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WINNERS OF THE  
2007 HOSPITALITY  
PRODUCT DESIGN  
COMPETITION  
LEAVE BEHIND THE  
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CREATE INVENTIVE,  
FRESH PRODUCTS.

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BY MICHELLE BOWLES

THE  
MOLD



Winning products in the **2007 Hospitality Product Design Competition**, sponsored by IIDA and *Hospitality Design* magazine, span the full spectrum, from graphic carpets to wallcoverings made of tree bark to textiles inspired by a kimono. But among the diversity, a common thread exists. Each winner ignored the traditionally held rules of old to create the products designers need – and clients demand. After all, that’s what the service industry is all about: delivering on promises and exceeding customer expectations, however unique the request.

## BEST OF COMPETITION

AFTERIMAGES, SHAW HOSPITALITY GROUP

Shaw Hospitality Group tossed aside subtlety when it came to its *AfterImages* carpet collection. Instead, the company chose to go bold – using positive and negative imagery, contrasting textures and colors, and organic forms that are simultaneously traditional and contemporary.

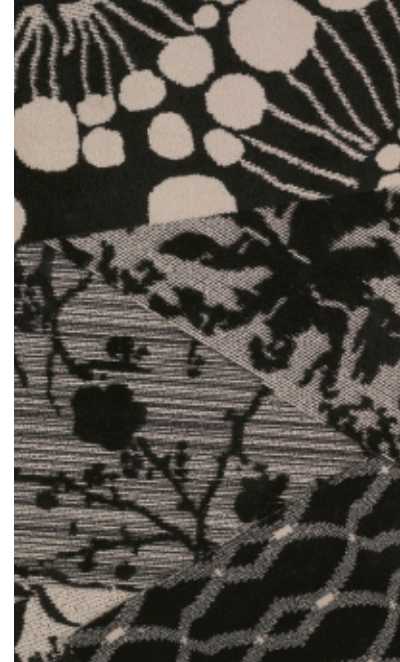
During the research phase of product development, Pamela Rainey, ASID, Senior Stylist for Shaw Hospitality Group in Dalton, Ga., noticed several emerging trends in graphic arts, advertising, fashion and architecture: the use of positive and negative patterns, black and white graphic prints, and organic silhouette images. “Contrast was the one design element that was found in all of these trends,” she says. “The challenge was transforming these trends into carpet designs.” To create that striking contrast, Rainey used silhouetted images as patterns and placed them on textured backgrounds.

The collection was originally intended for guest rooms, but designers and clients have embraced it in public areas as well. “Designers see all kinds of opportunities [with *AfterImages*],” says Desiree Worsley, Vice President of Marketing for Shaw Hospitality Group.

Viveca Bissonnette, IIDA, Associate at Carrier Johnson in San Diego, appreciated the product not only as a competition judge, but also as a designer. “Bold is an element often sought after in hospitality design, but not often executed in an

elegant way. *AfterImages* does this beautifully,” she says. “I am actually planning on specifying it for a project as we speak.”

But some of *AfterImages*’ highest accolades during HD 2007 came from neither judges nor designers. “The most compelling comments were from other hospitality product manufacturers who came to the booth after they had heard we won,” Worsley says. “That’s the highest compliment you can get.”



*AfterImages*

## APPLIED FINISHES AND MATERIALS — WALLCOVERINGS

ORACLE, WEITZNER LIMITED

Sometimes the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward. That seems to be the case with Weitzner Limited’s *Oracle* wallcovering, part of the company’s *Masterworks* collection. “I thought it was a risk when I first launched it,” says Lori Weitzner, Owner of Weitzner Limited, New York. “I never thought people would rise to the occasion and find all these different ways to use it.”

The wallcovering – made of gilded paper from a naturally porous fig tree harvested in Mexico – was originally intended to be placed over a painted wall, allowing the wall color to show through the apertures. But designers have let their imaginations run wild, placing *Oracle* over mirrors, using it as a wall divider, experimenting with all sorts of wall colors and textures, and even putting it on lamp shades, Weitzner says. Adds Bissonnette, “The product has a chameleon-like effect,

as it reacts to whatever surface or color it’s applied. As a result, the designer has ultimate control in the final finish effect, something we designers love having but rarely get: control!”

But allowing for that versatility and creatively doesn’t come easily. The tree bark is trimmed, steamed, pressed and spliced, all before it’s gilded and topped with a protective coat. “We took a different approach to looking at wall-paper,” Weitzner says. “Wallcoverings don’t have to be just something you slap on a wall.”

Now all of that extra work is paying off: *Oracle* has been embraced in hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and casinos. “We’re very excited *Oracle* is getting so much attention. It shows designers are intrigued and interested in using innovative products for wall-coverings, not just typical materials,” Weitzner says.

*Oracle*



## TEXTILES — BEDSPREADS, DRAPERY OR CASEMENT FABRICS

*KIMONO COLLECTION,*  
DESIGNTEX

DesignTex's *Kimono Collection* was created to embody the notion of flexibility, cross-functionality and synergy. "The product lends itself to many different applications," says Kimberle Frost, Co-creative Director for DesignTex in New York.

The line of textiles, made from Travira CS, an inherently flame-retardant, washable fabric, can be used for drapery, upholstery, headboards, bed linens and decorative pillows. And the collection doesn't end with the hospitality market either; some designers even specify it for residential and corporate applications, Frost says.

"Versatility is key when designing for the hospitality market," Bissonnette says. "This collection combines the performance required for a commercial application together with luxury, resulting in solutions for all of the required applications."

Frost believes "cross-marketing of products is where the industry is headed for the simple reason that designers want the flexibility to choose." "With the *Kimono Collection*, there are lots of possibilities," she says.

The inspiration behind the collection is very personal for Frost. More than 10 years ago, her husband brought back some kimonos from Japan, but she stuck them in a closet. When designing the

*Kimono Collection*, Frost pulled out those decade-old kimonos and drew from the craftsmanship and detail that went into making them — from the intricate stitching to the meaningful symbols woven into the fine layers of fabric. "The layering and architecture of my kimonos were really intriguing," she says. "It was especially enjoyable for me because it took on a personal part of my life."



*Kimono Collection*

## FLOORING — CARPETING AND CARPET SYSTEMS, RUGS

*CONVERGENCE,*  
MILLIKEN

The introduction of *Convergence* at the 2007 HD Expo and its major rollout that February meant more for Milliken than the average product launch. The company's presence in the custom hospitality design community during the previous seven years had been minor, says Steve Hillis, Business Manager for Milliken Hospitality Carpet, LaGrange, Ga.

Today, the company is back in full swing. "We're getting a great response," Hillis says. With *Convergence*, a product technology that integrates pattern and color into one structure, pattern emerges through texture, and texture through pattern. The new technology enables very tight construction in a multi-level cut-and-loop design, a method historically plagued with performance issues, he says.

Milliken's decision to focus on texture and pattern for carpeting in hospitality applications was an

easy one. "The industry has been standardized for so long with traditional patterns [in carpeting]," Hillis says. "A new generation of customer is tired of looking at old designs. People are moving more toward texture." In the past, patterns and texture were found on walls, draperies and beds, while floors remained cleaner and simpler, he says. Today's designers opt for the opposite. "Texture adds such a new dimension that's aesthetically pleasing," Hillis says.

*Lucerne*, utilizing  
*Convergence* technology





## LIGHTING — INDIVIDUAL

### ELITE BACK-LIT MIRROR, ELECTRIC MIRROR

While some products are created to fulfill a requirement down the line, Electric Mirror's *Elite Back-Lit Mirror* was a direct result of a specific, immediate need. Los Angeles-based interior architecture and design firm Barry Design Associates Inc., tapped to create the spa at the Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel, was looking for a way to open up the space with movement and light.

"The *Elite* was a collaborative design between Electric Mirror and Barry Design," says Jim Mischel, President and Chief Designer for Electric Mirror, Everett, Wash. "By

suspending the mirrors from the ceiling, designers are given the opportunity to present entire vanities away from the wall, which creates movement and flow in a room not previously afforded that flexibility."

The mirror – back-lit with a 50,000-hour lamp that uses a fraction of the energy required by incandescent lights – is suspended from the ceiling by a stainless steel frame. The suspension element offers designers the flexibility and creativity they need in today's design environment, Mischel says. "With all the challenges designers face, the opportunity to step away from standard formats is a huge plus," he says. "Not only have designers responded positively, but they have responded productively and creatively. It seems to

have opened up a realm of possibilities they were waiting for."

For Bissonnette, the product is simultaneously functional and beautiful. "Bathroom lighting can be very challenging, especially when it comes to lighting the face," she says. "This product is elegant as well as extremely effective at throwing light in the right direction."



PHOTOGRAPHY TIM GRIFFITH

*Elite Back-Lit Mirror*

Yin Yang



## THE 2007 JUDGES WERE:



Belinda Bennett, IIDA, Bennett Design Group, Houston

Viveca Bissonnette, IIDA, Carrier Johnson, San Diego

Brian G. Thornton, IIDA, AIA, IIDA Vice President of Communications, MGM | Mirage Design Group, Las Vegas

Larry Wilson, IIDA, IIDA Hospitality Forum Advisor, Rink Design Partnership Inc., Jacksonville, Fla.

## SEATING: GROUP OR SERIES — LOUNGE YIN YANG, JANUS ET CIE

The best ideas, whether for a new product or a business plan, don't necessarily happen in the boardroom, in a studio or over a working lunch. For the *Yin Yang* seating collection, created exclusively for Dedon by JANUS et Cie, the inspiration occurred along a beach in the Philippines, where designer Nicolas Tompkins sketched preliminary drawings in the sand with a stick.

"[Tompkins] was inspired by the balance of life – the positive and the negative, black and white," says Janice Feldman, Owner and President of JANUS et Cie, Los Angeles. The end result was an indoor/outdoor lounge formed by

two pieces – one platinum-colored, the other bronze-colored – that when pushed together create an organic shape resembling the Chinese symbol from which it takes its name.

"[*Yin Yang*] is sold as a set, but we're seeing the pieces used together and individually," Feldman says. "Designers like that flexibility."

Also noteworthy are the product's craftsmanship and complexity. Each individual seating piece uses more than 4,000 meters of fiber and is hand-woven. "It's technologically very advanced," Feldman says.

That attention to detail stood out in judges' minds. Adds Bissonnette, "We were looking for products that broke the mold and were different from what we had seen before. In addition to being beautiful, [*Yin Yang*] was incredibly comfortable."





Vibe Collection

## UPHOLSTERY VIBE COLLECTION, CARNEGIE

Geometric shapes aren't typically associated with calmness and serenity, though in many cases that's exactly what's demanded in hospitality applications. For that reason, "multi-colored geometric patterns are hard to find in hospitality design," says Mary Holt, Executive Vice President/Creative for Carnegie in New York. But in creating the *Vibe Collection*, Carnegie set out to turn that concept on its head.

For *Karma*, the collection's signature line, the company incorporated fractals – fragmented geometric shapes subdivided into different parts – to make the harsh, sharp lines of geometric shapes more calming and inviting. *Ohm* is inspired by the crop circle phenomenon and *Chi* by a swirling starburst pattern, while *Bliss* is made of lush, soft chenille.

The end result is a collection that evokes beauty, emotion, spirituality and comfort. "There was a cultural shift happening at the time we designed the product," Holt says. "[Consumers] are looking for products based on spirituality – something to take their minds off all the chaos going on in the world."

## SEATING: GROUP OR SERIES — OUTDOOR CABANA CLUB SEATING COLLECTION, TROPITONE FURNITURE CO.

They say what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, but in Tropitone's case, the opposite is true. The company knew pool areas in high-end resorts were evolving to include large cabanas and private seating areas. So as part of its market research for the product, Tropitone sent a team, including *Cabana Club* designer Richard Holbrook, to the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas. The result was *Cabana Club*, a line of contemporary, modular lounge seating.

"There was an opportunity for products that could be reconfigurable in a lounge seating-type application," says Peter Homestead, Vice President of Design for Tropitone Furniture Co., Irvine, Calif. "The collection is appropriate not only for private

areas of pool cabanas, but also in public spaces such as clubs and in some restaurants."

Tropitone chose stainless steel – in lieu of the company's traditional go-to material aluminum – to create a high-end, sleek, minimalist frame. "If we had to build [the frame] out of aluminum, [the seating] would look much chunkier, and we would lose the look we were after," Homestead says.

The collection has received much interest from the design community. Homestead notes that when the company announced the line on its Web site before its introduction at the 2007 HD Expo, designers immediately began calling sales representatives to find out when and where they could obtain it.

Competition judges were equally as impressed. Says Bissonnette, "This outdoor furniture collection was clean and modern. [The judges] reacted to its simplicity in design and the stainless steel used for the frame."



Cabana Club Collection



MANUFACTURERS EXHIBING AT THE 2008 HD EXPO ARE INVITED TO ENTER THE 2008 HOSPITALITY PRODUCT DESIGN COMPETITION. SEE P. 55 FOR THE CALL FOR ENTRIES.

## ACCESSORIES OR SPECIALTIES — HARDWARE OR DECORATIVE METALS OR PLASTICS

BRIDGE FAUCET WITH RADIUS TECHNOLOGY, WATERDECOR

With its *Bridge Faucet with Radius Technology*, Waterdecor adopted the philosophy that going green doesn't require sacrificing style and aesthetics. "Faced with water shortages that are becoming more and more frequent by the day ... the idea was to create a faucet that not only looks different, but would also have a practical purpose of limiting unnecessary water waste," says Anthony Chan, the faucet's designer.

The faucet relies on surround sensor technology that allows users to begin water flow by nearing the faucet with their hands. Unlike with infrared sensors, the *Bridge Faucet* doesn't rely on hot spots to activate water flow. Instead, it connects a single sensor wire to the faucet. "The valve eliminates the need for unsightly infrared sensors, thus preserving

the clean lines of design," Chan says. "Its hands-free operation makes it more sanitary."

Designers seem to appreciate the faucet's innovation and uniqueness. "We have had an excellent response from designers," Chan says. "This product has been specified by designers in residential as well as commercial projects throughout the country."



Bridge Faucet with Radius Technology

## ACCESSORIES OR SPECIALTIES — STORAGE SYSTEMS

EVO SYSTEM, VANTAGE POINT PRODUCTS CORP.

Versatility is a desirable quality of any material, product or furniture, particularly for home entertainment products, where technology can change a mile a minute. "Gone are the days of large armoires and huge TVs hidden within," Bissonnette says. "[Designers] need products that not only work

in different environments, but ones that can be modified to accommodate changing technology."

Vantage Point's *evo system* – as in *evolution* – allows for that flexibility. This modular installation solution takes wall-mounting to a new level. The *evo system* isn't simply intended for mounting flat-panel televisions. It's designed to hang all audio/video equipment including DVD players, receivers and MP3 player docking stations. It can even accommodate rear-projection televisions by incorporating additional shelving, says Don Burns,

CEO, Vantage Point Products Corp., Santa Fe Springs, Calif. And upgrading equipment is an easy process of rearranging shelves and mounts, or expanding the frame.

The product was created in part to fulfill a hospitality industry demand for more space in hotel guest rooms, Burns says. "The No. 1 thing we hear about is the space aspect. [The *evo system*] frees up floor space; it doesn't have a [physical] footprint," he says. "Hotels are always looking to increase the value of guest rooms, and the solution is to provide more space. There's a value there." 



evo system



## HONORABLE MENTIONS

### Applied Finishes and Materials — Wallcoverings

*True Metals*, Maya Romanoff

### Upholstery

*Chromatic Collection*, Luna Textiles

### Textiles — Bedspreads, Drapery or Casement Fabrics

*Urban Couture Design*, Luna Textiles

### Flooring — Hard Surface Flooring

*Buenos Aires Mood Series*, Crossville