



家具TIME

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直击科隆 家具四大潮流

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People Define the Worldwide Furnishing Trends



Design Council in the 2008 imm Trend Book.

Born in London, England, Sophie Lovell is a freelance writer, editor and consultant in the fields of architecture and design. She moved to Berlin in 1994 where she rapidly became an active member of the city's burgeoning multidisciplinary creative scene.

For the second year running she was a member of the 2008 imm Cologne furniture fair Trend Board helping to pinpoint key new directions for one of the world's most important furniture fairs.

Furniture Time(FT):About working with the Trend Board 2008 and choosing this year's trends?

Sophie(S):First of all let me disabuse anyone of the idea that spending time as part of a design jury picking next year's furniture trends is a picnic in the park: Two solid days locked in intense debate with four strong-minded experts is fascinating, inspiring, frustrating, illuminating and above all damn hard work! But my experience of the Trend Jury workshops has to date always been a



fulfilling one.

It is often surprising to find that, despite our different nationalities, backgrounds and professions, the themes and patterns that have caught and held our attention over the past year are often very similar. Thus we were able to condense our thoughts and define a set of interest areas in furniture design for the imm Cologne in a surprisingly unanimous fashion. The four key themes or trends defined by the jury were: Outside-In, Priceless, Design School and Neo-Nature. These trend definitions were then documented by the German

FT:As an editor, author and also in your role as a member of the Trendboard at the Cologne furniture fair you are constantly having to define trends. How and where do you find them?

S:Trends aren't something you find, they are something you observe and absorb. They are patterns that arise and fade in the fabric of urban life.

FT:How does a team like the Trendboard work when they are defining trends?

S:It is a bit like a college workshop really. Everyone does their homework beforehand, puts together a sort of visual notebook that loosely follows the brief and then you discuss and discuss your findings together until clear patterns begin to emerge. It is hard work but if the group is good and, as with the imm Trendboard,

a well chosen cross section of creatives at the top of their fields then it can be a very inspiring and rewarding experience – not just for the clients but the board members as well.

FT: At a time when so many innovations are occurring parallel to one another, is it still possible to talk about “the trend” any more?

S: In my opinion no. We have entered a phase of increasingly intricate hybridisation and cross-referencing. Innovation is now technology driven – creatively we are becoming highly sophisticated remixers of our own visual culture history and, increasingly, remixers of nature and natural forms as well. This is an issue that I discuss in some detail in my book *Furnish*. The Internet has opened up a vast pool of visual references now to which we previously had little or no chance of access and exciting new forms and materials are quickly picked up on and sucked into the aesthetic consciousness. For example, a couple of years ago I came across a series of photographs by a German photographer of home-made chairs that he

had come across on street corners during his travels through China. I found the strange mixtures of materials from rough carved wood to taped-up cheap plastic seats and even bits of cardboard to be completely refreshing and such a great counterpoint to our IKEA-inspired high-turnover, throwaway furniture culture here in the West that I used the images in my presentation to the Trendboard. Now I see there is a young Dutch designer making a range of furniture that is based on these same chairs and they have become fashionable in their way.

FT: Where do new trends come from? From cities perhaps? Or individuals?

S: I am a great believer in what I would call the *Zeitgeist* phenomenon. New forms and methods seem to arise and spread simultaneously at various points when the chemistry is right. Like mutations: Mutations happen constantly in nature but 99.9% of them are not viable. However, should the environment alter, even slightly, then there is an opportunity for certain mutations to thrive and spread where they were not appropriate before. With the internet interface the spread of new design “mutations” can now be explosive and on a huge scale. It is a fascinating and highly fertile medium that in itself multiplies the chance of new mutations crossing categories and disciplines millionfold. Thus you get a mixing of creative genepools that might otherwise take years or never meet. A biotechnician, for example, might develop a new technique for mapping bone growth and replicating it in synthetic materials for the medical industry then an industrial designer may come across the process and adapt the method to “grow” new furniture forms.

FT: Which places and people, in your opinion are going to be the most interesting impulse-givers in the near future?



S: Nanotechnology, biotechnology and materials research are already having a strong impact and will continue to do so. Both in design and architecture—we are already talking about growing “skins” and structural elements for buildings and furniture. The neo-organic shape of Zaha Hadid’s Phaeno museum in Wolfsburg, Germany, for example, would never have been possible without new breakthroughs in self-supporting concrete. The same goes for foam technology with the new Water Cube Olympic Pool structure by PTW architects in Beijing. We are starting to dare to challenge the position of “Mother Nature” as the greatest designer of them all. The challenge is rather clumsy and at times almost comically naïve but it is there and I don’t think it is going to stop.

In terms of places, I think in many countries, such as Turkey in particular, there is a definite new wave of young designers who are marrying state-of-the-art contemporary design techniques with traditional crafts, skills and materials in a way that is absolutely not “ethnic”. This is another form of hybridisation that is proving very fruitful. 

