

# AZURE

DESIGN | ARCHITECTURE | INTERIORS | CURIOSITY

AZUREMAGAZINE.COM

**MADE IN CHINA**  
Shanghai World Expo p. 99

**ICFF AND NEOCON SHOWS**  
Best interior products p. 116

**16 SIZZLING KITCHENS**  
From haute to homey p. 124

**PHILLY INFILL**  
Living large on a small lot p. 106



## INSIDE THE DESIGN MIND

EXPLORING THE CREATIVE PROCESS BEHIND 4 PHENOMENAL STUDIOS

**YVES BÉHAR**  
REVEALS HIS BRAND LOGIC

+  
**THE CAMPANAS**  
REINVIGORATE CRAFT

**SNØHETTA**  
PLAYS THE CLIENT CARD

**PHILIP BEESLEY**  
SEES THE FUTURE

CAN/US \$7.95  
SEPT 2010  
PM40048073 R09064



1 INSIDE THE DESIGN MIND







S

itting beside the floor-to-ceiling reference library in Fuseproject's San Francisco studio, Yves Béhar prepares to tell me a story. But instead of pulling a volume off the shelf, he reaches for a large poster board displaying dozens of watch faces and begins reading the small round objects like a narrative about time.

The main character in this tale is Japanese fashion designer Issey

Miyake, who approached Fuseproject last year to create a new watch with just one directive: capture "the spirit of Issey." Béhar was unfazed by the minimal brief; after all, he has been designing for clients as diverse as Nike and Jawbone since setting up shop in 1999, and the studio began this project as it always does, with a strong concept. "I had an idea about time appearing and disappearing," Béhar explains. "I wondered what would happen if you only saw one number – the hour you need – rather than typical watches where you have 12 numbers visible."

For the 43-year-old Swiss-born designer, the entire execution process is then an exercise in keeping the original idea alive. He and his team experimented with double-layered watch faces: a fixed, 12-hour analogue bottom, and a rotating top that shows the current hour through a small window while obscuring the other numbers. In one model, colours are used to reveal and veil the time. The end solution is certainly the most "Issey": a black and white palette and a simple series of lines that fade and sharpen each number. "It's almost cinematic," Béhar says. "From an ethereal innovation and poetry standpoint, I believe it is in the right spirit." The watch is packaged in a ream of paper, which can be reused to send thank you notes and love letters. "In Japan, there is a spirit of giving in product creation that I wanted to celebrate," he adds.

The Miyake watch illustrates Fuseproject's story-centred design process, which encompasses the entire brand-building enterprise, right down to the packaging. Whether the studio is designing the Leaf task light for Herman Miller or a battery-powered motorcycle for Mission Motors, each project, big or small, receives the same creative attention from concept to

#### WORKERS' UNION

In the double-height interior of Fuseproject's San Francisco office, dozens of designers sit around large, biomorphic tables and work on projects big and small, high-luxe and non-profit.



**"WE WANT TO REINVENT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DESIGN AND BUSINESS"**



launch, and the final product almost always exhibits a technoelegance. "When I started Fuseproject," Béhar explains, "I wanted to reinvent the relationship between design and business. My mantra has always been 'Design brings stories to life.' A decade ago, few clients thought design could make them money. Now, with companies like Apple, it's clear that design plays a huge role in creating products people want."

Today his San Francisco office (a satellite is located in New York) buzzes with the energy of 33 employees – engineers, graphic and industrial designers, architects, business strategists and researchers. At one table, a team might be conceptualizing a sustainable crystal lantern for Swarovski, while at another a group might be working on a digital tablet version of One Laptop Per Child. While balancing his busy schedule (besides frequenting the design show circuit, he recently curated his first exhibit, Technocraft), Béhar ensures that the studio takes its creative investment and design integrity seriously whether it's working on high-luxe projects or non-profit collaborations. It's an approach that has not only garnered Fuseproject awards (it scooped up 15 International

Design Excellence Awards this past July), but has also helped it to push beyond the idea of design as a powerful business tool and prove its role as an agent for social change. One Laptop Per Child could be considered a success simply for giving millions of children access to education, but what's more amazing, notes Béhar, is that it has inspired many non-profits to use design in revolutionary ways.

One socially minded project leads to another. The Mexican non-profit See Better to Learn Better, which provides free prescription eyewear to children, contacted Béhar after hearing about OLPC. The organization wanted to dispel the social stigma around wearing glasses by letting kids play designer. In Béhar's solution, Colección Escolar 2010, kids select shapes and colours from a catalogue. At Augen Opticos, a state-of-the-art factory in Ensenada, Mexico, frames made of Grilamid (a nearly indestructible plastic used in expensive protective sport glasses) are sonically welded around the lenses. Why such a high-tech material for children's glasses? "We realized the cost increase was nominal in such small quantities, and the material would make the glasses last much longer in the hands of kids," says Béhar.

**TECH EVOLUTION**

What started as a hand-cranked laptop has evolved into a svelte tablet – the latest iteration of One Laptop Per Child.

**TIME AFTER TIME**

In his watches for Issey Miyake, Béhar plays up time's ephemerality: the hour appears as a focused image, then fades away.

**BRAND NEW BIKE**

For Mission Motors, Béhar designed the electric bike of the future: sleek and battery powered.



**"THE PUMA PACKAGING STARTED WITH A QUESTION, NOT A BRIEF. THOSE ARE THE BEST PROJECTS"**



**SELF-SERVE EYEWEAR**

Working with the non-profit See Better to Learn Better, Béhar brought custom eyeglasses to kids in Mexico, who can create their own duotone specs, thanks to a colour-coded catalogue.

**PUMA PARCEL**

Béhar cut more than half of the material and energy usually expended in manufacturing shoeboxes with his textile-based design, which is supported by cardboard end pieces.

His track record for balancing practicality with innovation means that large corporations trust him to take creative risks. When Puma approached Fuseproject in need of an alternative to the shoebox, it didn't know what it wanted, other than that it should be eco-friendly. "These are the best projects," says Béhar, "the ones that start with a question, not so much a brief." He and his team travelled to factories, distribution centres and stockrooms in Asia, the U.S. and Germany to research materials and perform life cycle audits on globe-trotting shoeboxes. In the end, they designed a non-woven polyester polypropylene bag with the gentlest bit of structure built in through two cardboard end pieces and saved 65 per cent in energy and material. The new Puma packaging also creates a novel consumer experience – a win-win for Puma. For Fuseproject, it's another example of how small items like shoeboxes make a big difference. "That's what designers need to look for: those absolutely undeniable 21st-century opportunities. It becomes impossible for clients to say no." Smiling, he rephrases: "It becomes impossible for them not to say yes." **AZ**

