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Product Designers by Default:

A look into product design through custom millwork and furniture

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As designers, creating unique and extraordinary spaces for clients is at the core of each of our projects. Having an overabundant number of resources in the architecture and design community we are more often than not able to achieve just that. However, there are situations that either require or entice us to step outside of what is made readily available to really meet the client's needs and our desire for creativity. Customization in both furniture and architectural features within a space allows us to wear one more "hat" in the design process—product designers.

Nicole Migeon—ASID NY Metro member, architect, interior designer and principal of Nicole Migeon Architect (NMA)—shared some personal insight with us on adopting the role of product designer in her firm's projects. NMA is a New York City design firm specializing in residential, commercial, health care and hospitality, with a specialty in spas and salons. Adept at creating multi-functional spaces in both residential and commercial applications, NMA prefers customizing millwork and furniture to make the best use out of every space that might not otherwise



CHAD CHENIER PHOTOGRAPHY

Multi-Storage (DF-1)

be useable. In places like New York City, where space comes at a premium, customization can often be the best option for their clients. However, it is not a catch-all solution—budget, time constraints and the needs of the client will dictate the necessity of customized products.

NMA is flexible in their design service and can often create unique pieces of furniture like dining tables, entertainment and storage units. They retain copyright of each unique piece created, which gives them the

opportunity to offer it as commercial products to any consumer.

Dual Function Design

From the creation of these special products emerged a product line of their own—*Dual Function*. This line of original furniture and lighting units serve multiple functions while remaining clean, simple and stylish. NMA's minimal design philosophy prioritizes efficiency and comfort, blending form and function. *Dual Function* designs are customizable to suit the needs of each individual



CHIP FORELLI PHOTOGRAPHY

Multi-Closet Library (DF-2) - view of the closet compartments.



JOHN MORGAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Bird's-eye view of the Multi Storage (DF-1), showing an additional function-space for plants.



PHOTO BY KRISTEEN ARNOLD

Multi-Dresser (DF-4)



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Multi-Closet Library (DF-2)- view of the library side serving the living space.

client, offering stackable storage units and customizable shelving in a wide variety of base material options, including wood, resin or metal. The overall dimensions of each design are scalable, allowing residence and business owners to participate creatively in the design process.

The *Dual Function Collection* was designed with the intention of serving at least two functions. Here are just some of the many pieced within the line:

Multi-Storage (DF-1)

Made with a teak veneer and stainless steel.

Provides storage, seating, work surface, and garden—all these tasks are performed by the multipurpose, patented DF-1.

The DF-1 was conceived to store drawings and files that also serves as a social hub in an office or workspace. The four primary units are modular and may be stacked and rearranged at will. The unit heights are comfortable for both seating and work, while shallow and deep drawers provide versatile storage space. The stainless-steel center unit may be used as a decorative planter or fish tank.

The minimal design is free of unnecessary hardware, seams, hooks, or nails. Offered in different types of wood, resin, or metal.

Multi-Closet Library (DF-2)

Made with a teak veneer

The Multi-Closet Library is an impressive and distinctive design initially conceived to spatially divide a single loft space into a reading room and bedroom.

Crafted from teak veneer, one side of the DF-2 features hinged doors that open to reveal an array of library shelves or a customizable media station. The other side's long doors protect a generous closet space that includes hanging racks and drawers. The third side opens to reveal a shoe closet, showcasing the DF-2's unique flair. Also available with a flat base.

Multi-Dresser (DF-4)

Made with a walnut veneer, solid wood and glass.

Constructed of wood and wood veneer with a glass top, the Multi-Dresser features velvet-lined jewelry drawers as well as hanging file drawers on the side. (Patented DF-4)

This versatile unit contains multiple drawers for clothing, private files, and jewelry, as well as a hidden drawer for valuables and personal items. Its clean and minimalistic design adds a note of distinction. A perfect bedroom piece for jewelry collectors to keep their treasures safe.

Some Pros and Cons on Custom Millwork and Furniture

There are many pros to customizing woodwork and furniture. As mentioned previously, you can create pieces for small spaces or maximize the use of unusable areas. There is opportunity to create pieces that combine various functions into one unit. Also, the finishes, styles, colors and hardware available to the client are unlimited.

Some cons to consider: customization can be more expensive, and if the client is not going to remain in a space for a long time it might not be justified to create permanent pieces; also, lead times for customized items can be longer than prefabricated items. If the client is in a hurry to occupy the space, this poses an issue. ■