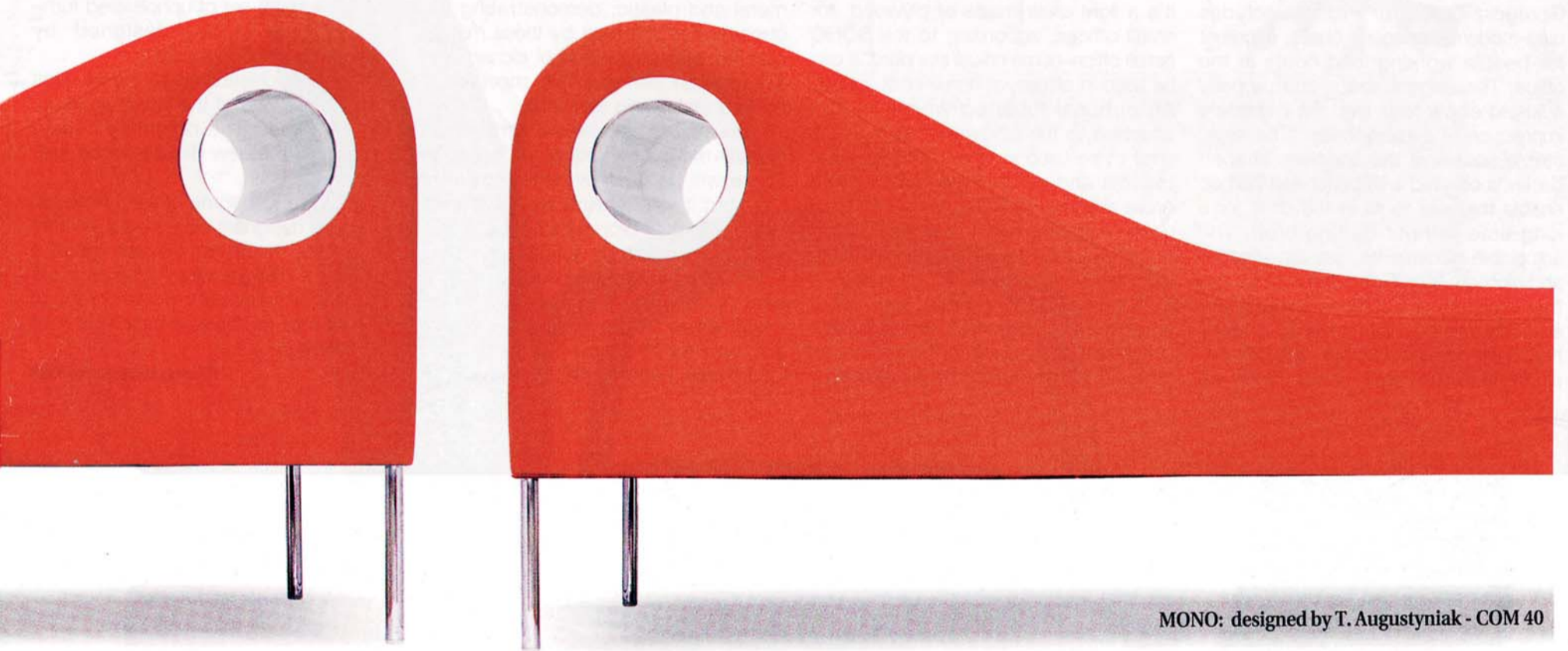


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Polish Furniture 2003



MONO: designed by T. Augustyniak - COM 40

POLISH DESIGN AND PRODUCTS

Seeking Beauty and Comfort

Can rationalism, pragmatism, fascination with technology and a focus on the current needs of producers and clients be a starting point for designing interesting and useful objects? One might get that impression from looking at the latest ideas by Polish designers. The generation of young designers can see the need to work with new technologies. Many world-renowned designers, such as Konstantin Grcic, say that without a creative understanding between the designer and the production engineer, there are no good products. What is produced in a factory is the result of technical possibilities, the designer's vision and the expectations of potential clients.

"I try to design furniture with a distinctive but universal form—furniture that does not impose character on the interior," says Piotr Kuchciński, an architect and designer. This doesn't mean that form is unimportant. Nearly every

designer's ambition is to leave their individual mark on the objects, as is the case with one of the best-known Polish designers, Tomasz Augustyniak. "The shape, the characteristic line, attract the client's attention, making it possible to stand out from the crowd of objects that surround us; but this isn't sufficient. A piece of furniture is primarily an object of use that has to be comfortable and ergonomic," says Augustyniak.

For several years, brand-name designer furniture has appeared in the Polish market. Polish producers of office furniture, chairs, and sofas create their own collections with the participation of designers. These include Profim, Balma, Mikomax, MDD, COM40, Kler and Eljot. They don't want to be nameless; they realize that without their own products it will be difficult for them to compete with Western producers. What do designers say to this? Most graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts have little idea of what a production live looks like, not to

mention the secrets of the technology behind different products. This is not taught at Polish universities, which focus instead on theory. Young graduates are useless to the industry. Those who already have some experience in design have gained it on their own by working for many companies.

"There's no policy related to design or designer training in Poland, though we do not lack young talents," says Beata Bochińska, founder of Autorski Bank Projektów Wzornik, which designs for the industry. "This is a pity because it's a field in which we might win a position in Europe. The projects that we have managed to carry out and implement sell not only in Poland. Educating a designer requires several years' work, getting acquainted with technologies, training, and contacts with design studios around the world. Those who chose that way several years ago can boast of numerous successes."

For years the furniture fair in Poznań, the biggest in Poland, has been an arena for debuts and presentations of new projects. Sometimes these are whole collections, and often prototypes.

Last year was very difficult, and not only for furniture producers. The domestic market crisis has hit many companies. Producers who remained in good standing included those able to sell their products abroad, the more so as recently the euro/zloty exchange rate has been favorable for exporters. These companies can afford new designs and collections. Poznań's Profim, the Polish producer of office chairs from Turek, will show several new chairs. This young and developing company has already delivered several intriguing projects. "From the very beginning, we have directed our products at demanding clients who will appreciate the quality of our chairs and who are not guided

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Seeking Beauty and Comfort

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exclusively by price," says Ryszard Rychlik, co-owner of Profim. "Our office chairs have found buyers not only in Poland, but also in Western countries. Our cooperation with Polish designers has brought good results."

The Active system, designed by Grzegorz Olech for Profim, includes ultra-modern manager's chairs, excellent for people working long hours in the office. The elegant shape and properly adjusted elbow-rests lend the immediate impression of a luxury chair. "The large, stable seat and the specially shaped backrest covered with perforated leather, enable the user to sit in the chair for a long time without getting tired. The adjustable elbow-rests, gas amortization and high-quality synchro-mechanism further improve the quality. In the Lux version, the backrest can bend to a nearly horizontal position, creating optimal conditions for a short rest. The company will

also present the Perfo chair in a new version. In Perfo New, a net fabric has been applied to the backrest, allowing excellent ventilation for the user's back.

Another exciting proposal, for a completely different customer, is a chair named Jojo, designed by Augustyniak. It's a light chair made of plywood, for small offices, according to the SOHO (small office-home office) standard. It can be used in offices, at home or at school. An optional tabletop which can be attached to the elbow-rest allows the chair to be used in training rooms, auditoriums and conference halls. Jojo's great advantage is the wide range of options offered, meeting the needs of the individual user. We will also see a system with the working name NOM, designed by Augustyniak for Mikomax. It's a set of employee and auditorium furniture with a simple structure made of bent tubes of different diameters, with plastic elements.



TUTTI: designed by J.Langier - Eljot

It includes both simple desks and small stacked auditorium tables which can be arranged in a great number of layouts. During the fair, Mikomax, a Łódź-based producer of office furniture, will also show a system designed by Olech. The designer has combined fiberboard, sheet metal and plastic, demonstrating the opportunities provided by these materials. The system is made of closed profiles and bent elements from sheet metal, finished with plastic elements.

Producers of upholstered furniture will display many new pieces of furniture. There will be no new collection from Kler, but it will certainly be worthwhile having a look at proposals from COM40. This young company, founded in 2000, in its first year showed a collection of 30 sets of furniture designed by Polish designers. A chaise longue and a sofa are among the new designs from COM40 by Augustyniak, who seems to

be a fan of sofas. The set's distinctive feature is a roll-shaped pillow. The set provides an opportunity for easy spatial arrangements; it can be easily moved by using the two-wheel version.

In May, at the Poznań International Fair, COM40 will present a new collection for 2003: a set of upholstered furniture named Mono, designed by Augustyniak (ABP Wzornik).

Another sophisticated proposal, Tutti from Eljot, is one of the latest works by Jerzy Langier. The company is also preparing three new designs to be presented in Poznań.

These are just some of the proposals by Polish designers and producers that we will see at the fair. A year ago, the number of designs was higher, but the standard of furniture provides grounds for optimism, testifying to the potential of Polish design.

Elżbieta Wrzecionkowska

Minimalist design, aggressive colors,
simple structure and easy adjustment
—such are the basic features
of modern furniture.



ACTIVE: designed by G. Olech - Profim™



JOJO: designed by T.Augustyniak - Profim™