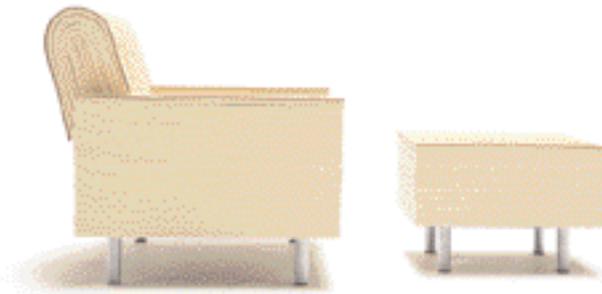
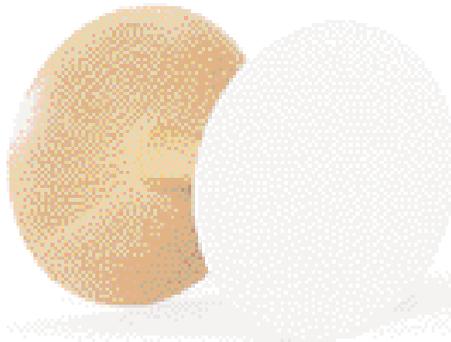


Keilhauer: new (and not so new) at NeoCon



Clockwise from top left: **Gazelle** chairs by Jonathan Crinion; **Felt chair and ottoman** by Brent Cordner; **Turn** tables by Patty Johnson; and **Fossa** from the Laughton Sofa Series, by Scot Laughton.



by Pamela Young

In a Merchandise Mart showroom newly redesigned by Yabu Pushelberg, Keilhauer made a particularly strong showing at this year's NeoCon. The Toronto-based manufacturer presented the unconventional and the reassuringly familiar side by side, in a harmonious mix that included new products, a reintroduced classic, and a versatile design previously available only in a limited run.

Keilhauer's new offerings were the Laughton Sofa Series, designed by Scot Laughton, and the Felt chair and ottoman, by newcomer Brent Cordner. (Fossa, shown above, is one of four lines in the serenely monumental Laughton series; two others are shown on p. 82 of this issue.)

Cordner's inaugural NeoCon was a stellar event: Felt, his first design to enter production, received a Best of NeoCon Innovation Award. Quite a turnaround for a concept that he assumed had been filed away and forgotten. "A couple of years ago I interviewed for a job at Keilhauer," he says. At the time, he was an architecture student at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, and the school's dean had recommended him to the manufacturer as a young designer with an aptitude for furniture. "I didn't get the job," says Cordner, "but they liked my portfolio and wanted to keep it on file. When [company president] Mike Keilhauer called me back last year and said they wanted to produce my chair, I was completely surprised."

Felt looked like nothing else at NeoCon. Fabricated over a steel structure, Cordner's chair has thick layers of felt in place of conventional upholstery. A covering of naturally finished leather wraps over the folded felt layers of

the back and tops off the stacked felt layers that form the seat and armrests. Mike Keilhauer appreciated the environmental advantages of this unorthodox construction: all components are natural or biodegradable, and the assembly requires no glues or plastics. "We liked the product and there was a real sense that the market timing was correct, and that's why we moved forward with it, when we did," he says. (His family's company has made a concerted effort in recent years to adopt environmentally responsible practices. Keilhauer now recycles 70% of the solid waste it generates, and uses maple from sustainable forests for its hardwood frames.)

This year Keilhauer also resurrected Gazelle, the indoor/outdoor cafe chair by Jonathan Crinion that is a bona fide Canadian design icon. Introduced in 1988, Gazelle went out of production 12 years later when its designer withdrew the license after the original manufacturer failed to pay out royalties. Along with the original, all-metal Gazelle, a version of the chair with slatted wood inserts is now available.

The other addition to the Keilhauer lineup is Patty Johnson's all-wood Turn, an occasional table that doubles as a stool. The design, previously produced by another manufacturer in a limited run of 100, comes in maple, walnut or cherry. Top halves can be painted in one of five colours; alternatively, the whole table can be left in its natural wood finish. If the contract market takes to wood as strongly as this year's NeoCon exhibitors did, it will be Turn's turn to reach a much wider audience. **A**

For sources see page 138.