

BLUEPRINT

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sour grapes

Eames meets Gucci

The appropriation of egalitarian post-war design by elitist glossy magazines and fashion houses continues apace. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the sponsorship of the **Eames retrospective** in London by **Gucci**, purveyors of £500 shirts to the super-rich. In return for sponsorship Gucci got to hold an exclusive preview at the **Design Museum** the night before the private view. Naturally, guests were expected to turn up dressed head-to-toe in Gucci's house colours: black, more black and just a glimmer of gold. But to ensure that nobody spoiled the look, Gucci took extraordinary steps to guarantee that one of their most important guests conformed to the code. The luggage of poor **Eames Demetrios**, grandson of Charles, had failed to arrive at the airport (convenient, eh?) and therefore the normally chinos-and-blue-shirt man was in need of a new

wardrobe. Just as he was about to pop off to Marks & Spencer to kit himself out, the kind people at Gucci stepped in and offered him a makeover. So he trotted off to the Sloane Street flagship where five people fussed around him like a star in a **Hollywood dressing room**. The result? "He looked a treat," said a Design Museum spokesman.

More Eames

Lucia Eames, daughter of Charles by his first marriage, enjoyed talking to guests at the less select private view the night after the Gucci party. She especially delighted in pressing the button which made one of the Eameses' famous **DCW chairs** spin round in a device like a big tumble-dryer. After explaining to viewers some of Charles's ideas for the chair, she then astonished them by saying, "I was lucky enough to get a set at auction in San Francisco a couple of years ago." Poor Lucia – you would have thought her status and

the fact that the chairs are currently in production at Vitra would mean she wouldn't have to scabble about looking for **bargain classics** like the rest of us.

New Labour millionaire?

Business is booming for **Tim Pyne**, architect, designer and man about town. While once he was content just to tart up the tents for **100% Design's** annual show, he now claims to be responsible for no less than three zones inside the **Millennium Dome**. "And I've got someone looking for a yacht for me in France," he boasted recently. Sadly, Peter Mandelson's gain is 100% Design's loss. Pyne says he won't have time to design the show next year.

Ab fab architect needed

A very abrupt mystery caller to **Blueprint** has been searching the world for a cutting-edge architect to design a new chain of **department stores**. He's not giving much away, but

apparently the plan is for a spin-off from a well-known **Knightsbridge store** (and we assume that's probably not the one owned by Mohamed Fayed). Names suggested as designers include some British youngsters, "and if you want someone really cool and you've got cash," we said, "try **Rem Koolhaas**." "OK," said mystery caller, "have you got his number?" Expect some **delirious stores** near you soon.

Bayley v New Labour

Ever since his departure as creative director of the New Millennium Experience, **Stephen Bayley** has used every available opportunity to dig the knife into his erstwhile colleagues at New Labour. So deep is his loathing for what he calls "**the Mandeldome**" and the super-smiley, one-party politics that currently engulfs Britain, that he has written a new book on the subject to be published by Batsford this autumn. And its title? **Labour Camp**. Should be top Christmas reading.

profile

Michael Anastassiades

is an industrial designer whose experimental work challenges our perception of furniture and electronic products. **Caroline Roux** met him

PORTRAIT LAURENCE BRUCE

The Parisians were confused. Not only did this person have an incredibly long and unpronounceable name, they weren't sure that it was entirely English either. "Mais il est britannique, non?" they queried to each other as they strolled, chic but puzzled, into the latest opening at Colette, Paris's shop of the moment. The rue St Honoré store stages frequently changing exhibitions of art and design among its displays of top designer clothing and knitwear (any shade of grey allowed), desirable home accessories (Ingo Maurer and Tom Dixon lights; Rei Kawakubo chairs) and state of the art trainers and cosmetics. This time the Colettistes had turned out in force to see new work by Michael Anastassiades, the 31-year-old London-based Cypriot designer. What they found was a sleek set of oak dining table, chairs and a light that, like all of his work, had a few surprises in store.

Anastassiades' pieces go beyond being just furniture – they represent explorations into how we use things as much as experiments in design and form. His work has a Duchampian trickery hidden behind a confident modernist aesthetic. A collection of occasional tables designed last year tread a fine line – whimsical, without tripping over into the realms of kitsch. The Mirror Table – a fine-legged wooden side table with a curved mirror top – plays with human vanity. The natural instinct is to lean over and look at yourself slyly in the glass, but then you are caught out by the

letter

LETTERS CAN BE SENT TO THE EDITOR, BLUEPRINT, AVON HOUSE, AVONMORE ROAD, LONDON W14 8TS OR EMAILED TO: mfield@aspenplc.co.uk

ELLE DECORATION

Dear Marcus,

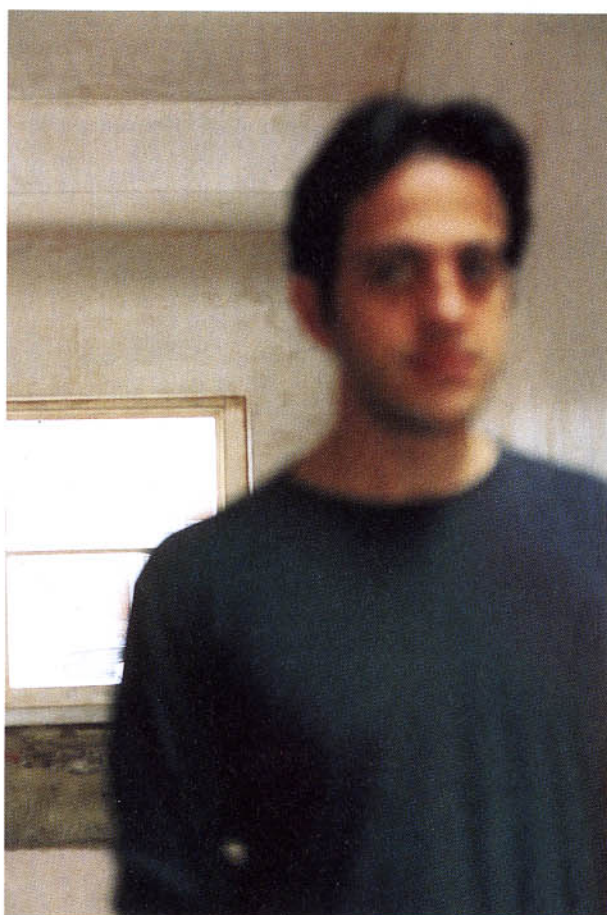
While I totally agree that Blueprint continues to be a leader in the architecture and design repertoire arena, I was a bit bemused by your characterisation of ELLE DECO as superficial.

Yes, architecture and design have become assimilated into the mass media, but I think that's great. Isn't it the point to get the good stuff in print and out there for public consumption? I was under the impression that Blueprint, ELLE DECO, Sunday supplements et al, were all striving for the same goal – to get excellence in design recognised.

One of the reasons I 'defected' to ELLE DECO from Blueprint, was because I wanted to get a non-specialist audience excited about design, not just the already design literate. It's communication to a different audience, not inferior commentary.

Michelle Ogundimu
Deputy editor, ELLE DECO, formerly senior editor, Blueprint.

MC



Designer Michael Anastassiades, left, has produced intriguing furniture (mirrored dining table and chairs, below, side tables, below left) and electronic products such as a beaker which takes messages, below far left

distortion caused by its curved surface. The Alarm Clock table is an assemblage of day-to-day materials and parts. To look at, it is no more than a simple metal bedside table, but set the clock concealed beneath its top, place your keys or loose change upon it and it will rattle you awake in the morning. You are the operator, and it is components from your life which make it work.

The wooden Lamp Table, with a light bulb set into its top, blurs the distinction between one object type and another. Is it a table? Is it a lamp? A Talking Cup looks like a simple wooden beaker with a brightly laminated inside, but thanks to a hidden microchip is able to take a short message when you speak into it. Leave it face down on a table, and the next person to come into the room

can pick it up and hear your voice.

Anastassiades seems to have come a long way from his undergraduate roots in civil engineering at Imperial College. ("What did I learn there? Just that I didn't want to be a civil engineer, I think.") He went on to complete an Industrial Design Engineering MA at the Royal College of Art in 1993, and has since worked extensively with RCA research fellows Tony Dunne and Fiona Raby on projects that incorporate explorations of human behaviour into design. He produced this year's *Blueprint* stand at 100% Design, set designs for Hussein Chalayan's last four London fashion shows, and is working on the interior of a Greek restaurant in Belsize Park that promises to extract Greek dining from the dark ages of retsina and plate smashing.

For the work on show at Colette, Anastassiades set out, he says, "to make something more commercial and useable. I was interested in making bigger, more permanent pieces." Nonetheless, the pieces are designed as a set, and evolved according to the way that they relate to each other and how the user would relate to them. The table incorporates a concave mirror at its centre, intended to catch and send back the light emitted from the slim, mirrored glass lamp that hangs above it.

"Look," says Anastassiades, reluctant that you should miss a single detail of this exacting composition, and the interaction between the component parts, "the light falls exactly inside the circle of the glass." In terms of human interaction, its concavity means that should you lean over and look into it, you see a blown-up image of yourself, but equally that a person sitting opposite you at the table is also reflected back in the central mirror: you see your dining companion facing you, and below them their reflection in the glass. More play with reflection happens with the mirror-backed chair: you need never dine alone — having at least yourself to converse with if no other eating partners are available.

As yet, all Anastassiades' furniture pieces are still produced as one-offs. "But I would love everything to go into production," he says. "I want people to use these things. I want them to be comfortable living with a vibrating table and a talking cup."



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