



IDEAS FACTORY

Meet the DIC, the Singaporean design collective changing the landscape of tableware as we know it

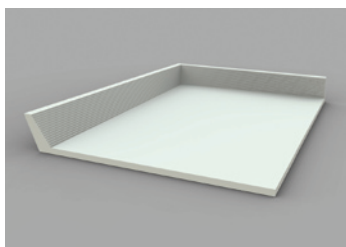


You may well expect rather ambitious goals from a group that calls itself Design Incubation Centre (DIC) – and you'd be right. All graduates of the National University of Singapore's Industrial Design Programme, this small Singaporean collective was set up to explore how design can impact on technology and social trends. Lofty ideals, you might say, but a year into the project, the DIC has created an impressive and creative catalogue of products, known under the collective title of Objects Around The Tablescape.

What's more, the studio has also shown a very astute talent for choosing appropriate commercial companies to partner with. In fact, a marketing arm called DLab was set up specifically for this purpose: to reach out not only to other retailers, but to other designers and architects, too.

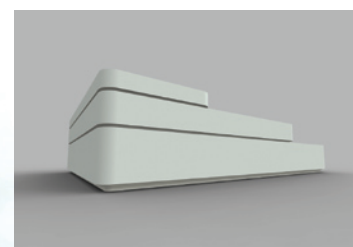
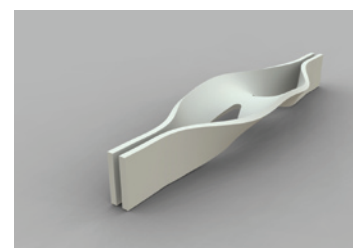
It was through DLab's marketing work that the studio's first collaborations with the company DuPont came about. DIC developed a range of tabletop objects using the material Corian, then the results were further refined under the design direction of Patrick Chia (W'85) to become part of the Tablescape range. Chia wanted the objects in the range to reflect the theme that everything is interconnected. 'An object does not exist just by itself,' explains Chia. 'For instance, a tree does not only provide shade and fresh air on a landscape, but it also measures the seasons, space and the passing of time.'

This idea of multiple dimensions is kept up throughout the collection, which is full of clever



MONO VISION

Clockwise, from top left, 'A Family of Long Legged Lights', price on request; 'A Long Fruit Bowl', €460; 'Stacking Trays', €740; 'Stairway Paper Tray', €420; 'Idea of a Vase', €720, all by Design Incubation Centre



twists or unexpected sparks of humour. 'Idea of a Vase', for example, is a black teak box, framing interlocking sinuous shapes, that disassembles into an intriguing set of vase-shaped blocks. 'A Family of Long Legged Lights' features odd-sized black steel floor lights that resemble props from *The War of the Worlds*, while 'Stacking Trays' is a trio of matt white Corian trays that stack up into an asymmetrical pyramid.

With its first showing to the outside world at this year's Maison & Objet in Paris in January, the studio piqued plenty of interest, though for the moment it's keeping a tight lid on the names of potential manufacturing partners. 'We are not looking at mass production,' is all Wu Yixiu, the collective's branding manager, will reveal, adding that production will be in runs of ten to 20. 'But it's important to emphasise that our intent is not to make limited-edition or one-off pieces with inflated price tags. Rather, our goal is to make the pieces from Tablescape available to those who want to own them. This was one of the main reasons for creating DLab, so we have a channel to make this collection and our future products readily available, as opposed to having the pieces remaining as prototypes.' One thing's for sure: the incubation period is over, the DIC's products are ready to face the world. ★

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