

CLASS REUNION – AN EXPERIMENT COMES OF AGE

NEW YORK, NY – During the ICFF in New York, twenty-five young designers will be honored in a retrospective celebrating the fifth anniversary of Bernhardt Design's innovative interdisciplinary studio with Art Center College of Design. Personally championed by Bernhardt Design President Jerry Helling and Environmental Design Chair David MocarSKI, the course was created to educate students in the process of designing products ultimately viable for production. At the conclusion of each studio, Bernhardt Design selects products for introduction in the commercial market. Since its inception, the design-thru-production studio concept has served as a model for other similar educational programs.

The Bernhardt Design partnership with Art Center College of Design to develop this unique program was based on the school's strong relationship with industry as well as their reputation for being a leading institution for over 80 years. The studio course, which is hosted within the environmental design major, has successfully trained students over the past seven years to design products that are visually stunning, appropriate for the commissioning manufacturer, fiscally feasible, and suitable within the constraints of mass production. The products developed from the Bernhardt Design studios have not only been award winning, but commercially successful around the world.

Former students have embarked on successful careers from designing for Marcel Wanders in Amsterdam to starting their own creative studios and working with top-tier manufacturers worldwide. Furthermore, the work of twenty designers from the program are currently in production with Bernhardt Design including the Red Dot Award-winning Loft chair by Shelly Shelly, the Audio chair by Chris Adamick, and Linc tables by Chase Wills.

“Several years ago I came to the realization that many recent design school graduates were very enthusiastic and had wonderful ideas, but they didn't know how the process of product development actually worked or what was required to design for mass production,” Jerry Helling explains. “We started the Art Center studio to give students a ‘real life, real time’ experience from the initial client brief through the launch of a product in the market. This was an experiment to see if we could make a positive difference in design education, and seven years later we are as excited about it as we were on day one.”

On view for the first time will be the work of Studio IV and Studio V. Tasked with a slightly different brief than the preceding classes, Studio IV worked in teams of three to create highly functional folding tables and table systems specifically designed for the commercial market. Born from this course are the striking Serif tables - an innovative and shockingly attractive folding table system for conference and training areas. Beautiful in a category that is primarily utilitarian, the arresting element of this system is the sculpted leg, crafted in polished aluminum.

Studio V presents work from five talented young designers who have drawn their inspiration from a wide scope of experiences and elements - from consumer electronics to hot air balloons, from waterfalls to Japanese landscapes. Vanish, a bar stool by Erika Kövesdi, stands out with a gently curved seat enhanced with a back lip that vanishes into the background. The Accent table by Steve Oh appears to be one continuous and fluid piece floating softly above the surface. With the Pause bench, Jen Kuca created a piece that is sculptural yet functional; its soft leather top subtly beckons the passersby to take a moment and pause. Aris, by David Kim, is a bench of elegant simplicity that explores contemporary culture's association of thinness to beauty. Rounding out the Studio Jessica Pell has taken the ubiquitous round pouf and made it an object of desire with a distinctive custom stitching pattern.

The retrospective at the ICFF in May, 2011, will feature all the designs created over the past seven years including the debut of eight new products. This is a class reunion worth attending.

ABOUT BERNHARDT DESIGN

Bernhardt Design was founded in 1980 by the 120-year-old Bernhardt Furniture Company and continues to be a leader and innovator in furniture design and production. During the past 10 years, President Jerry Helling has assembled an extraordinary creative team that has positioned Bernhardt Design as one of the leading international design companies with a roster of talent that includes: Ross Lovegrove (London), Arik Levy (Paris), Jaime Hayon (Barcelona), Yves Béhar (San Francisco), Patrick Jouin (Paris), Fabien Baron (New York), Monica Förster (Stockholm), CuldeSac (Valencia), Suzanne Trocmé (London), Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance (Paris), Jeffrey Bennett (New York), Bang Design (Sydney), Fredrikson Stallard (London), and Claudia and Harry Washington (San Salvador). Setting a precedent for leadership within the corporate community, Bernhardt Design created and sponsors an annual interdisciplinary course with the world renowned Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, challenging students to create world-class designs for mass production. Bernhardt Design also sponsors the ICFF Studio, a scholarship program which provides emerging design talent exposure to manufacturers, retailers and the media from around the world. Taking a proactive approach to sustainability, Bernhardt Design is one of the first furniture companies to have achieved Level certification, a multi-attribute standard assessing the environmental aspects of products, processes and facilities.

ABOUT ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN

Founded in 1930 and located in Pasadena, California, Art Center College of Design is a global leader in art and design education. Art Center offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide variety of art and design disciplines, as well as public programs for all ages and levels of experience. Renowned for its ties to industry and preparing students for professional practice, Art Center has attracted a range of notable corporate sponsors such as Nestlé, Toyota, Johnson & Johnson, Herman Miller, Autodesk, P&G, LG. Art Center is the first design school to receive the United Nations' Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status, providing opportunities for students to create design based solutions for humanitarian and non-profit agencies around the world. During the College's 80-year history, Art Center alumni, including Yves Béhar of Fuseproject, filmmaker Zach Snyder, and Christopher Bangle (former design chief of BMW), have had a profound impact on popular culture, the way we live, and important issues in our society.

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