

# de ma

AMANDA GREEVES REPORTS ON THE SUCCESS OF A NEW COLLABORATION BETWEEN DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS TO PRODUCE INTERIOR PRODUCTS AN INITIATIVE CALLED 'MANUFACTURING DESIGN', OR DE MA FOR SHORT



The De ma range of furniture was launched in September 2000 as a result of Arts Queensland's initiative, 'Manufacturing Design'. The vision of the program was to establish sustainable partnerships between designers and manufacturers with an aim to encourage quality innovative design, and to market the products produced to a national and international market. As a joint initiative with the Department of State Development the project was one of the most ambitious programs of industry support undertaken with the design and manufacturing sectors. This initiative represents a strategic move by Arts Queensland to establish partnerships of public and private sector support for the product design and manufacturing process. Key industry bodies endorsed the project including the Design Institute of Australia, Craft Queensland, Queensland Artworkers Alliance and the Furniture Industry Association of Australia.

Kylie Bickle, Knuckles. Manufacturer: GMI, ARMA, UG.



Manufacturing Design involved the establishment of a design consortium of six designers, Kylie Bickle, Bruce Carrick, Ian Garrard, Marc Harrison, Jim McKee and Luis Nheu, a pool of qualifying manufacturers and a nominated distributor. 85 sketch design concepts were developed by the designers and presented to a pool of interested manufacturers following a critique that reviewed design, production and market viability. The majority of designs were taken up by manufacturers for design development and proto-typing. The final product catalogue—De ma includes 16 ranges comprising over 70 individual products. Nine manufacturers (most of whom have never worked with designers before) made up the manufacturing component of the de ma partnership.

The project generated an extraordinary amount of dedication from all of the key players. The opportune timing of this project and the combination of key representatives has played an important role in its success. The designers invested significantly, in proportion to their income, for the opportunity to create new product and the manufacturers were pushed to experiment with new production methods. Due to the outstanding efforts of each design manufacturing team and with the facilitation of the Project Manager, the finished product was ready for national distribution in less than ten months from design conception. The products are now being distributed nation-wide by the Furniture Manufacturing Company of Australia (FMCA) and are on display in their showrooms at Murrarie (Brisbane), Redfern (Sydney), and Niagara Lane (Melbourne).

The project has consolidated the careers of the designers and provided new business opportunities. In the six months since the project was launched sales are increasing steadily with the *Calliper* range by Ian Garrard achieving the most sales of the catalogue, proving

extremely popular for specification by commercial interior designers and architects. *Alleviate* by Marc Harrison, *Loop* coffee table by Kylie Bickle and the *Organo* lounge by Luis Nheu have also contributed to approximately \$100,000 worth of product sales to date.

The success of sales to date indicates a definite demand for quality Australian design and manufactured product. As a benchmark for the industry De ma demonstrates that success through collaboration is possible. de ma also attracted a record amount of in-kind sponsorship estimated at approximately \$500,000. This result demonstrated the commitment of the industry to research and development, and the importance of design as a fundamental tool of innovation.

Arts Queensland has invested significant funds in De ma and has created a national initiative in supporting design. Manufacturing Design represents the first step towards generating consequential change. However the project must be reinforced with follow up programs and continued stimulation of the relationship between manufacturers and designers to build a self sufficient furniture design profession and realise the vision of Manufacturing Design.

#### endnotes

The De ma catalogue is available from: FMCA in either Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne, or tel: Maria Turmine, FMCA, Brisbane on +61(0)7 3890 3799 or fax: +61 (0)7 3890 3899.

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From left: Ian Garrard, 'Calliper' seating range. Manufacturer: Ergofurn; Marc Harrison, 'Alleviate' range. Manufacturer: FMCA; Kylie Bickle, 'Knuckles' range. Manufacturer: GMI, ARMA, UG.