

“Man is the mold of his country’s landscape”.

(Saul Tchernichowsky, 1875–1943)

In 2001 was held the first exhibition abroad of young Israeli designers at the trade fair *Abitare il Tempo* in Verona. Thanks to the exhibition of 2001, design historian Mel Byars, author of *The Museum of Modern Art Design Encyclopedia*, was confronted with Israeli design for the first time and declared in short, “Israeli design is the world’s best-kept secret.” Since then, those of us associated with the country’s design family have endeavoured to export and exhibit work that will continue to draw the contours of the phenomenon which can be circumscribed as Israeli design.

Beneath a thin crust of globalization, in Israel subterranean rivers of local culture continue to flow. The cultural DNA of the place and the people living there defines these rivers. In order to decode the genetic formula of Israeli design, some factors have to be considered.

“Post-industrial crafts”

Israel’s cutting-edge plastics industry and its refined high-tech sector offer first-class production facilities. Nevertheless, a designer-oriented furniture industry does not exist. But the void has fostered a high level of creativity, which might have been thwarted by the demands of the marketplace or the mandates of unsophisticated manufacturers.

The technologically advanced industrial conditions have encouraged a considerable number of designers in Israel to work in a sector, which could be called “post-industrial crafts”.

The designers have no real access to industry, so they create industrial products in the manner of traditional craftspeople. The saw, hammer and lathe of crafts workers have given way to injection moulding, metal pressing, photochemistry and other advanced methods of production.

“**Ogg Design Group**” reconstructed their own injection machine for recycling plastics for the manufacture of home goods, bowls and center pieces.

The result is far from industrial and reflective of the glassmaking equipment in Murano where each unit is unique. **Galit Shvo, Villy Mizrachi** and **Jonathan Roth** reinterpret the industrial process as new age craftsmen.

The will to surprise

The same motives, which have permeated Israeli literature, film and the theatre, are found in design; although, nowadays the desire to surprise is uppermost. And this desire is not only to entertain the neighbours, friends or the general public in the same manner as the archetype of the classic Israeli who, by means of irony or wit, loves to attract attention to himself and is also cheeky.

To those unfamiliar with the culture, the craving by Israeli designers to surprise or amuse the public may almost be an obsession or a somewhat childish foible.

The work of the couple **Kfir Schwalb** and **Orit Magia** is filled with a subtle sense of humour balanced with a strong sense of practical approach.

The same practical approach with a sensitive interpretation of the materials is visible in the work of Yair Fuchs.

Even the minimalist language of Form follows Function of **Yair, Orit** and **Kfir**, plays with us in order to surprise.

This Israeli design endeavours to unveil “the best kept secret in the world of design”, at least to a certain extent, which Israeli designers, producers and institutions have still yet to fulfil completely.

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