

Silvera lining

*While over-elaborate design can cloud our horizon,
Patrick Norguet's furniture for Silvera lets simplicity shine*



Conceptual design has shouted down the alternatives for a few years. And if the early furniture fairs of this year are anything to go by, the trend shows no sign of abating. Although technically bold and visually spectacular, statement design can leave you yearning for a return to simple forms and practical function. Edition 01, Patrick Norguet's understated first collection for Parisian store Silvera, is just the way we'd like to steer design.

'Our idea was to create pure forms that won't wear out in a few years,' says Norguet. 'We wanted to make a collection that won't be forgotten with the next trend, but will endure and adapt to the changing needs of the user.' Among the groaning stands of this year's Maison & Objet in Paris, the four-piece collection stood out precisely for these qualities.

Producing an in-house collection had been on Paul Silvera's to-do list for a while. He and Norguet first met when Silvera commissioned the designer to create his space for the 2006 Paris Designer's Day. 'We found we shared the same opinions on design, so the collaboration started naturally from there,' explains Norguet.

Comprising the 'Folio' desk, modular 'Yama' sofa, 'Nao' and 'Spirit', Norguet's collection bears many hallmarks of classic, French design. 'The idea was to use the French artisanal know-how,' he says. Hence everything was made in France: the wood and metal



EDGE FUND

'Nao' stools (top), from €400; modular 'Yama' sofa (centre), from €4,065; 'Folio' desk (bottom), from €2,000, all by Patrick Norguet, for Silvera

pieces were made by Alki, a producer in Itxassou, and the fabric and upholstery were manufactured in Jandri and Siegear factories in Paris. While the pieces are sold exclusively through Silvera's Paris store, the good news is that retailers all over Europe are clamouring for them, and the small collection is just a starting point. 'We called the range 01 because we want to make it clear there will be others - a promise of continuation.'

Edition 01 bears one of Norguet's own trademarks - combining materials. He mixed natural materials including beech, oak and leather with man-made neoprene and lacquer surfacing to add a contemporary edge to the otherwise classic collection; the neoprene-backed, oak 'Folio' desk is timeless yet intriguing.

Norguet has also been careful not to overdo it - there's nothing superfluous, but small details, like the extended backs of the 'Nao' stools or the dropped ledge of the 'Folio' desk, add a clever, delicate playfulness to the collection.

Murmurings have begun in critics' circles about the effect an impending recession might have on design. We take great comfort in a collection bucking the trend for extravagance, bringing elegant practicality back to the fore, without scrimping on innovation. No one's praying for a slump, but a new austerity in design wouldn't be a bad thing. ★

Silvers, 58 Avenue Kleber, Paris 16e, tel./-33.1.53.65.78.78, www.patricfnorguet.com