

From a scooty to a wine holder, a new crop of lifestyle designers is turning everyday objects into works of art



Wine rack, book rack and dokra spoons from the collection of Mukul Goyal



Take your eyes off Bipasha, for it's her scooter we're talking about. With its fuel tank beneath the handles, the Kinetic SYM Flyte allows more storage space under the seat.

by **Haimanti Mukherjee**

Utility art the new big thing

WHEN designer Mukul Goyal was thinking about making the next wine rack for his eponymous brand, he was a little high on wine and had two people in completely different worlds on his mind. Now, if you have had, like yours truly, the experience of your head swimming after a glass or two and your guard a little down, you would know that even in good company, you are in a world of your own. And if you look at the wine rack that Goyal eventually made (in the pic above), you would understand why the two people at two ends of the rack are pulling it in opposing directions. They are happy and high and in their own worlds, oblivious to each other.

That's just one instance of how a designer can turn an everyday object into a work of art that not just suits your mood but also perks up a corner of your living or dining room. Product design or industrial design may not be talked about on the same wavelength as fashion or interiors, yet it has been a part of our everyday lives more than we actually realise.

In its fifth year, the National Institute of Design (NID, Ahmedabad) awarded the Design Brilliance Awards to a chosen few in the industrial design category in the city recently. From a hospital bed to a cell phone to a scooter and decorative showpieces for the living room, the designs reflected style, functionality, aesthetics and brilliance.

The Indian market is abuzz with competition and the winning formula for various companies is to produce a design that is not just high on functionality but also has a price that doesn't scare people away. That's the only way to remain alive on shop racks for the longest period of time. No wonder, even big players in the market are employing innovative strategies to win customers through attractive designs of their products. In such a scenario, the role of a product designer assumes increased importance.

Ajinkya Firodia, vice-president, marketing and sales of Kinetic, praises his design team while explaining his award-winning design of the Kinetic SYM Flyte model. "After a lot of thinking about how to add value, we came up with a design where the rider, a college-going girl in this case, doesn't

even have to step down from the scooter while refueling the tank." The fuel tank is beneath the handles and not beneath the seat, which means the rider now has more space under the seat to store things. A push by femme fatale Bipasha Basu and the company had a winner at hand.

Such smart design inputs extend to a wide range of products like sunglasses, lamps which can be made to look like a jelly fish and even conventional hospital beds that can be re-designed to make them more comfortable for patients.

Pune-based Onio Designs, in collaboration with Godrej, has come up with a unique and comfortable bed that can

replace the usually clunky metallic contraptions at most hospitals in the country, or the super-costly imported motorised beds at expensive hospital suites.

"Art is for everyone. It's not the privilege of a few," says Bangalore-based Abhijit Bansod, whose exquisite Heritage range by Titan is as attractive as a set of speakers designed like a set of tabla, and named the 'Tansen' speakers. You do not need an expensive painting to adorn your walls and lend you the much-sought-after snob value or to define you as a man of taste. The spoon you use, the lights or lamp shades in your home, the dinner set, the sofa, the bed and even bathroom accessories can be

turned into an *objet d'art*.

Bansod travelled to all corners of the country, from temples to the Taj to Jantar Mantar to understand Raja Jai Singh's ingenuity before sitting down to design the Heritage collection. "I was representing 500 years of India's rich heritage on a time piece to remind people of the past," he says. History apart, the romantic-at-heart NID graduate has also designed a love seat called 'twogether' and a 'cyclub' or a community exercise machine that can have five people exercising together on the same machine facing each other! Who said the best gossip emerged out of the beauty salons?

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Gurgaon-based designer Mukul Goyal draws his inspiration from the fluidity of the human form



This larger-than-life jellyfish is actually a lamp by product designer Neil Foley



The old love seat takes on a new meaning in this sofa christened 'twogether' by Abhijit Bansod