



**This could be yours**  
(for a weekend)

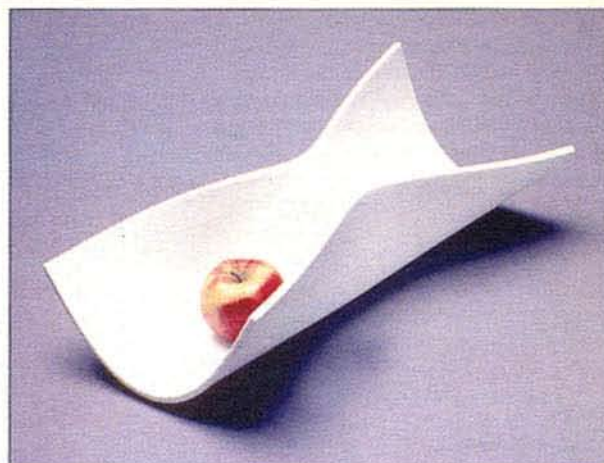
# **The Guardian** space

**Party houses | Osterley | Two decades of UK design** January 25 2001

## New Britain

Making their own stuff is still a necessity for today's designers, but this generation now has the confidence to take on the sort of mass-market manufacturing their predecessors would never have attempted. German Royal College of Art graduate, Rainer Spehl, for instance, has sold over 2,000 of his Qoffee plastic stools, shaped as giant plastic coffee cups, after making them for his RCA degree show, and launching them when he left college in 1999.

No doubt the government would see the newly confident work of such designers as Michael Anastassiades as a consequence of the "Cool Britannia" campaign it encouraged in the wake of New Labour's 1997 election victory. But there's more to it than that. In our brand-driven world, design is increasingly taken for granted. All shops are now expected to look as slick and perfect as Nike Town or Bluewater, while interior design has become the stuff of which peak-time TV is made. Today, designer-makers have become the rising stars of a new wave of design magazines such as Wallpaper\*, Elle Deco, Living Etc and space, and they have even made the transition to high fashion territory. Precious McBane's launch of its updated beanbag in Mongolian lambskin received a priceless boost in 1998, when it was adopted as the central accessory for a Vogue photoshoot featuring Kate Moss and Sophie Dahl.



**Design is now confident (Michael Anastassiades' pendant light for Babylon, left, Qoffee stool, below right, by Rainer Spehl), and influential: the media eagerly covers products such as Precious McBane's beanbag, below, with co-designer Evlynn Smith, and business collaborates with designer-makers such as Gitta Gschwendtner (Pinch Bowl, above)**

With retailers emerging all the time, to cater for design's new status as a popular cultural movement, no wonder designer-makers feel confident enough to work with big manufacturers. Gitta Gschwendtner and Fiona Davidson, for instance, worked with DuPont on a collection of prototype objects for last year's 100% Design, to demonstrate the potential of its once overlooked material, Corian. What a testament to the success of these designer-makers that now, far from being the risk-taking loners of the 1980s, they being courted by big firms themselves willing to take a chance. Michael Anastassiades products are available from Babylon (020-7376 7255). Qoffee stools are available from SCP (020-7739 1869). Precious McBane (020-7226 4235).

