

# art of erand

## Glimpses of Clarity

The Work of George Triggs

**Antony Gormley**

One & Other Project

**Jeff Koons**

Popeye Series



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# Design of England: Breaking Down Barriers



Britain is a hotspot for internationally recognised design talent. Viv Lawes meets two of the rising stars, Peter Marigold and Raw-Edges, who share a studio space in north London.

**B**ehind an unprepossessing grey gate just around the corner from Stoke Newington railway station, North London, a group of thirty-somethings is quietly working on cutting-edge products that are drawing accolades in the international world of design.

Their frills-free collective space is known as OKAY Studio, but all are independent designer-makers who graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2006. Most were on Ron Arad's Design Products (Platform Ten) course, which he headed for twelve years until his shock resignation at the end of June.

Two of the makers are Peter Marigold and Raw-Edges, the latter a duo consisting of married couple Yael Mer and Shay Alkalay. This year has been a big one for both businesses: in the spring they were

invited by luxury brand Fendi to work onsite at the Craft Punk space at the Milan Furniture Fair; and soon afterwards they were named Designers of the Future at Design Miami/Basel and commissioned to create an installation at the show using plaster and mirror. The fact that only four were selected for this award indicates the level of prestige it bestows on its recipients – it is one of the most high profile fairs in the business, riding on the back of top contemporary art fair Art Basel.

*Peter Marigold*

This thirty-four year-old British furniture designer has experienced both sides of the art and design world, having originally studied sculpture at Central St Martin's, London. He is now gaining an enviable reputation for his ingeniously constructed, DIY-

influenced shelving and furniture designs, which are inspired by the geometric forms found in nature, then subverted and made to appear random with irregular, angular patterns.

His love of improvisation and mechanics goes back to childhood. "I always wanted to be a product designer," he says. "The nickname my parents gave me when I was a kid was 'Can I Have It When It's Empty' because I wanted to keep all dispensers and containers with clever mechanisms." His habit of constantly looking down to find interesting things on the ground made his parents fear that he had a problem with his neck and they sought medical help. "I was called 'Frankenstein' at school because of the habit," he quips.

This early obsession with design never wavered, but he was persuaded by his art foundation tutor to pursue the fine art route. He found his experience at Central St Martin's frustrating. "You don't need a degree to be an artist - there's such a preoccupation with 'making art' at art school that in the end I found it boring." After graduation he spent ten years working as a theatre and events scenographer, building upon his skills as a sculptor and nurturing his love of construction, before heading off to the RCA.

The hands-off approach of Ron Arad, Head of Design at the college, invested the course with the freedom to experiment. Peter felt able to play with "forms, materials and colour, just like sculptors used to" and relished the fact that designers could communicate ideas with their work in a way that contrasted with the over-conceptualised aloofness he had experienced in the fine art world.

He has never looked back. A bursary funded his graduate show at London's Design Museum and a year later, in 2007, he showed his wedge-shaped *Make/Shift* shelving units at the *Great Brits: Ingenious Therapies* exhibition at the Milan Furniture Fair. The organisers were the British Council and Design Museum in conjunction with fashion designer Paul Smith. The shelves were an instant hit and are still in production, available in plywood and MDF by direct order or in ARPRO (expanded polypropylene) from retailers.

It was also the start of a fruitful working relationship with Paul Smith, who has since asked him to design installations for both his London and Milan showrooms. His work has been taken up by both galleries and manufacturers: he is one of the stable of designers at the premier Gallery Libby Sellers, which sells several of his series, including

the *Yield* screen of 2008 (edition of 10), which was constructed of thinly sliced lengths of bay wood or the tropical hardwood ramin, fixed to overlap in the order they were cut to reveal the changing growth patterns of the individual tree.

On the more commercial side, he has recently entered into an agreement with SCP - the design aficionados' favourite East London manufacturer and retailer - to make his solid cherry *Sum* shelves, which it will retail in sets of three. These are a variation on his earlier *Split Boxes* series, the principle of which was that the sum total of the internal angles of a quadrilateral is always 360 degrees. A single piece of wood is split into four pieces, constructed into an irregular box and fixed to the wall; more can be added ad infinitum. The fact that buyers of the SCP flatpack version will have to use their DIY skills to assemble them fits very nicely with Peter's celebration of the haphazard.

opposite: Peter Marigold -  
Palindrome

below: Yield screen, Peter Marigold.  
2008. Courtesy Gallery Libby Sellers.  
Photography by Gideon Hart

