

Furniture array

Armchairs with one armrest. A cupboard with zig-zag patterned coating. Functional, yet with an installation feel. What are they about?



MAJA Svendsdotter's armchairs each do a cheeky one-armed wave. Hello-o, here we are, check us out!

The black and white patterned one is kind of wild, with swirls of stripey fabric, stitched together kaleidoscope-like. The other has more leisurely, wavy stripes running over and with the form. While the cupboard stands tall and proud, its stripes broken, cut apart and stitched up again.

THIS FURNITURE GROUPING constituted Maja Svendsdotter's graduation project for Carl Malmsten Furniture Studies. The route towards this outcome was, on several levels, part of her life journey. As a child, she grew up in a textile milieu, with frequent visits to her mother's studio, that of Lillevi Hultman. Ticking fabrics were a natural part of her textile heritage, stripes, usage and recycling. The striped cloth on the cupboard came off an old feather bed, turned inside out.

PATCHWORK figured too, both as a springboard for ideas and as creative design. Plenty of source material was to hand in folk art, as regards both textiles and furniture, straightforward forms fashioned for function. Some of the furniture appears to be created symbiotically with a textile, for example the cushioned pads to soften a seat, make it comfortable.

WHILE STUDYING furniture design at Carl Malmsten's, she did a trip in spring 2011 to Mexico and Tecnológico de Monterrey Campus Guadalajara.

There she did industrial design, with the emphasis on craft technique. One of her assignments was to pose the question as to how a new ritual, one of the future, might look – to create it with Mexican influenced handwork and place it in a totally new context. Maja homed in on TV gogglers as a phenomenon, the way new technology has allowed us to look at more and more programmes, all day long, and how this influences us. Do the powers that be want us to see everything at the same time, as if under hypnosis?

She took the traditional Mexican striped cloth, *Sarape*, and used it to make what she called "hypnotic pinwheels".

These were mounted on loudspeakers and a bass woofer, which could be connected to a TV. The centrepiece on each loudspeaker pulls the gaze ever further in. Hues, colouring and patterning together form a perfect illusion.

BACK IN SWEDEN, she developed the idea of creating forms from stripey cloth, this time for placing on furniture.

– These days, textiles are often separated from the furniture form. So a chair gets created and the textile bit is just there, its own thing, replaceable. Like an add-on. Why?

Maja explained her take on how textiles are often synonymous with everything female, while furniture construction, on the other hand, has more of a male tradition. Having replaceable textiles is like putting the female to one side, diminishing it and subordinating it to the form of the furniture. Maja reversed the idea with her furniture. The fabrics occupy the space, represent the work of stitching and thinking about patterning, how it communicates with form.

What about the armchair with one armrest – how did that happen?

The answer had direct relevance to Maja. A while ago she suffered from a slipped disc. It was hard sitting in a "normal" chair. Instinctively, what she wanted to do was to lay one leg over an

armrest and also swivel her body, but there was no obvious space designed for this. There is now. And once friends had quality-tested them, the armchairs got the seal of approval. Furniture to go. Is this in fact an innovation, completely new? In a way it is and yet it isn't, commented Maja. Crooked wood furniture exists, there is patchwork with subtle effects in its mosaic patterning, but combined maybe not, that might be a new departure.

Maja is in her fifth year of higher education, doing Furniture Design at Konstfack in Stockholm. Her latest work will be exploring holism in furniture design. Spring 2014 is her graduation show. A

MAJA SVENSDOTTER

born 1980 in Linköping

Education:

Nyckelviksskolan 2007-08.

Carl Malmsten Furniture Studies,

Furniture Design BA 2009-12.

Exchange visit for a term at

Tecnológico de Monterrey Campus

Guadalajara, spring 2011.

Konstfack InSpace Interior,

Architecture and Furniture Design,

Master's programme 2012-14.



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