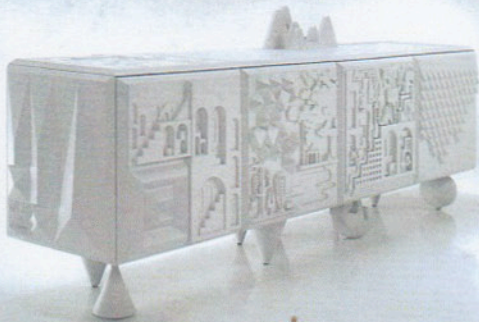




# Once Upon a Chair

*Design Beyond the Icon*



*Once Upon a Chair* is an international, up-to-the minute, survey of contemporary furniture design. The book captures the *zeitgeist* of this rigorous industry by examining current trends and presenting pioneering examples by the world's most influential designers and emerging talents. The collected works indicate a recognisable shift towards progressive and responsible designs that make a social impact, and towards the revival of artisanal craft. It further explores how designers are focusing more on process-driven and storytelling concepts, as well as how they are continuing to flirt with material and technological experimentation.

Max Lamb hails from Cornwall. The influence of this accident of birth on the character of Lamb's furniture and product design cannot be underestimated. Its elemental nature is a result of the designer's fascination with, and domination of, natural materials – carving, moulding, smelting, chiselling – and his elaboration of a technical means to do so. The designer brings together industrial production and hand craftsmanship whether he is working with quarried stone, molten metal cast in sand – or potato foam.

Lamb graduated from Northumbria University in 2003 with a degree in Three-Dimensional Design. While studying for his Master's degree (Design Products) at the Royal College of Art, he continued a long-standing project that began with his shaving a stool out of a solid block of polystyrene and fortifying the resulting seat with polyurethane rubber. This is when Lamb began to gel his particular process-driven approach to design through an ongoing project he has dubbed *Exercises in Seating*, which features material and production experiments and includes stools in pewter, copper, laser-sintered polyamide, and armchairs in both polystyrene and 29-gauge stainless steel sheet folded along exaggerated perforations.

After graduating in 2006, Lamb debuted his *Poly Chair*, along with a series of roughly rendered tables, stools, dining and armchairs. He also began developing limited-edition furniture for Tom Dixon, including the CU29 electroformed-copper armchair, the *Silver Slab* dining table and the extruded plastic *Fresh Fat Micro-Factory* chair.

The designer struck out on his own in 2007, fabricating the *Hexagonal Pewter* stool by pouring hot, liquid pewter into incisions made with a small

knife into the briny dark sands of the Cornish seashore. The designer then concocted a lounge chair from the froth generated by potato starch extruded into thick, sticky noodles, and moulded. Its ingredients – perhaps a more fitting term than materials – fated the *Starch Chair* for use outdoors where it may be left to compost as summer cools into fall.

Lamb's deep interest in materials and process means that he researches techniques both sophisticated and rudimentary. Travelling to areas rich in craft (China, Nigeria, India), the Brit feeds his passion to unite local, skill-based industry with emerging high-tech processes. Lamb has cleaved a small series of seating from blocks of quarried lime and sandstone and expanded polystyrene (subsequently cast in bronze or sheathed in rubber). He has mounted 18 chunks of concrete onto a wood-turning lathe, and turned them by hand to create stools. The effect ranges from crude and sweetly cartoonish to classical. Clearly, this designer is as much lion as he is lamb.



Sheet Steel Table (2008)

[www.maxlamb.org](http://www.maxlamb.org)

2009  
1 **Flat Iron Chair**  
Material: Laser-cut 3mm mild steel, zinc plated with trivalent passivate

2007/08/09 - ongoing  
2 **Scrap Poly Chair**  
Material: Low density expanded polystyrene (EPS), high density polyurethane rubber coating

