



Magis and the Furniture Fair

1984 was the year of the ladder called *Step*, a project by Andries and Hiroko van Onck. It was snubbed when it first came out, because the furniture store circuit was not a place for ladders; they were supposed to be sold in hardware stores. Then things went the way they did, and *Step* met with enormous success, especially in furniture stores. It was the first product to light Magis's fire - with regards to design as well as cash flow.

In twenty years roughly a million of them have been produced. It's super-imitated, and by high-lineage companies, too.

1994 was the year of *Bottle*, Jasper Morrison's first project for Magis, an object that gave luster to Magis by our being awarded an enormous number of design prizes and earning a place in the permanent collections of many contemporary art museums, such as the MoMA of New York and the Victoria and Albert Museum of London.

1994 was also the year of the *Lyra* stool by Design Group Italia.

Lyra did not receive the Compasso d'Oro or any other design awards, nor did it become part of the permanent collection of any museums, but it passed the most stringent test of all with flying colours: sales proclaimed it Magis's longest-lived bestseller.

1996 was the year of Stefano Giovannoni's *Bombo*, an extraordinary commercial success of international dimensions, and still going strong. Today *Bombo* is an icon; it created a style. It is super-copied and super-imitated - even by the most unexpected of Italian manufacturers, who did some free-riding on *Bombo*'s back. But *Bombo* remains *Bombo*. Its copies are another story, a different chapter, and it's not a chapter about creativity and design.

2000 was the year of Air-Chair by Jasper Morrison, a technologically advanced product, and the first single-shell chair in the world to be conceived in air moulding. It will doubtlessly be one of tomorrow's classics.

2001 was the year of the *Magis Dog House* by Michael Young. A success. But not so much from a commercial point of view as from a media coverage point of view. The attention *Magis Dog House* received was overwhelming and came from all directions.

2003 was the year of *Chair One* by Konstantin Grcic. A hugely innovative project. It is an example of modern use of die-cast aluminum. Its design is left more to the void than to the solid, resulting in the most product with the least material. Excellent critical and commercial acclaim.

2004 will be the year of Me Too, a collection of objects and furniture for children between two and five or six years old.

I had the idea three years ago, when I ran into great difficulties finding a desk for my beautiful granddaughter Anna, who was two at the time and showing a great propensity for drawing.

After a long pilgrimage from one magazine to the next, from one catalogue to the other, I finally found what I was looking for at Manufactum, a German mail-order company. I bought it.

It's an all-wood desk with an intelligent mechanism that allows the top to be fixed at different heights and, what's more, at different inclinations.

Fantastico! Ideal for drawing.

A small blemish: the mechanism was too difficult for a child to understand and operate. But that did not tarnish the project's high quality. The project was brilliant compared to the entire range of the market's offerings, which seemed to me not to offer much in terms of good children's products.

And so I decided to start up the collection of objects and furniture for children between two and five or six.

I immediately coined the name of the program: Me Too.



Me too,
jo tambien,
eu también,
moi aussi,
ich auch,
anch'io,
.....
.....
.....

the voice of children demanding, insisting to have their own objects, their own furniture that correspond to their own world, which is different from the adult one, not only for its dimensions but also for its values.

I didn't want something that was a reduced scale model, for example Jasper Morrison's Air-Chair shrunk down to the size of a two-to-five/six year-old.

No.

I wanted to go about it in the same way that children themselves might conduct and manage this kind of operation.

How?

I started to look for designers that were able to think with the mind of a child. The research took quite some time. I consulted books, catalogues, and in the end I selected **from outside Magis**:

Javier Mariscal from Barcelona.

Not an industrial designer but a graphic designer. To cite just one of his projects, he's the man who drew Cobi, the mascot of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. I had just heard that a marvellous, extraordinary thing had happened to him – he had recently become a father to splendid twins, Alma and Linus.

Jo tambien, Papa.

So in all, I had good reasons to want him on the team and it crossed my mind I could even give him the captain's stripes.

Eero Aarnio, in his seventies, was the Fin who designed the *Bubble Chair* in 1968, a kind of indoor swing.

Pirkko, his wife, told me that Eero always plays with the glasses and the bottle when he's at the table and waiting for the next course. He piles the glasses on top of the bottle in precarious towers that he is not always able to control, and that's when accidents happen.

Satyendra Pakhalé was born in India and lives in Amsterdam. He's a sculptor/designer that sculpture has lent to design.

El Ultimo Grito, led by the Madrilenians Roberto Feo and Rosario Hurtado. They live in London now. Ron Arad introduced them to us.

Martí Guixé is from Barcelona and designs the Camper stores. Ferran Amat, from the Vinçon gallery in Barcelona, suggested we work with him.

And from inside Magis:

Marcel Wanders, a Dutchman

Björn Dahlström, a Swede

Enzo Mari, an Italian



Marco Ferreri, an Italian

I contacted the designers, received their endorsements, assigned them their subjects, and the design machine started rolling. Today, two years down the road, here I am, here we are, ready to show the work.

From Javier Mariscal, a great group of projects. Chairs, tables, bookshelves, objects. High-quality projects. For me, the most special one is *Nido*, a kind of cave with good proportions – the ideal hideout where children can cultivate playing and dreaming.

From Eero Aarnio: *Puppy*, *Upside Down Chair* and *Bam-boo*, three wonderful projects. Especially *Upside Down Chair* is a magical project – a chair that can be turned over to obtain a different height seat, and placed down on its front to become a rocker. Bravo Eero!

From Satyendra Pakhalé, a container-cart and a puzzle-carpet.

From El Ultimo Grito, a collection of children's clothes that are more design than fashion.

From Martí Guixé: adhesive tape to make paper balloons.

From Marcel Wanders: a children's desk that has the feel of an unfinished piece. It's up to the children who use it to decorate it.

From Björn Dahlström: a curtain-cum-tablecloth and a space divider system that allows children to cut out their own little corner of the world.

From Enzo Mari: the little children's chair *Pop*, really beautiful. The material it's made of, expanded polypropylene, makes it soft and light.

From Marco Ferreri: a hand-held lamp, *Tabi*, a light that a child can always carry along, and that turns off automatically.

The Me Too project coordinator was Enrico Perin, from Magis's product development department.

He put all his heart, his entire mind, all his energy and a lot of time into Me Too. He even lost his flaming new black Ford Fiesta to it, the first new car he ever owned. He had just traded in his worn out Fiat Uno. Then one night a few days ago, he crashed into the kerb of a pavement near his house at a fast speed. An oversight, he told me. Of course, but what is an oversight but having your eyes elsewhere? So I'm convinced that Enrico's eyes were nervously running to Barcelona, to Mariscal's studio, to peek in on how the projects were coming along. But the pavement was there, crash. Not a scratch on Enrico, but the car was totaled.

In these two years, also my granddaughter Anna was also a great help to me. I always showed her the models in order to receive her judgment. While she looked at the models, I would look at her eyes and mouth. If her eyes lit up with joy and her mouth opened in a smile, I understood that she wanted to have one, and the project was approved.

Also the assistance of Londoner Edward Melhuish was priceless. He is an expert in pedagogy and was at our side from the beginning of the project, ready to contribute his point of view to all our different ideas for projects, and to the various models. He was a strict guard who only let projects pass that carried positive values for children.

In one month there will be the Furniture Fair, and that's where we will present Me Too.

The projects are all beautiful, I mean stunningly beautiful. They all emanate an air of high quality, they all have something new to say, they all fill an empty space that was.

In all there are twenty.

They're great, but how will the Fair react?

Could they be received in a way similar to *Step* in 1984?



Wouldn't that be something!

Eugenio Perazza