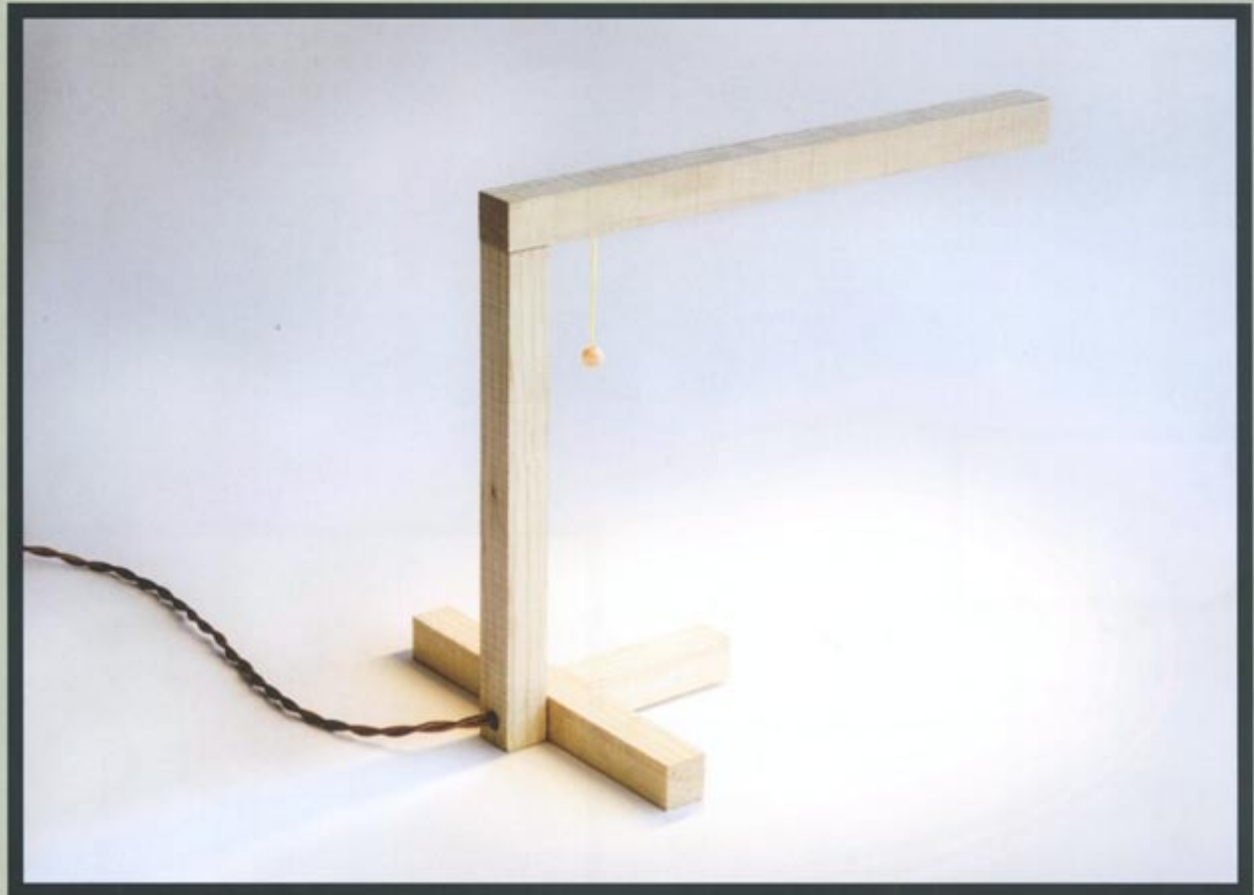




PRODUCE 61



Nina Tolstrup's pallet furniture melds Danish design tradition, social concerns, and quirkiness writes *Gian Luca Amadei*

Thomas Dickson, a lecturer at the National Centre for Design Research, part of the Aarhus School of Architecture, once wrote that the success of Danish Design could be explained by its 'playfulness' and that 'the major figures of the Golden Age of Danish design drew upon Denmark's strong carpentry tradition to make comfortable furniture for people stuck inside

for much of the year.'

The work of Danish designer Nina Tolstrup, combines playfulness and craftsmanship and integrates them with an aesthetic that can't be defined as canonically Danish, but which lies somewhere between the Danish and the British.

Tolstrup's work ranges from interior furniture and accessories for retail chains such as Habitat to

Above: This table lamp is part of collection 1x1 designed by Nina Tolstrup as part of design initiative Ten Again, and presented this year at 100% Design.



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architectural projects and, even, city guidebooks. She chose to use items of recycled wood from industrial pallets and scaffolding planks to create furniture for the design collective Ten, which is the brainchild of designer Chris Jackson and has an ethos that emphasises the virtues of sustainability.

Tolstrup says: 'Often my approach is to explore how to make the maximum potential from a minimal palette.' So she turned the

pallets into floor-lights and armchairs, and made the planks into coat stands and trestles.

Tolstrup's pallet furniture range brings to mind the Crate furniture series designed in the mid-Thirties by Dutch architect and furniture designer Gerrit Rietveld, which was constructed using crates otherwise used to ship more expensive furniture. Rietvelt, like his colleagues in Denmark, had social concerns and aimed to provide

functional furniture at affordable prices, but without compromising on the aesthetic.

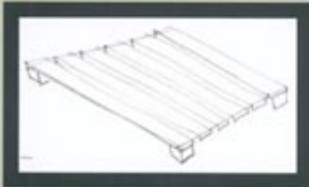
With her experiments for Ten, Tolstrup's concerns implicitly address social as well as sustainable issues. On her website, one can buy drawings and instructions for building a pallet floor light or a chair for just €10.

'Sustainability, in particular, is not something new to the design world but it has always been

embedded in Danish design.

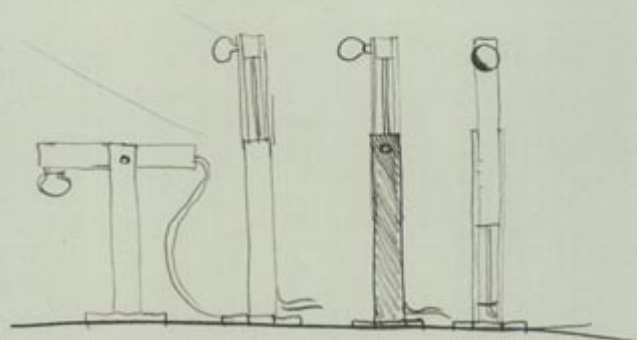
'The Hans Wegner Y-chair, for example was designed in 1950 using local beech wood and paper cord for the seat. This is not just a beautiful and functional object but is also a collectable, timeless item that is totally recyclable,' says Tolstrup.

That balance has been deeply disrupted by growing competition from other countries, so that some Danish furniture manufacturers



Right: Pallet Floor Light developed by Tolstrup as part of the Pallet Furniture collection in 2006. The collection was assembled by recycling industrial pallets Tolstrup sourced within a 10km radius of her east London studio.

Above: the final design for the Pallet Chair, and concept sketches exploring possible design solutions. Below: concept drawings for the Pallet Floor Light evaluating the adjustability of the light source.



have had to switch production to the far east to remain competitive. 'The presence of local traditional crafts skills is still strong though,' insists Tolstrup.

This was demonstrated at Made in Denmark, the stand which Tolstrup curated during this year's 100% Design (and which also won the 100% Design/Blueprint Award for Best Contribution to the Show). The selection of works presented there, all built using Danish wood,

were proof that the high level of Danish craftsmanship is still intact and continues to evolve.

Wood though is not the sole interest for Tolstrup. 'Just because I have been using wood in recent projects doesn't mean I'm not exploring other materials,' she says.

Other recent work by Tolstrup has made use of materials such as pewter. For example, she designed Fruity Bowl, a powder-coated pewter bowl which is

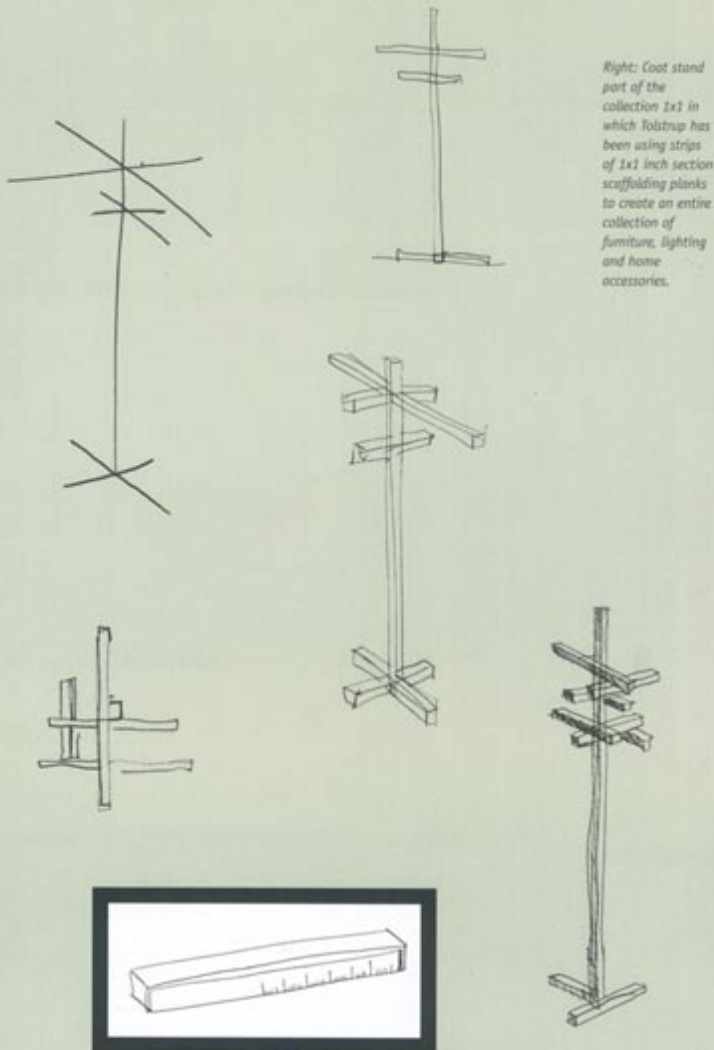
manufactured by Wentworth Pewter in Sheffield for retailer Greenwich Village, and won her the Eureka Award 2007.

Tolstrup studied at the prestigious Les Ateliers school of industrial design in Paris. She also has a BA in marketing from the Business School in Copenhagen. Along with her design work, Tolstrup teaches at Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication and is a visiting

professor at Syracuse University in New York.

She is producing and selling her designs through her own London-based company Studiomama, working in her studio at home and a small workshop. At the level of her personal projects, commissions are piling up, and Tolstrup plans to move into a new studio in 2008.

www.studiomama.com

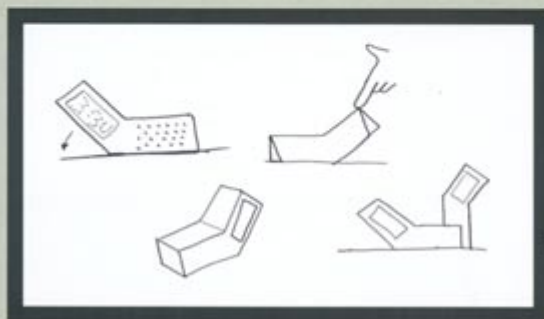
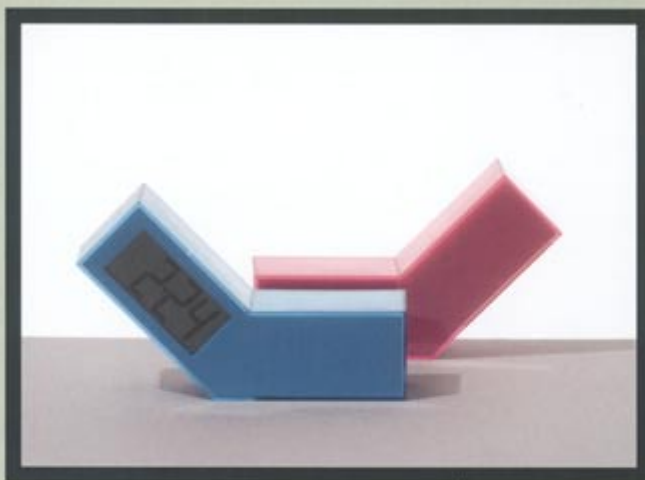


Right: Coat stand part of the collection 1x1 in which Tolstrup has been using strips of 1x1 inch section scaffolding planks to create an entire collection of furniture, lighting and home accessories.



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Right: The ONOFF alarm clock is manufactured by Lexon. Tilting it switches the alarm on or off. The clock is available in yellow, pink, turquoise, or bamboo green and is sold by Paperchase stores.



Right: With the pewter Fruity Bowl, Tolstrup has given new life to a material used for tableware since the Middle Ages.

