

# deSigns of the times

The funky creations of a few 20-somethings have put India on the global design map. From chairs and clocks to sharpeners and lamps, RUCHIRA HOON checks out some of the cool things they've come up with

**B**REAK ALL rules — that's the design philosophy driving these eight young men and women, representatives of a brave new generation of Indian industrial designers who're taking the world by storm. Working mostly on mundane things, they are not just improving them and making them more user friendly, but they are also

turning them into objects of desire. While some have an engineering background and some are trained designers, others are equipped with nothing more than the burning desire to make a difference. Their creations may not have made it to the manufacturers yet, but that doesn't take away anything from the idea.

**PRIYANKA GALA, 24**

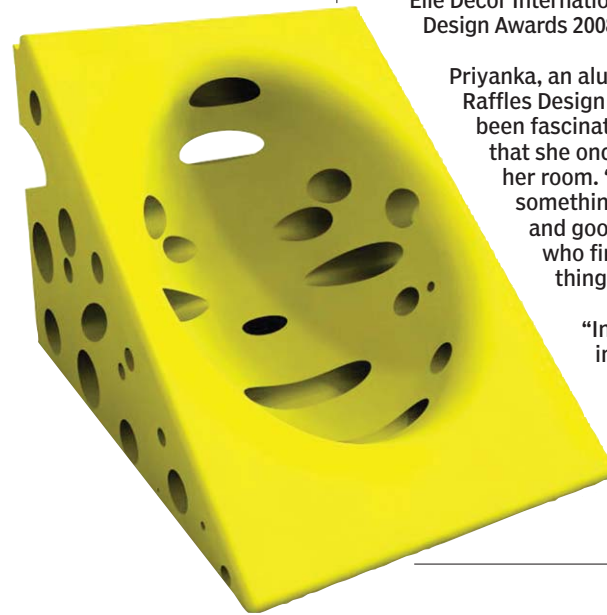
**Cheesy Chair**

It tickles Priyanka Gala pink to hear the phrase *omelet du fromage*. That's because cheese omelette — her favourite breakfast — is the inspiration for her Cheesy Chair, the design which won her a special mention at the Elle Decor International Design Awards 2008.



Priyanka, an alumna of Raffles Design International in Mumbai, has always been fascinated by do-it-yourself kits. So much so that she once tried to make the entire furniture for her room. "I love furniture and I wanted to make something that was not just useful, but also fun and good-looking," says the freelance designer, who finds it really exciting to bring to life things that she had only imagined.

"In cartoons, the cheese always has holes in it. And I figured that I'd like to do something with that." As comfortable as a beanbag, the Cheesy Chair is superbly cozy — something one could just drop into. Made of foam, it is all about being laid-back — quite like Priyanka herself.



**PAUL SANDIP, 29**

**Pencil Eater**

He studied electrical engineering, and has worked as a journalist and even a cartoonist for a while. 'Industrial sculptor' Paul Sandip has donned many hats and yes, won many awards as well. He's now with LG India, but on the side also works on *Useful Art*, a project he initiated that focuses on turning mundane items into objects of desire.

Take Pencil Eater, which won the prestigious Red Dot award in 2007, as also Jindal Steel's Stainless Innovation award that year. A simple and seamless design, the Pencil Eater is a pencil sharpener with dual cones that can sharpen pencils of various sizes from both its ends. "I've tried to simplify the sharpener so that every one can use it," the Delhi-based designer says.



Paul is constantly on the lookout for manufacturers for his creations — such as a circular clothes peg and a dog clip. "That's because I don't work on orders. I create exactly what I like and when I like. I suppose that's difficult to deal with, but that's how it will always be."



**VIKAS JOHIYA, 21**

**Toaster Suitcase**

As a child Vikas Johiya loved dismantling his toys and then reassembling them again. As an adult he does pretty much the same. A student of National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, Vikas is studying to be a product designer so he can get to make things his way. Especially, he wants to create products that are liked by both children and their parents.

He has definitely succeeded with the Toaster Suitcase — a suitcase on wheels, shaped like a toaster that looks like it's about to pop. There's hardly a parent who can resist that. "I wanted to make something that was child-friendly and yet not stereotyped. Something that a child would be happy carrying about, and a parent happier paying for," says Johiya. Inspired by the rocking chair, the Toaster Suitcase has just won a special mention at the Elle Décor International Design Award 2008. Vikas has used lightweight canvas with fresh friendly colours like orange and green to add a sense of fun to the functional product.



**MAHESH MARATH, 24**

**Spaceship Speakers**

Transforming the ordinary — that's what drives Bangalore boy Mahesh Marath. "Designs have always fascinated me, but until a few years ago I didn't know how to channelise my creativity," says Mahesh, now a product designer with ThinkDesign, a multi-disciplinary design firm.

Inspired by his uncle, a freelance photographer, and the work of iconic designers like Daniel Simon, Mahesh decided to pursue his dream. At the time, he was working as an engineer with General Motors.

As an entry for a competition, he came up with the funky and original design for the Spaceship Speakers. "I tried to make a single unit of speakers that could be carried around easily," he explains. "So I connected four speakers to one assembly for functionality and designed it to look like a spaceship, or spider as some people see it, for an added element of interest." For those who like surround sound, Mahesh also has the option of dismantling it. "That way it can be used by anyone and anywhere and yet be fully functional."



**GARIMA AGGARWAL, 26**

**Tipper Chair**

Garima Aggarwal nearly got into the wrong profession. "As a civil engineer, I used to wonder when I would get to work and play at the same time. A few months of painful analysing later, I realised my true calling and enrolled at the National Institute of Design," she says. With a diploma in furniture and interior designing under her belt, Mumbai-based Garima is now an award-winning designer. Her Tipper Chair won her the Elle Décor International Design Award in the student category last year. Inspired by a glass of wine, the innovative bar stool can be used in homes and commercially in bars and pubs as well. With its body made in clear polycarbonate for a smooth glass-like finish, and its seat made of jelly plastic, this chair is a sure-shot winner.



**NEIL DANTAS, 29**

**Urdu Clock**

For Neil Dantas, design is all about giving back to the society. Dantas wants to reach out to the youth with the products he creates. He also hopes his products will motivate their users to make a difference to the world. That's also the reason this proud Mumbaikar quit his regular nine-to-five job and is now looking to hit the big time. After all, he knows that while he may have a lot of ideas, he has no money to execute them on a large scale.

Dantas now designs a line of contemporary Indian T-shirts, bags, wallets and even shoes. But it's his Urdu Clock that really makes you sit up and take note. Taking his cue from the fact that the Urdu script has to be read from right to left, Dantas has designed the Urdu Clock which has to be read anti-clockwise. "I thought it would be interesting to make a clock that would symbolise secularism," he says. The desire to connect with people was another motivation. While Neil's typical Maharashtrian upbringing is obvious, it's his patriotic zeal that makes him a product designer to watch out for.



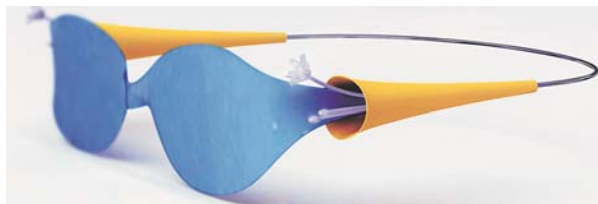
**ASHISH CHAUDHARY, 29**

**Butt-on Light**

Senior product designer Ashish Chaudhary decided to marry the two things he really loves — a good laugh and the play of light. So he created a range of lifestyle accessories called *Humour with Lighting*, around ideas that would draw a hearty chuckle from anyone.

The Butt-On, for example, is a fun low-wattage night lamp. "Shaped like the derriere, the Butt-On is made from soft translucent silicon-based rubber, so that you can give it a squeeze if you wish," says Ashish, who lives in New Delhi and is currently working with LG India. "In all honesty, it's made with a bachelor's apartment in mind."

Ashish's love for creating fun products began when his uncle and father taught him origami and toy-making with papier-mache. From then on, he says, he knew he wanted to create things. An avid photographer, Ashish loves to travel alone and spend time with himself, which gets his creative juices flowing. "I do whatever comes to mind — whether it's naughty or mundane. Giving it a twist is what's important."



**MOHAN VIJAY, 24**

**Table-Top Wet Grinder**

Global warming and its effect on the environment matter a lot to industrial designer Mohan Vijay. "I saw *The Story of Stuff*, a web-based documentary, and it was like a slap on my face," says Mohan who is employed with Wipro Light in Pune. "It made me realise that even an individual can make a difference." And so, Mohan is now constantly on the lookout for avenues to recycle and reuse.

A south Indian, Mohan would see his grandmother and mother struggling away with the table-top wet grinder which made the batter for the never-ending stream of idlis, vadas and dosas. So he came up with something that would use less electricity and work faster. "My idea was to use food-grade plastic, with steel drums and a base made of stone with a special coating. I wanted to ensure that there would be no overheating, so that the batter could be made seamlessly using as little electricity as possible," Mohan explains. Hardy and durable, the Table-Top Wet Grinder is definitely exceptional and unique. As is Deuce, a snake-shaped table lamp, which not just looks nice but also consumes less electricity.

