



HITCH MYLIUS **TRISTRAM MYLIUS**

MANAGING DIRECTOR
COMPANY ESTABLISHED IN 1971
BY TRISTRAM AND HAZEL MYLIUS

What is your company's ethos?

We aim to provide products that stand out from the crowd through design, quality and craftsmanship, while offering genuine value and reliable, attentive service.

When is the right moment for a new product?

I don't think there's ever a wrong moment to launch a new product. For Hitch Mylius, product development is a constant and never-ending process involving assessment of potential new designs and the review of our existing ranges. Often our product launches have coincided with trade shows, though a launch at any other time is an important and useful sales tool.

Which designers do you work with?

Our current product range includes work by a variety of designers and architects including David Chipperfield, Simon Pengelly, Nigel Coates, Mueller Kneer, and Azumi. We are currently working on new products by Matthias Demacker, Kazuko Okamoto and Fabiaan van Severen.

How do you decide which designer to commission?

On occasion, we might commission

a designer because we love his or her work. More often, designers approach us with a wide variety of ideas and, once in a while, if the chemistry is just right, a new product will be born.

What are the most important external factors that influence a design?

The critical factor in all this is the compatibility of the design with the Hitch Mylius dna: while our product range is quite varied, there are consistent qualities of proportion, detailing and a sparseness of design that run right across the range to define the Hitch Mylius collection.

How does the business model for your company influence the design?

I was really pleased when, just over a year ago, Demacker called me to suggest a collaboration. Though we had not had any previous contact, I had seen his work with a number of other manufacturers, either in the press or at the Milan fair. Equally, he was aware of our work and must have felt there was a potential synergy. He made an initial presentation of a number of designs, which we finally narrowed down to two that fired the enthusiasm of my team and that we felt had a sound commercial future.

How important are models and drawings in the process of developing a new product?

It goes without saying that models and drawings are absolutely essential steps on the path from concept to production. One of the designers we work with invariably provides us with CAD and 3D models, and a full set of working drawings, every detail and component being meticulously specified. At the other extreme, a high-profile architect once gave me a little squidge of orange plasticine with four matchstick legs as the starting point for a range of chairs and sofas. Either way, there is always plenty of scope for input from the manufacturer, and I suppose it is my job to be able to pick up the development from this early stage and steer it towards final production. In Demacker's case, his initial design changed considerably between concept drawings and final product, and while certain changes were required for commercial reasons, it was so important not to lose this quality.

How involved do you get in the design development?

I love the 'designing and making' side of my business. I'm in the very fortunate position, heading a small manufacturing company, where I can make sure that I'm intimately involved with product development. The designer, my production manager and I generally work together to fine-tune the design through the development and prototyping phase. I see my input as an essential ingredient

in the design process, and I'm afraid I never hold back from suggesting (or insisting on) design changes. With the factory as my base, a fair proportion of my time is spent in the prototype department.

Where are your products manufactured?

Hitch Mylius' production, and reputation, is centred around our workforce of highly-skilled cutters, sewing machinists and upholsterers at our north-London factory so, while many of our components are outsourced or subcontracted to outside suppliers, all our upholstery work and finishing is done in-house.

What are you currently working on?

We are working with Munich-based designer Demacker on an extensive seating range of which the first pieces were launched at Design Prima in June. These are simple, comfortable, refined yet quietly understated chairs: qualities that could describe any of our product family.

Your plans for the London Design Festival?

Further models from Demacker's range will be launched during the Autumn. This design very neatly fills a gap in our product range: a beautiful, comfortable, affordable, stackable conference or dining chair, and that's just the start of the collection.

Above left: Tristram Mylius assessing prototypes of the latest chair by Matthias Demacker

Above right: Cake, a concept modular seating system designed by Kazuko Okamoto

