



AZURE



Magazine
of the Year

THE BENTZ DTSENS'

T TAKE ON MODERN DESIGN



Great outdoor ideas
Cologne 2002: the new furniture
Greening the roof
Celebrating Arne Jacobsen

ONE
Ilkka Suppanen
Studio Ilkka Suppanen

A SNOWCRASHING NON-BORE



clockwise from top: Loco, Getset (with a glow lamp in the foreground), Ilkka Suppanen, and Hiwave, a new Snowcrash product fixture designed by Suppanen. The polyester fabric used for Hiwave's shade is developed for sail manufacturing.

In 1997, Ilkka Suppanen and several other young, Finnish designers were gearing up to launch their first collection, at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile. They had some striking products to introduce – notably Netsurfer, an early recline-while-you-keyboard computer station; Globlow, a lamp with a shade that inflates with a flick of the 'on' switch; and Airbag, an indoor/outdoor chair/mattress constructed from a knapsack palette of nylon, polyester straps and plastic buckles. But their company still needed a name.

"We chose Snowcrash partly because it sounds good and it sounds Nordic," recalls Suppanen, a 33-year-old with a high forehead, leonine mane and soulful expression that all seem vaguely Beethovenish. "It's the title of a science fiction novel by Neal Stephenson. In the book, the snow, or static, on a television screen is a drug. It sends information to you in a way that you wouldn't understand you'd been exposed to this information. The book is about the moment where you cross over from the virtual to the real, and that is also what we're doing: our work is dealing

with technology, but also with how you feel, how you function."

Perhaps that interest in combining technology with emotion and functionality explains why Snowcrash's new products at this year's Cologne International Furniture Fair seemed somehow *newer* than nearly everything else on display. "Work" is the focus of the company's latest collection. Getset, by the French designer Arik Levy, may consist of work surfaces, filing cabinets and various storage components, but putting it all together could be almost as satisfying as building a fort out of cardboard boxes, or messing around with giant pieces of Lego.

Suppanen designed Loco, which is billed as "a portable work pad for the modern nomad." As someone who has spent a lot of time shuttling between Snowcrash's Stockholm headquarters and his own Studio Ilkka Suppanen, in Helsinki – in addition to travelling to Italy, Germany and the United States to meet with clients – Loco's designer was also its target audience. (At press time, he had just resigned as Snowcrash's creative director.) Fully folded, Loco

looks like a courier bag. But it unfolds into a mat that keeps paperwork, computer disks and other necessities at hand for those who work in transit.

In February, as a guest speaker at Toronto's Interior Design Show, Suppanen showed images of new materials that he has been experimenting with, including a gel used in pads for wheelchairs, and a carbon-fibre tape that is as strong as it is sticky. He also told a story about how inspiration can suddenly spring from frustration. Recently he was showing some of his prototypes to designer/maker Giulio Cappellini. One was a pendant fixture with the light shining down through feathers trapped between two glass panes. Just as the designer was explaining why this heavyweight suspension could never go into production, he paused and said, "No, forget what I say – this is a table." Ilkka Suppanen's Frozen table, which has feathers sandwiched within its transparent resin top, is now in the Cappellini catalogue. PY