

living



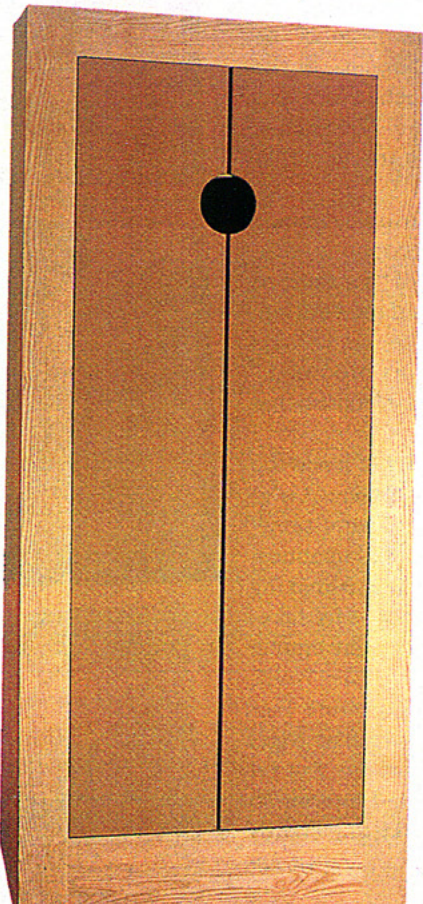
Nick Dine is built like a quarterback, so he doesn't look altogether comfortable draped over his groovy chaise longue like Goya's *Maja*. If his name sounds familiar it's because his father is the American Pop artist Jim Dine, but Nick would rather people didn't make the connection. "My father casts a long shadow," he says. "That's why I chose design rather than art—I wanted to do my own thing."

Dine went to auto-mechanics school – between a BFA in sculpture and two years at the Royal College of Art – which goes some way to explaining why his table legs look like chassis and why he loves spraying his furniture with Day-Glo green paint. "It's car paint – really tacky. People are always asking me to change it to black." Despite this idiosyncrasy Dine is a rationalist at heart, stripping his pieces down to their essentials then adding some sinuous curves. "Peter Fiell [who sells his furniture in London] calls it 'organic rationalism,'" says Dine. "I think it's more accessible than furniture that's purely rational, like Bauhaus."

He mostly uses moulded fibreglass, plastic and aluminium: "I'm working on my own, so I have to use tried and tested technology. But I'm not material based. If you limit your materials, you limit your designs." So he has a sideline in carpets with bold, Malevich-inspired splashes that he creates on his computer, and fabric printed with small, "very rational" patterns that read as solids. Recently, he's started to work in wood, making tables and a pale, elliptical cabinet in maple – "I use ellipses a lot; I'm always trying to find ways not to make squares."

"We can make chairs out of things we throw away," says Jane Atfield, perched on the back of her monolithic armchair made out of slabs of the sort of recycled felt normally hidden under carpets. "I never relate to furniture as a status object or precious statement," she adds, "so my felt chair doesn't deny its origins." Neither does

Above left and below, Jeni Lennox (tel: 0475 568918) monumental ash wood and MDF chest of drawers and wardrobe.
Above, Jane Atfield (tel: 071-278 6971) sits on her recycled plastic Rietveld chair, behind her corrugated cardboard storage unit and recycled felt chair and footstool



her Rietveld-inspired chair, which is constructed from bright panels of Jackson Pollack-spotted plastic created (by a small American company) by squashing empty bleach and fabric conditioner bottles. Her Packing Case chairs and tables, offcuts from crates that usually carry art (shades of Rietveld again), were borrowed for London Fashion Week by the fashion world's favourite recycler, Helen Storey.

Jane trained as an architect before changing to a furniture course at the RCA. "My architectural training was very modernist, very abstract. I wanted to learn more about details and materials so I switched to furniture," she says. Design retailer Zev Aram, who

included her work in his showcase for young design, *Graduates '92*, says: "Jane's work has a clarity that could only come from a cross-over design training. A lateral thinker, she uses different materials in new contexts."

Atfield explains her use of materials other than metal or wood: "At college I was terrified of the circular saw and the band saw. I had to develop an approach that didn't involve carpentry or welding; so that's one of the reasons I started working with felt and plastic. Now I'm more interested in the *idea* of furniture than the practical side." And the ideas are beginning to pay off, with first prize in an *Elle Decoration*/Ikea competition for her medieval/minimalist plywood storage frame and plans to bring the "Pollock" plastic squasher to the UK. "It's important to link furniture with the way we lead our lives," says Jane. "Recycling is a positive approach in a wasteful society. Refuse is regarded as a resource rather than as an embarrassment and recycled furniture is a process that will help us make that connection."

● **New designer trends to watch:** recycled materials such as felt and MDF (medium density fibreboard) are elevated in such monumental Modernist furniture as Jane Atfield's chair and Scottish designer Jeni Lennox's outside cabinets. . . Metal furniture is no longer characterised by curlicues and "suburban baroque" finials as this generation of metal-workers stretches metal to *attenuated lengths* on Michael Young's slinky lights and chairs, Nick Crowe's beaten copper beanpole lamps and Tom Heatherwick's delicate, spiralling metal thrones. . . *Playschool shapes* in psychedelic colours, such as Helen Maria Nugent's *Magic Roundabout* table and stools, match the mood for all things Seventies.