This year's project is dedicated to the memory of Lella Vignelli, whose legacy lives on at RIT.

Contents

“Design matters. It has an increasingly important role to play in our day-to-day lives. The collaboration that occurs through Metaproject, provides our students, faculty, and industry partners, with a remarkable experience in which design becomes a journey of mindful practice and unique collaboration. The high caliber of engagement, invention, and inclusive design that takes place during this experience is notable and remarkable. The opportunity to make connections, build community, and explore design through real world experiences is what makes Metaproject a treasure to the School of Design and the design community.”

Peter Byrne

metaproject 07
Rochester Institute of Technology

Concept: Josh Owen
Design: Sarah Ingerick, Elizabeth Stegner
Paper: U–Velvet 80# cover
Printing: Mercury, Rochester, New York
Binding: Mercury, Rochester, New York

©2017 Josh Owen, RIT

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or manner whatsoever without prior written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Mercury
Rochester, New York 14624
http://www.mercuryprint.comt

Printed in the United States

For more information visit
metaproject.rit.edu
youtube.com/RITmetaproject
facebook.com/RITmetaproject
twitter.com/RIT_Metaproject

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, commerce and environment.
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 assets, our students emerge as leaders in the field and our graduates redefine the profession as capable editors of content and 21st century story-tellers.

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 Greek. 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

The Metaproject initiative from RIT is now running in its seventh iteration. In keeping with the Design is One philosophy espoused by RIT's 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 07: Umbra

The title for this project and corresponding exhibition is reflective of the project's ongoing initiative: to impart a deeper understanding of problem-solving with the goal of exposing the intricacies of design thinking through the execution of a project brief. This exhibition demonstrates that education partnered with industry can be a successful vehicle for fostering innovative thinking and product excogitation.

In the fall of 2016 sixteen Industrial Design Seniors taking a course with Professor Josh Owen were challenged to design for small spaces. The trend of shrinking condo and apartment sizes has resulted in a trend towards making small spaces more livable and efficient. In being mindful of small spaces, Umbra invited the designers to create innovative housewares that consider opportunities for multiple functions, storage, space efficiency, personalization, dual utility, entertaining, and other micro-living concerns.

Introduction

Matt Carr

VP Design, Umbra

Umbra brings thought and creativity to everyday homewares through original design. Great design comes from creative thinking and we are committed to nurturing talent by collaborating with new and emerging designers. Umbra has organized numerous successful student design collaborations over the past 12 years. These design challenges have provided Umbra with a way to give back to the design community. In exchange, we are presented with great product design ideas and exposure to new talent.

Half of the world's population now lives in urban centers where real estate is expensive and space is hard to come by. In Toronto alone, the average condo sizes have shrunk by over 100 square feet in the last ten years. This has resulted in a trend towards making small spaces more livable and efficient. We need objects that make compact living exceptional.

In being mindful of small spaces, Metaproject 07 challenged designers to create innovative housewares that consider opportunities for multiple functions, storage, space efficiency, personalization, dual utility, entertaining, and other micro-living concerns.

Throughout the semester, I had several opportunities to engage with Josh Owen and the RIT team. A few Skype sessions, multiple visits to the RIT campus, and a road trip to Toronto where the students visited the Umbra flagship store, HQ, and Design Studio were essential components of the collaboration. Students learnt about the core attributes of successful product directly from the Umbra design team and President, Les Mandelbaum.

Josh and Umbra have had a working relationship for more than 15 years. It was a pleasure working directly with him guiding the students through the challenge. The student's curiosity and willingness to take action on feedback made the context dynamic to work within.

The diversity of archetypes within the project grouping shows the breadth of skill set and category knowledge. Final models and presentations were refined and professional. The 10 finalists best demonstrated Umbra's original, modern, casual, functional, and affordable values. They will be displayed at the ICFF in New York City.

We are very proud to be a part of Metaproject 07 and congratulate all participating students.

Prologue: Pedagogical Context

Josh Owen

Faculty and Metaproject Author

Course Description

This semester-long course introduced industrial design students to a working relationship with clients using a combination of seminar and workshop formats. The first half of each session presented aspects of the history, theory and the practice of product design as it related to the Umbra project agenda in the design and development of a solution to the aforementioned prompt: design for small spaces.

The second half of each session consisted of group and one-on-one critiques, discussions, field-trips and materials workshops. Critics were engaged at regular intervals throughout the course to share their insights.

Project Goals

Each student was required to explore the factors and challenges associated with designing for small spaces. This required that students fully immerse themselves into design research in order to seek results that related to the core constituencies, brand values and philosophies relative to Umbra.

Procedures

The industry participants used the following guidelines: Appealing to Umbra's target market; Value conscious and aesthetically minded; Feasible for mass production; Simple and functional.

Project Deliverables

Students each designed and produced a high-quality, finished functional prototype from actual materials using available on and off-campus resources. They were expected to carefully archive their process and document their final product with design-control drawings, graphically compelling use-scenarios and the written word to convey their overall concept.

Outcomes

In addition to the considerable media exposure given to the projects selected as winners, the projects were brought to New York City and exhibited in the context of Design Week. Several were earmarked for potential further development in order to explore their feasibility as products suitable for manufacture. Each student retains the ownership of the intellectual property of his/her design.

Institutional Value

The furtherance of a strategic course plan

As demonstrated by this seventh generation of the course, Metaproject is a repeatable template to be used as a thematic umbrella. The program of study can be used as a model for other courses to follow the strategic plan of the institute which addresses innovation and globalization. Metaproject 07 successfully fit into a single semester and works well with the rapid output needs of professional collaborators.

A partnership with the industry

In the case of Metaproject 07, the partnership was with the house goods industry leader, Umbra. In this project, the company donated materials and services, and provided educational feedback sessions from their members and partners. Additionally, Umbra hosted the students on a trip to Toronto. In exchange, sixteen students designed products which were crafted in synergy with the sponsors' core values.

An exhibition of RIT student work

Together with students from the course and a support team, which included a graduate teaching assistant and members of the sponsors' groups, an exhibit was designed to showcase the course output in a consolidated vision in the University Gallery of the Vignelli Center in Rochester, New York.

A global venue

The venue for further dissemination of the results of the student research in this project was the May, 2017 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 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. This year’s installation was housed within the Jacob Javitz center and the Partners and Napier Showroom.

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 2,000 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 are used by the ID department to seed future projects and by SoD to promote further, trans-disciplinary collaboration as well as by the Dean’s office and the Development office for their purposes.

A trans-disciplinary team to focus & communicate course output

ID graduate student Elizabeth Stegner and Sarah Ingerick, a fourth year undergraduate student from RIT's Graphic Design program took the lead this year in developing the graphic materials for this course.
Elizabeth Lamark, Photography Services Supervisor, RIT Production Services photographed and processed the student projects together with her team of photography students under the art direction of myself and the students in order to provide press-ready high quality documentation of the work for use in all communications.
The Vignelli Center hosted the project's final on-campus event and displayed the student work for the university community and award ceremony.
Rich Kiley from RIT's University News Services and Kelly Sorensen, Marketing Communications Director for CIAS, 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 Metaproject global website was created in 2012. It consolidates the work from all Metaprojects and creates a platform for future iterations of the project.
The current 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 site is also used for dissemination to media and other interested parties. This year, the website was revisited and maintained by alumni James Curtis in order to follow new trends in technology and to remain current. Social media channels were maintained by student leaders from the course.

Bringing in industry luminaries

The Umbra team are leaders from industry and acted as judges for the project. Outside perspectives of this nature are invaluable in selecting the most promising projects to be evaluated for further interest.

Matt Carr
VP Design
Umbra

Mingus New
Product Designer
Umbra

Tracy Wong
Studio Coordinator & Product Designer
Umbra

Building the future

Efforts like this project require extensive planning and the coordination of many resources beyond the classroom.
It is our hope that the above methods of documentation, dissemination and exhibition initiatives will facilitate the generation of more such projects in the future.

Student Designers

Mick Bartholomew
Jeff Bruha
Brian Cusack
Tadhg Duffy
Pauline Dziama
Jon Fratti
Mike Grady
Christopher Groves
Vincent Lin
Jack Marquez
Jamie Samuel Moore
Neda Navalesca
Veronica Santoso
Emma Sarles
Daniel Turner
Nina Zheng

Mick Bartholomew

Waver Basket

Context

Waver Basket - a playful interpretation of the “fruit bowl” - can be hung on a wall to unclutter valuable working surfaces in the kitchen. When placed on the table, the basket gently rocks on its curved base, adding a sense of whimsical play to the dining experience.

Jeff Bruha

Pail

Context

The Pail is an easy to use compost collecting container with a slim profile ideal for small spaces. Its compact charcoal filter ensures that odors stay contained and your kitchen remains clean and comfortable.

Brian Cusack

Saddlebag Organizer

Context

The Saddlebag Organizer is an adjustable storage system that fits snugly over a variety of household furniture and doors. It adjusts easily, allowing the user to reduce clutter and accent their furniture without occupying valuable counter space.

Tadhg Duffy

Popup Room Divider

Context

The Popup Room Divider is a bold space separator that can be set up or taken down in seconds. It folds up to store at a fraction of its size in one compact bag, allowing small space dwellers to reorganize their space whenever the mood strikes.

Pauline Dziama

Power Bucket

Context

The Power Bucket is a portable charging vessel that allows for accessible storage and organization. Its tapered base anchors securely into a standard sized cup holder during a car commute, or sits alongside desk work to display a cell phone and manage USB cords.

Jon Fratti

Pop Shelf

Context

The Pop Shelf is a storage solution addressing the changing nature of the objects that we want to display, store, and remember. With sound absorbing material to reduce ambient noise pollution of urban areas as well as interior and exterior storage to enable the user to aesthtically keep track objects needed to grab and go, the Pop Shelf quickly becomes a cornerstone of the living space.

Mike Grady

Ledge

Context

The Ledge is an extendable tray for temporarily storing small items. Placed throughout a home it quickly and easily creates an extra surface, its thin profile allowing for a variety of purposes. Nest the Ledge under a mattress to create a bedside tray or on a table to increase the table's usable area.

Christopher Groves

Rocket

Context

In small living spaces, the bathroom frequently sacrifices the most area in a floor plan. Rocket fits in wherever it is needed to hold toothbrushes, towels, toilet paper, and more.

Vincent Lin

Buoyancy

Context

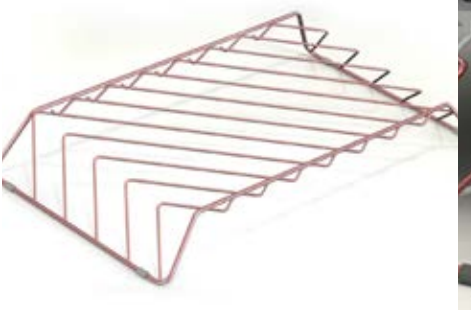
Buoyancy increases usable space on the modern homeowner's kitchen counter by decreasing the footprint required to store a roll of paper towels and providing storage. Designed in the language of Umbra's Vana Collections - minimal, elegant and desirable - Buoyancy provides an aesthetic organization solutions for kitchen space saving problems.

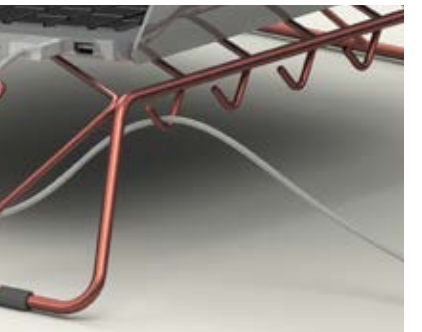
Jack Marquez

Tilt Laptop Stand

Context

The Tilt Laptop Stand provides a sculptural pedestal for any small to midsize laptop, increasing usable desk space and reducing cable clutter in a simple, minimal fashion.





Jamie Samuel Moore

Teardrop Storage

Context

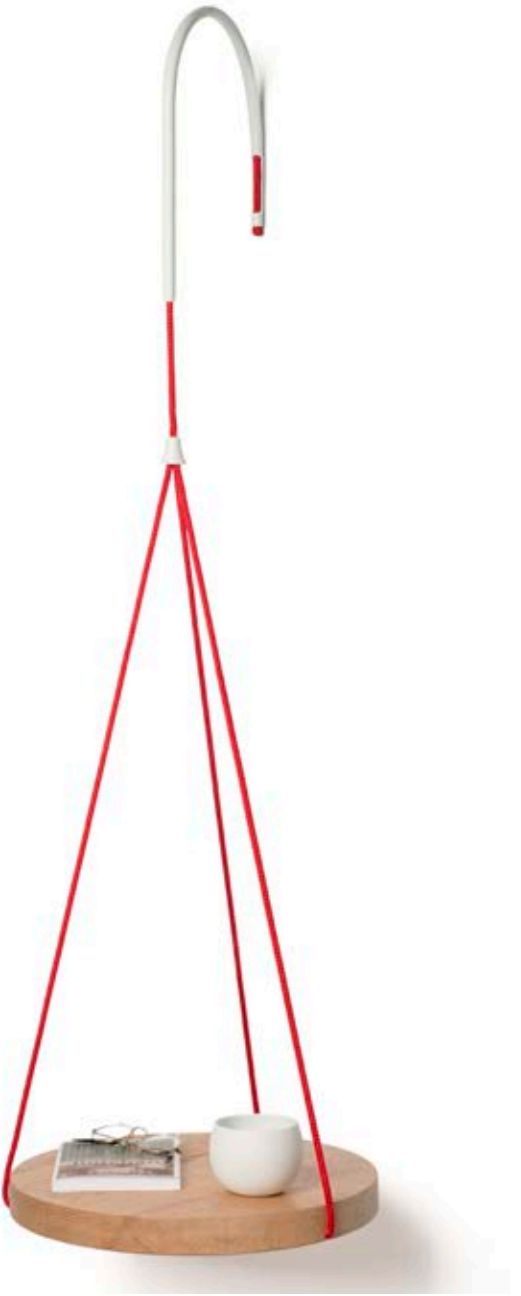
The Teardrop is a modular storage solution that can be mounted on a wall or over a door. Three teardrop shapes provide a variety of storage options. Additionally, teardrops can be added or removed to fit each individual's space and storage needs.

Neda Navalesca

Peppermint

Context

Peppermint is a whimsical nightstand that maximizes floor space. Although primarily designed to be placed next to a bed, it can also be utilized in a kitchen or living room as extra shelving or an end table.



Veronica Santoso

Tulip Multipurpose Organizer

Context

The Tulip Multipurpose Organizer is designed to maximize its functions in confined spaces. Depending on the user's preference, the Tulip can be used as a storage container, a stool, an ottoman, and a tray. Constructed out of a molded recycled plastic, the Tulip is sturdy enough to support a person while maintaining a soft, felt-like exterior. Its simple geometric form allows multiple containers to stack together.

Emma Sarles

Anguli Lamp

Context

The Anguli is an elegant floor lamp with a tiny footprint. Versatile and moveable, Anguli is and ideal for small spaces and particularly suited for corners.

Daniel Turner

Drifold

Context

Drifold is the perfect drying and storage rack for dishes in small spaces. Its minimal footprint and folding form allows it to dry and store a set of plates, utensils and glasses elegantly in a variety of ways wherever you call home.

Nina Zheng

Adjust Side Table

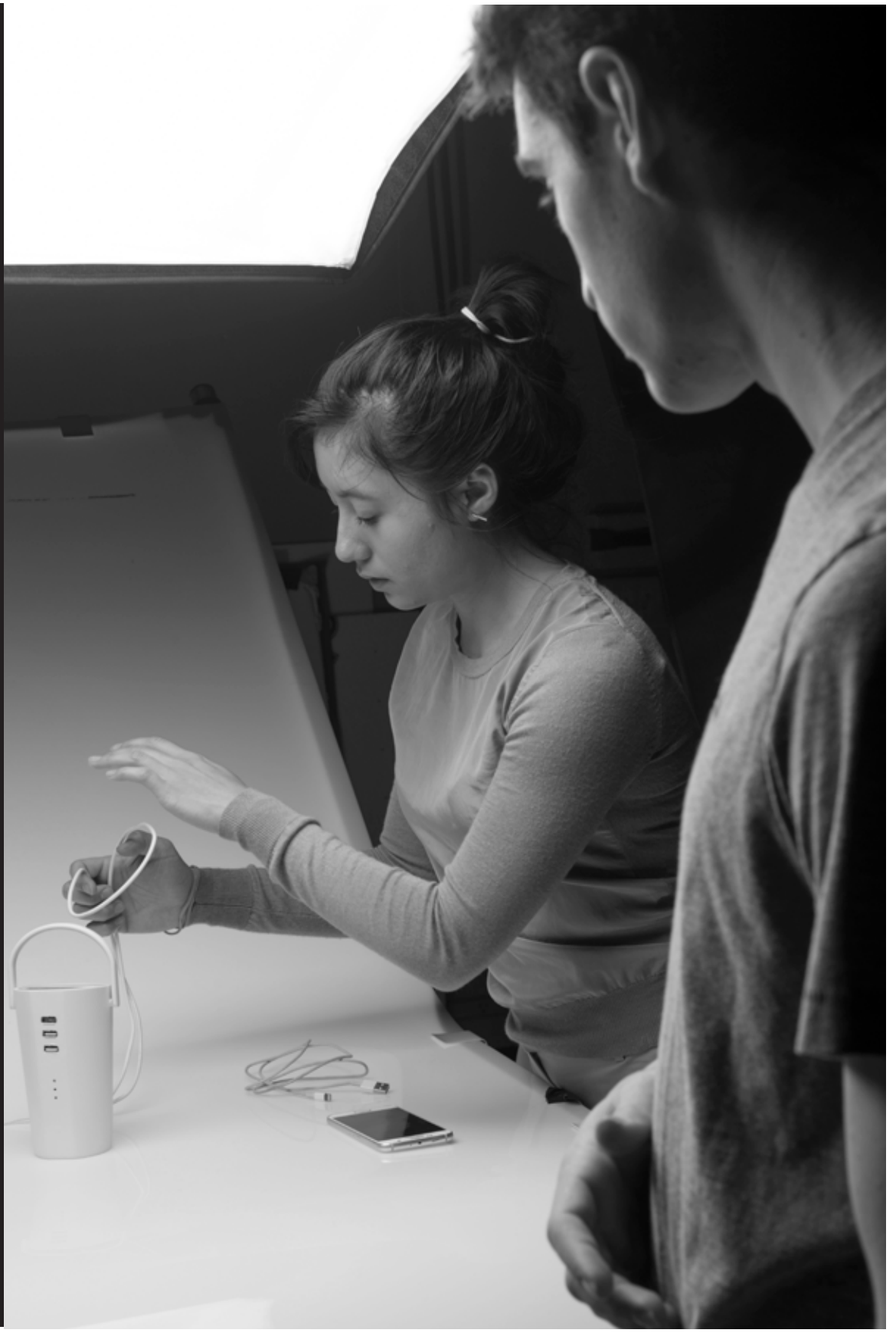
Context

Small spaces call for versatile furniture. The Adjust Side Table is an occasional table that serves a variety of uses in the home.


R·I·T


Social Media
#RITmetaproject


THE FORT WORTH ART MUSEUM



Winners

First Place
Tadhg Duffy

Second Place
Vincent Lin

Third Place
Mick Bartholomew

First Place

Tadhg Duffy

Popup Room Divider

Second Place

Vincent Lin

Buoyancy

Third Place

Mick Bartholomew

Waver Basket


LOUNGE

Student Designers' Statement

Pauline Dziama and Jon Fratti

Metaproject is the sort of experience that suits someone with an adventurous spirit. It is this spirit that draws students every year to a project that, while shrouded in mystery, instills in them excitement and confidence that what they're about to undertake will change them as designers.

As we eagerly gathered to hear who the industry sponsor would be this year, an energy could be felt in the room. When Umbra was unveiled as the sponsor and the brief of design for small spaces was delivered, you could almost hear the gears turning in everyone's heads. Microliving is a lifestyle we all connect to through the various places we've lived during our time at RIT or the temporary spaces we have stayed in during our travels.

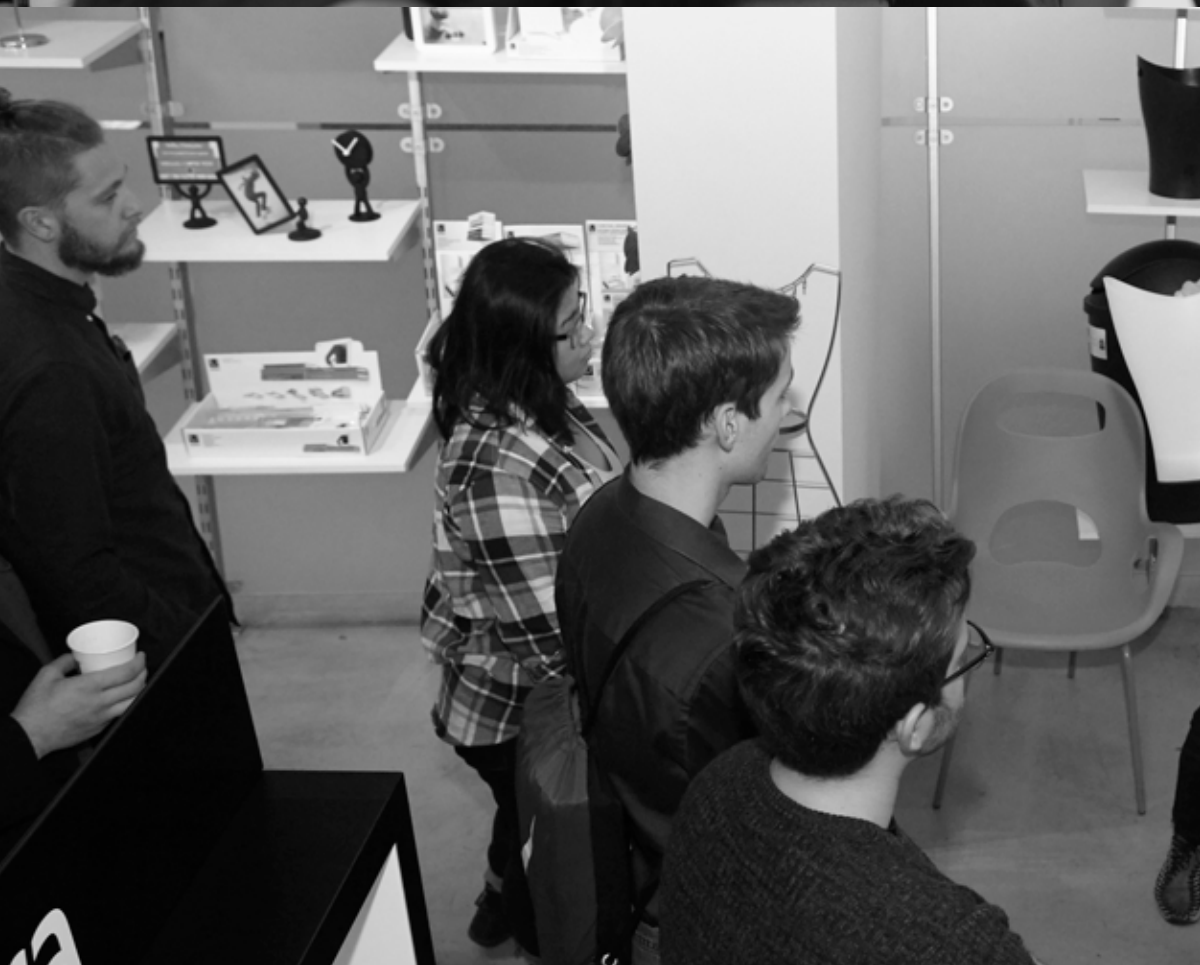
Immediately we filled the studio with products from Umbra's catalogue, fully immersing ourselves in Umbra's design ethos and developing an understanding of their design language. Whether it was playing ping pong or hanging clothes, each interaction gave us a greater sensibility for developing designs that fit Umbra's design philosophy.

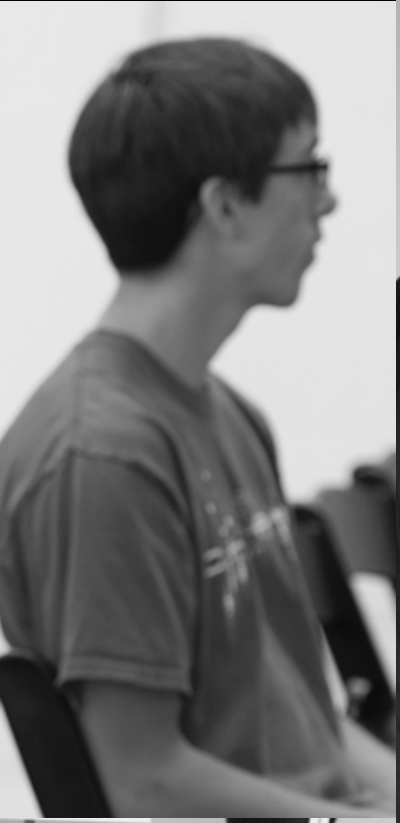
Metaproject presented a dive into industry, enabling us to interface directly with the client as we sped along to the finish line. From product research to building concept models we worked and grew together, exchanging ideas within our studio and applying Umbra's perspective beyond the classroom. Translating our personal observations of people in their limited spaces into an Umbra product meant practicing a level of professionalism that required as much receptiveness to our client as it did clarity in presenting our own thoughts.

Our exposure to the real world considerations of a universal housewares design company strengthened our own design perspectives. Metaproject was an exercise of collaboration with Umbra, our professor Josh Owen and amongst studio mates. This network of invaluable exchanges presented each of us a collection of viewpoints that pushed our ideas further than we could have ever imagined. For this we thank our fellow studio mates in the Industrial Design department at RIT for their encouragement on the development of our concepts. Thank you to Rick Auburn, our Industrial Design Workshop Technician for his guidance in how any idea of ours might be prototyped into reality. Elizabeth Torgeson-Lamark and her photo studio, thank you for documenting the Metaproject07 outcome. And thank you to our Teaching Assistant, Elizabeth Stegner, for your enthusiasm and guidance.

For the opportunity to challenge ourselves as design professionals we thank VP of Umbra Design, Matt Carr, and the chair of Industrial Design at RIT, Josh Owen, for your tireless efforts and investment in making this an experience that we will apply to the rest of our design careers possible.

On behalf of the students of Metaproject07,
Pauline Dziama and Jon Fratti





Project Team

Industry Collaborator

This year, the Metaproject partnership is with Umbra, the Toronto based home goods company using design as a tool to bring simplicity and elegance to everyday life.

Judges

Matt Carr
VP Design
Umbra

Mingus New
Product Developer
Umbra

ICFF Exhibition

Concept / Art Direction	Josh Owen
Product Photography	Elizabeth Torgerson-Lamark RIT Production Services
Process Photography	Elizabeth Torgerson-Lamark Umbra
Portrait Photography	Elizabeth Torgerson-Lamark RIT Production Services Umbra
Graphic Design	Sarah Ingerick Elizabeth Stegner
Primary Author	Josh Owen
Contributing Writers	Matt Carr

Industrial Design Professor
Josh Owen

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 or 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 a Professor and the Chair of the Industrial Design program at The Rochester Institute of Technology. His projects are produced by major manufacturers and have won many awards.

Teaching Assistant
Elizabeth Stegner

Elizabeth Stegner holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Studio Art from Willamette University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in Industrial Design from the Rochester Institute of Technology. Elizabeth is interested in public health, universal design, and tacos. Her graduate thesis is centered around the healthcare industry and creating modular, 3D printable eyeglasses.

Project Coordinator
Matt Carr

Matt's passion for design was first sparked when he interned at Douglas Cardinal Architects. He went on to study at Humber School of Industrial Design, where he received an 'All-Canadian Academic' award for scholastic and varsity achievements. An integral part of the Umbra design team since 2001, Matt has contributed countless designs to their product line. His work has been featured multiple times in The New York Times, The Daily Telegraph, Surface Magazine, I.D Magazine, Met Home, Monocle, and Living Etc. Matt is compelled to create product that balances business and imagination. Subtle details, an appreciation for imperfection, and the reinvention of traditional objects are distinguishing features of his designs. As VP of Design, Matt oversees a global design department headquartered in Toronto.

Project Coordinator
Tracy Wong

With a Bachelor of Business Administration from York University's Schulich School of Business, and a Bachelor of Industrial Design from Humber College, Tracy has her heart in design and her mind on business. For Tracy, joy and inspiration can be found in everything around her, from simple everyday objects to intricate feats of nature, to towering architectural wonders. She sees design as a powerful and far-reaching force that influences us as we work, play, and rest.


umbra


umbra


Brian Cusack
metaproject 07


umbr


rau

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:

The remarkable team at Umbra, especially Matt Carr, Mingus New, and Tracy Wong, Laura Carwardine, and Jennifer Pau.

Dr. Jeremy Haefner, Provost, RIT

Lorraine Justice, Dean, College of Imaging Arts & Sciences

Peter Byrne, Administrative Chair, School of Design

Roger Remington, Massimo and Lella Vignelli Distinguished Professor of Design

Josh Owen, Chair, Industrial Design

Massimo and Lella Vignelli for the enduring gift of their guiding principals.

Elizabeth Stegner for sharing wisdom well beyond her years within the classroom and beyond.

Professor Bruce Meader for his graphic design oversight.

Sarah Ingerick for her many contributions to the design of the Metaproject 07 book and for her enthusiasm for the context of this project.

Craig Smith, for championing the RIT ID cause.

RIT Computer Science alumni James Curtis and Jay Sullivan for maintaining the Metaproject website and the Metaproject mobile site with graphic design oversight from Professor Bridget Sheehan.

All of the Industrial Design faculty, staff and professionals who teach our ID students and prepare them for the rigors of this project.

Vignelli Center for Design Studies Archivist, Jennifer Whitlock for sharing the exemplars from our collections with the students.

Rick Auburn, Industrial Design Shop Technician for his tireless dedication to our students.

Elizabeth Torgerson-Lamark and her team at RIT Production Services.

The RIT Interpreters, especially the always enthusiastic and thoughtful Jonathan Hopkins who has been involved in all 7 Metaprojects.

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

Our friends in industry who assisted with prototyping our projects

And of course all of our friends and families.