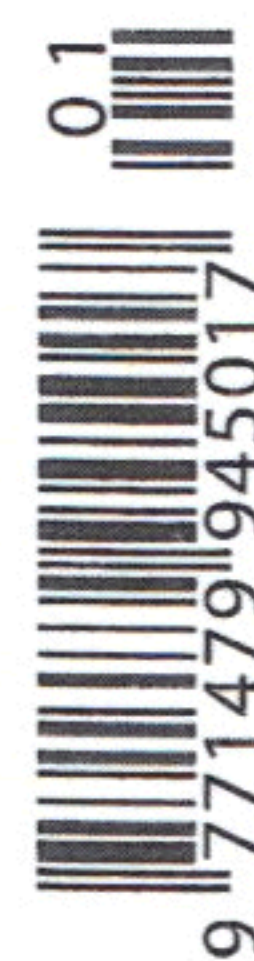


ISSUE 043 JANUARY 2007 £4.50

# Room

MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR



London's new wave of interaction designers

## Digital poets



Tokyo's design week  
A day at the Calatrava circus  
Zaha's first UK building

Plus work by Constantin Boym, Toyo Ito, FAT and Ineke Hans



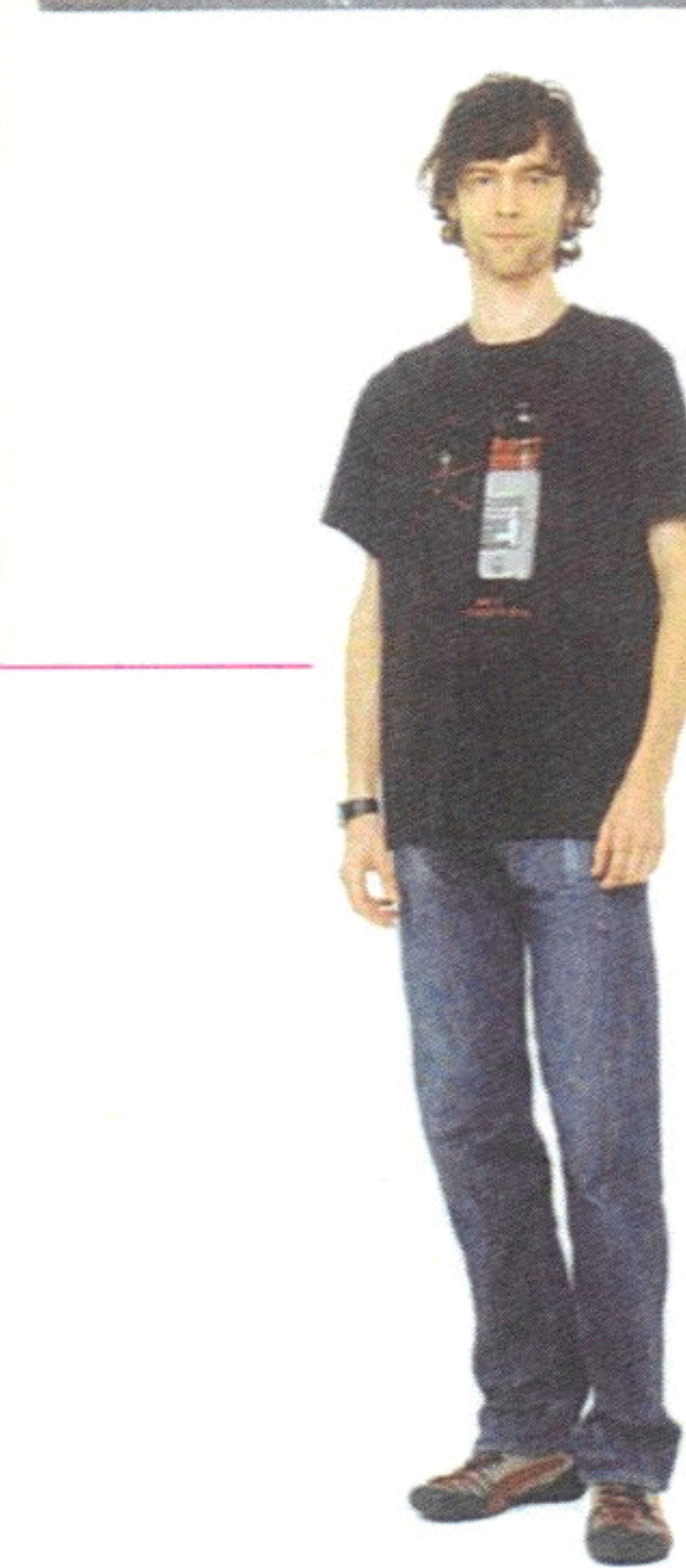
Technology, which focus on the technology itself, the RCA could be said to have produced a new breed of designer looking at the cultural implications of technology. As the name suggests, its Designing Interactions course has a social dimension. "The RCA has made a big impact on interaction design by contributing a more cultural take on what's going on in technical labs around the world," says Dunne. "Interaction design is an approach – a process of designing relationships rather than things. It emerged from designing for electronic systems, but that thinking can be applied to all sorts of areas."

The current dominance of the RCA in this area has put London in a crucial position. "London is a centre for this kind of design; everything looks provincial next to it," says Régine Debatty, who runs interaction design blog We Make Money Not Art. "People from other schools really look up to the RCA, I'm a big fan of their agenda," she adds. "There's lots of stuff happening in Tokyo and Berlin, but it's

either happening on the edge of academia as prototypes at conferences, or on the edges of media art that doesn't really connect with design," says Dunne.

The potential of electronic technology to transform objects or spaces, or the way people interact with them, has meant that increasing numbers of established designers now have ambitions to make their work interactive, and they are turning to specialists such as **Moritz Waldemeyer** for help. As well as producing his own design work, he acts as a kind of geek for hire. Originally trained as an engineer, Waldemeyer collaborated with Yves Béhar and Ron Arad in the design of their interactive Swarovski chandeliers. More recently he devised a robotic dress for fashion designer Hussein Chalayan.

As interaction design proliferates, there is also scepticism about some of the work being produced. "A few of these projects come from [a perspective of] 'here's a technology, so let's see what we can do with it' – rather than having



**02** Moritz Waldemeyer, 32, is more difficult to categorise than the average electronics engineer. "I cover art, design and engineering, and enjoy combining them all," he says.

After studying engineering at King's College in London, Waldemeyer developed prototypes for Philips as a research engineer. In 2003 he began tutoring on the RCA Design Products course, leading to collaborations with Ron Arad, including the

Lolita chandelier (**02**) for Swarovski. Developed in 2004, it featured LEDs encased within cylindrical stacks of Swarovski crystal, allowing mobile phone text messages to cascade down the chandelier. Waldemeyer also worked closely with Zaha Hadid on Z Island (**04**), the kitchen she designed for Corian at this year's Milan furniture fair. Touch-sensitive controls were embedded in the Corian, allowing users to adjust the lighting, sounds and smells of the kitchen directly from its surface.

One of the most striking aspects of

Waldemeyer's work is his ability to seamlessly incorporate electronics into familiar objects. For fashion designer Hussein Chalayan's innovative Spring/Summer 2007 collection (**01**), Waldemeyer introduced hidden motors that pulled threads running through the fabric. The outfits warped themselves into shapes from different eras as the models posed on the catwalk.

Pong (**03**) and Roulette, launched at Rabih Hage Gallery this September, are the first products Waldemeyer has designed on his own. These interactive gaming tables also feature embedded touch sensors and LEDs in Corian surfaces.

"I can definitely see a trend towards products that are more human – putting the user first and the technology second", Waldemeyer says. "In the last decade, something new came out and it had to be used, a lot of the time more for technology's sake than because of a real need. In the future you'll see more intuitive products. That's the next frontier."

[www.waldemeyer.com](http://www.waldemeyer.com)

