



PROFILE THREE:

Sydney-based designers Kathy Arnold and Christopher Lane (arnoldlane) won their second Corporate Culture + SAS Design Journey award in 2006 with LIPSTIK – a plastic outdoor chair. The company has also been short-listed for our own IDEA Awards.

Journey so far:

Kathy Arnold and Christopher Lane both studied interior design as mature age students at the Sydney Design Institute at Enmore, graduating in 1992 and 1993 respectively. Arnold started work immediately, but Lane set off for Europe, where he lived for two and a half years. In 1999 they found themselves at the same design firm in Sydney. "Our stories were quite similar and, while working together, we regularly joked about forming arnoldlane. Then a series of events conspired in our favour. We thought the opportunity would only present itself once, so we grabbed it," explains Lane.

Arnoldlane was formally established in 2002 as "a multidisciplinary firm offering hospitality, corporate, retail and product design".

"We hoped we could support ourselves by doing the kind of design work we wanted to do, instead of whatever was thrown at us on a short deadline," says Lane. Since the firm's inception, arnoldlane has worked on a wide range of corporate and hospitality projects while actively pursuing personal projects "that would lift our profile". They entered the inaugural Corporate Culture + SAS Design Journey competition in 2005 and won for their Chest Sofa range. The 2006 brief called for a stackable plastic chair, so they entered again and won with Lipstik.

What have been some of the key hurdles/challenges involved in getting your products to their current stage of development?

"Finding the time to develop designs and refine the details is the biggest hurdle. It is a matter of balancing aesthetics with function, practicality and cost.

"The cost of prototyping is an enormous hurdle. However, the design is only really refined and perfected through multiple prototypes. Also, because we don't actually prototype ourselves, finding people with the right skills can be difficult.

"We have been amazingly fortunate, however, in winning the Corporate Culture + SAS Design Journey competitions, which have helped us get our products to market," says Lane.

What kinds of support structures do you think are needed to help emerging designers?

"We don't feel qualified to comment on the existing support structures, as we consider ourselves product design 'novices'.

"We do believe, however, that the following would be helpful: mentoring programs, government-funded design studios or cooperatives, taxation reform that allows new ventures a grace period so that income can fund new development and prototyping and, oh, a few more sponsored design competitions would help."

Key products/projects to date:

Chest Sofa range produced in association with Corporate Culture (also short-listed in the furniture and lighting category of the Australian Design Awards).

Lipstik chair produced in association with Corporate Culture.

Coca-Cola South Pacific corporate office.

Sage Micropay corporate office (third place in 2005 IDEA Awards, Corporate category).

Firefly Wine and Espresso Bar, Walsh Bay Sydney (a finalist in the 2004 IDEA Hospitality awards).

What are your plans for the future?

1. Isn't it every designer's (unrealistic) dream to get rich designing really beautiful things?

2. Get to the point where clients seek out our services, rather than continually pushing to get our foot in the door, or to get on the short-list.

3. Break into hospitality design; an area where clients recognise that good design can really affect their bottom line.

4. Design our own homes.