

metaproject 01

Rochester Institute of Technology | School of Design

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**“ I think you should buckle
your seat belt because design
at RIT is going to take off”**

-Jeremy Haefner, Ph.D.

*Provost and Senior Vice
President for Academic Affairs*

metaproject 01
Rochester Institute of Technology

Concept: Josh Owen
Design: Tanvi Asher with Kristin McGeorge
Paper: Productolith Dull 80# text and cover
Printing: PAL, Rochester New York
Binding: The Riverside Group

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Printing Applications Laboratory
Rochester, NY
www.printlab.rit.edu

Printed in the United States

For more information visit
<http://industrialdesign.cias.rit.edu>
<http://wilsonart.com>
<http://gracejeffers.com>
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<http://youtube.com/metaproject01>

Industrial Design at RIT

At RIT, we believe that industrial design education lies at the nexus of theory, process and practice. Industrial design is a human-centered discipline which requires an understanding of the complex relationships between culture and commerce. Our varied and experienced faculty expose students to the history, context and state of the art, while imparting the skills necessary to compete as contemporary designers. Aesthetic sensitivity, technical competence, social and environmental awareness, and analytical thought are developed in a robust university environment where business, engineering, social sciences and scientific partners exist within arms reach as willing collaborators. Through hands-on experience in strategic design thinking, graphic visualization, technical drawing, model making and prototype development, graduates emerge with the skills needed to conceptualize, design, and develop new and improved objects and systems with an eye towards a better world-view.

Our high profile internships expose students to formative experiences in the field. Our ever expanding international agenda links students to global thinking. The world renowned Vignelli Center for Design Studies is a unique resource that reveals the nuances of design process seen through the lens of some of the world's most masterful projects housed on site in the center's archives.

With all of these opportunities, our students emerge as leaders in the field and our graduates redefine the profession as capable editors of content and 21st century story-tellers.

RIT was named by Business Week as one of the top ten design schools in the USA and in the top 40 design schools in the world.

Metaproject

Meta – (from Greek: **μετά** = “after”, “beyond”, “with”, “adjacent”, “self”), is a prefix used in English (and other Greek-owing languages) to indicate a concept which is an abstraction from another concept, used to complete or add to the latter.

Word Origin & History

Prefix meaning 1. “after, behind,” 2. “changed, altered,” 3. “higher, beyond,” from Gk. meta (prep.) “in the midst of, in common with, by means of, in pursuit or quest of,” from PIE *me- “in the middle” (cf. Goth. miþ , O.E. mið “with, together with, among;” see mid). Notion of “changing places with” probably led to senses “change of place, order, or nature,” which was a principal meaning of the Gk. word when used as a prefix (but also denoting “community, participation; in common with; pursuing”). Third sense, “higher than, transcending, over arching, dealing with the most fundamental matters of”

The Metaproject Series

Metaproject is a new initiative at RIT. In keeping with the Design is One philosophy espoused by the Vignelli Center for Design Studies, Metaproject aims to encourage students to produce design that is “semantically correct, syntactically correct, and pragmatically understandable, but also visually powerful, intellectually elegant and timeless”.

Metaproject 01: The Wilsonart Challenge

The title for this catalog and corresponding project exhibition is reflective of the project's initiative: to impart a deeper understanding of one particular material (laminates) with the goal of exposing the intricacies of design thinking through the execution of a project brief. This manuscript demonstrates that education partnered with industry can be a successful vehicle for fostering innovative thinking and product excogitation.

In the fall of 2010 twenty Industrial Design Seniors taking a course with Professor Josh Owen were given the task of creating seating prototypes that celebrate the richness of Wilsonart International's laminate surfacing materials. Each student was required to select and research a specific context and respond with an inventive proposal which provided a utilitarian service in the form of a seating-object typology.

Introduction by Grace Jeffers Design Historian Organizer of the Wilsonart challenge

Background

A manufacturer that specializes in a specific material is always interested to explore new ways of expressing the qualities of that material. If one produces a material, the manner in which that material is presented determines the way it is perceived. Most designers want to be shown new ways to use the material. And it is here that our adventure begins.

In 2002 Wilsonart Laminate's advertising agency designed an ad that would run in the May issue of design magazines, in tandem with the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York City. Wilsonart had been participating in the show for a few years already and the agency thought to link the ad with the show by featuring a modern looking chair, just as the ICFF graphic standard features a different chair debuting at the show that year. The agency invented a cantilevered chair and placed it in a stark white environment with a model near the chair. Shortly after the ad was released the switchboard began to light up. Apparently the graphic designers had invented a make-believe chair that in real-life could never be built or ever be used for sitting. Designers everywhere pointed this out to the company and offered to design and build a real chair for the following year's ad. A new idea was born.

The Challenge

Wilsonart Challenges is, for brevity's sake, a student design competition for a scholarship. But it is really so much more. It is a semester long class taught at a leading design school. Students are encouraged to design and build a unique chair that incorporates the iconic shape of a Wilsonart laminate chip; the familiar round cornered rectangle with the hole near the top. The chair must be built to full scale and be able to support 400 pounds. Each student is responsible for building their own chair. This 'real-world' factor has been vitally important in the competition because while a design may look like a winner on a piece of paper but the proof is in the construction!

One aspect that sets this competition apart from others is the fact that the students are designing a bench-built, one of a kind piece. In judging the work, emphasis is placed on the silhouette of the object and the story behind it, more than the function. These chairs will never be mass produced. Their intended purpose is to make people stop and think twice about the chair and about laminate. This allows the students a freedom of expression that will be rare in most of their careers. In the end the winner is awarded a scholarship and has their chair shipped to New York City where it becomes the feature of the Wilsonart booth at the ICFF- one of the most important design events in the United States. And voilà! A design star is born!

This opportunity has launched the careers of most of the winners, jettisoning them from anonymity to international acclaim. Over the years participation at the Fair has featured some magic surprises. Students have been hired by big design firms, some have sold their chairs to wealthy collectors and one student even connected with his future wife! One never knows what magic will happen!

In the past five years Wilsonart has worked with (in order) Parsons School of Design, The Rhode Island School of Design, The Savannah College of Art and Design, California State University Long Beach, Philadelphia University and Pratt Institute. Schools are chosen because they have a rigorous chair design class and a history of building. This year we chose Rochester Institute of Technology for two reasons. The first is RIT's impeccable reputation as a leading school. The second is professor Josh Owen. We had the privilege of working with Josh at Philadelphia University and we were so impressed with his methodology and his dedication to his students that we were eager to work with him again. We followed Josh to RIT and we did so gladly. He is, without question in our minds, one of the finest design professors in the country, if not the world. And what may set him apart from all others even more is his passion for seeing his students succeed in the world of design. He uses all of his connections to make his students gain lofty air under their wings, repeatedly putting their ambitions ahead of even his own.

Each year Wilsonart sends me as a decorative arts historian and material specialist focused on the history and preservation of laminate, into the classroom. I bring the students an historic perspective by lecturing on the history of the material and the typology of chairs as well. Wilsonart also sends a technical specialist to work with the students hands-on and teach them the fine points of fabricating with the material. This year the students had the pleasure of working with Danny Teague.

The final day of class culminates in a juried review of all the student's chairs and the winner is announced.

Each year the jury is comprised of distinguished magazine editors as well as upper management from Wilsonart. This year we were especially honored to have Ron Labaco, Senior Curator at the Museum of Art and Design in New York, Belinda Lanks, Managing Editor from Metropolis, Allan Chochinov, Editor-in-chief from Core 77 and the well known furniture maker Wendell Castle.

But what was it like to work with RIT in comparison to all the other design schools? As a woman who works in design I have taken particular note of how women have usually struggled in this competition. What has consistently separated the female students from the male students, in my eyes, is the ability to build. I always ask the students questions about themselves and their lives and consistently the story is the same. Boys grow up building with their Dad's. Girls do not. So when it comes to building a full-scale chair this handicap has become painfully evident. For the first time in my life I witnessed a group of young women who could build if not as well as their male counterparts, perhaps even better! Two of the three most challenging chair designs in the final competition were built by female students. I am not sure I can convey the profound sense of hope these women have given me; for the future, for change, for a truly different world. I know that I am leaving richer than when I arrived because of them.

What does this all mean?!

It means we look forward to seeing you all at the 2011 ICFF where the winning chair will be unveiled along with five additional student chairs that were worthy of the exhibition. We are so proud of everyone who participated. Thank you for making this an incredible experience.

-Grace Jeffers

Prologue : Pedagogical Context

By Josh Owen

Faculty and Metaproject Author

Course Description

This two-quarter, sequential course introduced industrial design students to a working relationship with a client using a combination of seminar and workshop formats. The overall goal of the course was to inspire meaningful innovation in product development balanced by real-world parameters. The first half of each session consisted of a didactic presentation focused on aspects of the history, theory and practice of product design related to the project agenda.

The second half of each session consisted of group and one-on-one critiques, discussions and materials workshops. Guest lecturers and critics contributed at regular intervals throughout the course to share their insights.

Project Goal

Each student was required to select and research a specific seating object typology (e.g. a chair, stool, bench, etc.) and a specific cultural and situational context (e.g. sitting by a pool and eating, perching on a stool while pivoting to suture a wound in an emergency room).

They were charged with defining a problem and finding a thoughtful intervention. Final objects were to be clad in Wilsonart laminate to make use of its time-tested qualities.

Procedures

Wilsonart required the following imperatives: “the product must be well crafted, recognizable as a seating device and be fully functional.” Projects were required to incorporate the image of a laminate chip - specifically the rectangle with the elongated hole (Wilsonart logo). They were also to be surfaced primarily, although not necessarily entirely, by Wilsonart laminate. The student projects were not supposed to be designed with the intent of serial production however, they were expected to look striking on a page and interesting enough to stop a reader (when seen in ad form). Students were encouraged to consider their product’s silhouette and the 3 second or less perception time given by a casual reader.

Deliverables

Students were given the mandate to design and produce a high-quality, finished and functional prototype from actual materials using available on and off-campus resources. They were required to carefully archive their development process and document the final product with design-control drawings, graphically compelling use-scenarios and the written word in order to be fluent in communicating their overall concept in multiple contexts. Within the course, students were trained to art-direct the final documentation of their product using a professional product photographer in order to deliver press-quality communication materials.

Outcomes

In addition to the considerable media exposure given to the projects selected, \$1,000 scholarship was paid to the winning student. The winning project along with the five runners-up were brought to New York City and displayed at the 2011 International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF). The winner was flown to New York City and provided with hotel accommodation. Each student owns the intellectual property of his/her design.

Institutional Value

The development of a new strategic course plan

Metaproject is a repeatable course title to be used as a thematic umbrella. The course can be used as a template for other courses to follow the strategic plan of the institute which addresses innovation and globalization. Because of the professional nature of the output (production of a working prototype) the course was designed to anticipate a semester-long agenda. As such, it was scheduled into both fall and winter quarters in the form of sequential Special Topics courses (keeping the same student enrollment) to allow for ample time to complete the project.

A partnership with the industry

In the case of Metaproject 01, the partnership was with Wilsonart International, the largest manufacturer of laminate surfaces in North America. In this project, the company donated approximately \$100,000 in materials and services, including a donation to the industrial design program, educational site visits from their corporate partners and the transport and exhibition of student projects to the ICFF in New York City at the culmination of the project. In exchange, twenty students designed chairs exploring the history and qualities of the sponsor's core product. The student projects are used by Wilsonart to demonstrate the values of the product and the company in a marketing campaign targeted to various audiences.

An exhibition of RIT student work

Together with students from the course and a support team, which included a graduate teaching assistant, a student from photo-journalism, a graphic designer and Wilsonart, an exhibit was designed to showcase the course output in a consolidated vision at the Center for Student Innovation at RIT in February, 2011, during the judging.

A global venue

The venue for further dissemination of the results of the student research in this project is the May, 2011 International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York City. The ICFF, in conjunction with "Design Week" in New York City, is the most visible design-related event in the United States. During the Fair's four days, 145,000 net square feet of the Javits Center are filled with more than 23,000 designers, architects, retailers, manufacturers, representatives, distributors, developers, students, educators, curators and media. More than 550 exhibitors will display contemporary furniture, seating, carpet and flooring, lighting, outdoor furniture, materials, wall coverings, accessories, textiles, and kitchen and bath fixtures for residential and commercial interiors. Selected projects from universities and design schools are also showcased. Together with the many lectures and presentations held on site during the fair, and the hundreds of off-site events held throughout New York City and Brooklyn as part of Design Week, this assemblage of national and international exhibitors and visitors affords the chance to experience the most selective scope of the globe's finest, most creative, individual, and original avant-garde home and contract products showcased in one venue.

**A case study book
& a project identity**

This book chronicles the methodology and output from the course, shedding light on the project results. The design of the book itself reflects the "Design is One" philosophy espoused by the Vignelli Center for Design Studies which is overlaid into the project linking the student work and the print collateral thematically to the Vignelli Center. Together with a press-kit of images and information, this book is printed in edition of 3000 and used as collateral to accurately communicate the course and its representatives to the scholarly world as well as to the media and to the professional sector when it is disseminated during the ICFF. Extra copies can be used by the ID program to seed future projects and by SOD to promote trans-disciplinary collaboration.

**A trans-disciplinary team to focus
& communicate course output**

Tanvi Asher, an alumnus of RIT's ID program and now an adjunct professor within the department, helped develop the graphic materials for this course. Scott Julian, a student in photojournalism, advertising and public relations, worked with us to record the project using still and video imagery. Elizabeth Lamark, Visual Resources Supervisor at ETC Production Services photographed the student projects with the art direction of Professor Owen and the students in order to provide press-ready high quality documentation of the work for use in all communications. Jon Schull and Carl Lungren from the RIT Center for Student Innovation hosted the project's final event and displayed the student work for one week after completion. Kelly Downs, Associate Director of University News Services made sure that the University's interests in promoting the project were well represented working in concert with the sponsor's outreach efforts.

**A process-oriented
support website**

The website serves as an on-line portal for the project, however it does not duplicate the efforts of the book. Where the book focuses on project results, the website focuses on the project back-story and linkages to the institution. This will be revealed in a dynamic presentation of video interviews captured by Scott Julian featuring conversations with RIT administration, faculty, industry collaborators and the students themselves and was timed to be made live on the opening day of the ICFF.

Bringing in industry luminaries

Together with Wilsonart, leaders from industry were selected as visiting jurors for the project. Outside perspectives of this nature are invaluable in selecting the most promising projects to be shown in a critical venue. The jurors were: Grace Jeffers, Design Historian, Organizer of Wilsonart Project; Alison DeMartino, Marketing Director, Wilsonart; Allan Chochinov, Principal of Core77; Wendell Castle, Furniture Designer; Belinda Lanks, Managing Editor, Metropolis and Ron Labaco, Senior Curator, Museum of Arts and Design, New York City.

Building the future

Efforts like this project require extensive planning and the coordination of many resources beyond the classroom. It is our hope that this document and corresponding exhibit and web-based initiatives will facilitate the generation of more such projects in the future.

Metaproject 01

Student Designers

Andy Clark
Brian Madden
Cathy Min
Christalyn Snyder
Colleen MacKenzie
Dan Fritz
Dan Kestler
David Allen Nicholson
Francesca Pezze
Jason Yi
Mary Kolber
Megan Searle
Richard Lastrup
Robert Seymour
Steve Caruso
Taylor A. Farone
Tim Kuo
Tom Frobish
Tiffany Hwang
Vito Morbidini

Brian Madden The Hub



Context

Any collaborative environment where brainstorming, working, playing or socializing happens.

Problem

Create a dynamic seating hub around which groups converge to talk, ponder, work or play together.

Solution

The Hub promotes dynamic social interaction, through the deliberate assortment of surface heights.

Brand Strategy

The sample chip icon hanger is a constant reminder of the functionality and reliability of Wilsonart products.



Cathy Min

Papasan Chair



Context

Time flies so quickly, as an adult we are caught up in the world of complexity and seriousness and we recall the fun and adventurous times we had when we were kids. My context is to help encourage the user to embrace their inner child and rediscover your childhood memories.

Problem

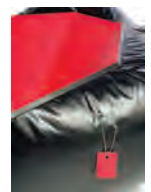
We don't allow ourselves to have fun as much as we use to when we were kids.

Solution

Resembling the shape of a geode, the vivid color and hard surface of Wilsonart's Hollyberry Red and the softness of the beanbag make a remarkable juxtaposition. The unity relates to our adulthood shell protecting our soft innocent childlike memories. The two distinctive elements offer an enigmatic sight and it is also unexpectedly comfortable. The chair even offers a user a stimulation of being "cupped." By learning to embrace our inner child the possibilities of sensations are endless.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart chip holds a metal engraved description on the back. The chip is bobbling down like a shiny earring representing an ornamental element to the chair. Along with two grommets on the beanbag resembling a piercing, is to create character and a fun decorative component showing defiance and personality.



Christalyn Snyder Shoe Bench



Context

Shoes are part of the daily ritual that is shared by both adults and children. The act, frequently performed in the chaos of an entryway, requires reaching the foot to put on the shoe and balancing the body throughout the process. Surrounding concerns are shoe storage, shoe care, and space constraints.

Problem

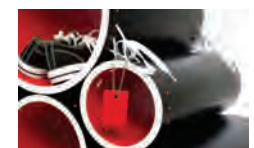
Create an ergonomic seating device that allows the user to put on footwear in a variety of positions and space for shoe storage.

Solution

A multi-level bench was created which allows for storage within the seating device. The compartments provided by the tubes help maintain a sense of organization when multiple pairs of shoes are within the bench.

Brand Strategy

Details, like the holes and the shoelaces are incorporated to reflect shoe design. This commentary allows Wilsonart's chip to become the pristine tag on this bench, similar to the tag on a new pair of shoes. The chip represents the brand and contains information about its name, designer and project sponsor on the back.



David Allen Nicholson Play Bench



Context

Located in the main entrance to a public space with a population of children such as a school, community center, or hospital.

Problem

Attending school and following the daily structure of their parents, a child's play-time and their creative thinking are greatly limited to the environment they are in.

Solution

This chair combines multiple instruments into a central gathering area that promotes unstructured play and creativity among children. On one of the two resonating chambers there is stretched red laminate acting as the drumhead to three individual sounding drums. On the second chamber there is a steel tongue drum played with mallets. Inside of the storage compartment there is a rain stick and maracas that can be removed and played by more children.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon cannot be seen from the outside of the chair, users must interact with the chair to experience the connection the chip has with the chair. Inside of the storage compartment or what I'd like to call the "heart" of the chair lies the chip mounted to a rain stick. As one holistic chair these instruments play an important role in the way the chair is used and the chip captures this idea.



Jason Yi High Chair



Context

In crowded, highly diverse, and fast-paced work environments we often need to take breaks to get back in touch with ourselves because when you have diversity with enough pressure, "heads will butt."

Problem

In this working style, if it's too much of a hassle to find a quiet and peaceful space in a short period of time, we may continue on with our day depriving our bodies and minds of the essential need of true rest.

Solution

Instead of having to go away to find some peace, we stay. And this chair brings you up, utilizing vertical space. This idea was inspired by the Zen philosophy of finding "peace within everyday chaos." The form, resembling a Ziggurat or a Mayan pyramid, implies the intended use as a personal temple that's left open as a communal entity – where everyone has access to the experience. This is high enough to provide the user with a wide field of vision, giving the effect of having a large area of personal breathing room – much like the feeling of being at the top of a mountain, or viewing an urban landscape from a rooftop.

Brand Strategy

To carry on the Spirit of the concept, the Wilsonart Sample Chip is integrated into a visual tuning device much like a mandala or yantra. Presented on the backrest in a delicate, spiraling gesture - like a falling leaf – it provides the user with a pleasant and calming visual cue in starting their session.



Mary Kolber The Anchor



Context

Some individuals have a tendency to slip out of their position in seating devices. Often times, stools do not provide a sense of physical security/stability.

Problem

Design a seating device that securely holds a user in position.

Solution

A bowl-shape is employed to prevent the user from 'spilling' out. A tripod based is used to create the most stable condition, and a low center of gravity offers additional insurance.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is placed as a seating target and focal point in the stool, reinforcing the central role of the laminate surfacing. The chip is 'folded' to highlight the faceted visual identity of the bowl-shaped seat.



Megan Searle The Companion



Context

The storage of excess reading material is traditionally solved with a book shelf. However, people do the majority of their reading in chairs. This results in an excess of furniture, and piles of books that either are in the process of being read or do not fit in a standard book shelf.

Problem

Create a reading chair that also considers storage opportunities for various reading materials.

Solution

An armchair with shelves incorporated for storing reading material of varying sizes.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is a book-mark emerging from a faux laminate book. The logo becomes a functional piece of the chair while reinforcing the overall function and subtly highlighting the brand.



Richard Lastrup The Companion



Context

The stool is a nomad within the home.
Giving it a new function finds its place.

Problem

Stools are lonely; they need a purpose
when they are not in use.

Solution

Turning the stool into a home for an animal
it creates a symbiotic relationship between
the two, giving the stool a purpose to stay
in one place.

Brand Strategy

The holly berry red Wilsonart sample chip
icon is recessed into the white laminate on
the front, in the upper left corner. The front
is where the chip would be most visible. As
for the top left corner, I searched for where
Wilsonart normally placed their red logo
which was in that location.



Robert Seymour The Snowboard Seat



Context

This chair is an outside seat for winter use which offers a dry comfortable place to sit even when it has snowed. The fold-down back is lifted to push off accumulated snow. It is very versatile and comfortable, either placed outside the ski lodge, or on the mountain.

Problem

As the snow falls it builds up on a normal bench or chair creating a very wet and awkwardly slippery seating accommodation. Sitting outside in these kinds of conditions can dampen pants and will make it uncomfortable to sit down when one returns to a warm interior setting.

Solution

A chair that will keep the snow off by allowing the back of the chair to fold forward and cover the seat.

Brand Strategy

To keep the seat itself as clean as possible, the Wilsonart sample chip icon was placed on the outside on the back leg. This not only keeps the logo visible at all times, but also makes it stick out against the stainless steel, while keeping the seat colors clean and flowing.



Steve Caruso
The Superlow :
a furnishing



Context

The moments of daily life occupy a continuum of formality, often breaching work and leisure paradigms. Without combining the two, drudgery and decadence emerge.

Problem

Create a seating opportunity that is a platform for potential, with the largest possible set of affordances and fewest possible instructional semantics.

Solution

Two chairs organized into a bench with an occasional table.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is shown flush laminated in a subtle reveal. This placement puts the mark in a position where, like the design of the object, discovery is intuitive.



Taylor A. Farone Tattoo Chair



Context

Tattooing is an uncomfortable, intimate experience between artist, client and chair. As the artist is engaged with the client, the client's body is fully engaged with the seating device in use.

Problem

Create a seating device that allows the client to brace themselves, holding onto the chair, while giving full access of the client's back and/or torso to the artist.

Solution

A seating device that allows the client to hold onto the chair back while resting their chest or torso on a comfortable, curved surface. The three-legged design provides stability for the chair and the users.

Brand Strategy

Implementation of red Wilsonart sample chip icon inlaid into the center rear of the seat. The objective is for it to exist as a powerful physical marker 'tattooed' against a black background.



Tom Frobish

The Reverie



Context

An idea starts off as a hunch, a tickling thought that needs to float around in your head before it matures. Ideas need time to incubate before actual realization occurs.

Problem

When a creative team works, they share their hunches until “the one” idea is formed. Often, before the hunches assimilate, ideas need to float around before becoming relevant. The idea grows, whether you are thinking about it or not. How do you make it grow faster?

Solution

A chair that allows its user to zone out comfortably without the risk of falling asleep. If the user starts to fall asleep, the chair moves, causing a slight falling sensation. The chair takes the user below the height at which people usually work, helping to put the mind in a different state of awareness.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is inset into the back rest. The chip and the back have the same color, drawing a subtle connection.



Tiffany Hwang

The Tool Stool



Context

In the kitchen, the cook is usually standing or moving about in a relatively controlled space. It would be useful to have something for them to lean or sit on temporarily. There is a limited amount of space in the kitchen, so the size of such a device should be small and easy to move.

Problem

Bring added convenience to people in the kitchen. The seating device should be easy to clean, easy to move around, offer some storage and not be dangerous.

Solution

A stool for leaning, and possibly for sitting, for a short amount of time. Wheels on the feet with a corresponding handle on top and foothold on the bottom allow easy mobility. A mid-size container on the back of the stool holds utensils, recipes, towels, spices, etc.

Brand Strategy

The placement of the Wilsonart sample chip icon on both the front and the back of the back support catches the user's attention from various perspectives. The foot rests converge to the front chip becomes a focal point; the back is located right on top of the foothold becomes a target for moving the stool.



Vito Morbidini The Recline



Context

In some cases, falling asleep could be seen as a kind of burden. Rolling in bed, searching for a comfortable position can cause frustration and stress.

Problem

Create a seating device which accommodates the need for a transitional position between being awake and falling asleep.

Solution

A body-support device where a user can rest, reclining on their side while waiting to fall asleep.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is placed on the base of the seating device to further strengthen its' physical and philosophical connection to the ground which supports and enhances its function and design.



Runner Up
The Cooler Bench



Andy Clark The Cooler Bench



Context

In an office environment, water coolers are the traditional place for quick breaks, office gossip and informal idea sharing. People benefit from social interaction with co-workers, and the chance to step back from the more controlled aspects of office life.

Problem

Create a seating device which challenges the office space and allows for more personal and less formal conversation.

Solution

Introducing a bench with a built in water cooler, to the office break scene.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon is placed where it has a high contrast against the rest of the bench. As a tap or switch to initiate the flow of water, it also becomes a key element of the function and forces the user to interact with it. This reinforces the Wilsonart brand in a visceral way.



Runner Up
The Encounter



Tim Kuo The Encounter



Context

In today's modern society, people often avoid unnecessary conversation with strangers. This creates a psychological wall that prevents chance social interactions.

Problem

Create a seating device which can enhance the exchange of information between strangers in a public setting.

Solution

A seat for two to three people which provides a temporary respite with an affordance for certain reading materials (newspapers, magazines) and for umbrellas, walking sticks etc.

Brand Strategy

Because the Wilsonart sample chip icon is the same red as all the functional surface areas of the bench and inlayed in the same manner, the brand will be associated with solving meaningful social as well as practical problems.



Runner Up
The Nodule



Francesca Pezze The Nodule



Context

Awkward personal grooming habits never seem to be discussed. Toenail clipping, shaving legs, applying lotion, painting toenails etc. not only are they uncomfortable to talk about they are uncomfortable to perform.

Problem

Create a bathroom apparatus to ease the process of tending to personal grooming habits that fits multiple sizes and doubles as storage.

Solution

A bathroom stool with varying height supports and storage compartments.

Brand Strategy

Like a branding tag on a towel, the red Wilsonart sample chip icon appears on a seam of the stool. It is set in white silicone so it doesn't cut anyone's feet and flexes if bumped into. The chip placement catches the eye without being too distracting and reinforces the red treatment in the other useful areas of the object.



Runner Up
The Union



Dan Kestler The Union



Context

New advancements in both communication and media technology have forced people to spend inordinate amounts of time sitting and looking at digital displays. This has caused a major decrease in daily physical / social interaction.

Problem

Create a design for a seating system which would cultivate a shared experience of relaxation and promote social interaction.

Solution

Two Adirondack-style chairs oriented towards each other that share a common armrest allowing shared relaxation for two individuals, seated across from one another in close proximity.

Brand Strategy

The Wilsonart sample chip icon placement is in the center of the shared armrest because it is the focal point of the context which inspired the chair's design. The chip is also doubled in length to express the duality of how the two chairs are joined together as one.



Second Place
The Stanchion



Colleen MacKenzie The Stanchion



Context

People fall into settings, often becoming comfortable to the point of missing the impact of notable objects in the scene. There is an opportunity to shock people into the reality of their surroundings by mixing functional object categories in meaningful ways.

Problem

Chairs take up significant space when standing alone and can often be hard to stow away efficiently. Chairs are not always effortless to move around between rooms and spaces unless they are more in the stool classification.

Solution

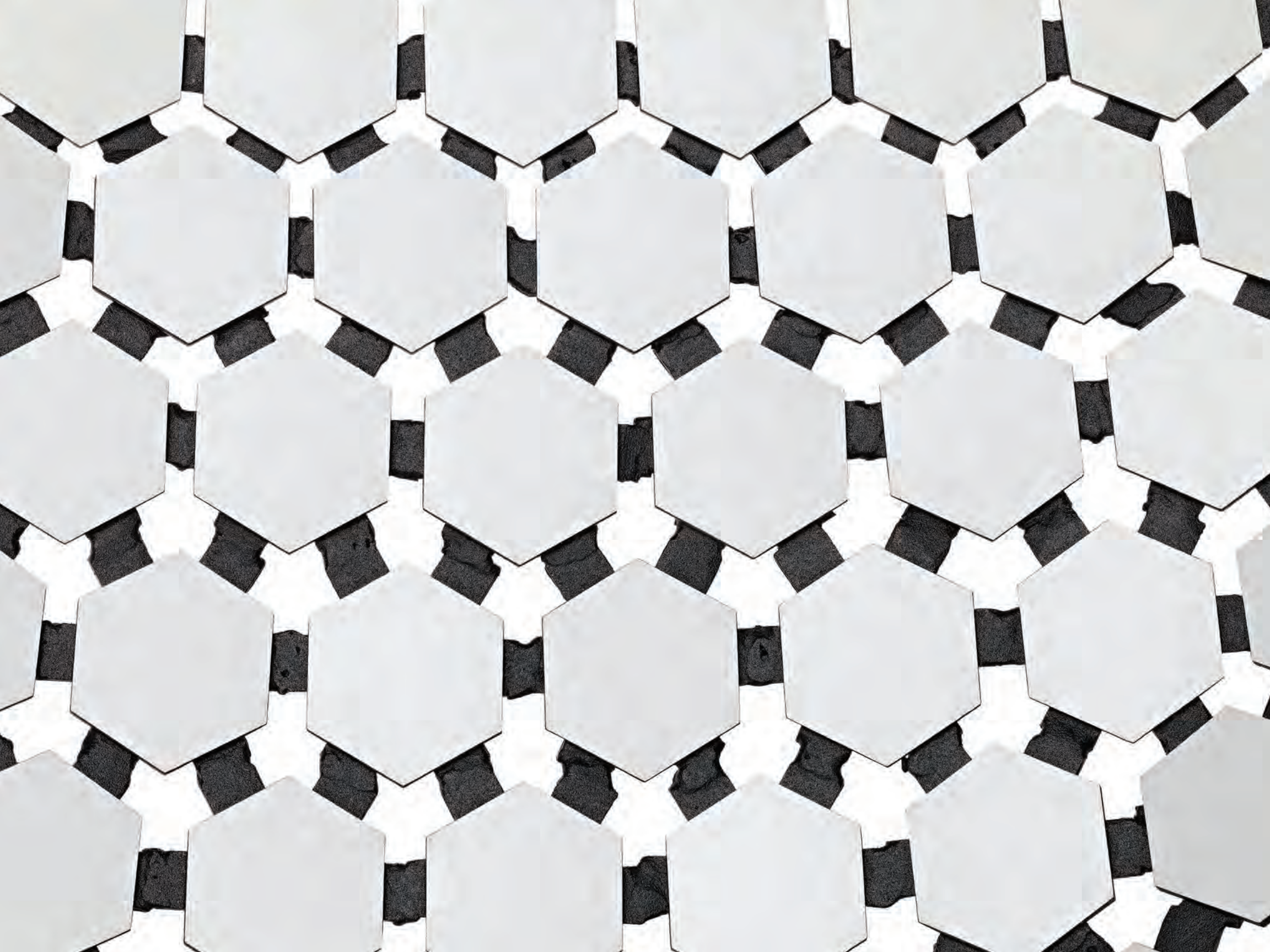
Create a seating device which accommodates temporary or occasional comfort as a perch and limited storage by offering a location for a drink, wallet, keys, glasses etc.

Brand Strategy

Graphic outlines of the Wilsonart sample chip icon shape are articulated as joints in details along the outside of each of the rungs of the seat's ladder shape. One of those details is fully defined by the Holly Berry Red chip itself. This link between the brand and the design shows the intimate connection between Wilsonart and innovative thinking.



First Place
The Trance



Dan Fritz The Trance



Context

People tend to lose themselves in the rushed life they live in. A simple act of meditation is one of many methods for slowing down a hectic life and restoring focus and creativity.

Problem

Creating a seating device that encourages the act of sitting down and removing oneself from the distractions of daily living.

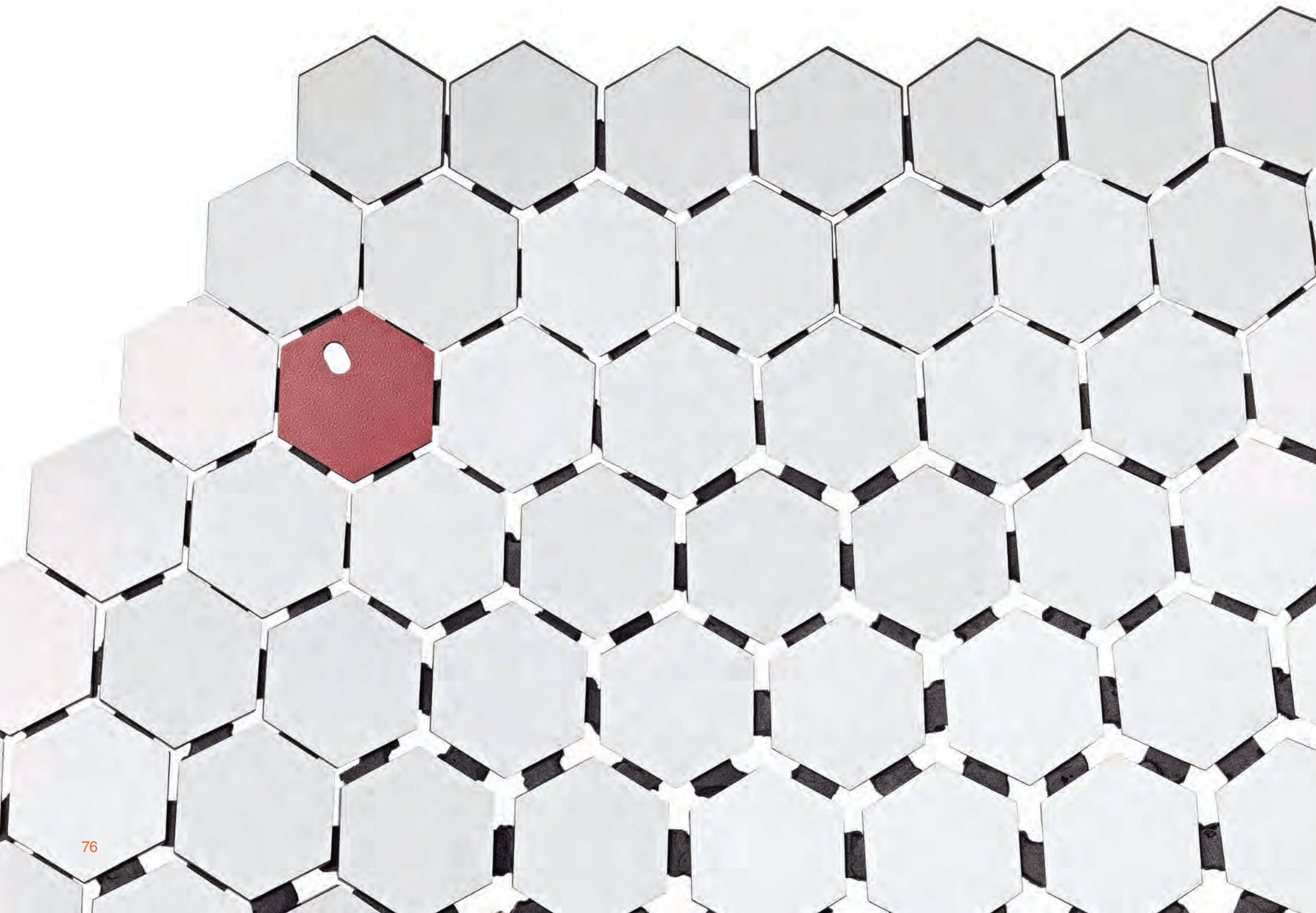
Solution

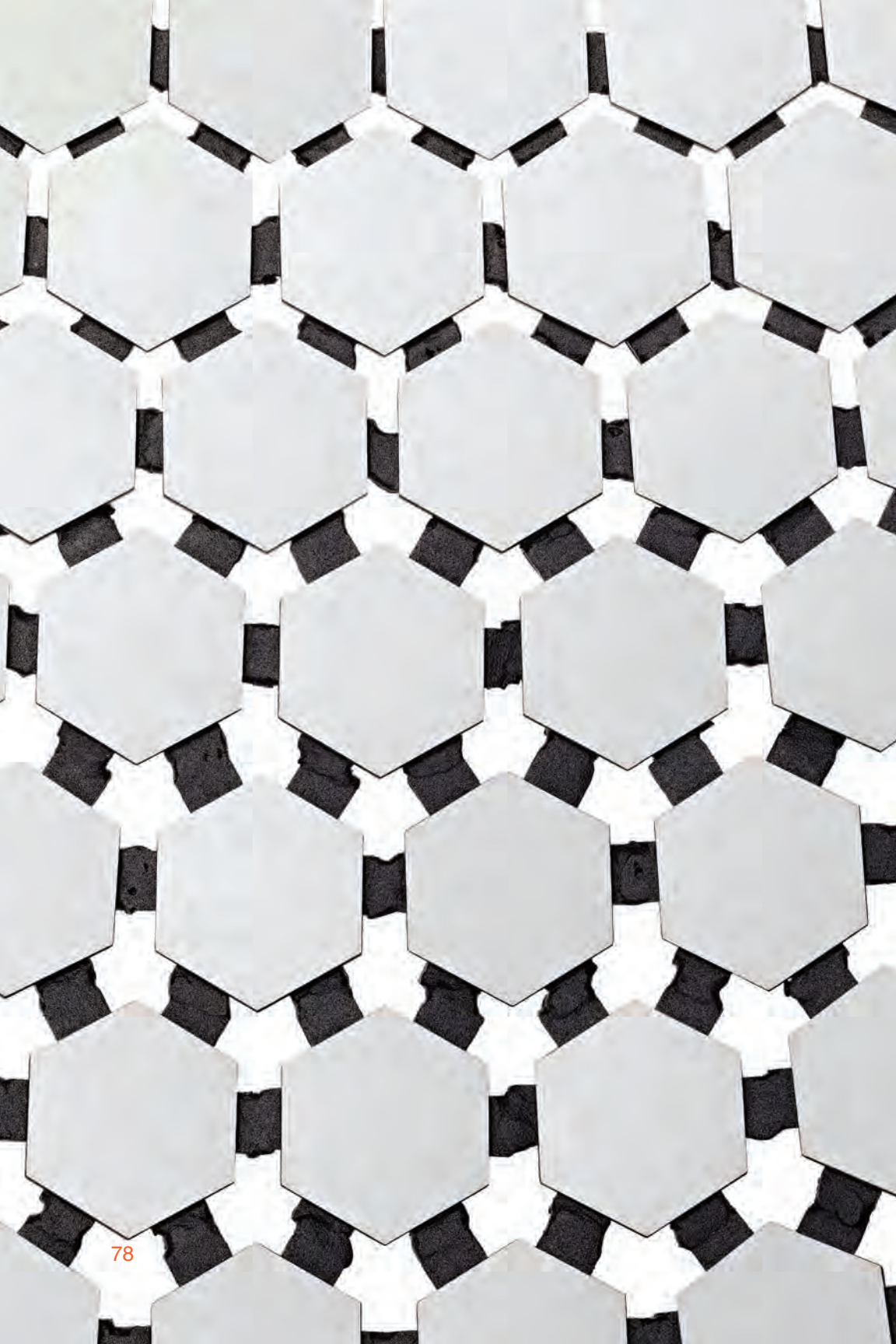
A lounge- type seat, which evokes the feelings of meditation through visual cues such as hypnotic repetition and slight separation of shapes.

Brand Strategy

The sample chip is a hexagon because like Wisonart laminates, it fits into its surroundings yet still stands out as its own. The exploration of the laminate's potential celebrates Wisonart's capability to retain its functionality even in unconventional applications.







Student Designers' Statement

When we twenty seniors in industrial design registered for a two-term course called "Surprise," none of us had any idea about the journey we were in for. The suspense peaked on the first day of classes when a new RIT design professor, Josh Owen, introduced a project that made our collective jaws drop. The opportunity he handed out to us, in syllabus form, represented an unprecedented step in our design education. Each of us imagined standing together with our projects in the lime light at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) in New York City and we wanted to start sketching right away, but Josh didn't let us.

Over the course of the next several weeks, we soaked up information about the history of furniture, contemporary designers and their philosophies. We got to know Grace Jeffers, a design historian and pre-eminent expert on laminate, who taught us to reexamine our perceptions of materiality and aesthetics in the world around us. The wealth of knowledge that we gained made us all the more anxious to apply them to our own work in Metaproject. To enhance the Wilsonart Challenge, Josh urged us to find a social context that would benefit from a seating device. After each of us had settled upon a unique context, it was finally time to start sketching.

From the moment we papered the walls with our initial concepts, it was full speed ahead. Day after day, we began to see our ideas grow into something real, and Josh never allowed us settle for what we thought was good enough; he wanted our best.

As the project neared completion, we found ourselves approaching the summit of a mountain we could look down from with a feeling of satisfaction. All the late nights in the studio, all the trips to the hardware store, and all of the small successes we enjoyed along the way were a testament to how far we had come over the past twenty weeks.

Even though final exams have come and gone, we will not soon forget what we learned from this project as we take the next step into the professional world. It has raised our awareness of what we are capable of, and taught us to dig deeper during our design processes. Each of us has grown in our own way, thanks to the guidance of all those who have helped us along the journey.

So, on behalf of the members of Metaproject 01, we would like to thank our friends and family, members of local industries, our fellow classmates, and ID faculty for your support. Thank you to photojournalism student Scott Julian and Adjunct Professor Tanvi Asher for volunteering their time to document this adventure. A special thanks goes out to Wilsonart and Grace Jeffers for choosing RIT for this year's challenge and the jurors for making the trip to Rochester. Finally, thank you to our teaching assistant, Jae Ho Seo, and most of all, to Josh Owen for believing in us.

On behalf of the students of Metaproject 01,

-Brian Madden and Christalyn Snyder

Project Team

Industry Collaborators

Wilsonart® International, based in Temple, Texas, is a leading manufacturer of decorative surfacing products, including Wilsonart® Laminate, Wilsonart® Solid Surface, Wilsonart® Flooring and Wilsonart® Adhesives. Wilsonart Laminate designs have been recognized for design leadership by Cooper-Hewitt, Interior Design and Architectural Record. For more information about Wilsonart Laminate or any Wilsonart product, please call the Customer Service Hotline at 800-433-3222. Consumers can also visit www.countertop.com and professionals can visit www.wilsonartcontract.com.

Judges

Grace Jeffers
Design Historian, Project Manager
Wilsonart Challenges chair competition
Alison DeMartino
Director, Marketing Communications,
Wilsonart International
Allan Chochinov
Partner and Editor-in-Chief, Core77
Wendell Castle
RIT artist-in-residence & furniture designer
Belinda Lanks
Managing Editor, Metropolis Magazine

ICFF Exhibition Concept/ Art Direction

Josh Owen

Product Photography

Elizabeth Lamark, ETC Photo, RIT

First Place Photography

Clint Blowers

Process Photography

Scott Julian

Graphic Design

Tanvi Asher with Kristin McGeorge

Primary Author

Josh Owen

Contributing Writer

Grace Jeffers

Studio Professor



The work of industrial designer and educator Josh Owen is at once simple, practical and creative. Although typologies that Owen creates are commonly described as refined, iconic and minimalist, he defines function in humanistic terms, combining clarity of purpose and functional efficacy with emotive and tactile qualities chosen to align strategically with industry. Owen is the president of Josh Owen LLC and is an associate professor of industrial design at The Rochester Institute of Technology. His projects are produced by major manufacturers and have won many awards. Owen's work is included in the permanent design collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Chicago Athenaeum, the Denver Art Museum, the Musee des beaux-arts de Montreal, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the National Museum of American Jewish History. His work has been featured in major exhibitions, numerous books on design and is regularly included in critical design discourse.

Teaching Assistant



Jae Ho Seo was born in Busan, Korea. He holds undergraduate degrees in Sculpture and Industrial Design from Hong Ik University. After completing university, Jae was a paratrooper during his military service in Korea. He came to America and to RIT in order to pursue graduate study in Industrial Design. During his time at RIT, Jae studied furniture design at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS), affiliated with the University of Copenhagen, a study abroad program in the College of Imaging Arts & Sciences at RIT. While there he was awarded the Furniture Design Award for Academic Excellence. Jae is also the recipient of an award for his entry into the 2010 Collab Student Design Competition with the Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Acknowledgements

The implementation of this project is the result of the work of many individuals, too numerous to mention here. Nevertheless, we wish to especially thank:

Dr. Jeremy Haefner, Provost, RIT,
Frank Cost, Interim Dean, CIAS,
Patti Lachance, Administrative Chair,
School of Design, CIAS, Roger
Remington, Massimo and Lella Vignelli
Distinguished Professor of Design,
Stan Rickel, Chair, Industrial Design
For collectively convincing Josh Owen
to join the faculty at RIT and to bring the
Wilsonart project along.

Jae Ho Seo for his assistance and support
throughout the course and beyond.

Tanvi Asher for her invaluable work on the
branding of this project.

Kristin McGeorge for additional graphic
design and pre-production.

Professor Bruce Ian Meader for his sage
wisdom and guidance.

Scott Julian for going beyond the call of
duty to collect images and conduct the
interviews for this project.

Jon Schull and Carl Lundgren,
Center for Student Innovation for their energy
and support in brokering trans-disciplinary
projects and for hosting this one.

All of the Industrial Design and
Foundations faculty who teach our ID
students for preparing the twenty for the
rigors of this project.

Especially Stan Rickel, Alex Lobos, Kim
Sherman, Alan Reddig and Amos Scully
who all consulted with students selflessly
and contributed greatly to many of the
individual project outcomes.

Our fellow students and colleagues in
other disciplines at RIT who helped us
with the development of the prototypes
and related efforts:

From Mechanical Engineering in
the College of Applied Science and
Technology ; Students Beth Kiefer,
Tyler Bigham, Anthony Poli Jr.

From the School of American Crafts in the
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
Professor Rich Tannen, Students Jake
Mendez, Justin Chick, Tawen Huang

From the School of Art in the College of
Imaging Arts and Sciences
Professor Elizabeth Kronfield

From the School of Photographic Arts
and Sciences in the College of Imaging
Arts and Sciences Professor Meredith
Davenport

The technicians from Wilsonart
International: Danny Teague, Product
Manager Decorative Metals and
Performance Laminates

Our friends in local industry:
Smidgens. Inc, RAMSCO, Rochester
Vibratory and Assembly Inc., Honeoye
Falls Millwork, Rochester Steel Supply
and Surplus, Leo J. Roth Corporation,
Senti-Metal, RES Exhibit Services LLC,
Raymond Corp.

And of course, our friends and families.

Metaproject

Meta – (from Greek: **μετά** = “after”, “beyond”, “with”, “adjacent”, “self”), is a prefix used in English (and other Greek-owing languages) to indicate a concept which is an abstraction from another concept, used to complete or add to the latter.

Word Origin & History

Prefix meaning 1. “after, behind,” 2. “changed, altered,” 3. “higher, beyond,” from Gk. meta (prep.) “in the midst of, in common with, by means of, in pursuit or quest of,” from PIE *me- “in the middle” (cf. Goth. miþ, O.E. mið “with, together with, among;” see mid). Notion of “changing places with” probably led to senses “change of place, order, or nature,” which was a principal meaning of the Gk. word when used as a prefix (but also denoting “community, participation; in common with; pursuing”). Third sense, “higher than, transcending, over arching, dealing with the most fundamental matters of”



College of Imaging
Arts and Sciences
School of Design



Rochester Institute of Technology
Center for Student Innovation



Vignelli Center for Design Studies