Industrial Facility: Under a Fiver

Foreword

There is a sly link from Sam Hecht's own work as a designer – with its careful unemphatic quality and its elegant economy of means – to his gently subversive passion for discovering the subtle brilliance of anonymous design. His is a collection of products universal and generic enough to cost almost nothing. To make an object that can be made in millions is truly modern, and demands a special quality. By assembling the fruits of his constant search for such objects, he is telling us that, if you can possibly manage, it is always best to use one word, rather than ten. He is reminding us that design does not have to be about signature, or shape making. For Hecht, and his studio, with the dead pan name of Industrial Facility, it is about discovering ingenuity in unexpected places. Above all, design is about looking.

Deyan Sudjic

Exhibition supplement

Industrial Facility:
Under a Fiver
9 May – 7 September 2008
Design Museum
Shad Thames, London SE1 2YD
www.designmuseum.org

Industrial Facility: Some Recent Projects

Foreword

I'm told they are English.
That's wrong: they are from somewhere else, that's their appeal.
They are neither fashionable nor modern, but timeless.
They are not minimalists, but know the secrets of the minimal.
They know only the elegance of intelligence, with humility and courage.
No logo, no master for them.
They are impossible to find, invisible.
But so likable.
They are uncorrupted.
I would have liked to have been them.
Too late.

PH.S.

Exhibition supplement

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1255booklet7.indd 2-3 21/4/08 22:07:04

Some Recent Projects by Gemma Curtin

Industrial Facility is one of the leading product design studios working today. Set up in 2002 this London-based team was founded by the British designer Sam Hecht and the American architect and writer Kim Colin. Japanese designer Ippei Matsumoto joined the office in 2003. This first exhibition of their work in the UK is not only an opportunity to see some of their recent projects for clients as diverse as Muji, Established and Sons and Herman Miller, but it also celebrates a growing maturity in the firm's work. This collection of over 20 projects from the last two years reveals the impetus, values and philosophy behind their simple yet rigorous design.

Designing for everyday, their work has a strong functional aspect. Whether a corkscrew, a printer, a pendant light, a coffee maker or a kitchen knife, these items all have a clear function and while all are mass-produced, each enjoys a close relationship with the user. As relevant as the relationship between the user and the object is the relationship of the product with the other things that fill our lives. Industrial Facility see their designs as component parts within this complex fabric. They condense the design to its most essential by simplifying the form, reducing the technical complexity to what is really needed and using a limited tonal palette. They create design that can be enjoyed when in use and that can also sit contentedly in the background of our lives when not needed.

Not interested in bringing their own personality to the objects, the team almost go out of their way to mask them. Like puppeteers they are discrete, unseen but still control every move. Once a product has found its way into an office, on a table at home, or on a person's wrist it carries with it the designers' identity in a very thoughtful way that is expressly unobtrusive. This subtle tone is paradoxically a distinctive character of their work. Rejecting the recent notion that a designer must have a recognisable signature style, one that is often used as a selling point, Industrial Facility manage to balance an international presence while remaining true to their design beliefs. This is due to their skill at knowing what the essence of a product is and also because their work fulfils a need for quietness in a very busy object-rich world.



Coffee maker

Manufactured by Muji, Japan
Polypropylene and steel plate
2006

Using a stainless steel pot Industrial Facility created a small capacity coffee maker for Muji. The cylindrical form allows the coffee maker to be placed anywhere on a work surface or table. This form is made possible by wrapping the water reservoir around the coffee filter. The result is simple, elegant design that is also easy to use.



Small fan

Manufactured by Muji, Japan
Polypropylene and ABS plastic, steel wire
2006–2007

Feeling that a cooling fan is often found in the middle of a room where all its sides can be seen, Industrial Facility gave as much attention to the back as to the front of this product. To obtain a perfectly smooth cylinder, the rear fan motor and gear system had to be reconfigured. The remote control when not in use rests in the base similar to a puzzle piece.

Born in London, Sam Hecht studied Industrial Design at the Royal College of Art. On graduating in 1993 he worked briefly for David Chipperfield Architects and then at IDEO in both the USA and Japan before becoming Head of Industrial Design for IDEO Europe. In the 1990s he collaborated with the Japanese designer Naoto Fukasawa. It was here that he first met Ippei Matsumoto, who studied Product Design at Tama Art University in Tokyo before studying Product Design at the Royal College of Art. Kim Colin founded Industrial Facility with Hecht in 2002, and is from Los Angeles where she studied art history at UCLA and architecture at SCI-Arc. Previously Colin worked for the artist Mike Kelley and for Phaidon Press, and taught Architecture and Interiors at the Royal College of Art.

The design process for Industrial Facility is as clear and direct as their design style. When working with a new client they combine their wide expertise as designers, curators and teachers. In most cases they take a critical look at the brief and if necessary extend it, often questioning previous conclusions. Research is practical and honest, looking at how the object is used or taking an existing product apart. A dialogue of ideas starts with discussions and sketches that pass between the team with speed. Once an idea is formed it is developed as a model and together with a narrative or ‘book’ it is presented to the client. Sometimes they will present only one solution. The time and energy of the team is given to developing the design and because of their rigorous approach the end product is often remarkably close to the initial model. As retained designers to Muji, Industrial Facility have adopted a different working method over many years. An enduring relationship cultivated with the client has generated a mutual trust enabling Industrial Facility to confine their energies to both the product development and how the company’s future can be shaped, rather then to the process of persuasion.

A unifying quality of the work of Industrial Facility is its criticism of superfluous user and environmental, specifications, created by a combination of focus groups, brainstorms and market research. The coffee maker or oven dishes are as comfortable in a kitchen or on a dining table and can move gracefully between the two. The Taylor’s Eye Witness kitchen knives abandon moulded hand grips which can as easily restrict the user’s movement as much as aid it. The Muji watch is both male and female and the Epson printer can be used by a child in a bedroom or a senior manager in their office. Their recent table for Herman Miller attempts to forge the needs of home life with the office. The table has two table tops one above the other. The gap between them is used to store laptops, other office equipment and also accommodates the mass of flexes and cabling. This simple yet seemingly obvious solution allows the table to be used for a range of tasks from typing to teatime. It also mixes up the materials of the home and office, combining oak with steel and die-cast aluminium. These objects offer an attractive flexibility in our modern fused and confused way of living.

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Sometimes a product's simplicity is viewed as a radical step by a client especially as manufacturers have for many years supplied the public with more and more complex functions. However, it is neither a simple task to take things away or to add things in a critical way. It is only by finding new solutions to problems that Industrial Facility is able to simplify forms without losing any functionality. It is because of their understanding of the technological requirements, engineering and manufacture of a product that they know what to remove. It took two years to reorganise the internal components and remove the irrelevant elements when designing the Little Disk hard drives for LaCie. When designing the Muji coffee maker they relocated the internal elements, positioning the water reservoir around the outside of the filter for the first time, and so were able to create a seemingly simple cylindrical form. Sometimes adding a new feature can also simplify the result. With the Jetlag travel clock for IDEA, a second display face gives a greater functional clarity.

A small practice with a strong impact, Industrial Facility can also be seen as part of a wider group of product designers working in this vein, from Jasper Morrison in the UK to Konstantin Grcic in Germany and Jonathan Ive in the USA. They aim to create design that is enduring, that does not fight for attention or strive to be intentionally different. While designing solutions for today, there is also a kinship with the age of Braun under its head of design, Dieter Rams, to a period of European design in the 1950s and 1960s where choice was limited and when the reduced forms were due to restrictions in materials and production. Industrial Facility draw on this aesthetic while showing acute awareness of today's ecological issues, '...in the 50s and 60s there was an economic obligation to preserve material. Now we are faced with a moral obligation to make things better with less.'

This exhibition is just a taster of what has been achieved by this established but still young design team and an insight into their future achievements. It is reassuring as a user that designers are investing such energy and intensity of thought to the tools we use to live our lives. Industrial Facility aim to reduce the clutter, the unnecessary technical features of product design and in so doing are creating affordable user friendly products that bring pleasure to everyday design.

IF4000

Taylors Eye Witness
High carbon stainless steel, melamine and polyester handles
2004–2007

New technology is used in both the blade and handle of this elegant knife. For the blade a new way of forging and grinding was used which allowed Industrial Facility to create a very smooth join between blade and handle. The handle uses a hybrid of white polyester and melamine to produce a cool to the touch material, rather than warmer plastic.





Beam pendant light

Manufactured by
Established & Sons, UK
Acid-etched glass, aluminium, steel
2007–2008

Designing a pendant, floor and table lamp, Industrial Facility were inspired by a child's drawing of a light fitting, illustrating not only the light shade but also the beam of light coming from the shade. Combining metal and glass Industrial Facility have created a combination of focused and ambient light.

Ten Key calculator

Manufactured by IDEA
International, Japan
Hi-pressure ABS plastic
2007

The Ten Key calculator is the first of a series of products designed for IDEA International in Japan. The oversized number pads are the size and form found on a keyboard rather than the usual rubber ones found on a calculator. As well as functioning as a calculator, the Ten Key can connect to a laptop through a USB connection, making the task of typing numbers easier.

Overleaf:

Little Disk hard drive

Manufactured by LaCie, France
Hi-pressure ABS plastic
2007–2008

1.3inch USB: 30GB, 40GB
1.8inch USB: 60GB, 80GB
2.5inch Firewire: 120GB, 160GB, 250GB, 320GB
DVD Lightscribe Firewire 400, 8x

These sleek box-like forms took over two years to design and engineer. Unlike other hard drives it requires no extra leads or transformers. No manual is needed and there are no buttons or display screens and no visible LED's. You simply plug it directly into your computer. The hard drive ends up being no more than a tool for storage.

Overleaf:

Picturemate photo printer (Vollet edition)

Manufactured by Epson, Japan
Polyester reinforced handle,
ABS plastic
2006

The starting point for this design was its function. Accepting that a printer is used only occasionally Industrial Facility sought to produce a compact, simple and storable form. This commercially successful design was the first Epson printer to be designed and produced by an outside designer.

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LaCie
LaCie
LaCie
LaCie
EPSON



Wine opener

Manufactured by Muji, Japan
ABS plastic, coated stainless steel
2008

Asked by Muji to combine a foil cutter and bottle opener Industrial Facility produced an everyday, but quality product. The foil cutter is neatly stored in the handle so as not to get in the way of its main job of removing corks.

Frequently asked questions, May 2008

What is design to you?

Our concept of design is that it should be inclusive of people and the landscape at large. This is perhaps obvious to some, who may find our work a little too simple or even boring. This is primarily because the essence of our work is about discovering the pleasure of use and its rightfulness over time. We are not so interested in expressing ourselves individually in the mass-produced work. We like design to be plain and simple, useful and better than it was before.

What are the most important elements in your designs?

Design will always be a servant to capitalism. Many designers try to ignore or remove themselves from this fact. The factory, the company and the shop are integral to how we consume and understand design. Once you accept this, the job of the designer is to make life better and that generally means removing complexity and making things more useful. Beliefs will always adjust themselves as the world changes. While the designer needs to admit that the shop is where consumption takes place, they must realize that the entry point to the design process should not be this shop, but the landscape where the design will operate and the people using it. Design has become too entertaining for its own good.

How did you decide to work together?

We decided to work together because we found that our ways of thinking are complimentary – that when we work together, the project gets better. When we first started the office, we asked Ippei Matsumoto, an old friend and a great designer himself to join us. We were small, but we felt very able to work with large companies. We wanted to perhaps confuse them into thinking that, like them, we were also a large company, and easy to talk to.

How did you choose the name Industrial Facility?

We chose something very banal. The word facility also means easier, more facile. We wanted to make clear that our adopted world would be industry, whom we believe need help in defining and constructing the new economy.

Have your design concepts ever conflicted with commercial considerations?

It has a lot to do with language. Design has the ability to express a common language rather than a specific language. For instance, if we were to say to an engineer ‘we really want to express the idea of quality’, then their idea may well be very different from ours. Their idea may be something ‘well-toleranced’. A marketing person may think of quality as ‘something that has the latest features’. Our role as designers is to be aware of and consider all these factors as well as to achieve something friendly, reliable, with minimal parts and not harmful to the environment.

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Enchord table with model

Manufactured by
Herman Miller Inc., USA
White oak, steel, aluminium die-casting
2008

A table designed for both home and office use. The form allows the table to be used for a wide range of activities. By splitting the table top into two horizontal panels it provides a cavity for all cables and office equipment within a strong, simple, adaptable and affordable form.

Eco-Design has become a big issue; what are your thoughts on eco-design and how do you respond to it?

Eco-design or sustainable design is a tricky subject. It's a moving target demanding new research and some critics will find holes in it regardless of what you do. Any designer who does not strive to achieve work that is clever and enduring, that is made of the minimum parts to create maximum quality, while also sustaining relevance for a long period is not serving design well. We are interested in ideas that make a confirmation of the landscape that they will sit in. The worst and most unnecessary concept of design is something that has reached the end of its life because it becomes unfashionable or irritating because of its aesthetic.

Which of your work is the most popular or successful?

Success can be measured in different ways. From a sales point of view, our LaCie Little disks are widely distributed and this is very rewarding because we worked for two years to get them right. The shape is not arbitrary but instead comes from very methodical thinking. Some of the pieces for Muji have been very successful; the coffee maker is one of those that we slaved over to get every detail right, and the 'City in a Bag' series is one of their best sellers. From a brand view, our work with Taylor's Eye Witness has helped reinvigorate the company with a passion for producing relevant pieces.

Can you predict the trends of design in the next 50 years?

We have no strong view of what the future holds. For us, the present is so captivating that this is the world that we involve ourselves in. Probably the worst person to ask about the future is a designer, because the job at hand is to make the present simpler and also more progressive. If it can't be made now, then it doesn't interest us as much. The future is now.

What advice would you give to young designers?

Respect what you know but also build on it. Connect what you know about life to what you want to do. Connect ideas to reality. Understand all aspects of how things are made.

What environment inspires you the most?

The city for productive struggle, the desert and seaside for replenishing.

What does architecture as a discipline offer product design?

Product design can benefit from a more macro view, an architectural perspective that considers site and culture of use. It offers a different way of conceptualising how the world works, or doesn't. It is not satisfied with the object, but looks to the ground, time, and the network. Architecture thinks big and has a history of internal and civic debate. Product design probably lacks critical thinking because the designer's mandate is not seen as significant as the architect's which goes far beyond the project itself. This is changing and it means that design requires a bigger model.

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Some Recent Projects
List of exhibits

Beam lighting programme
Manufactured by
Established & Sons
Opal glass, aluminium, steel
2007–2008

Chantry Modern knife sharpener
Manufactured by
Taylors Eye Witness
Zinc alloy die-casting,
stainless steel
2005–2006

Circumference watch
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co., Ltd., (Muji), Japan
Stainless steel, ionised plating,
crystal glass
2008

City in a Bag series
(City, Suburbia, Countryside,
Outerspace)
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co., Ltd., (Muji), EU
FSA sustainable beech wood
2004–2008

Coffee maker
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co., Ltd., (Muji), Japan
Polypropylene and steel plate
2006

DVD/LCD digital projector
Manufactured by Epson, Japan
(not in production)
2006

Enchord table and storage
programme
Manufactured by
Herman Miller Inc.
White oak, steel, aluminium
die-casting
2008

IF4000
Manufactured by
Taylors Eye Witness
High carbon stainless steel,
melamine and polyester handles
2004–2007

IF4000 knife rack
Manufactured by
Taylors Eye Witness
Bamboo, beech wood
2006

Jersey dish
Manufactured by
Jersey Pottery for Whirlpool SpA
Hard paste porcelain
2007

Jetlag
Manufactured by
IDEA International Co., Ltd., Japan
ABS plastic
2008

Liteplug
Manufactured by
IDEA International Co., Ltd., Japan
Fireproof coated ABS,
polycarbonate
2008

Little Disk family of hard drives
Manufactured by LaCie
Hi-pressure ABS plastic
2007–2008

Lo-Cost cutlery
Manufactured by
Taylors Eye Witness for Muji, EU
Stainless steel
2007

Orange Live
Design investigation
France Telecom
(not in production)
2007

Passport memo
Manufactured by
Muji, Japan & Muji, EU
Coloured card, staple-bound pages
2006

Picturemate photo printer
(Vollet edition)
Manufactured by Epson, Japan
ABS plastic, polyester
reinforcement
2006

Small and large fan
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co., Ltd., (Muji), Japan
Polypropylene and ABS plastic,
steel wire
2006–2008

Ten Key calculator
Manufactured by
IDEA International Co., Ltd., Japan
ABS plastic, polycarbonate
2007

Toilet brush and bin
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co. Ltd. (Muji), Japan
Polypropylene
2007

Two-Timer wall clock
Manufactured by
Established & Sons
Tempered glass, steel, quartz
movements
2008

Wine opener
Manufactured by Ryohin Keikaku
Co., Ltd., (Muji), Japan
ABS plastic, coated stainless steel
2008

Curator
Gemma Curtin

Foreword
Philippe Starck

Exhibition design
Industrial Facility

Exhibition and supplement graphic design
Graphic Thought Facility

Supplement photography
Angela Moore

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IDEA International Co., Ltd., Japan
Established & Sons Ltd., UK
Simon Miller
Epson, Japan
LaCie, France
Orange / France Telecom, France
Ryohin Keikaku Co., Ltd., (Muji)
Taylors Eye Witness, UK
Whirlpool SpA, Italy
Don Goeman
JW and Sue Colin
Deyan Sudjic

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2002–2008
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www.industrialfacility.co.uk

The Design Museum is one of the world's leading museums devoted to contemporary design, from furniture to graphics and from architecture to industrial design. The museum's exhibition programme demonstrates both the richness of creativity to be found in all forms of design and its importance.

To find out more about the Design Museum including talks, late nights, membership and kids' activities visit:

www.designmuseum.org

Under a Fiver
List of exhibits

Straightforward
Blowtorch lighter, USA
Double-headed nail, USA
Egg boiler, Japan
Get a new foil, Jordan
Green starch toothpicks, Korea
Kirin tomato juice can, Japan
Liquid plumber, USA
Muji paper can, Japan
Plug with pull tab, France
Soup ladle, Japan
Wooden igniter, Switzerland
Wrapped soap bar, Egypt

Modification
Bic gas lighter, Italy
Chewing gum, Jordan
Chocolate pills, Japan
Compressed clothing, Japan
Emergency air bag, Japan
Gas/pipe lighter, Mexico
Glass ball bottle, Japan
Health shot, Japan
Inflatable envelope, USA
Injection candy, Japan
Nail varnish, USA
One-row fine toothbrush, Japan
Plate and glass holder, USA
Rotating toothbrush, Israel
Scraping spoon, France
Teaspoon tea strainer, UK

Duality
Candy bubbles, USA
Car sponge glove, Italy
Chocolate lipstick, USA
Dummy thermometer, USA
Hook raw plug, UK
Massage soap bar, Japan
Paper slippers, Japan
RyanAir sick bag, Ireland
Sting caffeinated gum, Japan
Whisky gum, Japan
Straw bottle, Japan
Switch plug, Netherlands
Tongue/toothbrush, Japan
Washing-up glove, Malaysia
Watering can/spray bottle, Malaysia

Oddity
Cheese knife, Japan
Cherry drink ball, Japan
Child's finger toothbrush, France
Chocolate cigarettes, Japan
Creap milk powder, Japan
Disposable travel iron, Japan
Dried fish for soup, Japan
Hot-water bottle, Japan
Ioniser toothbrush, Japan
Lark cigarettes/toothpaste, Japan
Religious washing pot, UK
Sock touch glue stick, Japan
Tango soft drink, UK
Toothbrush band, Netherlands
Wine bottle sponge, France

Situation
Cold calling plug, USA
Dent suction cup, USA
Disposable paintbrush, USA
Ear commuter alarm, Japan
Emergency drinking water, USA
Heinz tomato ketchup, USA
Mobile privacy film, Japan
Musical candle, USA
Oyster glove, France
Pet grooming glove, France
Pipe painting glove, USA
Play money, Germany
Rubber sink drainer, USA
Tip-n-tell, USA
Toxic glove, USA
Vacuum cleaner pills, Japan

Care
Campari soda bottle, Italy
Disposable oil light can, USA
Gas lighter button, Thailand
Leaf container, Nepal
Paper urinal, UK
Plastic cutlery, Italy
Plastic flower pot, Japan
Plastic tumbler, Japan
PVC bollard, USA
Shoe cream, Mexico
Silicone tumbler, Japan
Surgical glove packaging, UK
Terracotta skin scrub, UK
Toilet float, USA
Yellow liquid spray bottle, USA

Curator
Gemma Curtin and
Industrial Facility

Exhibition design
Industrial Facility

Exhibition and supplement graphic design
Graphic Thought Facility

Supplement photography
Angela Moore

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21



8 Nail varnish, USA
9 Disposable travel iron, Japan
10 Disposable paintbrush, USA
11 Wine bottle sponge, France
12 Paper urinal, UK
13 Wooden igniter, Switzerland
14 Plate and glass holder, USA
15 Scraping spoon, France

It is tempting for a manufacturer to alter very slightly an existing product to make a completely new one. The plate has had a piece cut out of it creating a new function as a glass holder at a party. The spoon has also had a part removed, the end, now allowing the spoon to scrape the bottom of a pan.

Overleaf:

16 Car sponge glove, Italy
17 Toxic glove, USA
18 Washing-up glove, Malaysia
19 Oyster glove, France
20 Pet grooming glove, France
21 Pipe painting glove, USA

In this collection of gloves so many human tasks are revealed. From the opening of an oyster in a restaurant kitchen to the job of painting an awkward surface, such as a drainpipe. Niche tasks that unless you had experienced them you would never know that such gloves might be useful. While some of the gloves are helpful, others look more of a hindrance. The washing-up glove with integral sponge, as with many objects in the collection, show that sometimes design tries to provide solutions to problems that aren't really there.

proposed local usefulness. The majority of Under a Fiver artefacts are a promise for a better life made by manufacturers to consumers. They are signs of the desire for a better future; a future that addresses every (even small) need whether it be real or pseudo.

Globalisation is about dissolution of locality. It's about forming a larger-scale economy and identity and risks the loss of a local one. After the world's oil crisis of the late 70s, local manufacturers pressed ahead with producing goods, which had little relationship to their demographic origin. In Mexico for instance, AT&T opened factories to manufacture telephones and with the cordless boom of the 80's and 90's, workers from small villages found themselves producing machinery that they had no relationship with. The concept that an end market did not need to be a local market was successful and with most of the Far East investing heavily in this equation, globalisation was to be a 90's phenomenon. This concept has now become turbo-charged in China.

For many companies the market for the goods was outside the producer's domain and culture. And as a designer I often find myself responsible for implementing this equation. I visit factories in Japan and Korea and see a Wim Wenders-like scene, where factory workers are producing large fridges and televisions that would never possibly get through their own doorframe. Instead they would be bound for the West. On my travels I'm far more interested in spending the afternoon at the local market, buying what the locals brush their teeth with or discovering what is used to wash vegetables. And it becomes a kind of communication to me because I look hard at what I am actually looking at and what is involved in its existence.

Gradually, I realised that behind each object's quirky existence (some people might compare this to a tourist meeting a local) there was an honesty of local function and local material. Things started to become more interesting. When I shared my observations with the local communities they often reacted with astonishment, because they had previously taken the objects' existence for granted. And that's a perfectly normal response since they are things they understand to be perfectly natural.

And now on to some of my recent purchases, on a trip to Switzerland, I picked up a fire igniter made of small shards of wood wrapped together with paper. In the middle is a wick made of string. It reminded me of some kind of bomb and the action of lighting it and throwing it into a fireplace furthered that. In Seattle, I found a most elegant spray dispenser, where the trigger is inside the bottle outline; some disposable dishes made of leaves from Thailand – the oddity being that they are based on disposable styrene forms; also from Thailand, a gas lighter where the button was as big as the lighter itself; from Los Angeles, a three fingered glove for handling toxic chemicals; and from Mexico, a paint glove (for painting the backside of pipes) and a cigarette lighter that has been amalgamated to become a cooktop lighter. Lots to think about.

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Under a Fiver by Sam Hecht

It's also almost ten years since the Design Museum in London asked me to first exhibit a selection from Under a Fiver. So its fitting that during the exhibition of Industrial Facility's recent projects, that we show how Under a Fiver is doing. How it has changed through editing and to see some recent acquisitions.

Under a Fiver, for those who missed all of the excitement is for some people a collection of tat, but for me it represents value beyond price. It's a colourful assembly of objects that serve primary needs in a roundabout way and it is continuously expanding. People find the collection amusing and captivating.

An important point to note is that Under a Fiver is non-curatorial in that there is no particular mandate and certainly there are examples of very poor design. But that too is vital to understand that mass-consumption has little to do now with mass-production. The processes of production that were once reserved for only the masses are now available to the small-sized manufacturer. This extends further the choices of objects to join Under a Fiver because even the most primordial of human activities can be targeted by localised manufacturers.

Each object is a testament to un-global culture. Communities the world over continue to need things that serve their local needs, where design plays little if no part at all. I guess this is partly why I feel refreshed because there is so little design as we know it today. As long as this local attitude continues my collection will grow and grow.

On my travels, I've wandered through hundreds of local hardware stores, chemists and supermarkets, finding low-cost objects (all of which are under £5) that say something about how we live. These objects represent value beyond price. Others might visit landmarks or museums, but I prefer to stop the taxi by small local shops. It's here that you get a real reflection of the local culture. I take the objects back to the studio where they might inform our work or start discussions. Each of the objects appeals to me for a specific reason. It might be an ability to address and identify a small and localised need that communicates something about where I have been. Where, for instance, other than in Japan, would you need 'sock glue'? (The glue secures socks and protects against the exposure of calves.) They all hold the hope and promise of a man-made progress.

I started to collect these objects some fifteen years ago. If I see something beautiful that is progressive and effective I buy it, but I also buy the most curious objects that are somehow quite ordinary to the local resident. Some people see it as a collection of oddity. One thing that it is not, is novelty. While some of the things might seem novel, none have been produced for this purpose. What binds the collection together is that nothing has been sold on the merits of its design but instead on its

1 PVC bollard, USA
2 Watering can and spray, Malaysia
3 Toilet float, USA
4 Childs finger toothbrush, France
5 Double-headed nail, USA
6 Religious washing pot, UK
7 Gas lighter button, Thailand

The relationship between function and choice of materials and manufacture can be seen in this selection of Industrial Facility's Under a Fiver collection. Some of the objects are so beautifully made yet they have quite lowly functions, such as the PVC traffic cone and the toilet float. Out of context these seem like precious and expensive objects. The other extreme is the religious cup that seems inappropriately basic. Function again is the driving force in the design clarity of the double headed nail. This simple object is a temporary nail, made to be removed easily. With the watering can and bottle, however, the attempt at a two-in-one function is possibly less effective.



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