



Design bonanza

REAR PASSENGER seat window offers a medium through which to access important information.

(Courtesy)

Students from the Industrial Design Department at Bezalel exhibit unique projects that explore problem solving

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The packing and shipping of the contents of the Design Bonanza exhibit alone is worthy of a diploma. Let alone the time and effort that went into each and every item that together turned many a head last month during Milan Design Week.

Exhausted yet joyful, the students, teachers and curators of Design Bonanza returned to Mount Scopus last month to slowly and carefully release their creations from the packing tape and Styrofoam wrappings.

The original meaning of "bonanza" is a rich deposit of ore or precious metals. Most often associated with the search for gold, a bonanza marks the moment any treasure seeker dreams of, when persistence turns into profit. For the students of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, a bonanza is often found internally, in the revelation of a new idea.

The exhibition was a showcase of projects dreamed up by students from the Industrial Design Department at Bezalel and marked the third year that the acclaimed academy has participated in what is commonly considered the design event of the year. Depending on the designer, each work represented a different stage associated with the notion of bonanza, from the search to discovery to purification of the idea.

Unlike their exhibition last year, Thinking Hands, which focused on the intimate relationship between a designer and his raw materials, Design Bonanza was dedicated to practical solutions to problems.

"Industrial design is about solving functional problems that people experience," explains Galit Maoz, administrative coordinator of the department.

The exhibition consisted of 45 works by as many designers, students in the bachelor's and master's programs. Haim Parnas, department head of Industrial Design at Bezalel, consciously shifted the focus of the exhibit to mirror an overall trend in the international design community.

"The balance in the design world is shifting from beauty-only products to designs that are more practical and problem-solving in nature. The shift is toward experimental design that pushes us forward into producing products that have real, practical uses. The designer is a servant of the people," explains Parnas. "We have the chance to do a heroic deed in our work, to take the needs of people and make something that you cannot live without. Our students put aside their egos in order to identify with their target consumer."

The inspiration for several of the pieces from Design Bonanza came from a crisis course offered at Bezalel. Focusing on the effects of natural disasters, this class challenges students to create new solutions to world problems.

"We hurt the Earth and the Earth hurts us," says Parnas. "It happens. We need to know how to work with that."

One of the most talked-about pieces in the exhibi-

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tion was Arthur Brutter and Ido Bruno's Earthquake Proof Desks. These tables, which serve the same needs as classic school desks, turn into rescue tunnels during an emergency.

"When we came to Milan with our Earthquake Proof Desks, they said 'broken tables?'" laughs Parnas. Days later, with hordes of visitors passing through the exhibit, Parnas realized that the exhibition had achieved its goal.

"We wanted to throw these ideas out into the world like a stone skipping across the water, and they were received very warmly," says Parnas.

Other disaster-related products included the Ruins Catheter by Idan Raizberg, modeled after a medical catheter that is used to transfer necessary supplies to people trapped inside a collapsed structure.

While many students opted to focus purely on function, many of the pieces in the exhibit were a meeting between poetry and utility. Shoes crafted from pine needles brought together fashion and nature, while a form of salt-pressing meats presented a new system for food preservation.

Guy Mishali's project Blast began as an exploration of energy.

"There is so much wasted energy from natural disasters," he explains. "I wanted to take advantage of that energy and find a better way to harness it."

After many months of experimenting, Mishali devised a way to attach explosives to a sheet of metal in such a way that upon detonation the sheet turned into a stool.

"My process was about turning destruction into design," he says.

No two stools are the same and, once Mishali has affixed the explosives, there is no way to control the outcome.

Mishali's project is a perfect example of the philosophy espoused by Parnas and his associates. While the end product is aesthetically stunning, the content of the project lies in its concept.

"For us, beauty is the process, not the end result. As designers, we have to find the balance between beauty and function," says Parnas.

It is this delicate formula that sets designers apart from both engineers and visual artists, he says, adding, "First, we deal with science, then we get to do poetry."

Racheli Boxnboim's tea sets are a perfect example of the balance between beauty and science. To begin, Boxnboim measured a tea set as a seamstress would, creating a sewing pattern out of each dish. She then sewed fabrics into the shapes and filled them with porcelain. In the kiln, the fabric burned off, leaving only the impression of its texture on the new dish.

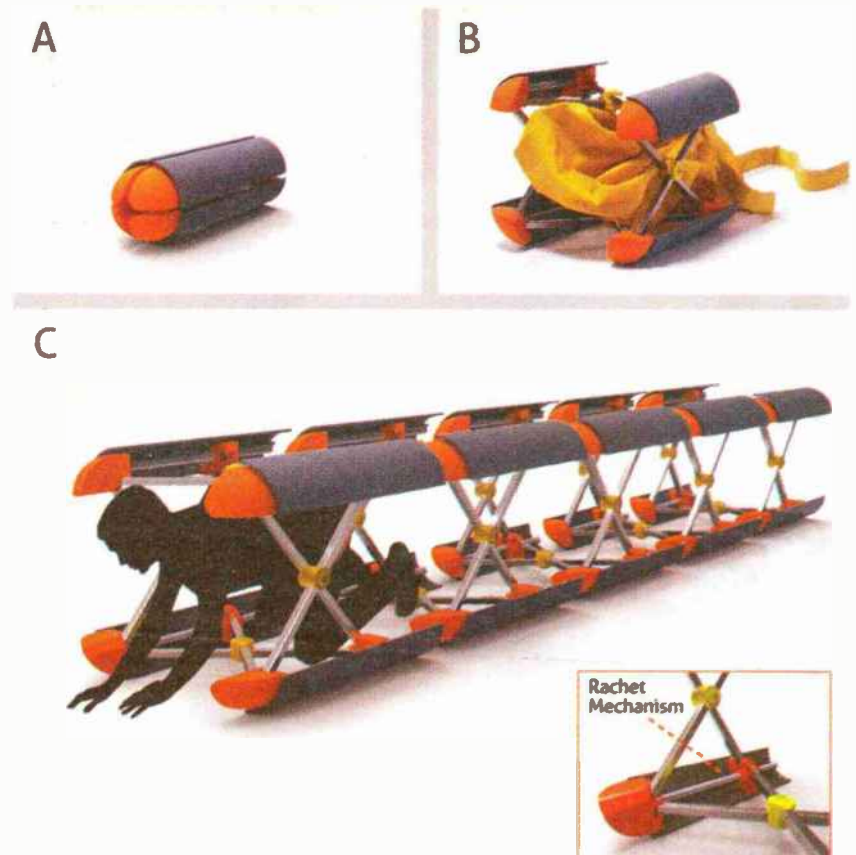
Like Mishali's project, Boxnboim's work also includes a good helping of chance. Hours of preparation never seem to prepare Boxnboim for the product that emerges from the kiln. This release of control is both nerve-racking and utterly rewarding for the young designer.

"There is a great dialogue between the mold and the material," says Boxnboim.

Be it a coffee pot, a life-saving helmet or a gorgeous chair, design comes into our lives in a million ways every day. Often it is the design of a particular object that makes it a staple item while others fall to the wayside.

"Designers form a bridge between many

THE RUINS CATHETER is modeled after a medical catheter that is used to transfer necessary supplies to people trapped inside a collapsed structure. (Courtesy)



worlds. In this day and age, design is the element that connects new technologies to the people who need them," says Maoz. "Design is more necessary now than ever before." ■

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