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COOL ON COLOGNE

photographer Cornelis Goldhardt

Inspiration and innovation weren't exactly the order of the day at the Cologne Furniture Fair 1997. With only a few companies coming up with the goods, **Ginger Crosby** had to work hard to find this year's winners

the colours

If you're looking for relief from chocolate brown, then the Cologne fair wouldn't have been the place for you. Brown abounded on most major Italian stands with B&B, Maxolta and Cappellini all pushing what can best be described as bitter chocolate. With several woods moving towards ebony in tone, wenge wood is set to be many companies' veneer of choice for the coming season. Most pieces on show were offset by stainless steel hardware, or paired with white to offer maximum contrast. Other hues to keep in mind are oranges, greys and high-gloss whites.

the players

If anyone was a player at Cologne this year, it was lighting designer Ingo Maurer with his installation at the Deutzer Brücke, where he launched his spiky new task light dubbed 'Mozzito'. While Ligne Roset took a bold step in lighting by introducing rubber as a material for shades and reflectors for a group of wall-mounted and freestanding lamps, Artemide unveiled the hottest new product in the form of the Metamorfosi light system that offers 12 million different colour settings via a tiny, programmable computer control panel – interested buyers should be prepared to shell out at least £3,000 for the most basic model. On the furniture front, the Scandinavians led the pack, with Swedish design co-operative Swecode showing organic drawer units from Box, and Bjorn Dahlstrom's curved bench for CBI. But if we had to walk away with two items, our pick would be Cous's two seater version of the Globe chair and Fritz Hansen's PK O chair, designed in the 50s by Poul Kjaerholm.

PERFECT PRODUCTS: Cologne accompaniments. *Anti-clockwise, from left, two-seater globe sofa by Cous. 'PK O' chair by Fritz Hansen. Rubber wall light sconce by Ligne Roset. Wenge and stainless steel stools by Maxolta. Shirt drawer by Box*

the talent



Cologne wasn't bursting with new talent, but after three days of scouting around the fair, we met the young and gifted Eric Degenhardt, whose mesh-metal carpet and oversized ottoman-cum-daybed were two of the most inspired products on show. A trained architect who tired of working for Germany's big firms, Degenhardt developed his current range of products while 'on a retreat to Britain'. Degenhardt originally wanted to study at the Royal College of Art, but couldn't swing a grant from the German government. 'I decided that I just had to do it – and my background in architecture has obviously helped,' he explains. Currently working on a commission-only basis, Degenhardt is hoping to expand his range. In the meantime, his 'Shift It' table is a must have for all bedsides.

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