



**OPINION
TODAY**
Ken Keuffel
NEWS REPORTER

Some ways to scout for next generation of designers

Furniture can drown in a sea of sameness. So it's imperative for sources to keep looking for talented furniture designers who can come up with fresh looks even as they respond to market trends.

The next High Point Market, which begins Oct. 18, offers at least two opportunities for scouting the next generation of stars. At the market itself — in the Suites at Market Square, G-1025 — Groovystuff will hold another Groovystuff by Design Challenge, a regular competition for college students organized by the eco-friendly furniture specialist.

And over at High Point University's Sechrest Gallery, "High Point University Explores the Art of Seating" will showcase chairs designed by students and faculty from HPU's School of Art

piece that "utilizes or reconfigures the reclaimed material that exemplifies the Groovystuff product line and is competitive enough via written orders at market to be included in the company's catalog," according to a competition description.

During the market, the designs and models for the students' pieces will be displayed in the University Hall of Innovation & Job Creation, a room above Groovystuff's showroom at the Suites at Market Square. There, market attendees — including manufacturers, press, designers, buyers and retailers — will vote on the pieces they like best.

One winning design entry will be chosen from each of the participating schools. Each winning entry will receive a \$250 cash prize, and furniture based on the winning designs will be

The Groovystuff by Design Challenge epitomizes how industry should connect with education.

and Design. This exhibition was inspired by "The Art of Seating: Two Hundred Years of American Design" at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art in nearby Winston-Salem, N.C.

The "Art of Seating" shows that the "quality of work from our students and faculty is of the highest caliber," said Maxine Campbell, director and curator of the Sechrest Gallery and instructor in the School of Art and Design. "These students gained invaluable hands-on, real-world experience in producing work for a contextual setting."

As for the Groovystuff challenge, more than 60 students from three universities are participating in what is also a real-world experience. The three universities are Florida State University, the University of Minnesota and Auburn University. The Auburn group includes students from Shu-Te University, Auburn's sister school in Taiwan.

Each student is designing an accessory, accent or occasional

made and placed in Groovystuff's line.

This kind of venture epitomizes how industry should connect with education. It offers students hands-on experience, with Groovystuff employees in Dallas periodically viewing uploaded student folders and offering instantaneous feedback via Facebook groups.

Marlo Ransdell, an assistant professor in the interior design department at Florida State University, is supervising students from that school in the challenge. She said the "feedback from these online interactions helps students work through their design solutions and challenges them to see their designs as a marketable product within the Groovystuff product lines."

"This experience bridges the two worlds of education and industry," she added, "and gives the students working knowledge of the home furnishings market they could not gain through education alone."

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