

East Midlands Designer Of The Year Competition Winner Announced at 100% Design!

A Leicestershire designer impressed judges with an innovative space-saving table and chair and scooped the first prize worth £5,000 in the first East Midlands Designer of the Year Competition. The winner was announced at 100% Design last weekend.

Launched this summer by the East Midlands leading design agency, Design Factory, the competition asked talented designers from across the region for their ideas for an innovative and practical item of storage furniture.

The winner, Eiry Rock, who graduated from Loughborough University this summer with a BA in 3D Design (Furniture), took the top spot with her simple but effective design. As well as a £2,500 marketing grant, Eiry's winning table and chair will take centre stage in Design Factory's stand at 100% Design, the UK's most prestigious interior design show next September.

Eiry (22) of Thurstaston, said: "I feel completely overwhelmed to have won this competition. It's a fantastic opportunity and one which I hope will benefit my design career greatly. I now hope to develop my concept through material exploration and by addressing the products function and marketability."

The design Eiry came up with for the competition was a box and chair, made from ash and MDF, which can be used as seating for both an adult and child or can be a seat and a table for a child.

Judge, Lee Garland, of Concept for Living magazine, described Eiry's design as a revelation which made him sit up in his chair. He said: "It was in a league of its own in terms of conceptual design. The shadow it casts into the space left by the chair, the confident monotone of the piece. It was a revelation. It didn't store much more than the chair it had cut out from itself - but there's no denying it's the best looking table that stores a chair I'd ever seen! I'm not an expert in marketability of furniture - but I want one. It's a piece of art."

Runners up, Ali Woodgate and Pete Wycherley, both De Montfort University graduates, who together launched their own design house Creative Ape Ltd in 2006, came up with a Springbook bookcase. The concept takes flat-packed furniture to another level as the bookcase is designed to save space. The shelves can be folded out when in use or folded back when not required - saving lots of space.

The duo, who have recently collaborated with Hotel Maiyango - Leicester's first boutique hotel on a range of bespoke furniture, wins a year's free Design Factory associate membership. This includes a host of benefits including training, business support and one-to-one mentoring.

Ali and Pete of Leicester, said: "We are delighted to be the runners-up and not only for the recognition, but also the business support and mentoring which will only benefit the company further. As a young design company, it's important to get your name heard and the "Design Factory's Designers of the Year" competition was a perfect way to carry our Creative Ape to a wider audience."

Clare Edwards, founder and director of Design Factory, which funds and supports regional designer/makers, said: "Once again we can see that there is a great deal of creative talent in the East Midlands. It was the first Design Factory competition and we were thrilled with the standard of entries, there were several inspiring concepts and it was a close run competition. Both Eiry and Creative Ape demonstrated originality in their designs which have a great deal of potential to be taken to market. Design Factory will now work with both Eiry and Creative Ape to help them achieve their goals."

Next year the competition will focus on a different, as yet undecided, specialism and will be launched in Summer 2008.

Design Factory recruited a panel of industry professionals to assist with the judging. Alongside Clare Edwards, Director of Design Factory, the other judges included:

- Ashley Cartwright, furniture designer and lecturer at De Montfort University, Leicester.
- Chris Lamerton, furniture/product designer, consultant and part time lecturer in product and furniture design at Nottingham Trent University.
- Lee Garland and Emma Hill, Editor of Concept for Living Magazine.