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## Blind Date

*Bernhardt's new collection is by designers left in the dark.*

A Shaker chair and a Noguchi coffee table are both considered quintessential forms, but they wouldn't necessarily look good in front of the same sofa. Yet when Jerry Helling, creative director of North Carolina-based Bernhardt Design, directed eight international designers to contribute a specific piece to a collection of timeless, universal furnishings without knowing anything else about the project, the results were remarkably cohesive.

Global Edition, introduced at last month's International Contemporary Furniture Fair, consists of 20 items that are meant to stand on their own, rather than play supporting roles in an ensemble. By preventing the contributors from being influenced by their partners, Helling kept their minds focused on the paramount theme of simplicity. "I thought we'd get something special that people would be more likely to want—and keep," Helling says. "As a society we have to become less disposable, even if it means manufacturers and retailers selling less." Up close, details like the serene touch-pad dimmer on PearsonLloyd's desk lamp or the inverted triangular dip in Yves Béhar's oak bench certainly reveal their makers' personalities. But as a group, the pieces, all with thin lines and softened angles, hang together surpris-

ingly well. None "scream look at me," says London designer Luke Pearson of PearsonLloyd, which also contributed the injection-molded Coast chair, its bowl-shaped plastic shell resting on spindly steel legs.

The rest of the collection includes a delicate-looking Whisper armchair by the Culdesac collective in Valencia, Spain—which required 14 generations of prototypes to ensure that the slender maple frame would pass structural tests—and the straightforward leather-upholstered Milix sofa by the Israeli-born, Paris-based Arik Levy. "Designers are always under pressure to do something different," Pearson notes, "but if you're trying to create the quintessential coffee table, it can't be something that will look dated in five years."

[www.bernhardt.com](http://www.bernhardt.com)

—JANE MARGOLIES