieces they have put into production by Lane have that questionable quality about them insofar as being pure furniture pieces. The solid top of Atlas is an ellipse, albeit it is a gentle curve: a pencil placed at the corner will roll gently towards the middle. The functional aspect of the table is not greatly impaired. This did not inhibit the manufacturer in putting them into production as such oddities make the piece more interesting and likeable. The balance between function and visual impact is shifted slightly in favour of the latter. Such a piece as Atlas would make one think before one would place a cup on it. In this way, the piece has an integrity of its own, it communicates to the user on a personal level. According to Fiam, Lane's pieces are 'not ice sculptures but truly domestic products'.

Lane speaking about the functional element of his furniture says that,

> Recently I have been absolved of the guilt of being a fine artist working in the applied arts, where the need for expression is tempered by the demands of function. The architecture of my pieces is constructed around a respect for materials' function and aesthetic performance.

He goes on to say,

> Furniture spends most of its time performing a sculptural function being seen, not used. The practical demands of my furniture are equal to its visual performance.
> (Information Leaflet sent from Glassworks, 22 January 1989).

Glass can be contoured and shaped into forms strong enough to support the weight of a body. So striking is Lane's glass furniture that the issue arises: is it a chair or a piece of sculpture? The question is posed at a time of confusion and uncertainty. Now more than ever artists are using chairs as their medium of pure artistic expression while at the same time more and more designers are producing chairs that conform less and which are more sculptural. It is more a question of psychological comfort

than physical comfort that is at stake here. The physical dangers are removed (edges are blunted etc.), nothing else really stops us from sitting on a glass chair.

Although Dormer sees elements of violence in Lane's work and believes it is his form of opposition to British industy. I believe that there is more depth to his work than that. Lane has extended the properties of glass into the realm of furniture. It is now also a manufacturable furniture material. Furthermore, he is qustioning the domestic design of furniture and its traditional material base which has been a long time unchallenged. He has developed other related functions that furniture performs : furniture as art, furniture that addresses the needs of the human spirit and furniture that functions as visual objects. These are aspects of furniture design that have often been neglected or played down in the past, especially in countries with strong conservative values.

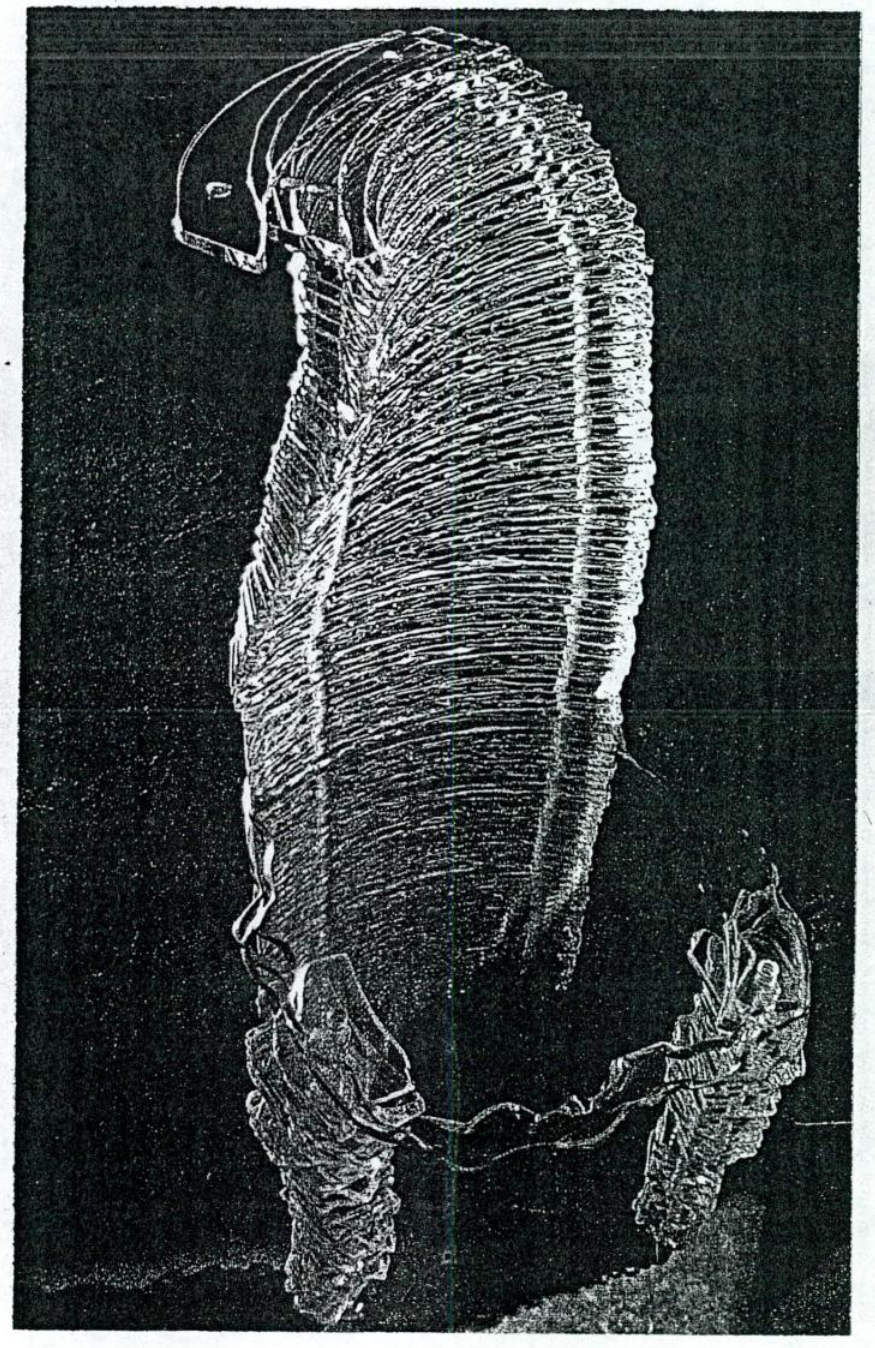
LANE AND FUNCTIONALISM: CONCLUSION

According to Lane he 'abhors functionalismm for its own sake because it does not address the needs of the human spirit'. (Information Leaflet sent from the Glassworks, 22 January 1989).

Lane does not address the design or manufacture of a piece of furniture from a purely functional aspect. Lane's furniture is certainly potent and beautiful but along the way Lane has had to sacrifice aspects of furniture that are important. It is difficult to characterize his work under a general heading. The array of work he has produced is wide and various. However, regarding functional furniture, he has shifted the emphasis on each piece. His Etruscan Chair (Illus. 36) is more functional than, say, his Stacked Chair (Illus. 42). The former is lighter and therefore mobile and you can sit on it. If we take the Stacked Chair it would be impractical to think that you could pull it under while attempting to sit at a table. The emphasis in the Stacked Chair is more visual than functional. It is an object that, yes, you could use, nothing prevents us from sitting on it but it does not relay to our sense the feeling of security and therefore, comfort. It, in fact, attacks our sensibilities by inducing the opposite response which we have in the past received from furniture. Rick Poynor, commenting or Lane's Angaraib Bed, summarizes what could be said about all of Lane's work in varying degrees:

> You must ignore instinct and fly in the face of common sense. Lying on the bed prompts disquieting sensations of exposure and vulnerability. (Poynor, 1988, p.14).

Lane knows this feeling and values it; he is aware of the disquieting sensations his furniture creates. He has what you could call an instinctive measuring rule as to what works and what does not. According to Lane, 'design has been shown to be an



(Illustration 42).
Stacked Chair - Designed by Danny Lane.
Constructed from layered float glass, this piece is more sculptural than functional. The weight of the chair alone would render it immobile in any environment.
Produced by Glassworks.

area of pragmatism. I've made my choices - I believe if you work from the heart you can't go wrong'. (Ramshaw ,1987, p.64).

However, he does not brush functionalism aside completely, even though his tables, chairs, screens and tottering towers might appear to strain the material to the point of destruction. The individual pieces are created through a dangerous process of controlled breakage, yet somehow, the finished works' inherent fragility is cheated and the glass holds them firm. But as always with experimentation, things do go wrong.His Chaise Longhi (Illus. 40) is a failed piece. Despite the brilliant glass-working technique, the chair in question was functionally never strong enough for Lane's peace of mind and it remains a somewhat beautiful loser. According to Lane 'It is a failed piece - and it's very important for that reason'. (Vickers, 1988, p.14). However, in essence Lane's furniture evolves around the belief that pieces have to work aesthetically and functionally. However, Lane's idea on the functionality of furniture is best described as being a little removed from the accepted norm.

An interesting point about Lane's furniture is that he does not, for example, supply you with the do's and don'ts of his furniture. If we look at Dutch designer, Erik de Graaff, who also lives and works in England, he has learned that few people will intuit the intellectual process involved in producing his finished objects. He does not like, but has to a degree accepted, the probability,that as soon as his objects leave the space he controls they will be put in settings which are (to de Graaff's eye and mind) inappropriate and even subversive to his objects' integrity. He has, on seeing a room in which a client was to put his work, refused to part with it.

Lane's pieces are without doubt intellectual explorations in form, material, processes etc; this side of his personality seems to dominate. However, his personality does not extend beyond his own workshop insofar he does not attempt to dominate why, where and

how his pieces should be used. That is the user's responsibility. Solomon's Table (Illus. 41) which has two spiral columns rising from a plinth of layered glass, might pretend in name to be furniture but you would have to be singularly insensitive to rest a mug of coffee on its marble fin. Yet, if we look at the tables he has done for Fiam, they are aesthetically Lane's but they are also functional pieces.

How does one address pieces such as Solomon's Chair (Illus. 41) that retail at £1,000 and are impossible to sit on apart from saying ' I like it' or 'I don't like it'. Certainly, it is possible to measure the gap between intentions and achievements. A chair intended for mass production should be engineered in such a way that its price can be minimised. Mouldings are best detailed in such a way that they will not crack with even the most minimal use. These are functional issues, readily susceptible to measurement. What is furniture design about beyond that? Indeed, it is furniture's role as a visual object rather than utilitarian artifact, that interests Lane. His achievement is creating objects that are successful visual obejects. However, depending on the area in which Lane finds himself, functional issues arise only to serve the intended purpose. Beyond that he is a manufacturer of artefacts that bridges the boundaries of design, craft and art.

Lane has exhibited work in Italy at the International Show in Milan. His work has been shown in Milan on numerous occasions, every year since 1984 when he shared the stand with One-Off Ltd. He now supplies the prestigious Dilmo's Furniture Shop in Milan with a constant flow of pieces. He has shown work in Paris and sells work through Galerie Yves Gastou there. Lane's furniture has also been exhibited all over London and England and is currently sold through three independent modern furniture retail outlets in London.

He has carried out commissions in London, Paris, Miami, Baden Baden in Germany, Helsinki and in Scotland. The Etruscan Chair by Lane is on permanent display in Stockholm and Paris; his Stacked Chair is permanently exhibited in London's Craft Council Museum.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL DESIGNERS AND FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS; DESIGNER-MANUFACTURERS AND FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS: A COMPARISON

The following chapter takes a look at the role played by the traditional furniture designer. It in no way sets out to undermine his/her contribution to the overall scheme of furniture design. However, since there is a shift in the percentage of design graduates who would rather establish their own independent manufacturing firms and who wish to be in the position of having a more effective say in the execution of the design artifact, it is imperative to understand the reasoning behind this circumstance.

Having examined the philosophy and methodology of the designer-manufacturer through the work of Arad and Lane and seeing the advantages and disadvantages this situation gives, this chapter will look at the role of the traditional designer and compare it to that of the former. The word 'traditional' should not imply that the practise of the traditional designer is outdated and therefore non-progressive. It is used only to differentiate between the two and to understand the context of both disciplines. This distinction is rather crude because the division between the two is often blurred. As we have seen, the designer-manufacturer not only designs and manufactures his own pieces, whether through his own workshop or through other engineering-based workshops, but he also has pieces that are mass or batch produced.

The traditional designer normally works as an in-house designer, as a designer that works in a consultancy or as a freelance designer. Since he does not produce furniture himself, he designs it for furniture manufacturers. He is restricted by several factors that to a certain extent predetermine the eventual outcome of his

design. Much of what he designs is determined by the capacity of technology and machinery that the manufacturer has at his disposal. The designer's aesthetic expression has to coincide with several deciding factors. He must design furniture that does not extend beyond the production means and costs; he also must design furniture that extends the aesthetic expression of furniture previously produced by the particular manufacturer in order to maintain consumer confidence. If no such furniture range previously existed and the manufacturer is starting production for the first time, then his expression can be said to be based solely on whether the manufacturer and his board feel the design, based on what is sold on the present market, stands firm against their market research and looks as if it could be a commercially profitable product. His choice of materials is determined also by the manufacturing processes, cost, availability and whether or not they relate to the traditional concept of comfort.

The traditional designer has also the problem of designing something that needs to function well, based on ergonomic data of human functional abilities while, at the same time, the product has to stimulate our imagination, desires etc. Initially furniture is almost always chosen for its visual impact; this is one of its primary functions. It is possible that in its lifetime it would fulfil no other function. Therefore the guise which dresses the furniture must evoke an emotional response from its public as to whether it is extremely elegant, colourful,fashionable etc. It is the role of the traditional designer to design furniture that people will buy, that will serve them well, that will give them comfort and solace, that is within their economical means and for the most part durable. Only then, after the manufacturer has been convinced that the designer's designs are a true representation of the needs of the public at large, will his work be manufactured. Once the traditional designer has handed over his work to the manufacturer he has nothing further to do with that particular project. The manufacturer then takes responsibility for the production of furniture. The furniture has been designed

so that it can be manufactured by whatever means is at the disposal of the manufacturer. The means of manufacture at his disposal is normally fixed. Therefore, the number of materials, methods of processing them and finishes is restricted.

The route of the traditional designer is compared to that of the designer manufacturer by J. Morrison:

> There are now two routes for a designer to take. The short route solves a design problem set by a fixed brief provided by a manufacturer to enable him to use his existing machinery and skills to increase his sales. Although this route secures the manufacturer's immediate future, in the long run, it merely fossilizes his technology. Moreover, it provides the designer with little satisfaction, other than cashing his royalty cheques. The longer route occurs to the designer with foresight: he builds his own factory, not with bricks but from the sprawling back streets, teeming with services and processes for materials, both common and uncommon, to his trade.... Design by this longer route offers an approach with an almost limitless range of materials and ways of treating them.
> (Dormer, 1987, p.137).

Therefore the designer-manufacturer has a wider selection of manufacturing processes at his disposal than the traditional designer. The range of materials and processing methods at his command are appropriately applied depending on the project at hand. The results of his efforts are contrary to the less detailed and less interesting forms and materials at the disposal of the major manufacturers.

This highlights the flexibility the designer-manufacturer enjoys. His aesthetics stem from a limitless range of materials and ways of treating them. His pieces vary in complexity but are always simple to produce. He can design objects so that they can be produced in small numbers within the technological and budgetary confines of a small workshop. On the other hand, if he is commissioned by a manufacturer to design something, he designs it so that it can be realised in 3-D by producing prototypes based on

what machinery and tools he and other workshops have at their disposal. Therefore the resulting design still depends on simple machinery and low investment. This is not to say that he has designed his objects with disregard to the technology and machinery the manufacturer has at his disposal and the investments he has made. The manufacturer approaches the designer manufacturer because he has seen and knows how he works. The manufacturer is made aware of who he is dealing with because he has, like the designer, attended the fairs, he has seen the designer-manufacturer's work and he knows his capabilities. Likewise, the designer-manufacturer has engaged himself on the same level. As Peter Cook points out, when a designer-manufacturer and an industrialist establish a good working relationship,

> ...together they are special, they understand, together they can suspend the usual pragmatics of judgement and all those predictable manoeuvres of commonplace chairs, rooms, screens, or pieces of equipment that are 'many-off'. Together - if they have a will - they can dream, float, soar above the flat typicality of four square and smooth surfaces or cut, thrust and tear through the uptight integrity of the box-as-room or chair-as-cage.
> (Von Vegesack, 1990, p.6)

If we can suspend for the moment other considerations such as ergonomics, tooling costs, colour, materials etc., these 'usual pragmatics of judgement' to which Cook refers,we can seek to find what it is that bridges that gap of understanding between the two.

By producing his own furniture, by demonstrating his talents and skills of judgement at furniture fairs, exhibitions and through his own retail outlets, the designer-manufacturer exposes himself/herself to the criticism of others. Central to all this, the designer-manufacturer imposes his aesthetic and philosophy of design on others. Here exists the choice, you can accept it or not. If a manufacturer approaches the designer-manufacturer, asking him to design something for him, he is not going to impose the usual pragmatic restrictions on the designer. By doing so, the manufacturer would be interfering with that aesthetic which

contains the elements which brought the designer to his attention in the first place.

What designer-manufacturers are doing is opening up the repertoire of imagery that is available to design. Much of the aesthetic of present design is determined by the abilities of machines. These machines limit the vocabulary of design in a universal sense. The difference in machine technology between manufacturers of furniture are minuscule. This is because they compete closely on the same level for mass markets. This creates anonymity in design aesthetic.

To design a product or a furniture piece based on fixed production methods immediately constrains the repertoire of ideas available to the designer. Fixed technology limits the designer whereas flexible technology gives him room to manoeuvre and to develop ideas. To design and make a product based on what can be made with the simplest tools does not interfere with the conceptualisation/design process. When a manufacturer approaches a designer and requests him to design something so that it can be produced by the production means at his disposal, then the designer has to design the product that is relevant to the manufacturing processes. The manufacturing processes available to major firms are similar. They are geared towards mass markets. The processes are quick and semi-automated. The processes are universally standard. This allows a certain amount of parts interchange. However, the aesthetics are fixed. The aesthetics of a Japanese furniture firm that produces press-moulded chairs is similar to the aesthetic of an English firm that produces press-moulded chairs, the differences being slight variations in form, texture, weight and colour. The materials also influence the design because it too is based on the manufacturing processes at the disposal of the manufacturers.

By removing the requirement to use specific types of machinery, for example, the injection moulding machines, metal formers, stamping

machines, and extrusion machines etc. which are available to most manufacturing firms, the image of mechanistic perfection or any other kind of stylistic approach does not define barriers for the aesthetic of the artifact.

As idealistic as it may sound, it is not as simple in reality. The approach to design is reversed but the means of production can be the same. The ideology is based on the recognition of some of the physical qualities of furniture and not on specific production methods. The long tradition of furniture and its intimate relationship with man suggests that unless it is to become nothing more than a blank anonymous piece of equipment, it must have an emotional content. Having the mechanistic barrier reduced allows the widely different forms of expression that designer-manufacturers explore come to the fore in the designed artifact.

Oscar Tusquets Blanca, a distinguished Spanish designer, sums up the outstanding points of difference between the former type of designer and his manufacturer, and the designer-manufacturer:

> It seems clear to me that nowadays the most creative young designers often ignore the problems of production, usefulness and cost, which should be important aspects of their work. Top producers are more interested in marketing than in the product itself, often regarding it as more important to be on time for the next fair than to work patiently at improving the design. My own compelling need, for example, to revise prototype after prototype in order to achieve something acceptable begins to seem merely quaint and inconvenient. And the fantastic prices asked for furniture make me wonder how much relates to the materials and labour and how much to the advertising, the expensive paper for the useless catalogue, and the pawns for the well-attended cocktail reception.
> (Tusquets Blanca, 1989/90, p.9).

THE ITALIAN SITUATION AND SUCCESS

The cause and effect of Italy's strong design tradition is based on a special relationship that exists between designer and manufacturer. It is worth noting this in the light of that relationship that exists between the designer and manufacturer in England. The best results are still obtained where a subtle dialogue is sustained between the designer and manufacturer. This fact has been highlighted by Oscar Tusquets Blanca:

> This dialogue is essential; it cannot be improvised and it can easily be downgraded. It is based on mutual respect; on freedom but with specific requirements; and on formality, but with fun and brightness. Although no one in Italy has emerged to take the place of those brilliant designers who erected a magic bridge between art and industry (Zanuso, Castiglioni, Magistretti...), their country is still undoubtedly in the forefront of design because it preserves such a dialogue. This approach does not work solely with Italy's national designers; its results can be seen in the work of guest designers from Japan, France, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Spain and England.
> (Tusquets Blanca, 1989/90, p.6).)

The designer plays the role of 'generatore di idee', he advances a product in terms of atmosphere, references and impressions he wishes to put across. The manufacturer leads a team of design engineers, marketeers, and other industrial designers, etc., all with the aim of putting the 'idea' into practical terms. The manufacturer prides himself on his ability to understand and make the designer's sketchbook a part of reality. The designer is not expected to finalise the technical details of his/her creation. The manufacturer sees it as their responsibility to overcome the technical impossibilities presented to them. Increasingly, technical innovations arise out of this trend. Rather than wait for new techniques to be developed it is the designer who expects technology to do the catching up. This relationship has been borne out by the furniture industry and its heavy emphasis on the aesthetic component of their products.

The product ranges of companies such as Zanotta, Cassina and Allesi are presented like a collection of individual personalities. The emphasis is on the original idea, glossy catalogues featuring the initial concept sketches alongside the final product. 'Look how close they are', they proudly proclaim.

Unfortunately this level of communication is seldom if ever reached between a British designer and a British manufacturer. However, there are some exceptions like S.C.P. (Sheridan Coakley Productions). What is good in Italian design is probably the debate and disputation that the designer and manufacturer undertake collectively. Since British furniture designers cannot reach this degree of collective dialogue with British industrialists, they have sought and found other means. New British furniture designers have become synonymous with manufacturers in Italy, Spain, the U.S. and Japan. According to Floris Ven Den Broecke, 'The state of manufacturing and marketing in the U.K. will not allow the maturing of young design talent - there can be no other reason. Those who do get on do so by working abroad or for foreign manufacturers', (Van den Broecke, 1992, p.57).

Quite a number of English furniture designers of quality and influence are begging the question why, with the array of talent in England, cannot they produce work of comparable stature to other European countries. This no doubt reflects the contradiction of the industry and the difficulty which many a designer-manufacturer has encountered. Indeed the emergence of such large numbers of designer-manufacturers in many ways acts as a reminder to British furniture manufacturers of the deplorable state of the industry.

CHAPTER 4

DESIGNER-MANUFACTURERS: PRODUCT EXPRESSION

It is unique to England and to London, in particular, that the designer-manufacturer has emerged so strongly and not elsewhere in Europe. The reason for this centres around the relationship between the industrialists and the designer and between the designer and the manufactured object.

If the increase in the manufacture of furniture since the turn of the century could be demonstrated in a three dimensional object, it would look like an upside down pyramid that is forever increasing in scale at the top. This means that the production of furniture has gone from very small production-based craft workshop industries to large scale mass production furniture in the form of national and multinational manufacturing firms.

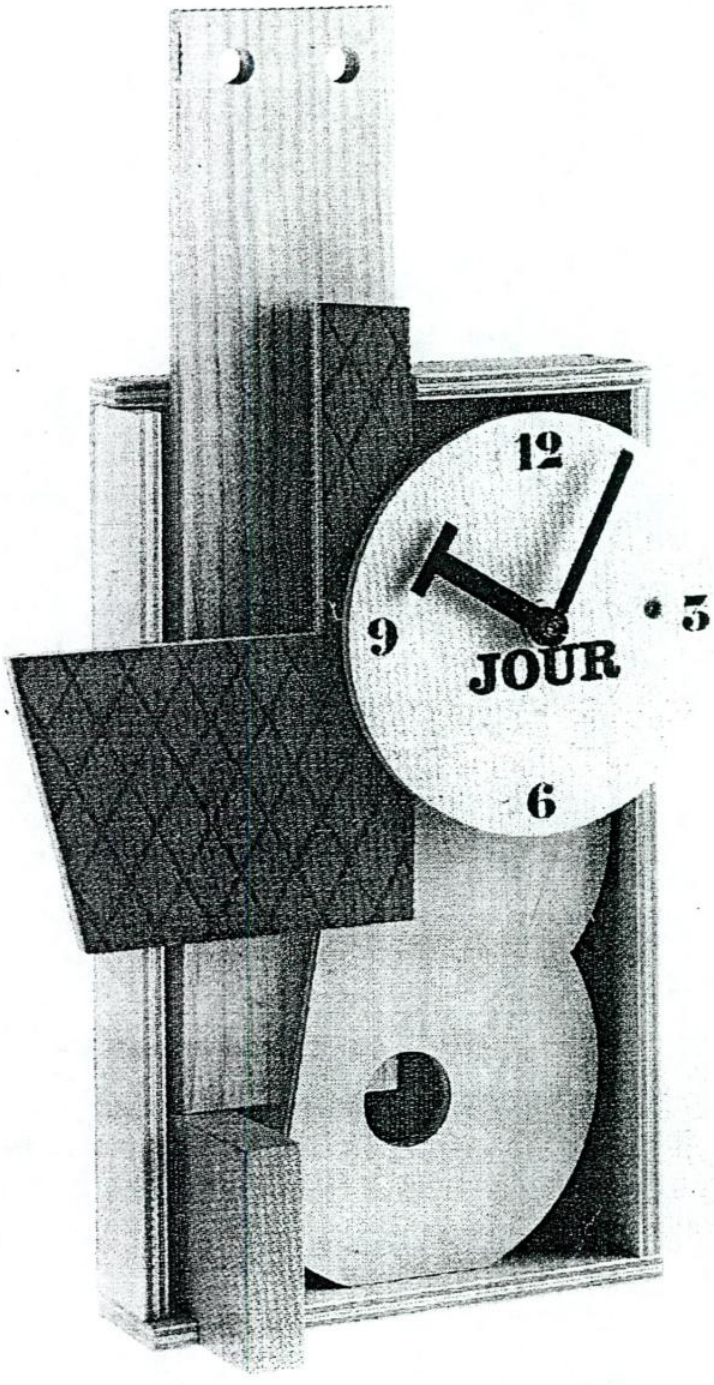
The produce of the much larger manufacturing firms is regarded by the designer-manufacturer to be lacking individuality because firstly, there is so much mass production and, secondly, it is mass production of one aesthetic style. He feels restricted by this and asserts that this 'black leather and chrome' aesthetic is anonymous and generalised. However, this lack of individuality is rooted in the practicalities of manufacturing - the forms and materials used are relative to the means of production. The other factor that led to the success of this aesthetic was that these objects were initially seen as functional pieces of furniture and were not ornamental.

Bland aesthetic design allegedly causes the consumer to feel excluded. Like the stylised black chic hi-fi system, the form covers the working parts. It gives the assurance that the inner working parts of the system will perform well and efficiently. The attitude that this style can be said to express is one in which

the consumer's faith and allegiance to the product is achieved by stylising the product with adopted imagery. In this case, high-tech imagery is used to cover a hi-fi system, (Illus. 20). For the designer-manufacturer this design ethic is dull, platonic, non-invigorating and culturally insignificant even though most people, most of the time, want to be spared the details of the workings of the objects they buy - whether it is furniture or stereo equipment.

The dissatisfaction of certain designers in having to comply with the above design aesthetic approach manifests itself in stylistic individuality. This may be ironic in relation to the developments in Western society, which are towards globalism and corporatism. Such developments in advertising, for instance, have made Coca Cola, Pepsi Cola, McDonalds, American Express, Sony, Toyota, Mercedes etc. known to all the world, from Sydney to Colorado to Calcutta. Strangely, designers try to persuade manufacturers that individualism, niche marketing, niche design and serving minority interests should become the rule. However, manufacturers will only become interested if it can be made more profitable than mass markets.

Two outspoken designers since the early 1980s, Gerard Taylor and Daniel Weil, have opened the forum further by regarding stylistic approaches to be more than the fixations of certain individuals. Taylor's Jour Clock was a project that was funded by the Design Council-funded consultancy for a Birmingham manufacturer. Taylor and Weil were asked to design a product that would utilise this manufacturer's machine-ware. Their result was the Jour Clock (Illus. 43). On seeing it, the Birmingham manufacturer took fright and refused to pay the designers. Constructed out of inexpensive plywood panels, Jour Clock posits a return to the multi-planar Cubist imagery of Weil's 1984 clock, Hinge, a connection reinforced by its title which is a pun on the newspaper fragments (Le Journal) found in early Cubist collages as well as the hours in the day.



(Illustration 43).
Jour Clock - Designed by Weil and Taylor.
Weil and Taylor's Jour Clock uses a Cubist vocabulary to analyse the structure.

Produced by Anthologie Quartett.

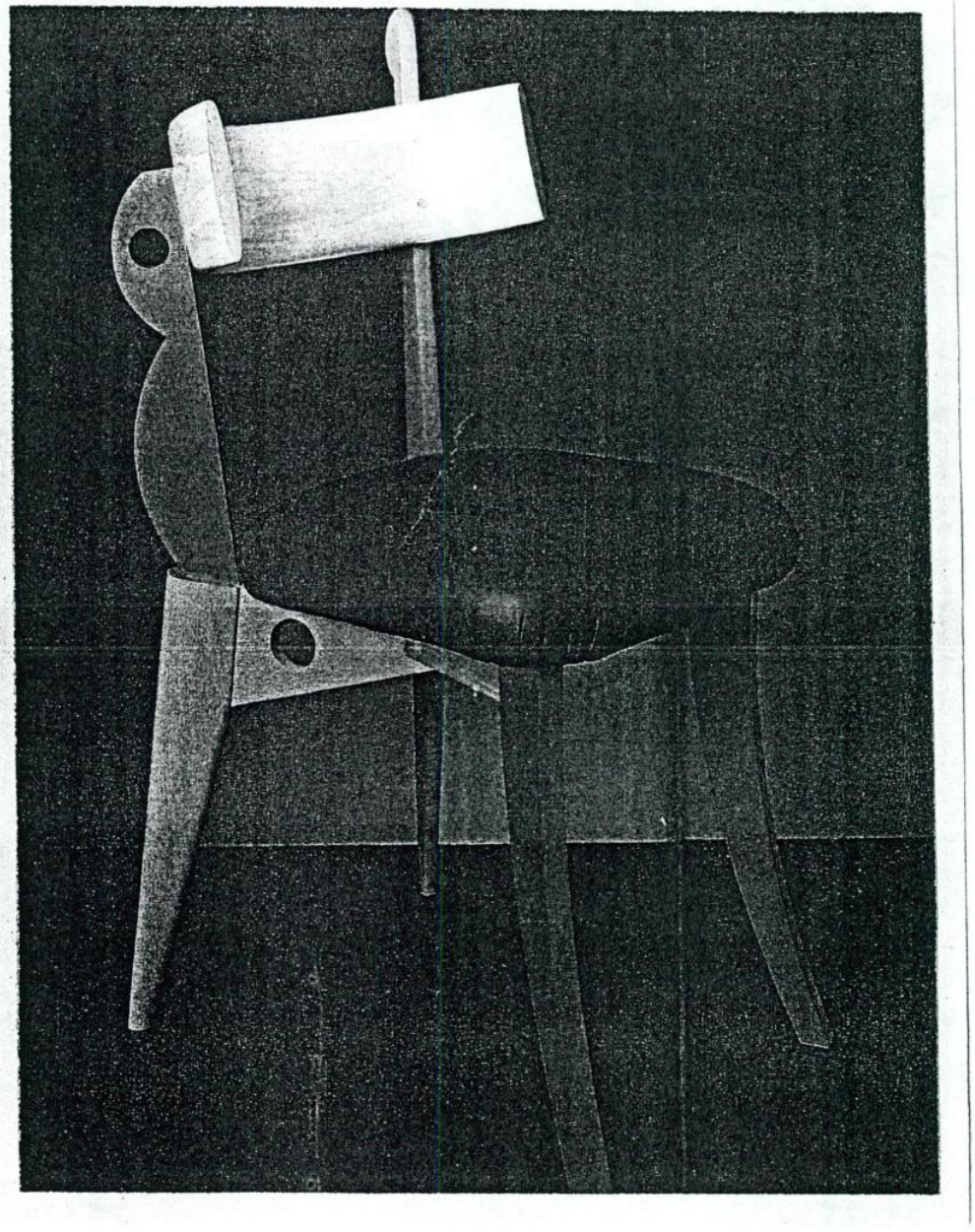
Similar associations with Cubist art is evident in a chair of theirs called Quasimodo (Illus. 44). The brief they were given asked them to reinterpret nineteenth century drawing room furniture in a contemporary manner. In the course of their research, they became fascinated by the eccentric construction of the concealed joinery in these early upholstered pieces. As a result, Quasimodo combines a mock traditional approach to construction with a Cubist treatment of structure to produce a chair that must be viewed in the round, like a piece of sculpture before it can be fully understood. The wayward asymmetry, random Cubist perforations, eccentrically deployed colours and essential simplicity can be read as an implicit criticism of the Modernist tyranny of steel, which Weil and Taylor readily admit 'leaves them cold'.

But as with other emerging styles, it would be a mistake to discuss the use of Cubist gestures of these pieces as fixations on behalf of the designers, still less as empty exercises in historical double-coding. For Weil and Taylor, Cubism is just a method or a device in the analytical tool box.

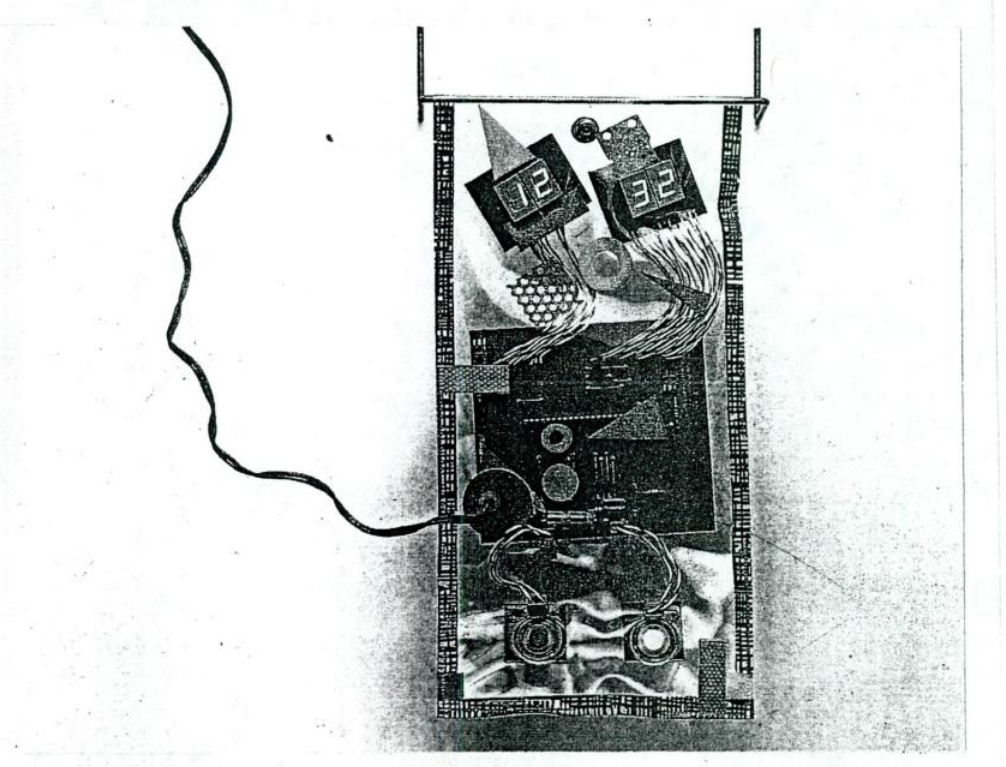
> The clocks and radios Weil made in the early 1980s demystified the technology of the object by rendering the container transparent, disclosing the frail components for inspection and, of course, remystified the object as a presence in the process, (Illus. 45). (Poynor, 1988, p.34).

The willingness to draw on the vocabulary of art as a means of expressing the object is no doubt one reason for the following accusation from Peter York. According to York:

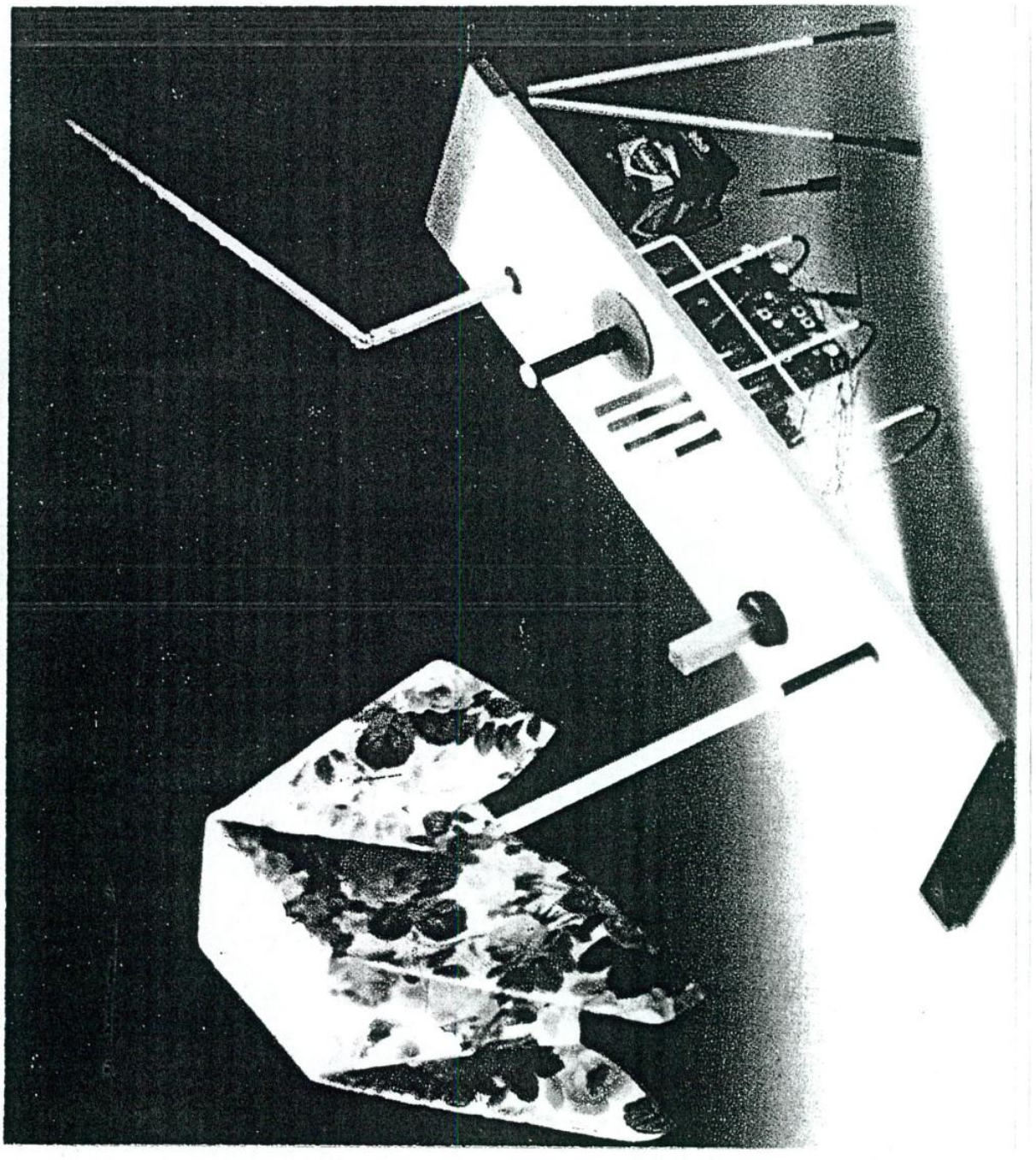
> Weil's lopsided mousetrap, (Illus. 46) exemplified all that was wrong with contemporary British design. They call it design but you can tell from the price that it's actually art... Now the compilers of New British Design think that this is an important little radio. They think it's a milestone in British design. They put it on the cover. My instinct is to step on it. (Poynor, 1988, p.32)



(Illustration 44).
Quasimodo - Designed by Weil and Taylor.
It combines a mock traditional approach to construction in mood with a Cubist treatment of structure. The chair must be viewed in the round before it can be fully understood. The wayward asymmetry, random Cubist perforations, eccentrically developed colours, and essential simplicity can be read as an implicit criticism of the modernist tyranny of steel.
Produced by Anthologie Quartett.



(Illustration 45).
100 Objects Mirrors of Silenced Time - Designed by Daniel Weil.



(Illustration 46).
Small Door Radio - Designed by Daniel Weil
Produced in Japan.

Small Door Radio is an oblique look at British taste and the old-fashionedness of British domestic design. It is design as commentary, design as narrative; it questions our standing as consumers and the choices that we make in the act of home decoration. The guts of the radio hang beneath the wooden platform - they come from a Roberts radio, renowned for its solidity, good quality and boring design. The images the exposed parts of the radio convey, are those of the bomb sites of grey Post Second World War Britain period (for which Britons have an enduring affection), and the important role the radio played, as the bearer of news, of events, dangers, etc.

The pastel switches, with their candy-coloured stripes, recall small British confectionery shops selling sweets made by tiny firms in the heart of Britain's industrial arena. The positioning of the speaker on a pole and its covering with a piece of flower-patterned chintz is reminiscent of the popular habit in the Forties and Fifties of covering things that were new, special and in need of protection, things such as televisions or radios or the backs of new fireside chairs. Weil's radio is allusive, it causes much puzzlement, annoyance, some ridicule and some delight.

If a leading sociologist such as Peter York can miss the point of such research so disastrously, Weil and Taylor will have even more difficulty in trying to talk around blunt-speaking British industrialists. The work Weil has produced is all designed for easy and cheap batch or mass production. If the prices have been high, Weil, like other designer manufacturers, has been obliged to produce short runs of the pieces himself. Hence the expense involved in proving a point.

Ironically, the majority of work produced by Weil and Taylor is readily accepted once outside England. They carry out projects in Australia for Esprit in association with Ettore Sottsass Associati

in Italy. They have done a shop for Alessi (Italy) in Bari. They have produced an executive furniture range for Knoll International in the United States and Germany; they have designed furniture for Driade, Italy, through the manufacturer, Rainen Krause's German company, Anthologie Quartett. A Japanese firm now batch produces Weil's 'lopsided mousetrap', Small Door Radio for the French, German and Italian markets and Anthologie Quartett also produce Jour Clock as they do Quasimodo.

Weil's design philosophy states that:

> Design has to separate idea from form to be able to reposition form successfully. You have to be able to deal with the abstract before you deal with the form. Design has dealt far too long with the form first: form follows function.
> (Poynor, 1988, p.35).

Weil and Taylor's disenchantment with design in the late 1980s and early 1990s is not only based on the fact that they cannot find British manufacturers to produce what they design, it is also based on what is being produced and retailed on the home market. Taylor says,

> I think Oxford Street is an extremely depressing street. It's design as comfort, design to pacify, design to round the edges, design to give a soft light. None of these shops take an assertive stance. They actually do the opposite. They negate complexity. They negate clarity.
> (Poynor, 1988, p.35).

The question is, what is it that Italy has or the Scandinavian countries have that gives them the leading edge in the design world? It is high time that a British industrialist had the vision, the taste and the cultural conviction to take up the challenge. Asked if the cycle of making and selling might be broken in design's favour, Gerard Taylor uses the example of Italy:

> Design is only as good as its industrialists. In Italy the industrialists you deal with are culturally sophisticated people. They know a little about art, literature and music. What it needs is people who perceive industrial manufacture to be a long term process. Alessi is an example of an Italian company prepared to make this kind of cultural investment. (Poynor, 1988, p.35).

The underlying message is that British industrialists are not interested in embarking on tentative experiments in design and thus do not wish to establish themselves in this respect. Instead, they opt for the production of commercial products at moderate prices, whereas the industrial strength of Italy grows annually because of the constant design input. In this respect, the Japanese are a close second and are increasingly using Western designers, e.g. Idee Furniture Manufacturers use Philippe Starck, Marie-Christine Dormer, etc. France and Germany have now just started a number of the large industries in this area of design furniture and show signs of good progress. 'The United Kingdom' according to Oscar Tusquets Blanca,

> ...continues to nurture promising young designers and suggestive prototypes and ideas but few industrial realities. My good friend fashion designer, Antonio Miro said ... Although new ideas in dress come from England - the punk look, for instance - they are never marketed successfully there, whereas they are in France, Italy and Japan.
> (Tusquets Blanca, 1989/90, p.6).

Arad, Lane, Weil, Taylor and other designers have become exasperated with the situation in England and with the unwillingness of industrialists to listen to them. They have, in turn, become manufacturers of their own products in England while working for other foreign companies. Since industry refuses to accommodate them, they have sought and found other means that allow them moderate production runs of their work. Now it is normal to find graduates embarking on similar routes as the above designer-makers.

Headlines like 'Make or Break for the Go-It-Alone Graduates' demonstrate that this phenomenon is certainly exerting some influence. This headline is based on an exhibition at the Third Direct Design Show 1991, where Britain's designer-makers displayed their most recent work. The article in Design Week, 23 August 1991, goes on to say that enthusiastic crowds attended the show at Kensington Town Hall and the sums of money that changed hands signified that the designer-manufacturers' furniture, clocks, screens, carpets, clocks, ceramics, silverware and stencils on view succeeded in capturing the public's imagination.

In the industrialised world, Japan sets the competition. Against a competitor whose quality control, product range, delivery and after-sales service is so good, any advantage the West might have in design aesthetics is marginal as a competitive edge. The Japanese strategy for breaking into European markets came to fruition in the 1970s. British industry, in particular, lost out to the Japanese in the manufacture of motorcycles, cars, radios and televisions. Britain's furniture industry is now similarly threatened. Japanese design (now executed by renowned Western designers), innovation and manufacture are quickly synthesised into a production system that brings out new items with astonishing speed into the global marketplace. The West has a marginal competitive edge. Its innovation, symbolic, metaphorical styling is essential in the battle for product differentiation.

Mass produced furniture is becoming the same 'below the line', meaning the means of production are standard on a global level, the materials of processing them are standard on a global level, therefore the aesthetic style is the same on a global level. A saturation point is evident. The advantage to the manufacturer with foresight lies in making the product stylistically different.

Much now depends on the style of the product communicating the right sort of values - the values shared by the consumer through the eyes of the designer. Style is a reference to the class,

profession, aspiration and age group of the targeted consumer group. What manufacturers in the Far East now demand are huge amounts of information. One of the tasks under way by manufacturers in the East - where there is a fear of the growing strength of a consolidated E.C. - is detailed research into national characteristics in European design. Eastern manufacturers are seeding design consultancies in Europe. In 1991, Goldstar Inc., a Korean firm, set up its European design consultancy here in Dublin. In December 1991 - January 1992, Sony (Japan) set up two new consultancies, one in Barcelona and one in Milan, the most prominent design capitals of Europe. The objective is to use Western European designers to find out what characteristics in styling matter most to consumers in each of the European countries.

Peter Dormer feels,

> ...what will emerge in the 1990s is more niche marketing with styles thought carefully, (with an eye on their symbolic content) to appeal to ever more rigorously defined groups of consumers. Consumer groups, as defined by age, profession and the rest will be targeted and seen to have more in common with one another across the world than with different groups in their own countries .
> (Dormer, 1987, p.60)

The recent growth of designer-manufacturers in England can be seen as a reactionary response to several factors. The first is that the continuing absence of design jobs in British industry is swelling the number of designer-manufacturers. The second is the refusal of industrialists to recognise the importance of stylistic meanings, metaphors and other tool-in-box methods designers may employ to engage our interests. More and more sensible design and quality production is taken for granted. Therefore, designers need to search out new ways to make design appeal to our sensory and emotive requirements . The industrialists' attitude differs in this respect. Hence, designers seek other means that allow them to manufacturer their own designs. The third factor is seen

as a parallel response to the future growth and diversification of niche markets. Design and manufacture must, as Frampton put it, 'bring out notions of roots, identity, place, culture, sub-culture - all of those things which have to do with locale'. (Ritchie and Calzolari, 1984, p.103)

CHAPTER 5

AN ESTIMATION OF FUTURE SUCCESS FOR THE DESIGNER-MANUFACTURER OF CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE

It seems that the market for the designer maker of furniture in England is relatively poor. According to Jane Lamacraft:

> The furniture buying public is notoriously traditional in its tastes and, while happy to splash out on, for example, clothes, remains reluctant to invest in design in the home. Spending £60 on a Paul Smith shirt is one thing, parting with five times that amount for a little something from Philippe Starck seems to be another matter.
> (Lamacraft, 1989, p.43)

The report goes on to state that in England for every designer/manufacturer that succeeds in the furniture business, a lot less successful designer/manufacturers sink without trace from the marketplace. For every Morrison, Hilton, Dixon, Arad and Lane there are a hundred hopefuls who are not going to make it. Theodorous Theodorou, who set up his own furniture design and manufacturing company after leaving the London College of Furniture, but later quit to start the three-man importing, exporting and distributing operation, IKON, has,

> designers approaching me weekly: They have taken an idea and knocked it into 3-D form in the garage. They seem to think that resolving the manufacturing problem is it but it isn't. For a truly international piece of design, you have to consider how it's going to be packaged, who's going to distribute it, the ex-factory price, the distribution costs and so on. Design is not just thinking of a chair and dumping it on someone's doorstep.
> (Lamacraft, 1989, p.43).

The poor state of relations between the British furniture manufacturing industry and the absence of designer jobs has given rise to a large number of graduate designers who have decided to

go-it-alone and set up their own manufacturing companies. Success, however, depends on marketing strategies. Joe Tibbetts of Jardine Llewellyn Partnership castigates Britain's design colleges for not placing more emphasis on marketing in course curricula. This can be seen as the reason for naivety among designers who wish to become designer-manufacturers and the high number of failures.

Designers wishing to embark on such a career are innocent about the realities of running a business and initially assume that domestic consumers provide the main audience for design. Many lack market know-how and so fail to reach any audience and simply come and go with hardly a whimper. Despite this, it has not deterred the recent rash of designer-manufacturers, distribution set-ups and marketing operations: Viaduct, De Soto, The Edge, MAD, Jardine LLellwyn Partnership and so on. Success seems to be attainable if good promotional work is carried out. The Third Direct Design Show in 1987 was hailed a complete success by Jeremy Myerson. Myerson believes it was the marketing muscle behind the exhibition that succeeded in capturing the public's imagination. It was a 'hard-headed vehicle and public showcase' for the various talents of seventy designer-manufacturers, organised with precision by the Jardine Llewellyn Partnership. Organiser, Joe Tibbetts, who spearheaded the success of the Third Direct Design Show, believes that the

> ...burgeoning designer-manufacturer movement can do without the public subsidies of art bureaucrats. What it needs is the marketing back-up and direct access to the general public which willingly votes with its cheque book when given the chance.
> (Myerson, 1987, p.35)

However, regular exhibitions can put heavy financial burdens on small companies due to the cost of stands and travel expenses. Beyond that, the retail market for contemporary furniture is tiny, the number of retail shops across the British Isles selling modern pieces to the domestic market is 'enough to be counted on the fingers of two hands', (Lamacraft).

Craig Allen, buyer for one of London's and England's more adventurous contemporary furniture retail outlets, the Conran Shop, believes,

> ...that we are not on the verge of the Great British Public realising the quality of modern design. And what any new furniture-making company has to grasp is that it'll be very lucky to survive by selling in just this country, there must be a European marketplace as well.
> (Lamacraft, 1989, p.43)

While Craig Allen of the Conran Shop argues that modern furniture is not in the shops because no one wants to buy it, or that it is only possible to sell it abroad successfully and while Jane Lamacraft believes that wringing money-making margins out of modern furniture in England or in the British Isles for that matter is impossible because the buying public are so traditional, IKON, the distributing firm, protests that the reason people aren't buying it is because it is not being made available. IKON emphasises, 'The market is only as big as the people who sell it. The public will buy it if it's there'.

Success in the market seems attainable if the marketing groundwork has been well covered, coupled with distribution and retail outlets at home and abroad. S.C.P. can be described as a firm that combines the above and more in a successful recipe, headed by Sheridan Coakley, who has left blazed trails in his path in order to find a place in the market for his company, S.C.P. Sheridan Coakley Productions (S.C.P.) batch manufacturers, distributes and retails contemporary furniture by Jasper Morrison, Matthew Hilton and Nigel Coates (designer-manufacturers and graduates of the R.C.A.). His S.C.P. firm has a turnover of £1million. Although he is the British distributor for Alivar's range of classics by the likes of Mies and Corb, which are safely saleable classics of the 1930s modern movement, he could give up selling the classics and make profit from contemporary pieces on their own. However, by

selling commercial certainties such as Le Corbusier's Chaise Longue, Coakley allows himself the margins to indulge in pieces like Hilton's Antelope Table (Illus. 47) which he sees as tomorrow's modern classics.

Matthew Hilton now has nine pieces of furniture in production with S.C.P. as well as sixteen items of metalware; Jasper Morrison has eight pieces and Nigel Coates has five. All three expect to show new designs in Milan at the 1992 Furniture Fair. Coakley has taken over the manufacture from the designers but he still operates the production of the pieces in a similar manner to the designers. He buys the services of small manufacturing companies as he needs them and uses several suppliers to make elements of the same piece. Coakley's network in East London, Woolwich and Essex includes engineers, upholsterers, aluminium casters, polishing plants, glassworks and cabinet makers. As a manufacturer of contemporary furniture, his prices are as low as possible. In Coakley's view prices of contemporary furniture are too high. In Europe he uses agents, who take ten per cent, rather than distributors who maintain stock and therefore require thirty or forty per cent. In Britain, most pieces are sold exclusively by .S.C.P. to avoid an additional retailer's mark-up.

Coakley is among few in England producing and retailing modern furniture in the manner that he does. As a manufacturer he never exerts aesthetic influence over the work of the designer-manufacturers. He allows them to produce their own furniture in the manner of designer-manufacturers. If he sees commercial possibilities or potential, he distributes and retails the pieces and eventually he takes responsibility for the manufacture through the workshop services used by the designer-manufacturers or through other services which he hires himself.

In the mid-eighties when most of the designer-manufacturers were starting out, they found their materials in skips. However, increased prosperity has meant that, for the most part, they now

(Illustration 47).
Antelope Table - Designed by Matthew Hilton.
"Anthropomorphic" is the label that Hilton attaches to his work. The Antelope Table, with its two antelope legs as though poised to spring, takes its inspiration from the bush animals of Africa where he grew up. There is less handcraft in his pieces that their quirky individuality suggests: he is seriously concerned with the technicalities of production in reasonable numbers, and with methods of tooling up factories for batch runs. Initially produced by Hilton himself.
Produced by S.C.P.(London)

buy their materials. However, the aesthetic remains firmly rooted within the tradition of Marcel Duchamp and art schools, rather than in the Chippendale finesse. City Steel was an exhibition of furnishings held in March 1991. According to Robert Silver:

> Everything is essentially big, intended to grab attention and dominate its space, of which it needs lots - it is furniture for converted warehouses, not bedsits.
> (Silver, 1991, p.12).

As well as drawing the public, exhibitions also attract a large number of design consultants, architects, interior decorators, who scout the stands in search of unusual pieces or for art and craft works to commission. The number of designer-manufacturers is almost limitless in scope and sophistication and many interior designers and architects are turning to those at the fringes of artistic design for unusual items. It is through these chance encounters that designer-makers reach their second market.

Architects and other professionals in the field are more and more on the outlook for people to commission in order to achieve a result that is often better executed and certainly more interesting than an off-the-peg solution. Suppose an architect wants an alternative to the ubiquitous Arteluce Jill Uplighter. He or she could design a fitting himself, but the chances are the time at his/her disposal is limited, and he probably has neither the inclination nor the expertise to refine all the details, nor the knowledge of a contractor who can make it properly. How much easier it is to use a designer-manufacturer, who probably is a specialist or who knows or works with a specialist.

Danny Lane, who has designed and manufactured steel and glass and striated glass chairs, is typical. 'I am a worker, I like working with my hands. It's a cheap and effective way of developing an idea...and you can discover valuable techniques.

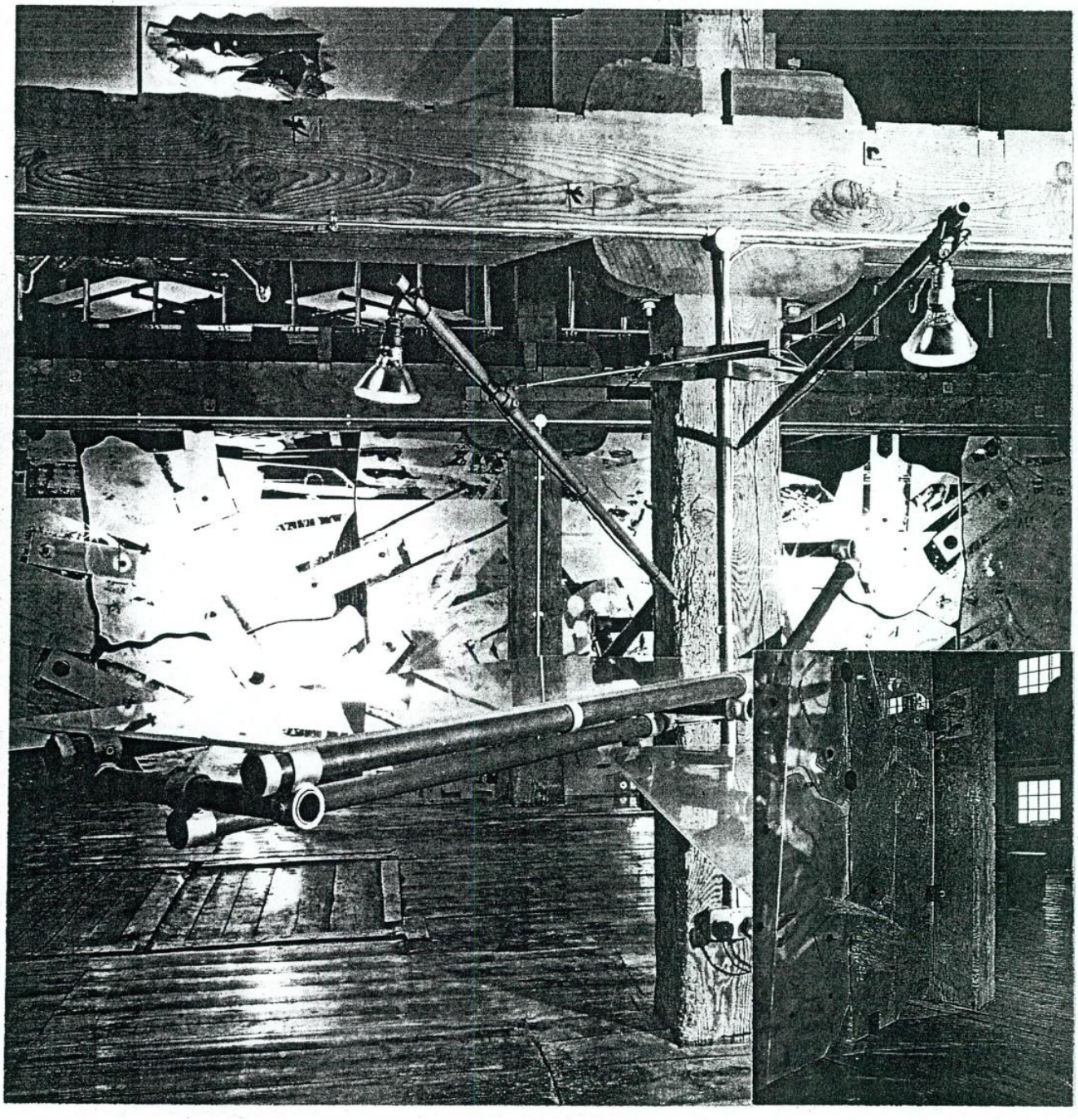
The aim is to get the concept and the material to come together'. (Buttery, 1987, p.38)

Lane and the small team working for his company, Glassworks, produces his own designs as well as producing commissioned work to specifications. This combination means that they not only have very good industrial facilities for cutting, sandblasting, engraving and polishing glass, but also a high level of expertise to offer. These are instances of true collaboration, however, Lane has had disagreements with designers who have refused to take his advice.

Lane's most successful collaboration has been with Ron Arad. Initially, they worked together on furniture and lately they have worked together on interiors where Lane was given almost total artistic freedom. For example, in an office project in Wapping, Arad was designing the interior of offices on an open studio level. He wanted the conference area to be divided off. Lane was given measurements and left to get on with it. He produced visual screens, using metal and different thickness of toughened glass (Illus. 48).

> Most architects only come up with what they can draw. They are limited by their own drawing skills. I think it's much more exciting to do things when the architect and client don't know exactly how it's going to turn. With Lane, it can only be good and it may also be fantastic.
> (Buttery, 1987, p.38).

Another designer-manufacturer, Gordon Burnett, has had successful collaborations with several design practices. Burnett studied jewellery at the R.C.A. and first became known for his large clocks. His firm of two, recently renamed Burnett's Interior Metalwork, has expanded mostly into light fittings and door furniture, acting as consultants to interior designers, as designer-makers, or as specialist contractors. Commissions have included a 10 foot diameter double-faced clock, suspended in the Scottish Exhibition Centre in Glasgow, for James Parr Associates;



(Illustration 48).
Screens designed by Danny Lane.
Lane's screens for a Wapping office conference area feature metal frames, toughened glass in different thicknesses, with elaborate sand-blasted artwork decoration on the glass surfaces.
Produced by Glassworks.

an underfloor clock to be installed in the Kensington High Street branch of Next; light fittings for Wang headquarters and the new Lloyds Bank at Hayes Galleria, both done by the architects, D.E.G.W.

Burnett enjoys collaborating with designers:

> Pitching in on the design is very important because you cut down on the time taken in finding out what works...It's very stimulating too - sometimes they're thinking about totally different things from what I'm thinking about, so all kinds of influences and aesthetic approaches come together.
> (Buttery, 1987, p.36).

Burnett believes that in the past, architects were ignorant about the benefits that were possible when both disciplines worked together. The old English word 'craft' simply meant skill. Unfortunately, the term has become burdened with a whole range of pejorative associations. At worst, it reminds people of nubby brown pots and macrame hanging images. Both of the above associations have not got the remotest relevance to commercial interior design, with its tight budgets, deadlines and modern aesthetic.

However, through the use of well marketed exhibitions and the increase in public awareness, the designer-manufacturer could be with us for a while yet. Certainly, the evidence is there to prove that the work of such people is suited to a much wider audience than was initially presumed. In the past, designer-makers would have been labelled as artistic craftspeople, most of whom either worked directly for private or corporate clients or for commercial galleries. Therefore access to such work was restricted to a certain extent from being enjoyed by the public on a more personal level. Now, through exhibitions, through firms like S.C.P, and through modern furniture retail outlets and shops owned directly by designer-manufacturers, it is anticipated that a wider audience will be able to avail of the work produced by these

individuals.

Architect and furniture designer, Charlotte Perriand, believes the future will see more and more designer-manufacturers working in this manner, producing designs, manufacturing and retailing them by their own accord.

> I think we can anticipate a return to a more primitive form of craftsmanship - not in the sense of going back to the techniques of the past, but a return to smaller scales of operation, making use of all the potential offered by present and future technology. There may still be a need for manufacture on a large scale to meet some need, but more and more will be produced by individuals, by artisans - the impact on creativity could be enormous, each individual could diversify.... (Ellis, 1984, p.25).

A combination of industrial-like aesthetic and marketing sensibilities has provided a lucrative beginning for Edge furniture. The Edge Company hallmarks are steel mesh, sheet steel and glass; the metal is often bent or twisted and given a variety of darkly lustrous finishes. They are one of the many recently established designer-manufacturing companies. The Edge is a small firm, it consists of two individuals, Suzanne Darling and Dawn Carter. Suzanne trained at the Wolverhampton Polytechnic as a product designer; Dawn Carter studied sculpture at Birmingham.

The Edge's furniture workshop is on the top of a large warehouse in Hackney. Their work attracted attention at the Design Magazine sponsored stand at last year's 'Uneasy Chair Exhibition'. Terence Conran now stocks Edge furniture pieces and glassware in his shops. They have done steel mesh windows for one of Nicholas Grimshaw's (leading London architect and designer) houses in Camden. They freely use steel mesh oxidised and crushed to produce a fabric-like appearance which creates prismatic effects when light passes through it. This aesthetic inevitably draws comparison with the work of Ron Arad but this work seems more amenable, less disturbing, smaller and sweeter.

The success of the Edge's market is very much based on Steven Taylor, who masterminds an independent, design marketing operation. Taylor, formerly deputy editor of Arena and The Face finds work for Edge, places the resulting products and handles the financial and contractual affairs. Suzanne Darling welcomes Taylor's input to the enterprise. So far since they started in 1990, two thirds of the Edge commissions all have been one-off propositions for domestic interiors; one third have been for commercial premises. The business plan includes evening out these proportions and getting business outside the U.K., in Europe and Japan.

Life is precarious for such fledgling ventures such as the Edge. Working outside the industrial furniture manufacturing framework is nowhere more difficult than in the economic and manufacturing climate of London at the present time. Since its birth, the Edge has gained high level recognition in its first two years. It is sensibly tailoring its product to the careful buyer. The Edge, like other designer-manufacturers, has maintained a level of operation that yet could become prominent in the manufacture of furniture in England. Its strength is in its flexibility and range of services which puts it on a level that threatens the lead that mass produced furniture has had for decades. The other aspect of designer-manufacturing is that ceramics, screens, carpets, clocks etc. are also beginning to be produced in this manner.

The market for contemporary furniture in the rest of Europe has grown. Elke Pumpe-Kruger, writing on the retail of contemporary furniture, states that the market has increased over the last few years. She believes this is due to the fact that the mentality of the consumer has changed. 'They no longer buy the way they did once. But this has not been the only cause of the recession in the furniture industry: the real reason lies in the fact that the way in which people furnish their homes has undergone a radical

change'. She further states that now,

> People pick out individual pieces of furniture and set them in their homes in a way that satisfies their own personal taste and desires as far as possible. And this approach is by no means an isolated phenomenon: it applies to every age group and to every class of society.
> (Bretagna, 1986, p.247)

This offers limitless scope for contemporary furniture and furnishings. In France, furniture design production and retail has undergone radical change. Contemporary design has taken over the streets, new showrooms are opening. Galleries like Neotu are springing up, specialising in displaying and selling prototypes and experimental furniture that is produced in small numbers. At the same time, with the launching of Francois Mitterand' 'Grands Projets', design commissions have multiplied and creative output has been notably stimulated.

According to Odile Fillion,

> Modern furniture showrooms are being opened in small towns, an occurrence that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago... three new producers have moved into the market place, each with a range of 'leading edge' products that will result in plenty of fine products in future years.
> (Bretagna, 1986, p.247).

CHAPTER 6

DESIGNER-MANUFACTURER - A NEW INDUSTRIAL PHENOMENON?

The following chapter questions the means at the designer-manufacturer's disposal that he or she uses to produce and manufacture their products.

This chapter draws parallels between industry in Italy and the designer-manufacturer phenomenon in England. It points to the success of Italian design and manufacture and its unique approach.

In the successful design capitals of the world, the type of industries that make them thus are often small industries dotted around the perimeters rather than large national and multinational industrial conglomerates.

Looking at the fashion industry in Britain, we see that it is big business economically but it is composed of many small independent individual firms, each working within their own set framework, doing their own thing and making it pay.

Looking at Milan still the undisputed design centre of the world, we see that its industries have traditionally (pre-World War One) been made up of small businesses with artisan-based economies. Italy was not and is not a country which has a great number of large companies but there are exceptions such as Fiat, Olivetti and Vespa. Booms come and go but Italy has continued to succeed industrially in a fashion unlike other industrial countries. The continuance of many relatively small businesses has created a culture of manufacturing flexibility, low tooling investment and market controlled manufacture. This means that Italian manufacturers do not invest heavily in machinery and technology. It is a market-controlled manufacture which means that if the

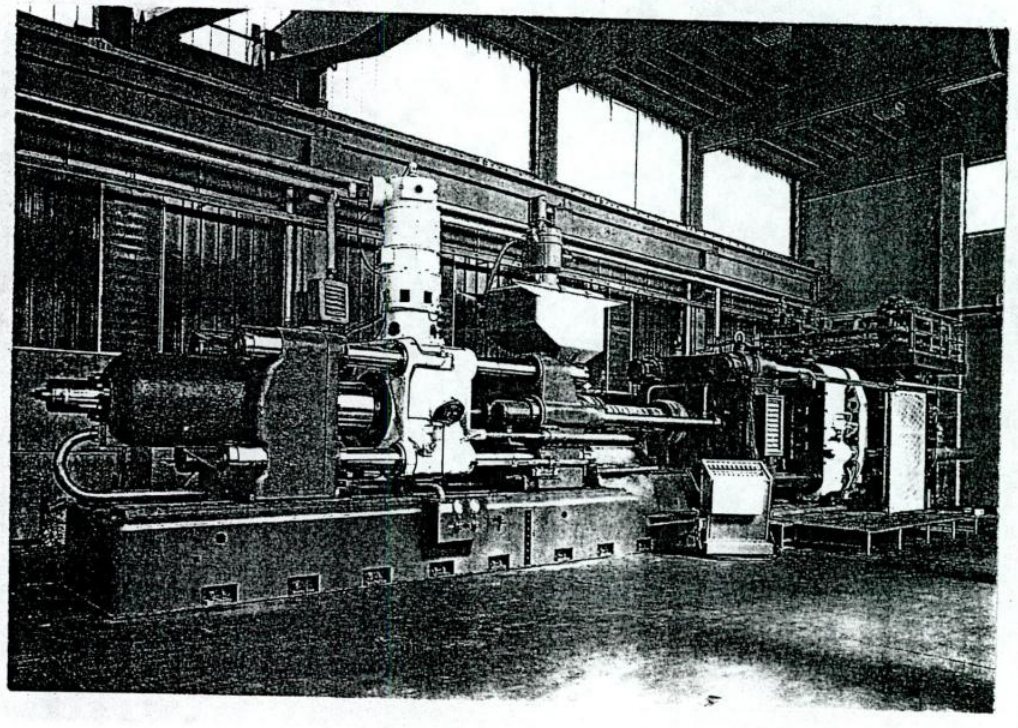
product does well on the market, more of the product is produced. Then second level investments are made. Initially, all products are produced in limited numbers and tested on the marketplace. If the product performs well then it is produced by mechanical means, again depending on the product. On average, most products involve a combination of artisan hand assembly and mechanical production.

Italian design, however, is not based on industrial means nor is it dependent on the technological base. According to Andrea Branzi Italian design is about

> ...an understanding of the expressive... The soft technology of Italy has worked for the expressive quality of the product, together with its technical quality. It is applied technology used to emphasize qualities and not the reverse.
> (Dormer, 1987, p.19).

Manufacturers that invest heavily on one level of production and manufacture often are weighed down by the wide array of responsibilities, which undermines the importance of design. A production system is installed and from that the products made under this system recuperate the investment. Time taken to recoup costs can take an average of six to seven years. In the long run the advantage with this system is that cheap and reliable furniture can be produced that easily finds a ready market.

However, to break even on investment, the company has to direct all its attention on that product type. If, for example, the company invests in injection moulding machines (Illus. 49), these machines can cost up to £650,000 each. To produce a range, several machines need to be purchased. After a product has been designed, tooling has to be made. Tooling involves high grade metals which are expensive and time consuming to produce. To manufacture a tooling mould that produces the designed product, the costs are £50,000 and over depending on the complexity of the mould. Basically we are talking about an



(Illustration 49).
Injection Moulding Machine
This impressive injection moulding machine produced the 4870 Chair.
One chair is produced every 80 seconds.

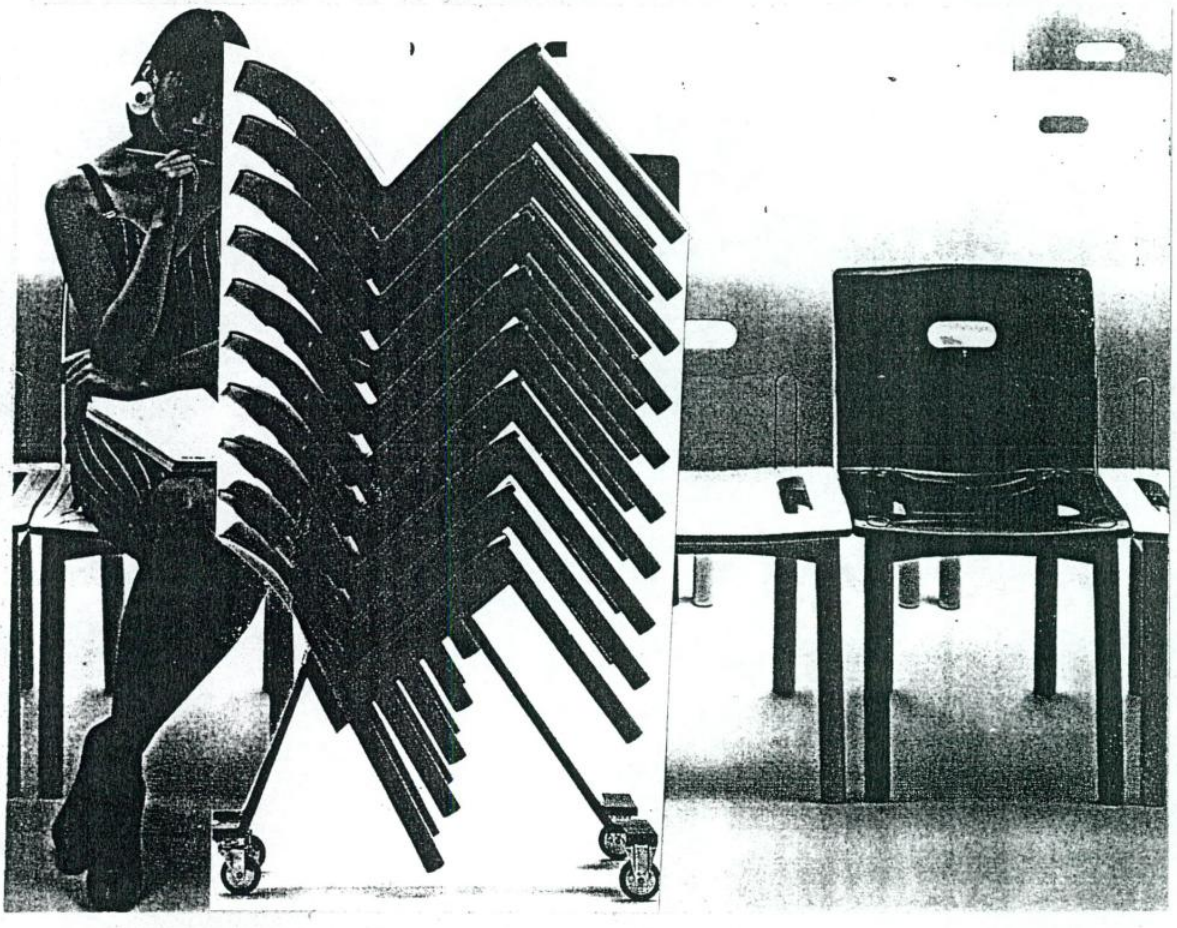
> ...imposing piece of machinery weighing 1,500 tons that is used to manufacture a chair and the movements of a 15,000 kilogram injection moulding robot, the product of eight thousand man/hours of labour, which spits out a shiny finished chair every 80 seconds, (Illus. 50). (Morello 1989, p.64).

The products produced by such systems are good, reliable and durable. However, due to the investment, the means of production are fixed and all products are restricted to that means. Within that system there is very little room for leeway or manoeuvre; the forms of the product vary, colour varies but the aesthetic remains the same as does the smell, touch, texture, and 'feel' of the chairs. Thousands of these chairs must be sold globally in order to recoup investments.

For such industries, sales are always the outcome of a successful advertising. The product could be well designed and manufactured to the highest standards but in the effort to achieve good sales numbers, massive investments in advertising must be made. Now more than ever, sales depend on how well the marketing and advertisement campaign succeeds. The company, Kartell, whose machines and products we have seen, share the belief, 'The more effectively the public are made aware and conscious of the product, the more chance it has to be a successful selling product'. (Morello, 1989, p.64).

The pressure on effective advertising bears much responsibility because on it focuses the success or failure of the products. The resources of the company are often stretched, as Augusto Morello points out in the case of Kartell.

> Advertising absorbs much of the company's energy and resources, especially before innovative forms of distribution appear, before the sales outlets of 'well designed articles', the appearance of voluntary purchasing associations among retailers, the opening of the first purchase centres for durable goods, and lastly, the first hypermarkets.
> (Morello, 1989, p.49)



(Illustration 50).
4870 Chair - Designed by Anna C. Ferrieri
The 4870 Chair is light, durable and stackable. It is particularly suitable for collective use. The chair seat features two slits to contain the back legs when stacked.
Produced by Kartell.

The result of such expenses means that the market must absorb all products before new investments can be made in design and production. This means that the level of technology is frozen over a period of years before change can occur. Indeed, applause must go to the designer, whose responsibility was considerable. The total capital investment for the 4870 Chair was around $700,000 and the company is now looking for sales of tens of thousands a year over many years. However, flooding the market by such large numbers of chairs, as Jasper Morrison points out, 'secures the manufacturer's immediate future, in the long run it merely fossilizes his technology'. (Dormer, 1987, p.130).

Whereas the Milanese-based approach demonstrates, as Peter Dormer points out, 'high production flexibility, diversity of skill and low cost good design'. (Dormer, 1987, p.24). Also, the regional competitiveness between cities makes Italy seem more like a federation rather than a single state. This fuels the idea of plurality, disputation and questioning, creating an 'intellectual' arena which both designers and clients freely build upon to constantly experiment, innovate and speculate.

A valid point was made by Nonie Niesewand, in the International Designer Yearbook 1989/90, which was that this intellectual arena is actually encouraged financially by Italian industry in the form of patronage. Much of what would normally be the advertising budget for companies is spent advocating constant enquiry, searching, innovation and speculation in design.

The Italians have familiar examples worldwide that are leaders in various industries. The following industries are all based in and around Milan and nowhere else worldwide yet they have a worldwide reputation. In the furniture industry we can speak of companies such as Cassina, Zanotta, Memphis; in the automobile industry, we can speak of Ferrari, Lotus, Maseratti, Lamborghini; the bicycle industry boasts Campagnolo, Colnago etc.

Parallels can be drawn between the style of the Italian furniture industry and the 1980/1990 events in the furniture design/manufacture industry in England. No one (apart from Andrea Branzi) has clearly made the case on behalf of the designer-manufacturer more intelligently than Jasper Morrison, and is worth quoting at length: from his argument, similarities between the Italian industry and the recent phenomenon in the British furniture industry can be made.

> Today more than ever the part the designer plays in the scheme of things is confused by the variety of guises and disguises the profession affects. For example, there is the design-group designer who is desk-bound and struggling with his corporate identity crisis; there is the company in-house designer tied by his beard to the company products; there is the designer-artist thinking with his chisels; and there is the freelancer who is confident in his skills and inherited assumptions about design. But, just in the picture, there is the designer-thinker who is not satisfied with any of these roles.
>
> The function of design, seen from a social and economic viewpoint, is to make products more desirable and facilitate their manufacture - and the designer has the skills to do both. He is likely to be fascinated by manufacturing and its processes. But a thoughtful designer, looking at the factories built to produce what he designs, may be struck by their inadequacy to provide their public with anything more than reworkings of designs that have proved saleable in the past.
>
> The designer-thinker - at this stage of his (or her) thoughts is unemployable but for the purpose of clear thinking this has its advantages. It is evident that the notion round which the designer-thinker's troubled mind revolves is that of production. Clearly there can be no design without production (although it does not have to be mass production) because without production design becomes something else, often (and confusingly) dressed up as art. It is true that design contains its own art and it can be close to sculpture but nevertheless quite separate.
>
> An important part of the designer's art lies in the solution of its manufacture: the quantity needed for the size of the intended market and the costs involved. The balance of these variables is every bit as important to the art of design as its 'sculptural' content. Indeed, the two aspects are interwoven and

to ignore either in the pursuit of the other is to miss the point of designing.

Recently the consumer market has been fragmented: the traditional (mass manufacturing) approach to supplying it has increasingly been replaced by smaller operations, which have quickened the pace of supply and demand to an ever more hysterical consumer market. As a result, the larger companies are forced to update their products more often. This demonstrates that production on a small scale is as valid as any other and it has a potential for growth.

There are now two routes for a designer to take, a short and a long one. The short route solves a design problem set by a fixed brief provided by a manufacturer to enable him to use his existing machinery and skills to increase his sales. Although this route secures the manufacturer's immediate future, in the long run, it merely fossilizes his technology. Moreover, it provides the designer with little satisfaction other than cashing his royalty cheques.

The longer route occurs to the designer with foresight: he builds his own factory, not with bricks but from the sprawling back streets teeming with services and processes for materials both common and uncommon to his trade. The thoughtful designer knows full well that while the big-time manufacturers and his more employable colleagues are unaware or disdainful of the afternoons he spends wandering the streets, he has only to make his own living to accomplish more than all of them. Why? Because it is more important to keep those small but enormously useful backstreet businesses alive than to maintain a single large, stagnating producer of hand-stapled, upholstered suites.

Design by the longer route offers an approach with an almost limitless range of materials and ways of treating them. Filed randomly in the designer's mind these materials and methods will surface intuitively and simultaneously to marry, at one blow, all the variables of a product's manufacture with the concept of its final appearance. The designer who is free (unlike the designer-craftsman fettered by his role as a carpenter or the manufacturer with his factory) can take advantage of the variety of facilities and mix them. A builder sub-contracts because he knows he will get a better result than if he asks a bricklayer to do the plumbing. In the same way the new designer or (indeed) the new manufacturer, taking advantage of multiplicity of skills available, can design and produce with a versatility that cannot be matched by a single factory.
(Dormer, 1987, pp.136/137).

The similarities with Milan are based on the use of various small workshops that provide the designer with a wider vocabulary of manufacturing processes to produce his work rather than being restricted by the over-rigid processes of one manufacturing company. It is design in opposition to fixed manufacturing means.

The characteristics of industrially produced design have always been bound up with the question of standardisation, the factual corollary of mass production. The search for the standard type form has been of paramount economic importance for the traditional designer and his client. This echoes what Andrea Branzi has to say about present day design. He states that,

> Design has operated for fifty years researching and producing 'standard objects', objects that would fulfil the basic needs of a society recast outside false need, objects that would please everyone, (displeasing a little to everyone), directing itself toward a kind of neutral territory of taste.
> (Ritchie & Calzolari (eds) 1984, p.15)

Being unfettered by the over-rigid categories of the traditional designer, i.e. not having to design an object to be produced by a single process; not having to design an object that is based on client or market pressures, the designer-manufacturer can enjoy the flexibility and diversity of production at reasonable cost just as his Italian counterparts.

The use of smaller independently based industries by designer manufacturers is comparable to Italy, whose design industry is based on small artisan like businesses, with specialised skills and an awareness of other manufacturing means. The operations of Ron Arad, Danny Lane and S.C.P. are based on the use of small businesses which provide an array of processing operations. Arad has his own workshop but at times when orders are too great or a specific finish is required, he uses other workshops. Danny Lane's apprentice was in a glass workshop not far from where he has

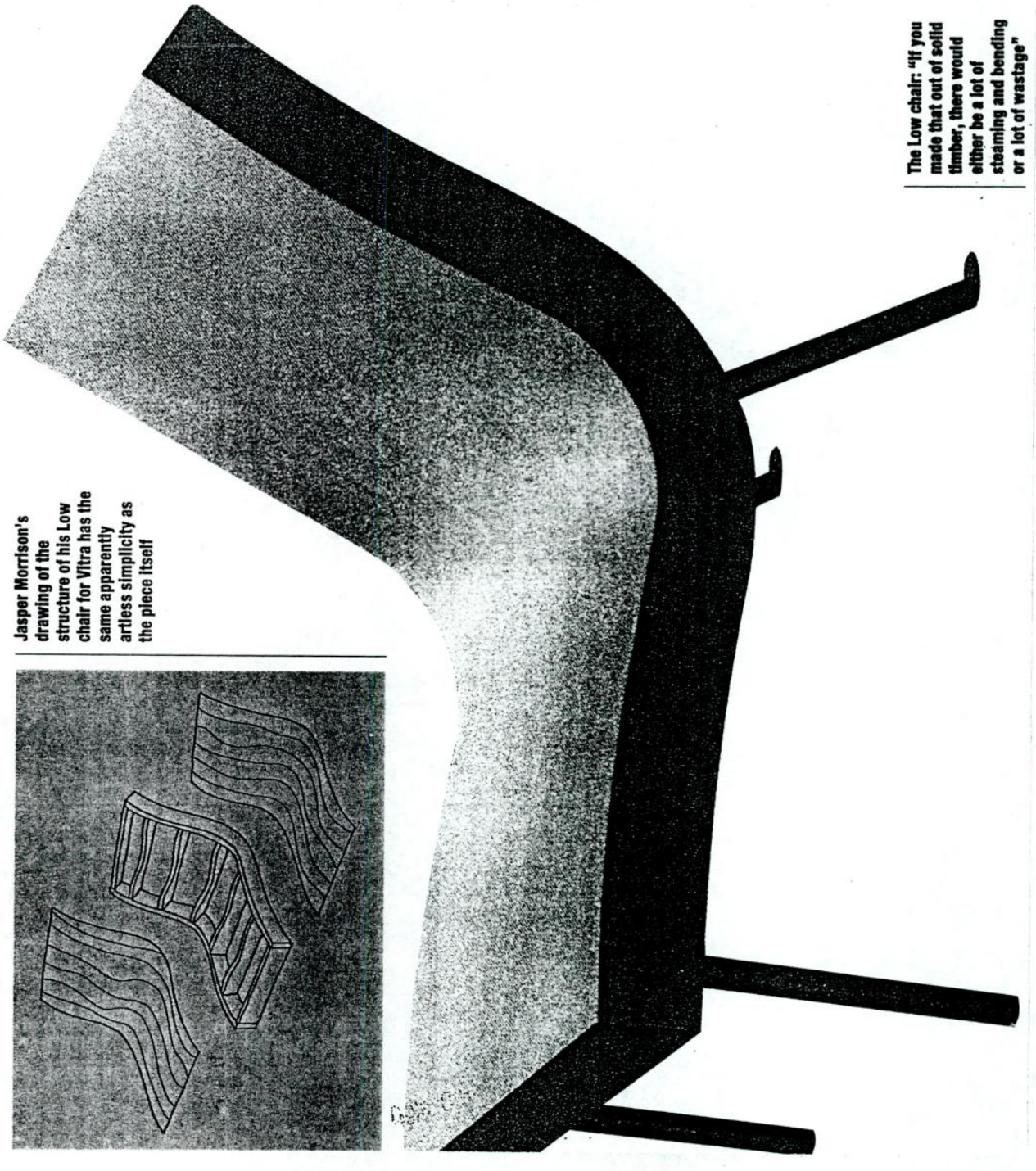
established himself in Glassworks. He uses other small engineering based workshops like Arad to fulfil orders, whose number and deadlines are beyond the capabilities of his own workshop. Sheridan Coakley of S.C.P. uses the services of several small companies as was outlined in Chapter 5. Suzanne Darling points out, to establish agreements with other firms can be difficult, like most products designed by designer- manufacturers simple tools are required. However, she states,

> It's really difficult to find manufacturers who will provide orders of 20 - 30 pieces. We have one glass company who are fantastic but, in general, it's a nightmare. It takes a long time to build up a relationship with engineers and it's hard to keep the relationship going, particularly when we may not use them for four or five months at a time. It's such a problem, we're thinking of writing a book about it. (Hancock, 1991, p.26)

Sheridan Coakley of S.C.P. buys the services of small manufacturing companies, his network encompasses engineers, upholsterers, aluminium casters, glass etching plants but as with Suzanne Darling from Edge, Coakley finds it, 'a struggle to find companies willing to produce work to a high enough standard'. (Poynor, 1991, p.34).

However, being able to use the back street workshops has its advantages. Jasper Morrison continues to make prototypes using his network of back street workshops to prove economical sense through design to his clients. He can iron out any problems himself. Morrison enjoys hands-on involvement in the production process and has been misleadingly bracketed as a result with the crafts end of the furniture market, whereas his goal has always been to design for volume manufacture and reasonable pricing.

Morrison's Low Chair (Illus. 51), a potential candidate for Fehibaum's Vitra Editions, (Rolf Fehibaum, owner of the Swiss German furniture company, Vitra), is typical of this reductionist logic.



Jasper Morrison's drawing of the structure of his Low chair for Vitra has the same apparently artless simplicity as the piece itself

The Low chair: "If you made that out of solid timber, there would either be a lot of steaming and bending or a lot of wastage"

(Illustration 51).
Low Chair - Designed by Jaspar Morrison
Produced by Vitra (Germany).

> One of the main points about this chair is that the technology is incredibly low. It doesn't require any jigging up. You'd have to make a former if it was solid and you'd have to laminate 20 metres of plywood and it would weigh a ton. So the point is to keep it as simple as possible, to keep it light, but for it to have the illusion of solidity.
> (Poynor, 1989, p.30)

Fehibaum has allowed Morrison to pursue the reductionist logic of the method without attempting to distract him with the technology at the company's disposal and in doing so, Morrison has produced a more economical solution. Morrison has succeeded in wringing the maximum impact from the least amount of effort.

Andre Dubreuil produces delicately wrought metalwork furniture. For him, his methods of production and manufacture has its advantages. He is a designer-manufacturer who has developed a tame but rough and ready technique of metalworking on a batch production scale. Batch production numbers range from 20 to 200 units. His furniture pieces retail between £150 to £300 per piece. His Dining Chair (Illus. 52), a dramatic swooping chair, finds a ready market. As the demand increases for his furniture, Dubreuil hires more blacksmiths to produce his pieces. He intends to remain working in this manner and steer well away from the production line.

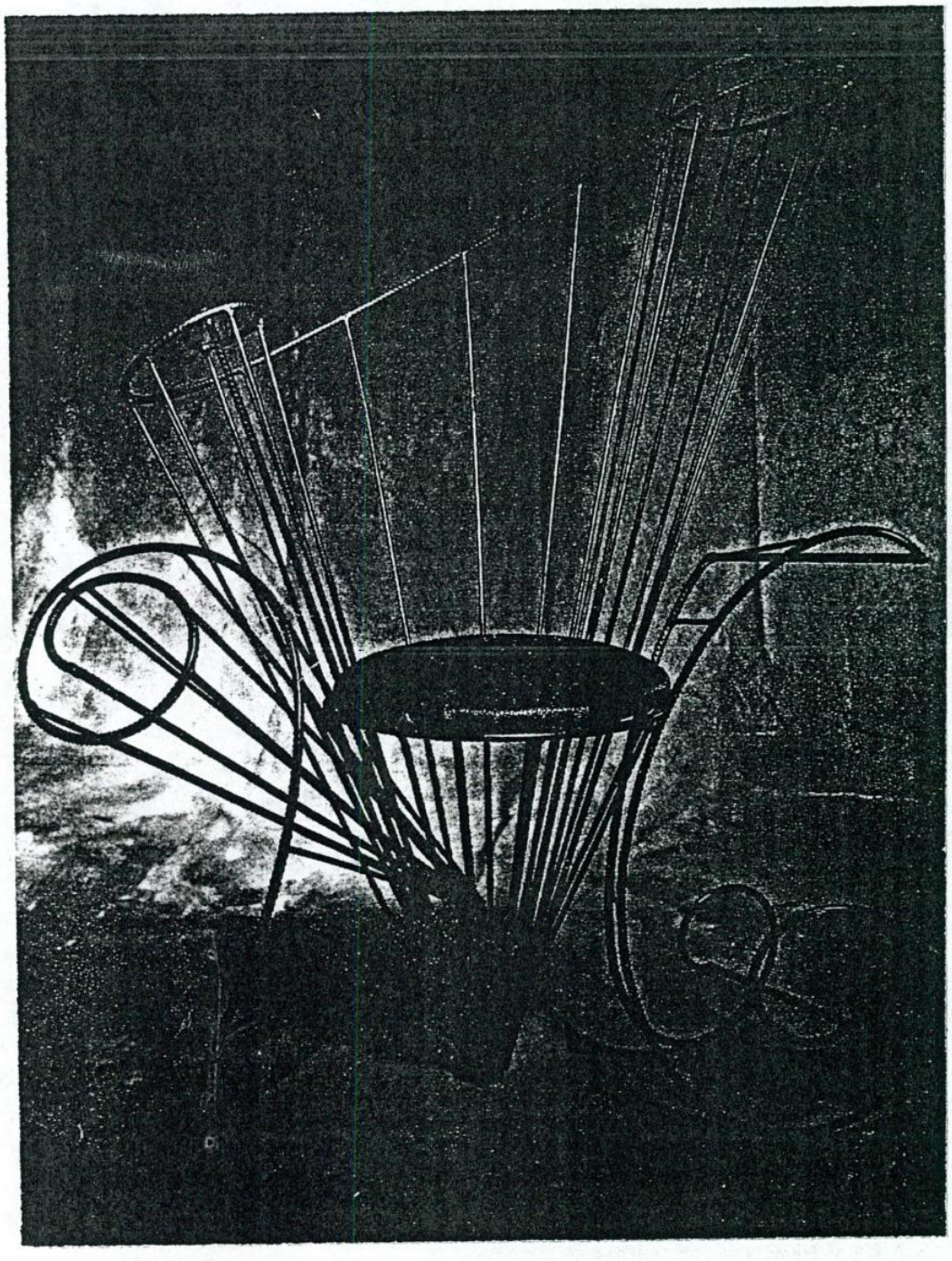
For Dubreuil there

> ...is always the danger of worrying about production, supervising staff, filling in forms, spending all day on the telephone. In the end that is why I will remain small. I want to make new furniture, not to be a traditional designer with no real responsibility for the end product.
> (Sudjic, 1989, p.210).

Dubreuil's methods allow him to constantly develop new forms of furniture through experimentation. He is a designer first and a manufacturer second. The success of Dubreuil's furniture has attracted the attention of manufacturers who wish to produce it on a mass production scale of up to 2,000 and over at any one time. However, Dubreuil refuses the offer because from his experience,

> ...they have to redesign a piece for machine production, it loses its character... they smooth it out, refine it for production and paint it blue. It would then be their chair, not yours. Why bother with that at all.
> (Sudjic, 1989, p.210)

Dubreuil's approach mirrors the Italian market demand/manufacturing philosophy. According to his interview with Deyan Sudjic, the consumers for Dubreuil dictate the number of manufacture and therefore, he can tell whether a certain piece meets the aspirations of his consumers, and whether or not he should continue



(Illustration 52).
Dining Chair - Designed and produced by Andre Dubreuil.

to produce it. This route allows the designer to constantly experiment and change is work without having to suffer heavy industrial losses. These are reasons why designers like Arad, Lane, Morrison, Hilton, etc. operate on such small scales. While content to allow other manufacturers to manufacture their designs, they pursue designs on their own uncompromising terms. If others want to manufacture their design that's okay for them.

Designer-manufacturers prefer to stay independent of any and every large scale production or marketing strategy and diverge their resources to the creative and experimental explorations in design. Remaining independent of manufacturing firms and fixed production methods allows the designer-manufacturer to design first and produce after. Realistically there are times when compromises need to be made even to facilitate production on a small scale. The small designer-manufacturer firm, Edge, produced a Caravazza range of glass vases, made of 'hand-adapted' laboratory glassware with round steel bases. The range has been accepted by every retail outlet approached. A substantial order was placed by the Conran shop, however it was advised that some modifications should be made as specified by Terence Conran which included removing some decorative pieces of mesh and simplifying the joints. In making those simplifications, Suzanne Darling and Dawn Carter of Edge realised they could produce a version of their product that was more agreeable to them and to their means of manufacture.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary furniture manufacturing industry in England is small. It cannot be compared to those of Italy, Germany, France or Japan. England's contemporary furniture industry consists of one or two small firms with modest annual turnovers. There are no major firms in England producing contemporary furniture in the manner of Moroso, Zannota, Cassina (Italy), Vitra (Germany), Neotu (France or Idee (Japan). Sheridan Coakley Productions (S.C.P.) is one of the few small English firms that has emerged over the last six years. Its turnover is perhaps minuscule in comparison with the image and profile it has carved out for itself since its foundation; a fact that is commendable in itself.

Apart from S.C.P. and a few firms like it, designers who wish to design contemporary furniture and to see it manufactured can only be discouraged further when the major British brands such as M.F.I. furniture manufacturers, courts, IKEA or Queensway prefer to concentrate on the lower end of the market. Such a policy precludes any investment in design. Because of the lack of courage or imagination of such companies, designers have had to seek other means of production and thus have become innovators in the manufacture of contemporary furniture.

Ron Arad is a designer-manufacturer who has thrust out many strands of daring in the massive metal pieces of furniture he has designed and produced in his One-Off workshop in London. Through his activities of designing and producing experimental furniture, Ron Arad has produced such a volume of new ideas about form, surface, finish, texture, colour, materials and ways of treating them, that he has overturned the predictable manoeuvres of the traditional manufacturing approach and thrown them by the wayside.

At the same time, his work has given our comfortable attitudes towards typologies and the ideological man/artifact relationship an

injection of vitality. He has designed chairs that distort and flex, he has also formed chairs that at first seem solid but actually move and interact with the sitter. Having a sharp eye for the creative potential of everyday objects and redeploying them through surreal transformations, Arad has trivialised the traditional design ethic that simple good taste should be the underlying goal of every designer. Through producing objects such as Aerial Light and the Rover Chair, Arad established a repertoire of inventive and highly saleable items: he has created a stable base for his company in the furniture and design trade. He has a growing international clientele of both private and public furniture collectors, manufacturers and distributors. At the 1991 Milan Trade Fair, his collection of 11 new chairs for the Italian company, Moroso, catapulted him from being regarded as an avant garde fringe designer to being one of the most sought after furniture designers in England.

Danny Lane has become known throughout Europe for the visual elan of his glass/metal chairs. Lane, like Arad, has become an integrated designer/entrepreneur/manufacturer. Lane, like most designer-manufacturers, has avoided involving himself in the continual reproduction of the same objects, no matter how successful those reproductions might be. However, he refuses to let his Glassworks company specialise or become a strictly artisan business. Lane prefers to remain independent of every production strategy that might stifle his creative qualities but is content to allow manufacturers to manufacture his furniture. He is eager to discover more about the materials themselves and about their special attributes and processing possibilities. Lane's work is accented with spontaneity, he uses the simplest tools on everyday materials to create spectacular pieces of furniture and art. His work is exhibited in major museums throughout Europe and the United States. Lane also supplies the most prestigious furniture retail outlets in Paris and Milan while carrying out commissions in London, Paris, Miami and Helsinki. Lane has become synonymous in Germany, Italy and France with furniture and pieces that mix design

and art in a manner that provides furniture which has a voice and which provides entertainment, solace, or a combination of the two.

Chapter 3 has looked at the comparisons in approaches to design between the traditional designer and the industrialist, and the designer-manufacturers. This chapter has highlighted the advantages and disadvantages both approaches have. It has shown how the designer-manufacturer's approach is more beneficial to both the designer and manufacturer. The chapter concludes by showing that one of the reasons the Italian furniture industry is so successful is because a special working relationship is achieved between the designer and manufacturer, and that such a relationship does not exist between English designers and manufacturers. It is thus shown how this has created a situation from which the alternative approach of the designer-manufacturer has emerged.

The final chapter has concentrated on the designed artifact (furniture and product) and on the differences in the manner in which it was perceived by the industrialists and by the designer-manufacturer. It demonstrates how success on the market is possible if an alternative or new approach is accepted. The fourth chapter examines the difficulties designers Daniel Weil and Gerard Taylor have encountered when dealing with English manufacturers that were opposed to their ideas, when foreign manufacturers readily accepted them. Much of what is designed and produced in England is based on an ease of manufacturability.

Designer-manufacturers do not accept this premise as they feel that to design artifacts to accommodate specific manufacturing processes undervalue the expressionistic quality modern day artifacts should have. The alternative approach to design is one that does not perceive design as a technical solution or a styling exercise, but one that is an expression of an idea or a process, that process being completed both by whoever has the artifact and uses it.

Thus such different lines of thought have contributed greatly to the divisions between designer and manufacturers in England. Designer-manufacturers believe basic manufacturing problems can be solved: it is the quality of life that remains the issue and designers are uniquely placed to improve it. They believe that we should control our material world. Our attitude towards material consumption can be controlled if the objects that we produce interact with the user through responding to our feelings and aspirations. British manufacturers of furniture do not have the cultural belief, conviction or the confidence in English furniture designers to design marketable products that encompass these design ethics.

A combination of interesting ways of thinking about furniture, of producing furniture and market sensibilities will reshape the traditional face of the British furniture industry. In doing so, designer-manufacturers will alter our past stagnant views about man and his relationship with the contents within his environment, therefore, giving new meaning to our daily lives.

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