



Considerations

Modular Design is a process that sub-divides an item into smaller parts (or modules) that can be used together or separately in different ways for multiple functions.

As modern life begins to literally push us into a corner we begin to see a modular revolution slowly taking place in interior design, furniture and product design.

Of course, tiles are in essence already modular but the products' potential is not always pushed to the limit.

As the migration towards cities continues, the infrastructure and architecture of urban environments will be reassessed. How we travel, where we work, where we live and how we live will change accordingly.

All of these issues are already being considered by designers in the interior design and home products arenas, changing their practises and most importantly inspiring their processes.

Designers are focusing on ergonomic considerations and organic forms created using advanced software to produce futuristic styling with a human touch, and, as the worlds of science and design come together in new cross-discipline collaborations, exciting new materials are being created and cutting-edge product design that showcase simple aesthetics based on complex technologies or simple materials' used to create complex product aesthetics.

Shining example

The point is to create something outside the realms of the ordinary and by bringing in talent from outside the tile industry – whether it is a jewellery designer, architect or sculptor and so forth – you can benefit from the creative thinking of people who are not restricted by an awareness of the do's and don'ts of the industry.

Plus as an alternative to celebrity endorsement, respected designers and artists from varied fields can help to embed qualities of prestige, desirability and cool-kudos to new product ranges.

A shining example is the collaboration between internationally awarded industrial designer Karim Rashid and Australian metal tile manufacturer ALLOY. Karim's approach pushes the boundaries of traditional tile design, creating an innovative collection of eight, predominantly organic metal tile cells for interior and exterior use.

Karim explains: "This collection for ALLOY is organic in shape because I believe that the world needs a softening and a more fluid human spirit. I have always been obsessed with patterns and working with ALLOY has given me a great opportunity to play with the idea of pattern, grid, and repetition.

"The more diversity of line, shape, and composition, the more interesting a single cell is. The undulating, curvilinear forms give a two-dimensional surface a sense of three-dimensions.

These elements repeat in a predictable manner but they are designed to contradict the square tile."

ALLOY design director Jonathon Worner comments: "It has been very exciting to develop a range with Karim that is so unique.

"We are particularly interested in his ability to create distinctive work that focuses on the design language of the future and not the past. We have a history of challenging the boundaries of traditional tile design and manufacture and the organic style of The Karim for ALLOY collection provides a visual fluidity with metal tiles that has not been achieved before."

Ultimately, this is a trend with a scientific edge and a keen eye on the future. As more and more product designers' creations start their life as computer simulations, a futuristic styling becomes apparent that develops from organic forms.

Although these computer-generated designs sometimes have an appearance of complex facets, in most cases products display a human quality and a feminine softness that connect in pleasing and unusual ways.

This new metropolis aesthetic makes reference to positive and negative space, Escher-type thinking, mathematical formula and repetitive rhythms.

As 2010 promises to be a period of greater optimism it is certainly a time to be more inventive, take risks and challenge convention in order to regain stability and progress.

It is important that tile designers, manufacturers and retailers have unique product offers that will excite and intrigue, looking beyond the boundaries of the industry to forge new creative relationships in order to a new way forward.

W alloydesign.com.au

W scarletopus.com

W trendsblog.co.uk

All images on this page: Karim for ALLOY

