



# Gone Fishing

For Toronto's Fishbol Design Atelier, a bad day at the office beats a great day fishing.

**YOU'VE BEEN THINKING GLOBALLY AND ACTING LOCALLY.** You've tried your best to keep to the 100-mile diet and shrink your carbon footprint. But what about the plates you eat from, or the chair you're sitting on — do they follow your new lifestyle?

Local manufacturing and sustainable materials are something the designers behind the Toronto-based Fishbol Atelier are keeping in mind. Mani Mani and Elie Nehme, both graduates from Carleton University's School of Architecture who set up the design firm in 2005, say that considering the life-cycle and origin of materials comes second-nature to them as they create everything from dishes and furniture, to fashion and hotel interiors.

"We are definitely eco-conscious in terms of the materials we use," explains Nehme in an interview with *SPADE*. "We are dealing with local manufacturers purely based on our economy and delivery of materials, but at the same time I think it is important to let that not be the focus of design."

His business partner agrees. "No matter what, you have to be conscious of your materials, you have to be conscious of your environ-

ment, you have to be green, try to be local — all those things are default and a given," says Mani. "It is kind of passed trendiness, I think. We just don't think about it that way like 'Let's do something green.' It's more like 'We are doing a chair and it is going to be green.'"

Mani says it has taken a few years, but now all good designers are rethinking their materials and products. "Now being green is part of the show," he says.

A glance at Fishbol's wide-ranging portfolio shows how the designers have put their words into reality. Their ready-to-assemble Bungee-seat is made of sustainable bamboo, their wine bottle shelf combines recycled wood and reused bottles, while plastic pipes have been resurrected into a funky pair of eyeglasses.

But Fishbol is more than just creating eco-conscious consumer products. Mani and Nehme have collaborated with other designers and architects on a number of interior spaces, from a handful of trendy bars in Ottawa and Toronto, to the striking hotel/fitness centre Hot'L in Kuwait. Mani explains that while their projects differ drastically in scale and scope, whatever the goal, they still need to think



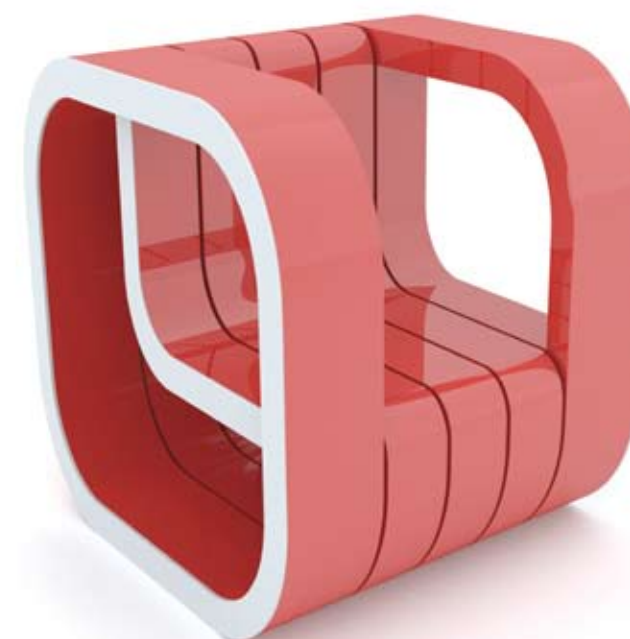
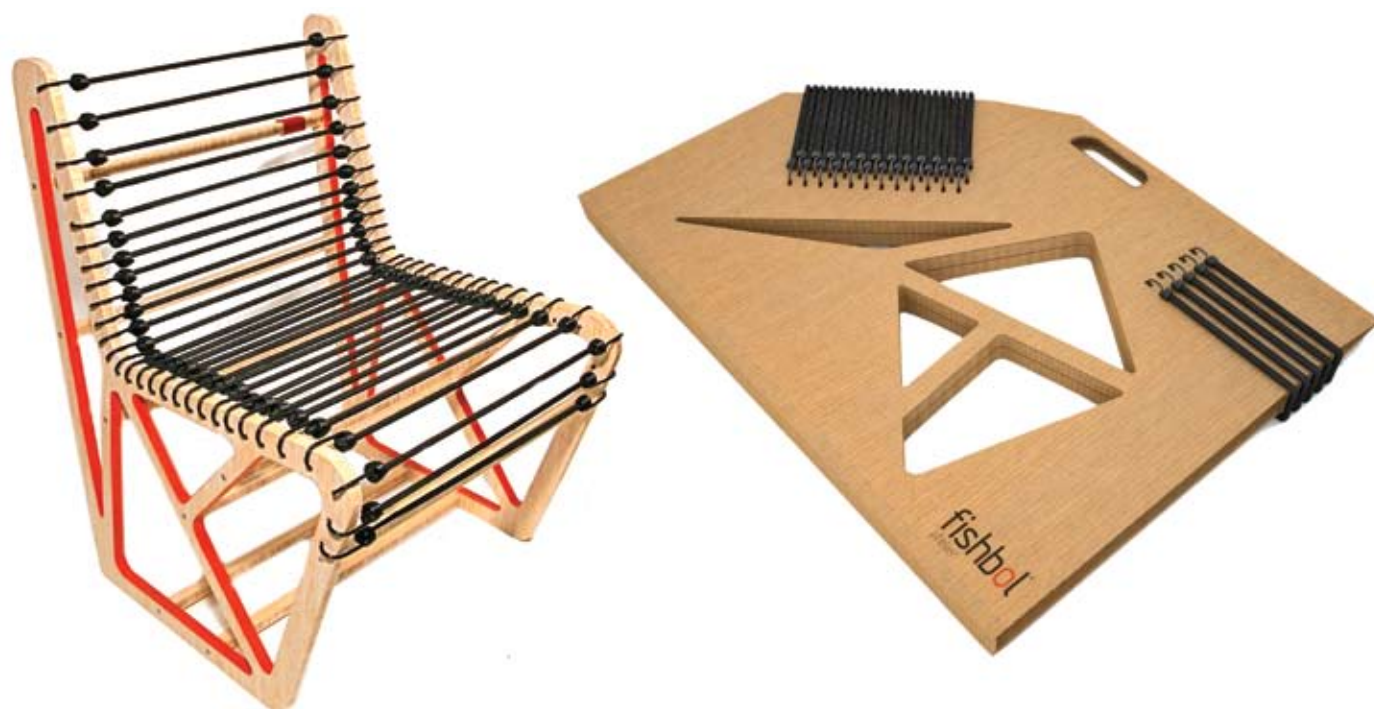
about longevity of both the materials and the design.

"Going from eyewear to furniture you are dealing with scale, you are dealing with the way that people are using it, and when you go from architecture to urban planning, again, it is important," says Mani. "How many people are using it, how many times will it be used, and how long is it supposed to last? The life expectancy for a pair of eyewear is very different than a chair, and it is different than for a building and than a city."

For Mani and Nehme, design should aim to be long-lasting, something the consumer doesn't want to or need to throw away after a season.

"I think the most green you can be is to make something that is long-lasting and worthwhile," Nehme muses. "Good design is design that's lasting, design that can last as long as the concept. You can have a great concept but the design has to follow up, and vice versa. Some of the greatest chairs out there — [like] the Barcelona chair — were designed by architects. These things, they are timeless designs. I think that's the sort of thing we hope to do."

"It's not about 'buy it, use it, toss it' when you are moving. Those are old rules," adds Mani. "It's about getting something lasting, something that you can actually have a sense of belonging and you keep it with care."





Interestingly, both Nehme and Mani, who met in Ottawa while studying architecture, came to the field after separate attempts in electrical engineering. Nehme says he can't explain where his passion for architecture comes from, but that he had always been interested in the arts, while Mani says having architects for parents might have had something to do with his final choice.

So what are two architects doing designing ceramics, eyewear and furniture in addition to urban spaces? They are just doing whatever they want to do out of pure enjoyment of design. And while creating fashion or ceramics may not be in their background, they are ready and willing to learn about new methods of bringing their ideas to life.

"What we always try to focus on is new, fresh ideas," Nehme explains. "We never really set out to have a certain style or a certain look."

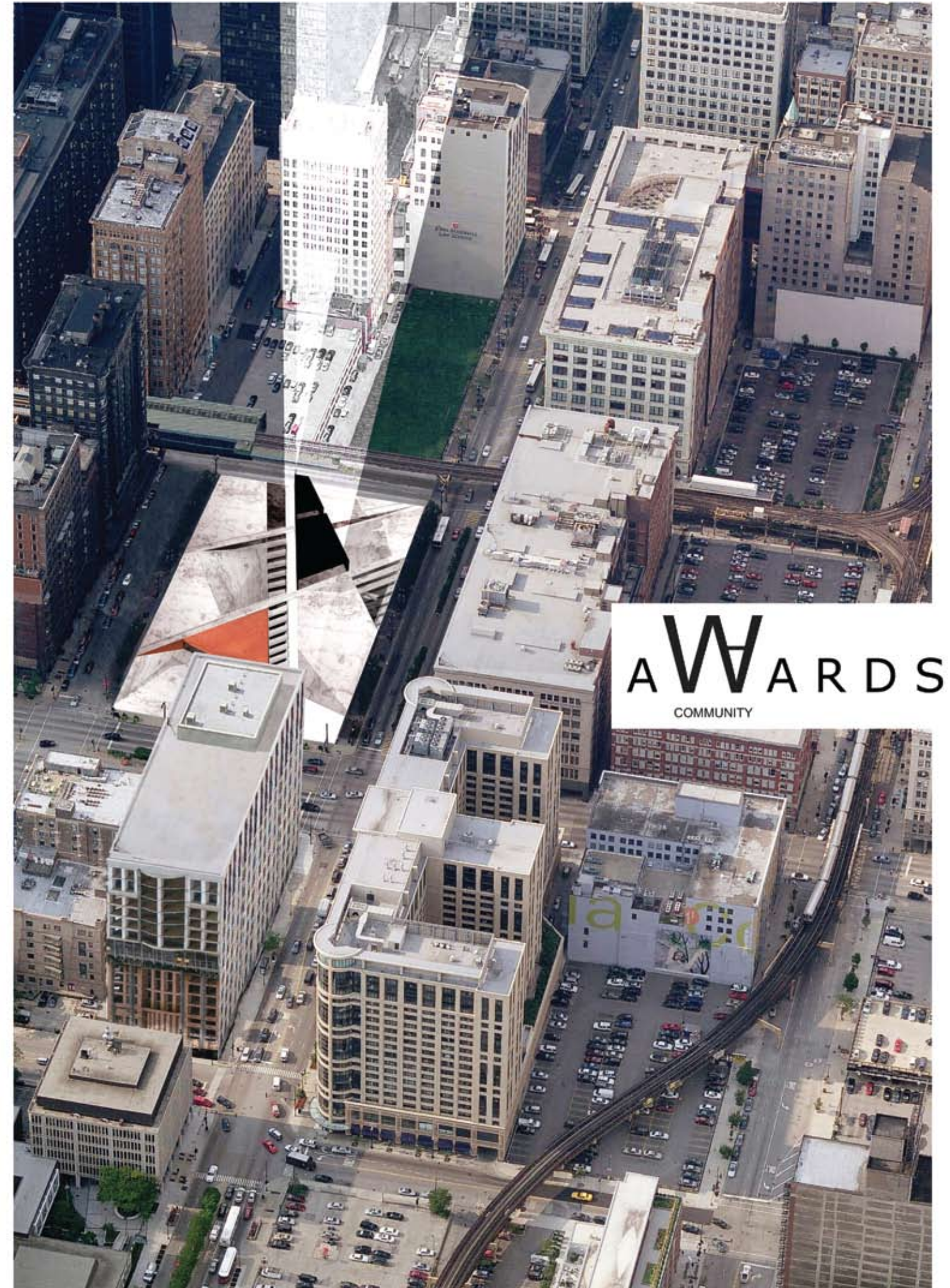
"We have different interests and different flavours of design that we appreciate, but what makes it interesting is when our different styles come together, then the product is Fishbol," adds Mani. "As long as we get [a dialogue] going, then you always have something unexpected or something new that you try and it works."

Aside from preparing for a handful of design competitions, Fishbol is currently working on two major projects: renovating the nightclub lobby in a Toronto boutique hotel, and helping eyewear designers Cutler and Gross design their flagship store in London, UK. For now, Mani and Nehme work from their independent home studios in downtown Toronto, but they hope to soon open an actual office workshop space where they can collaborate on a daily basis and bring in new designers from a variety of fields.

"We want to bring different fish into the Fishbol," they laugh.

For more information, visit [www.fishbol.com](http://www.fishbol.com).

words: Christina Leadlay



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