



Gardam in his studio assembling his Packaged Glow foam light. PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN LAURIE



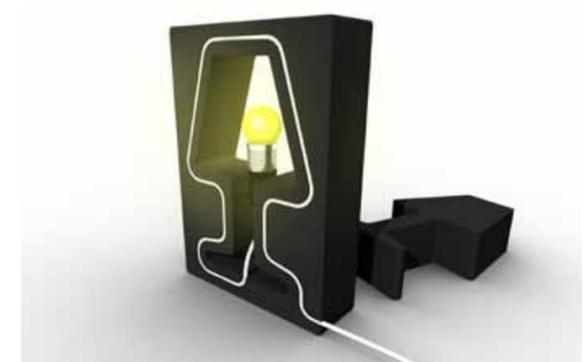
Perch stool, 2009, polypropylene and plywood. COURTESY ROSS GARDAM



Flat Jack bookcase, 2008, X-board. COURTESY ROSS GARDAM



Squash Me chair, 2008, steel and plywood. COURTESY ROSS GARDAM



Packaged Glow foam light, 2009, packaging foam. COURTESY ROSS GARDAM

The return of

ROSS GARDAM

NOW BACK FROM LONDON, THIS MELBOURNE-BASED DESIGNER'S SAVVY BUSINESS SENSE SEES HIM CREATE CLEVER VIDEO ANIMATION TO TELL HIS PRODUCTS' STORY.

Ross Gardam's mind is always in space. The founder of design company Spaceleft, he specialises in creating furniture and lighting products that realise the potential of their environment.

A childhood of "tinkering with machinery" at his father's construction company lead Gardam to study industrial design at Monash University, graduating in 1999. He cut his teeth on interior retail design before heading to the UK, where he founded Spaceleft studio. "It was about taking small steps to achieve long-term goals," says Gardam. "I wanted to go to London, set myself up, build and grow, and obtain a solid focus. This has enabled me to return to Australia and take full control of the products and the processes."

Spaceleft moved to Melbourne in 2007, introducing products that did not target a specific commercial market, but rather explored

themes. "They were about developing an intimate knowledge of space," Gardam says, explaining the development of Flat Jack (2008), a cardboard bookcase made of 97 per cent post-consumer paper waste. "Its theme was about maximising space while minimising material. The final product was developed using 94 per cent of a single sheet of material."

Gardam's process consists of three phases: immersion, design and delivery. "The first step is creating a beautifully simple story to encapsulate the product," he says. Each product starts with a space analysis, which considers the environment, people and culture that will interact with it, not just physical space.

Perch (2009), a plywood and polypropylene stool, is one of Gardam's favoured designs. It demonstrates how his immersive

process achieves not only design but business objectives: "With the development of this product, a framework of key requirements was defined which included material type and use maximisation, target market, wholesale and retail price point, volume, transport and packaging." Consequently, four Perch stools can be cut from a single sheet of ply.

Working to ensure each product is created and produced strategically and ethically, Gardam completes the delivery phase by meeting time and budget parameters, as exemplified by Perch. "It is a 'love project' for me," he says. "Perch is one of the products I get to do hands-on. I finish everything and assemble it all myself. Going forward, I want to work collaboratively with specialist manufacturers who are able to work like this on a large scale."

Big things beckon for Spaceleft, with Gardam recently launching a London studio with new business partner Michael Travalia. Looking to the 2011 range, the pair plan to accelerate Spaceleft's process from concept to delivery by utilising local manufacturers and distributors in both countries.

In addition, Spaceleft's promotional philosophy, rooted in guerrilla marketing, will continue to grow the brand. "Most products have a video animation, telling the story of the product and its design," says Gardam. "Some of the animations have gone viral. Often products such as tables and chairs can feel pushed away from the consumer, but [the videos] let those products take on personalities. It's all about exploring new ways to talk to the market." spaceleft.com.au

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