



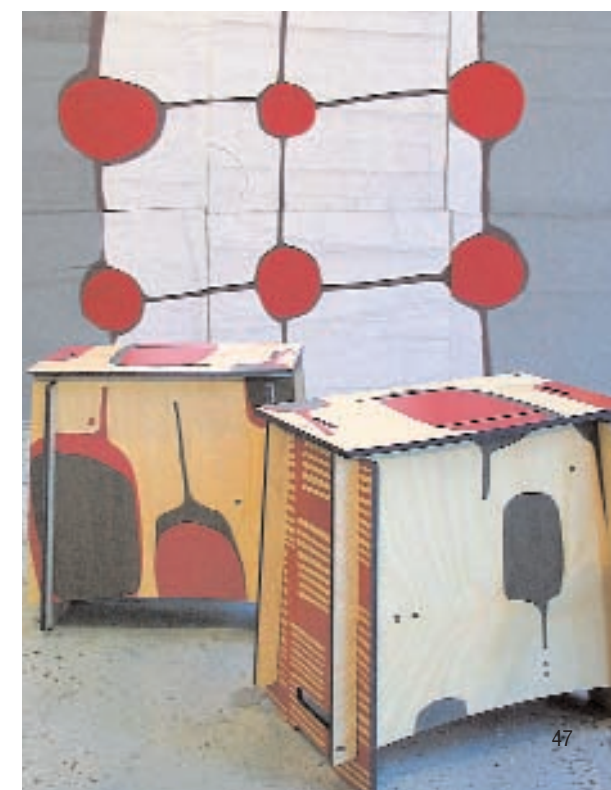
By: Martyn Pedler
 Photos: Helen Punton, Barbara Whitman (1), Jonah Demallory (1)
 Designs: Spacecraft, Bongoût, Julie Paterson, tin&ed

★ Special Places

SOCIAL SEAT

The Zaishu project turns stools into artworks

MADE DOWN UNDER: for the 2006 State of Design Festival in Melbourne, Spacecraft designed a range of Zaishus (above) in their studios (right).



It all began with a Japanese stool. Since then Zaishu has become an interactive artistic project. People the world over are designing their own chairs. And MINIInternational has come on board.

In Japan, a Zaishu is a legless chair. In Melbourne, a Zaishu is a legless chair, but it is also a designed object that informs rich social interaction through creative collaborations. Literally, a Zaishu is “a slot-together, flat-packed seat featuring unique artwork or prints”. Theoretically, it is much more. Founded in a Melbourne laneway three years ago by designer Matt Butler and a group of artists, Melbourne’s Zaishu project is much bigger than a sweet little seat with a print. “The idea took on a life of its own through different opportunities,” explains Matt, who (through his work as a designer) was invited to create an exhibit at Melbourne’s Australian Centre of Contemporary Art (ACCA) in 2004. With the exhibition in mind Matt called in friend and curator Andy Mac, who got together 20 stencil artists. “We set up a heap of plywood in the laneway behind Misty bar,” recalls Matt. “Before that time I had no idea of the Zaishu at all.” Over three days the artists worked, drank and hung out together and, through both Andy and Matt’s vision, the project began to materialise. At the end, Matt gathered up all the wood to be cut and the first Zaishu was constructed, ready for the ACCA exhibition. But the friends and connections made stretched further than plywood and paint. The versatile project then sprang up in galleries, town halls, classrooms and community spaces around the country. While the wood is laser-cut in a factory, the rest is left to the imagi-

nation of those taking part. The simple construction of the seat using plantation growth wood, water-based inks and no screws or bolts means that there is no creative hierarchy. Zaishu’s language is purely visual, so anyone, anywhere can take part in the process and design their own. Zaishus started out, and continue, as social and artistic projects, involving adolescents, for example, or alcoholics and drug users in rehab. The revenue generated is regularly ploughed back into social schemes. Racking up more frequent flyer miles than Richard Branson, the Zaishu project has travelled from Italy to Canada, Berlin, Sweden, Japan and India, where in April 2006 it stayed for six months as a mix of children, Bollywood artists, Rangoli artists, Warli tribal artists and Hindi sign-writers took part. This provided support for 90 orphaned children. Zaishu might be a global traveller, but its core values of creativity, participation, responsibility and evolution have never been forgotten. All production remains in Melbourne and Zaishus are stocked in local design stores like Spacecraft, which also produces its own designs. “No matter how long I’ve been away, in Melbourne there are great networks of people that you can tap into,” says Matt. “All I’ve got to do is get on the phone and call a few people I know and things happen.” Sounds just like the Zaishu spirit. Turn to the next page to find out about a very special Zaishu designed by tin&ed for MINIInternational readers. ☺

THE SPIRIT OF ZAISHU: Anna Hellsgard and Meeloo Gfeller of bongoût (below centre) designed Zaishus for Designmai Berlin in 2006. The latest designs are by Cloth (below right).

- www.zaishu.com
- www.spacecraftaustralia.com
- www.clothfabric.com
- www.bongoût.com



★ MINIInternational exclusive

A ZAISHU FOR OUR READERS

Get a unique piece of art to sit on

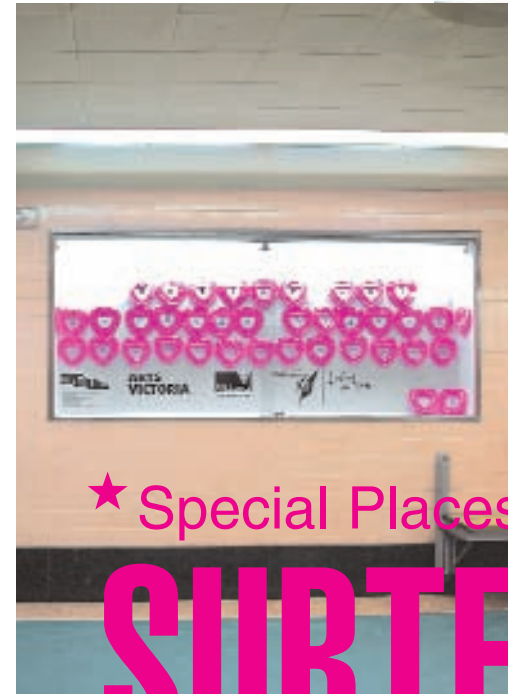
tin&ed have designed an unusual chair for MINIInternational. Each one purchased supports a good cause.

MINI and MINIInternational commissioned Melbourne designers Tin Nguyen and Ed Cutting with producing a special limited edition of 50 Zaishu chairs which are only available to order directly through the project (www.zaishu.com). For 215 euros (or 390 US dollars in the USA, or 350 Australian dollars) plus postage, you will be sent the MINIInternational Zaishu chair, signed by Tin&Ed, in a flat-pack 40 by 40-centimetre package. All you have to do is assemble the pieces to create your very own Zaishu. Designers Tin Nguyen and Ed Cutting opened their design and illustration studio Tin&Ed in 2004 (see also Talents, p.28). Melbourne's youngest design duo are well known for their whimsical illustrations, their dream-like collages and animations and their strange, abstract photographs of Melbourne's nightlife. When they are not out on the town, Tin&Ed

work on the eighth floor of the Nicholas Building. "We have both lived in Melbourne our whole lives," says Ed. "No, I moved here when I was one," corrects Tin. "From Vietnam." They both love the city, especially the view from their studio. "We can see every landmark. It's inspiring. We get to experience the city even when we're in front of our computers all day." As a studio, Tin&Ed are excited to be designing a Zaishu stool because the project was founded by their university lecturer, Matt Butler. Their design is based on the MINIInternational Melbourne theme "Open Secret". "We've made the Zaishu into an imaginary creature. You will be sitting on it and you may or may not want to acknowledge that there's this magical being right under your nose. That's how we see Melbourne – as a living creature who is part of our lives. Some

people ignore it, but the best people bend right down and look straight at it – they're creative and they interact with the city." 50 Australian dollars out of the proceeds from the sale of each Zaishu for MINIInternational will go to "Ripple", a new charity founded by three young Melburnians. www.ripple.org is a website designed to raise money by harnessing the power and profits of internet advertising. Ripple generates money for charities such as Oxfam Australia and Water Aid Australia. Every time a user clicks on the "give" button at www.ripple.org or uses a "ripple" search to browse the internet, money is added to the charity box.

www.tinanded.com.au
www.zaishu.com
www.ripple.org



★ Special Places

SUBTERRANEAN ART

A "walk-through gallery" showcases contemporary works

By: Martyn Pedler Photos: Barbera&Whitman

CHANGING EXHIBITIONS of modern art are on display in subway cabinets. STICKY next door has a wide range of artist books.

WWW.PLATFORM.ORG.AU

The most difficult thing about PLATFORM is resisting the urge to make jokes about "underground art". That's because the PLATFORM gallery displays art in numerous large cabinets flanking either side of the Degraeves Street Subway. And if you can't resist that terrible joke, they'll probably hear you. "You can just stand in the doorway and hear people talk about the art," says Luke Sinclair, one of the gallery's founders.

PLATFORM shares its office space with STICKY, a shop just off the subway that specialises in magazines, artist books, and other intimate, small-press treasures. Both projects have a long history behind them in Melbourne. PLATFORM was started by artists Andrew Seward and Richard Holt in 1990, originally down in Spencer Street Station. STICKY has existed since 2001, after being inspired by a small shop of artists' books in Amsterdam. "The idea was to run the PLATFORM office space with the shop space, because the kind of things we'd sell at STICKY would only go for one or two dollars, and 80 percent goes straight back to the artists."

And whereas even the most diligent art lover might only visit a gallery show once, visitors to PLATFORM – intentionally or otherwise – have a different relationship to the art on the walls. "Some people come in here at least twice a week if they work in the city," says Luke. "It's great that people see the art more than once, and people who wouldn't necessarily go into a gallery see the work. When there's a popular exhibition people will rave about it." And when one isn't so popular? "You'll hear people grumbling as they walk past ..."

PLATFORM
Campbell Arcade, U-Bahnhof Degraeves Street

STICKY
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