

Appalachian State University 8th Annual Chair Competition

by Derek Elliott

Boone, NC. Saturday, January 18th a crowd of people stood in a room full of unique chairs at the Appalachian State University Chair

Competition. The event that took place at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts was the 8th annual competition challenging students from across the nation to design and build a chair for a particular category. This year's category, "New", emphasized using innovative manufacturing techniques and material applications to bring to life a chair that has a real-world marketplace application. The competition aims to discover and showcase young designers that represent both design innovation and an understanding of product and market.



Richard Prisco organizes the event with the Industrial Design program at Appalachian State and every year the stakes get higher with awards for first, second and third place. This year \$6,000 and an automatic entry in to ICFF studio were up for grabs. ICFF studio, sponsored by Bernhardt Design, is a platform for young designers to showcase their prototypes to manufacturers, retailers and the media. ICFF studio has been a career catalyst for many past participants.

Armed only with a 20" x 30" presentation board and a deep knowledge of their own concept, eight students presented their prototypes to this year's panel of

judges. Todd Campbell, design director for Bernhardt Design, Kelsey Keith, senior editor at Dwell Magazine, and Greg Saul, president of Tolleson Saul Design watched (and sat) with great attention as each finalist sought to wow them with their concept. After each presentation the judges had an opportunity to ask more questions about design decisions, concept directions, etc. Both critical and informative, many of the judges' comments were directed at all finalists in order to make the event a valuable learning experience for everyone.



Todd Campbell judging Byron Conn's Calligraphy Stool



Felicia Dean with Beekeeper

After several anxious hours of deliberation the judges announced the winners starting with third place, given to Byron Conn of Rochester, NY for his Calligraphy Stool. Byron's stool took inspiration from the swift movement of Chinese calligraphy to create a timeless Scandinavian appeal that makes use of modern day CNC machining. Second place was awarded to James Ellis of Boone, NC for his chair "Maximilian". James' chair features a removable leather seat pad and a spacious back to allow the user to feel open and relaxed. The top award was given to Felicia Dean of Greensboro, NC for "Beekeeper". Felicia's creative and innovative use of fabric provided a both eye-catching and tactile experience for viewers and users alike. Though Felicia described the process to create the fabric for Beekeeper as very precise, Todd Campbell commented that sometimes it's designers with new ideas that drive innovation in production and manufacturing.

All eight chairs will be on display along with their associated concept board until February 8th at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts in Boone, NC. For more information about the Industrial Design program at Appalachian State University visit <http://industrialdesign.appstate.edu/> and for more information about ICFF studio visit http://bernhardtdesign.com/discover/icff_studio.html #To learn more about the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts and stay up to date on all events keep an eye on their web page at <http://tcva.org>

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