

S.F. at International Contemporary Furniture Fair

FURNITURE

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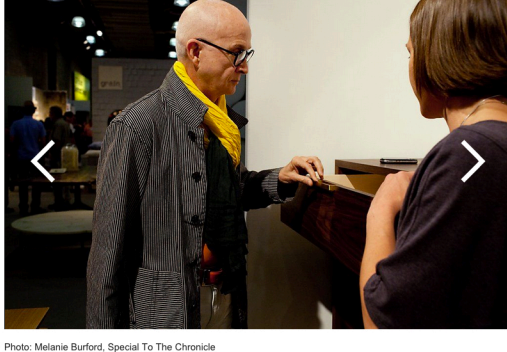
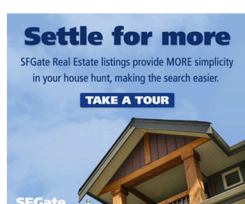


Photo: Melanie Burford, Special To The Chronicle

San Francisco designer Orlando Diaz Azcuy, left, studies hand crafted furniture with Alice Tacheny from San Rafael at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair at the Javits Center in Manhattan, New York on May 20, 2012.



Someone had the brilliant idea to ring up Orlando Diaz-Azcuy and inquire whether he was going to the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, which took place recently in New York City.

The timing was right. San Francisco's overachieving landscape, residential and commercial architect and interior, furniture and textile designer would be perfect to review a trade show where more than half of the attendees are interior designers and architects. Such

luck that Diaz-Azcuy, whose qualifications and personal style on the floor of the huge **Javits Center** would be instantly recognized, said yes. (It was no small convenience that he has an apartment and office across from United Nations Plaza.)

ICFF is top tier, competing only with the **Salone Internazionale del Mobile** in Milan in April; many exhibitors show at both. Turnout is serious; this year, more than 500 exhibitors were analyzed by over 26,000 interior designers and architects, retailers, store design experts and manufacturers. What we recognize as a popular look now could have sprouted from the floor of ICFF three or more years ago.

For a consumer, the most efficient trail to owning a breakthrough design from the show is to go to the maker's website and either purchase direct or get the names of retailers who will carry the product. It can take weeks, so keep an eye on the site.

But the feedback from a big-name designer like Diaz-Azcuy can help channel a design into the marketplace much sooner. Diaz-Azcuy assesses a product by whether it breaks the mold, is well made and (if it's seating) is comfortable.

We tagged along as he dropped by the Bay Area's nine exhibitors, starting with **Council of San Francisco** (councildesign.com), which earned the ICFF Editors Award for its outdoor furniture collection, Plank, designed by **Eric Pfeiffer**. The design is structured around a frame of white powder-coated steel with weather-treated pine slats. The lounge hints of the Adirondacks but makes the leap to a modern profile thanks to its deep, low-slung seat. Pricing is not yet announced. Diaz-Azcuy declared Plank to be "a beautiful design, brilliantly executed."

Sancal (www.sancal.com), a Spanish company whose North American headquarters are in San Francisco, showed several sofas and tables. Copla, a sofa designed by **Rafa Garcia**, caught the attention of Diaz-Azcuy, who said its leg detail made it a handsome piece. Copla will list for \$3,839.

'Innovative'

Seclay Precision Stone Inlays (seclay.com) in San Mateo showed examples of stone and metal inlays for furnishings, woodwork and border accents to marble floors. The company can sell the materials or produce the finished product themselves. Diaz-Azcuy said the product was innovative. "It's good for designers and architects to know about," he said.

Alice Tacheny (alacetachenydesign.com) launched a full line of handmade furniture at ICFF. Based in San Rafael, Tacheny describes her work as "modern craft that lasts a lifetime." Diaz-Azcuy noted that her hardware and overall craftsmanship are excellent. Prices are \$1,400 to \$11,000.



Photo: Melanie Burford, Special To The Chronicle

San Francisco designer Orlando Diaz Azcuy, far left, with Alice Tacheny, center, from Alice Tacheny Design from San Rafael at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair at the Javits Center in Manhattan, New York on May 20, 2012.

The architect-designer was enthralled with two San Francisco lighting designers he tagged "best in show": Pablo Designs and **Peter Stathis & Virtual Studio**.

Pablo Designs (pablodesigns.com) named its collection an emphatic Fall 2012. Cielo was shown in a group suspended from the heavens; it's a new flat-panel LED light source that gives brilliant yet soft illumination. Clamp, by Dana Cannam for Pablo, was shown in an alternative design, Clamp FS (freestanding), which provides unlimited adjustable illumination to any surface. LIM, a high-performance LED, is so minimal, so chic in high-polish colors, that it has flown off the shelves. A new 360 feature makes the model limitless. Designs range from \$190 to \$800. "I see nothing but first-rate creativity and quality at Pablo," said Diaz-Azcuy.

Peter Stathis & Virtual Studio (peterstathis.com) announced a collaboration with the Trapeze LED, which the studio designed for Joby last year. It's now under the umbrella Light & Contrast, formed with **Peter Kahane**, founder of Ameico. Independent of this, Stathis designed Symtra, a lamp for **Humanscale** (humanscale.com) to which we detoured since they are New York based. Diaz-Azcuy was blown away: "This lamp (Symtra) provides the most friendly high-tech energy at the fair. It's a one-dimensional expression of a traditional lamp using the highest LED technology. It brings to the user a design that is very human and pleasant. ... I hope they don't lose anything in the integrity of the prototype."

'Clever'

Upwell (upwelldesign.com), Justin Porcano's multidisciplinary studio in San Francisco, introduced Hook and Envelope, light-switch covers that add practical functions such as key and mail storage. "Clever," said our critic.

Outdoor furniture maker Henry Hall Designs (henryhalldesigns.com) of San Francisco brought out the Serene collection designed by Italy's Unopoiu. It's made of teak and the synthetic weave Waprolace. Two of the pieces are stackable: The lounge chair will retail at approximately \$812, and an adjustable six-position chaise at \$1,685. Our authority liked these pieces very much and said they were "well-priced."

Oakland's Urbio (myurbio.com) brought its lightweight, polypropylene invention, My Urbio, a magnetic system that can be used to create a vertical garden or function as a space saver in a work space. The pieces are sold individually but a setup of six wall plates and six pots costs \$175.

Familiar glass

SkLO (sklostudio.com) of Healdsburg, a creative firm with its roots in the glass masters of the Czech Republic, was turning out new designs at the glass factories while we were standing at their booth. Pavel Hanousek, **Karen Gilbert** and **Paul Pavlak** are the team. Prices start at \$115. "Oh, I know these!" the tastemaker said about SkLO's beautiful Float vase (Float also appears in a lamp design). "I used them all over my Ram's Gate Winery project."

Post-ICFF, Diaz-Azcuy, San Francisco's Cuba-born owner of a thriving international design business, offered these final words: "The entire show was good and varied, and Northern California was well represented. I encourage designers and manufacturers to participate in the future."

Nancy Frick Battaglia is a freelancer in New York City. E-mail: home@schronicle.com