

METROPOL



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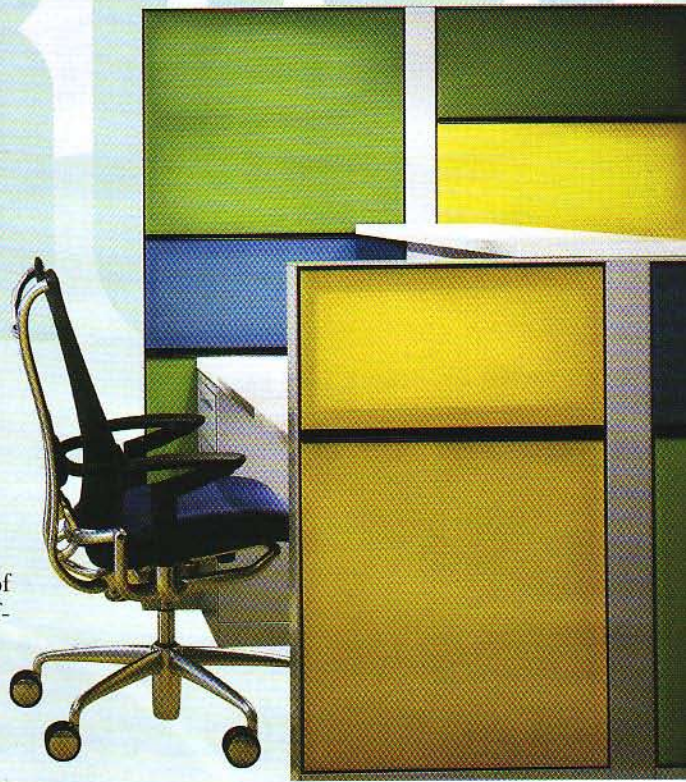
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The Metropolis Observed

Resin Bonded

Muscatine, Iowa, was once known as the button capital of the world, boasting 43 factories that stamped mother-of-pearl buttons out of Mississippi River clamshells at the turn of the twentieth century. So when word recently spread that the McKee Button Company—one of the town's three remaining factories—started stamping the notions out of an interesting new resin, everyone got excited, including employees at Allsteel. Also headquartered in the small town, the office furnishings company was looking for a new surface material, something customizable that would easily fasten to the exterior of their Terrace panel system. "Our customers really like the flexibility and structure that a panel system provides, but they also want a look that expresses their company's identity," explains Julie Zielinski, Allsteel's vice president of marketing. By combining the semitranslucent polyester resin, which is 100 percent recyclable, with the



i-Pantone color-system, Allsteel is able to offer customers a uniquely customizable stacking panel system while supporting one of its home town's three remaining button factories. For its part, McKee simply reconfigured the factory's machinery to punch the rectangular resin panels out of the same sheets used for buttons.
—Laurie Manfra

Sparking Reaction

"Buy, sign, and post are the three simple steps to [resist] apathy and do something for the world we live in," British designer Afroditi Krassa says of her small-scale solution to the huge problem of homelessness.

Krassa's Spare Match is inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen story "The Little Match Girl," about the nineteenth-century tradition of homeless city dwellers selling matchsticks to survive. The campaign features £1 matchboxes covered with a grainy photo of a typical London street with Big Ben in the background. Each prestamped matchbox is printed inside with a personal message from a homeless person to Prime Minister Tony Blair. "Once you have bought and used the matches, the message is revealed at the bottom of the box. You simply sign [the message], post it, and it will go directly to Downing Street," the founder of Studio Krassa Industrial Design explains.

Frustrated after a discussion with her mentor, furniture designer and architect Ron Arad, who suggested that design can have only a limited impact on the world, Krassa set out to disprove this pessimistic view. Her campaign has since won the fifth annual award of The Edward Marshall Trust—a British charity that sponsors progressive ideas in contemporary design—providing her with \$35,000 to produce her project in conjunction with the nonprofit division of *The Big Issue*, a magazine sold by homeless people in London. Krassa touts, "Good design is not just a luxury...now it is time [for design] to deal with those who have nothing."
—Lauren Nelson

