



By Victoria Redshaw

There is an increasing need for furniture to adapt and change with our lifestyles. It needs to offer versatility and flexibility and provide solutions to our everyday practical problems, making life easier and supporting our needs, working with us rather than simply being inanimate objects, says trend forecaster Victoria Redshaw, who is dissecting the demand for modular design in this month's column.



Hi-Can canopy bed.

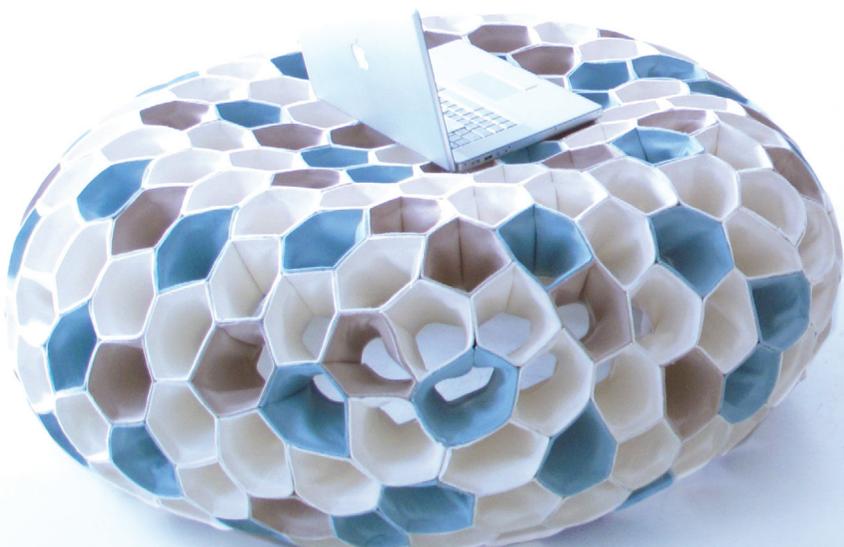
## REVOLUTION

This trend is essentially concerned with introducing space and light into people's lives and homes, along with a modular design philosophy. Space-saving furniture designs which offer multiple layout possibilities are key to providing options and choices that make consumers feel in control of how they live, within open spaces for gathering together and sharing, and also intimate spaces for 'me-time' and relaxation.

The UN estimates that by 2020 55% of the world's population will live in cities and now, for the first time in history, worldwide urban population figures are greater than rural population figures. Having enough space is becoming an issue!

In the extreme, planned developments of space hotels and a planned exploration to determine the habitability of Mars all point in the same direction – we need to utilise the space we have carefully and make plans to find or create more space!

Modular design is a process that sub-divides an item into smaller parts, or modules, that



Coral seating module by STUDIO Aisslinger, photographed by Werner Aisslinger.

can be used together or separately in different ways for multiple functions.

This system of design and way of living enables elements to be attached or removed at will. It is therefore very flexible and is space-saving.

As modern life begins to literally push us into a corner there is a need for intelligent furniture designs that answer our changing needs and evolving lifestyles. Sometimes we are on our own, sometimes we are in groups, sometimes we need to make space, and sometimes we need things close to hand. As more and more is demanded of us as individuals we need thoughtfully-designed furniture that make tasks and life easier, quicker and more pleasurable.

As longevity increasingly becomes a desirable product attribute, modular design considerations help to answer our changing needs over longer periods of time, for instance as our family groups alter. And this system of design naturally addresses green issues – more modules can always be added and so we can ‘plug-on’ rather than replace. This offers benefits to manufacturers and retailers too because it encourages regular purchases of additional modules.

As the migration towards cities continues over the next decade, the infrastructure and architecture of urban environments will be reassessed. How we travel, where we work, where we live and how we live will change accordingly. All of these issues are already being considered by new designers in the furniture, interior design and home products arenas.

Hi-Can (the High Fidelity Canopy bed) is a new interpretation of the classic canopy bed that recreates our most intimate and protective spaces inside the bedroom. Crossing the traditional boundaries of a bed, this is a unique product containing modern technology components such as a computer, console game, video and home theatre system, immersing you in sound and surrounding you with images to create special relaxation, leisure and work experiences.

This piece of furniture creates a bedroom, office, home theatre, den and lounge in one, making studio-style living more appealing.

“As modern life begins to literally push us into a corner there is a need for intelligent furniture designs that answer our changing needs and evolving lifestyles”

Austrian architecture firm AllesWirdGut have literally turned designing a room on its head by creating the Turn-On circular living module concept. Each module looks and functions like a futuristic hamster wheel, each having multiple functions around the inner surface that can be rotated into place by the user inside.

These modules can be bolted together to create a long cylindrical space, with each Turn-On module joining together to create a fully-contained living space. It is an out-there idea, but inspirational nevertheless!

Confluences, a modular sofa designed by Philippe Nigro and manufactured by Ligne Roset, offers a seating solution that looks great when joined together or separated. It encourages an interactive relationship with furniture and puts freedom of choice back into the hands of the consumer via a variety of layout options.

The final example is from Belsize Architects (UK), who have addressed the issue of space and multi-function beautifully as part of their Cannon Place project. The bespoke wall unit

conceals a dumb-waiter from the kitchen below, media centre and storage space. This intelligent design creates a striking wow-factor as well as practical living solutions for the owners.

As the worlds of science and design come together in new collaborations, exciting new furniture solutions can be created with simple aesthetics based on complex technologies. Although more and more designers’ creations start life as computer simulations, products should still maintain and clearly display a human softness.

This can be achieved by designers focusing on ergonomic considerations that result in curvaceous, often visually-soft products that comfort and protect us, and addressing wellbeing issues. This future metropolis aesthetic leads us towards a new way of life in which furniture plays a key role.

**Victoria Redshaw is a leading trend analyst for Scarlet Opus.**

**W [scarletopus.com](http://scarletopus.com)  
W [trendsblog.co.uk](http://trendsblog.co.uk)**



**Confluences  
modular sofa.**