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A UNIQUE PRODUCTION

The post-industrial wood furniture designed by Raw Edges was inspired by and created with paper. Its ingenuity lies in the fact that each piece, despite being made in a factory, is a one-off **Words** Luke Tebbutt

Computers have been great for designers. Since they started creeping into the industry in the Eighties they have allowed complex furniture to be made efficiently and with a level of standardisation that was previously impossible. But lately, between the precision bends and curves, designers have been rediscovering the joy of the unexpected: the handmade.

The benches and stools by young London-based design duo Raw Edges, pictured below in an early version, are a case in point. They're made by pouring liquid foam into a wood veneer shell, which creases

as the foam expands and sets inside, making each one unique. The result is a visual oxymoron: crinkly wood. But perhaps more interesting is the fact that this crinkly wood has been turned into a factory-made product by Italian brand Cappellini, unveiled at Milan earlier this year, individual quirks and all.

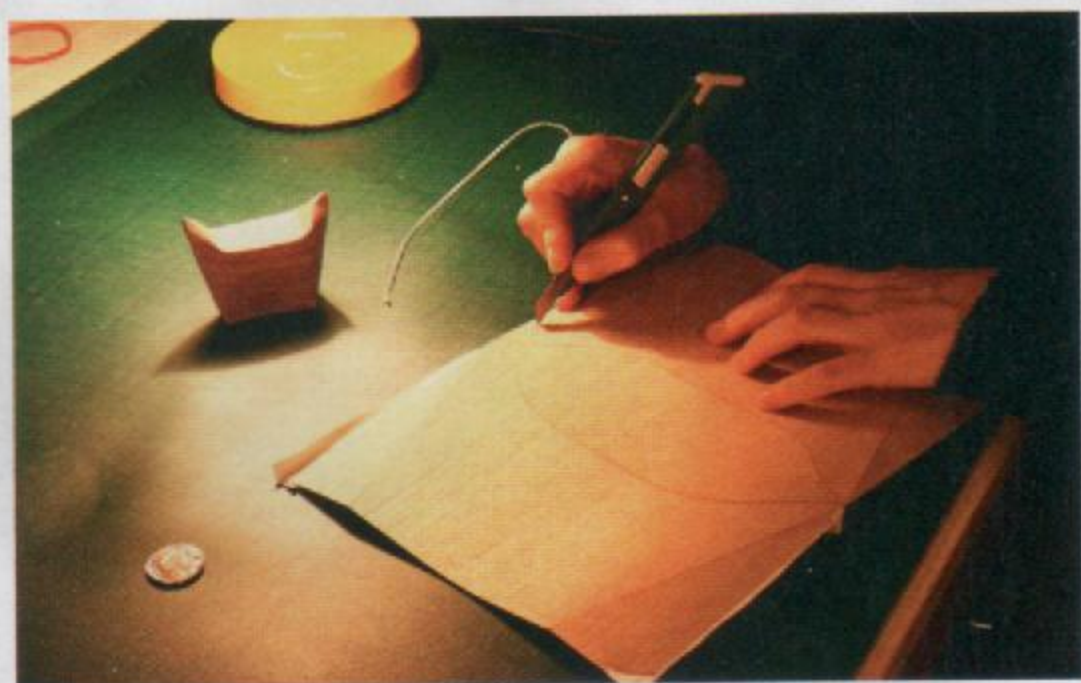
'It's what you call a post-industrial product. It is produced in an industrial way, but each piece is unique,' says Giulio Cappellini, who heads the Italian company. It was he who approached designers Yael Mer and Shay Alkalay after catching sight of their pieces at an exhibition. 'I said to them, "I →

below Early versions of the stools were made by pouring liquid foam into a wood veneer shell. The expansion of the foam as it set gave each piece a unique shape



Bulletin Launch Pad

*right and below
Cappellini's
factory-made
Tailored Wood
stool and bench
are true to Raw
Edges' prototype,
with machines
used to shake the
furniture as the
foam is injected,
creating the
distinctive creases*



*above Designer
Yael Mer (left)
began working
with paper,
creating mini
mock-ups before
producing
life-size pieces in
paper, filled with
polyurethane
to make
them sturdy
left Designs for
an armchair are
in progress*

want to come to your studio," and they were a little like, "No, we can come to your showroom." But I wanted to see how they worked. For me, the goal was to start with the prototype and try to make something that could be produced just like any other product.' All up, the jump from studio to factory took a year, with the wood now shaped around a mould, and machines used to shake each piece as the liquid foam is injected, creating unique creases.

'I enjoy working with material and not forcing something on it, but seeing what the tendency is for the material, and it was amazing that Cappellini wanted to keep this randomness,' says Mer. The idea, she explains, originated from a desire to recreate the crafty appearance of paper prototypes on a human scale. 'Some people thought it was just me being lazy and avoiding the workshop,' she says. 'I was doing all these sketches of chairs and sofas and then making patterns on my computer, which I would print out on A4 paper and fold to create tiny, sweet mock-ups, and I really wanted to keep that sketchy feel.'

Early experiments making full-size versions in metal didn't have the same effect, so the duo decided to ramp up the scale of the paper mock-ups instead and fill them with polyurethane (commonly used for insulation) to make them sturdy, before discovering a wood veneer material that's lined on the inside with paper, which creates similar creases.

In a way, the process is closer to fashion design than furniture design, acquiring its unique shape from its material rather than its mould, and originating from patterns on paper the way dresses and shirts do.

'There is flexibility with clothing and pattern making – you can change size and proportion quite easily, so the stool can become a bench,' says Yael. And, indeed, the bench will soon become an armchair, with a design currently being finessed, and the process is also being used to make a one-off bed for a private client.

It's a heartening reminder that, even with all the capabilities of technology, there's still a place for sticking together bits of paper in a studio.

'It's not that we're against technology – we use computers quite often. But there is something about the simplicity of materials that we like,' says Mer. 'We try to find new ideas in common materials. Ideas are around us all the time – we just need to dig and find them.' **GD**

Cappellini's Tailored Wood furniture will be available to buy in late August. The stool and bench are made with ash wood veneer and come with an optional coloured strip in green, grey, red or blue. Prices start at £1,830.65 for the stool and £3,662.48 for the bench. (020 7014 5980; cappellini.it)