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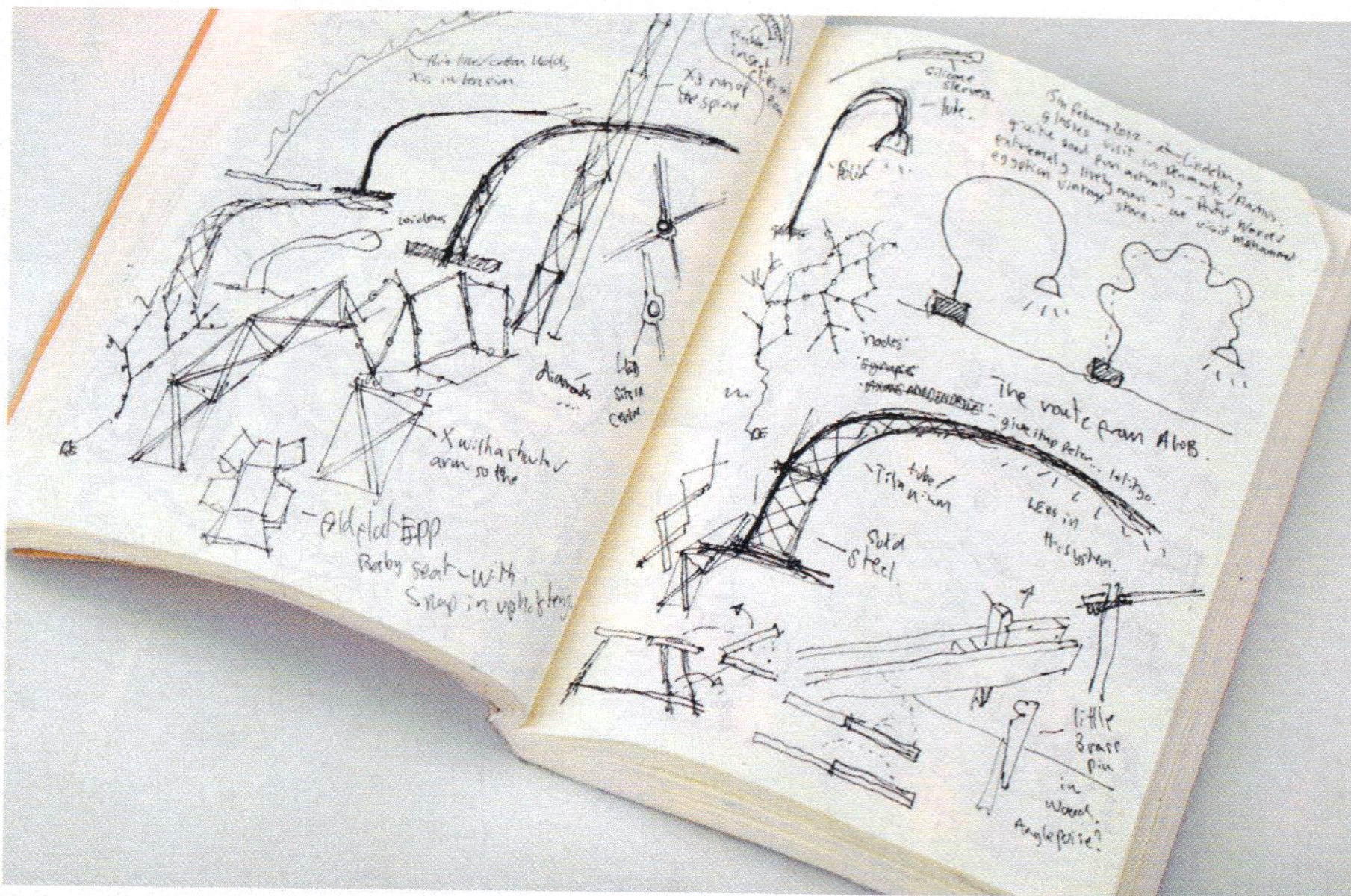
'Konstellation' lighting,
by Lindberg and Peter Marigold

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CLEAR VIEW

Lindberg's AIR Titanium glasses, with the company's trademark ball-and-hinge joint

Below, Marigold's sketches for 'Konstellation'



Henrik Lindberg is what you'd expect of a CEO of a successful Danish design company. He is straight-talking and sociable, but no pushover. Ask him what the company's annual turnover is and he answers with a twinkle, 'It's OK.' He is dressed in varying shades of grey, including a soft Tom Ford scarf – from which he has removed the label.

Lindberg is attracted to a subtle kind of quality: his shoes are unbranded Prada, his watch is by Hublot. And the glasses? His own brand, of course. Why would he choose anything other than the AIR Titanium frames that the Lindberg company, established in 1984 by his father Poul-Jørn, has spent years finessing? The frame-free lenses suspended onto wire-thin arms have sucked up every design award going.

Lindberg is not just a family company, but also a totally flat business model. 'We don't outsource,' says Lindberg. 'And we don't make anything for other brands.' The company has seven in-house designers and two more in a Shanghai office, opened ten years ago. Retail design, exhibitions, graphics – it all happens in Aarhus, in a century-old former lathe factory. But when

Wallpaper* asked Lindberg if the company would work with a designer of our choosing for Handmade, he threw open his doors. 'I thought it would be interesting to see how someone from the outside interpreted what we do.'

British designer Peter Marigold was an obvious choice. 'I like small components that form larger structures,' says Marigold, who is known for his 'SUM' shelves for SCP (irregularly shaped boxes that can be grouped into any formation), his 'Tilt' series (where one crazily slanting shelf can be positioned on another) and the 'Ellipse' table (which can be expanded by the addition of extra pieces). What eventually emerged from Marigold's collaboration with Lindberg was a titanium spider's web called 'Konstellation', twinkling with tiny LEDs that

'If someone doesn't explain how clever the glasses are, you just think, "Oh, glasses"'

seemed to have been artlessly spun around the staircase at Palazzo Brioni in Milan during the Handmade exhibition. Another piece is a wobbly, multicoloured circle (the metal has been anodised as it is for the fashion eyewear collections) also punctuated with points of light.

Lindberg's USP is the lightness and strength of its eyewear, which is made from titanium, a metal with a tremendous tolerance, and the fact that it has eschewed the usual hinge, which rotates around tiny optical screws that inevitably fall out. Instead, Lindberg has perfected its own ball-and-hinge joint which, devoid of screws and soldering, is unlikely to fail. 'The company HQ,' says Marigold, 'is just like the product. When you first go there, there's nothing obviously magical going on. It looks like a quiet workplace. It's like the glasses. If someone doesn't explain to you how they work and how clever they are, you just think, "Oh, glasses".' 'Konstellation', in which 3.3 volts of electricity is passed along each joining arm, is just as self-effacing.

'On my first visit to Lindberg, I didn't know what I was looking at or for,' says Marigold. 'But at the end of the second day I spent two hours on the laser-cutting machine and it fell into place.' Marigold alighted on some of the company's core concerns: lightness, repetition, systems and dry fittings, and illumination, which is so important to the display and subsequently the sales of the end product. Titanium, if coated, could safely conduct current from one LED to the next. Thus one arm, bearing a decidedly Lindberg-like, screw-free fixing containing the LED, could simply be attached to the next, to create a two- or three-dimensional structure.

'I love how each design element relates directly to our production and values,' says Lindberg. 'Yet Peter has created something that has nothing to do with the optical world. I see it as a building system, small parts that can be endlessly added on. It's a bit like Lego. You could start with a small box and create something, and then buy another, and then another.'

Should 'Konstellation' be commercialised, however, a few problems would need to be resolved. Titanium isn't in itself expensive, but the machinery used to work it is. And it oxidises almost as soon as it's cut. 'We had to silver the contact points in the end,' says Marigold. 'So we might look into using brass, instead. Which, ironically, would mean losing one of the most important elements associated with Lindberg.'

Another Lindberg quality, however, proved very present as the Handmade exhibition in Milan loomed nearer. The company works with the very highest technology but equally relies heavily on handwork and craft skills. While all the parts are created in Aarhus, they are sent to the company's factory in the Philippines for hand-polishing. The company has just opened its fourth building there. 'It takes six months to train a polisher,' says Lindberg. 'It's skilled work and the Filipinos are very skilled people.'

'I couldn't help thinking about that combination of hi-tech and handcrafted work at the end,' says Marigold. 'We had to work really fast and, in spite of using a lot of technology to get things right, it ended up with me and my mum – who's 70 and a great maker and teacher – sitting at my kitchen table with piles of food, ironing out the glitches to get the pieces up to par. Handmade? Too right it was.' ★
lindberg.com, www.petermarigold.com

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BRIGHT IDEA

This page, Peter Marigold created his light installation out of titanium which is capable of conducting electricity from one LED to the next

Opposite, Marigold's 'Konstellation' was showcased on the staircase at Palazzo Brioni during the Handmade exhibition in Milan in April

