



News Release

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May 28, 2009

Cuesta Students Earn National Awards for Cardboard Chair Designs

A Cuesta College architecture student has won a national furniture design contest.

Jessica Leung, 20, of San Luis Obispo won the fourth student Chair Affair design competition for her entry "Hole on Hole," the American Institute of Architecture Students and the International Corrugated Packaging Foundation announced May 5.

Cuesta student Brad Smith was also named one of the six finalists of the contest. He, Leung and the four other finalists traveled to the 2009 AIA National Convention and Design Exposition, held in San Francisco April 30 through May 2. Winners were alerted later.

Chair Affair challenges students, working individually or in teams, to design a chair using corrugated cardboard and glue. It encourages and rewards excellence in design that integrates function, aesthetics, structure and ergonomics. And it exposes architecture and design students to career opportunities in the dynamic corrugated cardboard industry.

Leung, who hopes to attend USC's School of Architecture and become an architect, said she was happy, though a bit surprised, after learning she had won the award, which includes a \$1,500 prize.

"Because when I saw the other designs I thought that they were all really cool," she said. "They were on the technical side whereas mine was more free and artistic. I didn't know whether the judges would like the more-tech stuff or whether they liked the aesthetic quality of mine."

Leung's design, which resembles a bean bag chair, began when she envisioned a 12-inch hole at the center of the piece.

"I wanted to make something that was comfortable," she said. "I used to be a gymnast and then I hurt my back. When I sit on a chair a long time my spine kind of hurt. So I really wanted a hole that wouldn't be pushing back on my spine."

“When you sit on the hole it’s not like some concrete thing that you are sitting on. But this hole — this space — is holding you up. I started by wrapping strips around the hole — like a donut. And then I saw that it wasn’t really strong, so I started doing horizontal strips and found that it looked good.”

She said the project took about 50 hours to complete, including cutting cardboard on a band saw and then weaving together the half-inch-wide strips.

Submissions were evaluated on originality, aesthetics, ergonomic comfort and cleverness of craft and design.

Leung’s teacher, instructor David Fernandez, AIA, of Cuesta College’s Architecture Department, said this is the first time a Cuesta student has won the national contest.

“The unique thing about her project is there’s no glue,” he said. “They had two materials that they could use: cardboard and glue. No fasteners. No straps. Jessica spent a couple of weeks cutting strips of cardboard and then weaving them together into this form. She didn’t use glue, so I think that was one of the things that set hers apart from the others.”

Leung’s classmate Smith received an honorable mention award for his design titled “Caterpillared,” a chair and table with flat surfaces that are supported by a trellis of rolled cardboard spires.

“Cardboard has two ends and the corrugation in the middle,” said Smith, 25, of Los Osos who is bound this fall for the University of Oregon. “I pulled off (the top surface), and I rolled it up and noticed there was a lot of stability on a pillar, vertically. I just thought about a few different designs from there.”

Smith, who received a \$350 prize for his entry, said he scavenged the cardboard — something contest organizers encouraged — “from dumpsters and the sides of buildings.”

“I designed it so I wouldn’t need huge pieces,” he said.

The winning entries will be on display during the 25th annual American Institute of Architecture Students Grassroots Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. on July 23-26, and, in October, Leung will attend the International Corrugated Packaging Foundation and the Association of Independent Corrugated Converters meetings in Las Vegas.

More Online:

To see photos and descriptions of Jessica Leung’s winning design, “Hole on Hole,” and Brad Smith’s “Caterpillared” visit www.aias.org/chairaffair.

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