

TOOLS AT SCHOOLS

Designed for Kids by Kids



NEW YORK, NY – Understanding design can bring everyday objects to life and give children a new view of the world. Design can turn on the light in a child's mind and suddenly routine school lessons seem relevant in the real world. The design process can teach children how to create, how to question the obvious, how to communicate their ideas, and how things are actually made. Design can be a window for our children to cultivate the practical skills they need to succeed in an ever more competitive world.

So why isn't design part of the educational process? Why isn't it integrated into our math, science, writing and art classes? Why doesn't design serve as a bridge between educational disciplines; a bridge to unite the learning silos, to integrate thinking and to develop practical skills? Tools at Schools is one simple example of how this might be possible.

Tools at Schools is a partnership between American furniture manufacturer Bernhardt Design, creative consultancy Aruliden, and The School at Columbia University, one of the most diverse independent schools in the nation. The project was created to introduce design into the school's eighth grade curriculum. Forty-four students were asked to create the classroom of the future using their daily school environment as a launching pad for their ideas. They were asked to evaluate the items they interact with most frequently and envision better and more efficient solutions.

The students immersed themselves in the entire design process, from research and concept, to hand-sketching, 3D drawing and the creation of scale models. They learned to effectively communicate and sell their ideas both verbally and in writing. There was a simultaneous mixing of art, statistics and language during the selection of colors, materials, product names and graphics. And, in the end, the students experienced the magic of design, when their ideas were turned into production drawings and came to life on the factory floor.

What started as a simple effort to get involved in the community grew into a much larger realization that the design process can make an important difference in the education of our children. Their success is not only in their concepts, but in the passion and awareness each student gained in the journey. The result is a collaborative vision of the future classroom – designed for kids by kids.

Tools at Schools will debut at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York on May 14, 2011. The Museum of Arts and Design in New York will present an exhibition of the project beginning in October, 2011.

Please join us during the ICFF and meet the students, see their designs, hear their stories and experience their process first-hand. Warning: you will be inspired.

THE PARTICIPANTS

"I used to think that design was really exotic and abstract. Before Tools at Schools the first thing I would think of when I heard the word 'design' was fashion, things that Lady GaGa would wear. It amazes me to think back and see how off I was. I have opened my eyes to see that everything around me is designed: the computer I work with, the jewelry I wear and even the pencil I use."

Eighth Grade Student - The School at Columbia University

"Witnessing firsthand how the students did their research and provided solutions to every problem they identified, followed by big ideas that were articulated better than many adults, was in a word: amazing. I am hopeful that other schools can and should do this in their own backyard as it is a process that provides practical learning tools and training for real life."

Rinat Aruh - Co-founder, Aruliden

"Through the Tools at Schools project, I found the fascinating world of design, and its effect on the future. I now view design as a scientific process that creates solutions to everyday challenges. Design isn't only the way something looks and works, but also a perspective on what works most effectively and ergonomically. The project has also created a feeling of 'what's next for the future' in me."

Eighth Grade Student - The School at Columbia University

"We initiated this project because it seemed like a simple idea that made sense. As a business person, it was an opportunity to participate in the educational process, and as a parent, it is an experience I want for my children. The program started before the release of 'Waiting for Superman' or the creation of Students First. However, it seems particularly relevant today, since we are now in the middle of a national discussion on the future of education."

Jerry Helling - President, Bernhardt Design

"I feel like I have spent so much of my time trying to figure out what I would do for the rest of my life. It's not that I didn't think I was good at anything, but I didn't know how to utilize my abilities properly. Once we were introduced to Tools at Schools, I could not find words to describe how I felt. I felt excitement, but also a sense of belonging. I thought to myself this is what I want to do when I grow up."

Eighth Grade Student - The School at Columbia University

"Education in the 21st century is not about giving students a 'how to guide', but finding ways to help them explore new approaches and develop their own individual solutions. The internet has changed the way we live, work and learn. As a result, our society needs new strategies, skills and literacies to solve problems. The Tools at Schools project enabled our students to do just this by teaching them design thinking skills and real world problem solving."

**Don Buckley - Director of Communications Technology,
The School at Columbia University**

"Design intrigues me and it is interesting to see how science, physics, art and math all come together. I have learned that design combines meaningful ideas with science and technology. Now I'm always thinking about what works, and what doesn't work."

Eighth Grade Student - The School at Columbia University

ABOUT ARULIDEN

aruliden is an award-winning brand strategy and product design consultancy based in New York City, founded by Rinat Aruh and Johan Liden in 2006. Bringing over 20 years of collective experience in the fashion, automotive, lifestyle, and beauty industries, they use design to rethink brands. Through their process of *producing*, aruliden has been internationally recognized for their work with brands such as PUMA, Microsoft, Kiehl's, Motorola, and KIKI de Montparnasse amongst others.

Rinat Aruh has led and collaborated on diverse projects from retail environments, mobile communications, automotive launches and consumer packaging to internet start-ups. Before Gap Inc. brought her on as Vice President of Marketing for new brand initiatives; she was the Global Strategy Manager for MINI Lifestyle at BMW Group in Munich. Rinat also worked on the MINI brand during its US launch at BMW of North America, spearheading a number of initiatives that brought MINI to the forefront of the design world. Her fashion experience extends to women's ready to wear label, MaxMara, where she held various positions in the US market.

Johan Liden began his US experience by working for clients such as Birkenstock, Nike, BMW, Nissan, Herman Miller, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft and Toshiba during his tenure at fuseproject. Johan later joined MAC Cosmetics, where he was responsible for developing multiple product lines seen on the market today. He was then recruited by Nike's Converse division, where he shaped the core product line by bringing new design directions as well as introducing new product platforms. Johan's design work continues to be recognized globally through international exhibitions and awards.

ABOUT BERNHARDT DESIGN

Bernhardt Design was founded in 1980 by the 120-year-old Bernhardt Furniture Company and continues to be a leader and innovator in furniture design and production. During the past 10 years, President Jerry Helling has assembled an extraordinary creative team that has positioned Bernhardt Design as one of the leading international design companies with a roster of talent that includes: Ross Lovegrove (London), Arik Levy (Paris), Jaime Hayon (Barcelona), Yves Béhar (San Francisco), Patrick Jouin (Paris), Fabien Baron (New York), Monica Förster (Stockholm), CuldeSac (Valencia), Suzanne Trocmé (London), Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance (Paris), Jeffrey Bennett (New York), Bang Design (Sydney), Fredrikson Stallard (London), and Claudia and Harry Washington (San Salvador). Setting a precedent for leadership within the corporate

community, Bernhardt Design created and sponsors an annual interdisciplinary course with the world renowned Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, challenging students to create world-class designs for mass production. Bernhardt Design also sponsors the ICFF Studio, a scholarship program which provides emerging design talent exposure to manufacturers, retailers and the media from around the world. Taking a proactive approach to sustainability, Bernhardt Design is one of the first furniture companies to have achieved Level certification, a multi-attribute standard assessing the environmental aspects of products, processes and facilities.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

<http://theschool.columbia.edu/>

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