

**FURNITURE DESIGN AND DESIGNERS IN ROMANIA AFTER 1990
BETWEEN RATIONAL AND SEDUCTIVE: FURNITURE DESIGNED BY DRAGOȘ
MOTICĂ (Part II)**

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Abstract:

Among the types of products that the designer Dragoș Motică approached until now, furniture has an important share. Either with chairs or with families of pieces, the designer's focus is concentrated upon finding the best solution for the ensemble of functions and attributes of the product: folding, storage, transportation, simplified manufacturing, occupied space, materials used.

The furniture he designed is made of wood and wooden materials, whose character and properties he is always striving to know better. His designs are meant to be used for both domestic and public spaces.

Key words: furniture design, simplicity, efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

Starting with the second decade of the 21st century, the generations of designer graduates succeeded in becoming a creative mass strongly willing to assert itself professionally, applying their acquired knowledge and skills through personal experience. Dragoș Motică is certainly one of them. A resolute, even combative nature is to be seen in how he asserts and exposes his ideas, the impossible does not exist for him, he perceives obstacles rather as challenges. For ten years after his graduation in 2012, he learned not only to raise his ideas at the level he envisioned, but also to get visibility and public appreciation. Curiosity made him work with various materials, thus discovering new qualities to be incorporated into future creations. "One is able to experiment quite a lot with materials, all the time. It is wonderful to see what they are able to do, what response you get from them" (Dragoș Motică cited by Sabău 2017). Three years ago, in 2020, Dragoș Motică co-founded ASKIA Furniture, Bucharest, a studio he also coordinates as Creative Director. A few of his creations were presented in a previous paper by Sabău (2022).

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to present one of the most appreciated Romanian furniture and domestic object designers, a personality who has to be viewed as a model for present generations of creators, whose creative concepts are able to develop a clear vision of the future.

METHOD

The paper is based on the analysis of Dragoș Motică's design process, innovation capability and evolution as member of the Romanian designer community, accompanied by several face-to-face dialogues and interviews with the designer during the last five years.

WOOD FURNITURE DESIGN

For many Romanian furniture designers (e.g. Corvin Cristian, Constantin Alupoaiiei, Emil Răgușilă, Cristian Branea etc.) wood represents the primary material of creation, with its help they begin to apply their first ideas. Being an accessible and friendly material, wood seduces the imagination of the creators with its texture and grain, always leading them to finding reasons for new experiments. Attracted by its intrinsic qualities, Dragoș Motică worked wood with pleasure and inquisitiveness. He approached it through simple techniques and structures, attempting to penetrate its unseen meanings as deep as possible. As a natural reduction route, simplicity became a basic principle, the quintessential

An example of his earlier design is the furniture set *Marco*, 2014, composed of: stool, barstool, bench. These pieces are versatile, they can be used in either domestic or public spaces, outdoors and indoors. Light and simultaneously solid, they show maximum simplification. They have cylindrical beech legs which are hold in position by metal connectors. The seat is rectangular, made of plywood to which a 30mm thick layer of cork was added, with softly rounded ergonomic corners. Their simple structure, accessible materials and careful execution, all are concurring to achieve intrinsic quality. The metallic elements – connectors and leg end supports – with their saturated colors bring fresh accents to the clear composition of every object. The happy idea to use cork over the seat panel means for the designer to resort to a friendly and smooth material (Sabău 2017) which blends harmoniously with wood and metal and makes *Marco* successfully avoid the „commonplace” design zone (Fig.1, a,b,c, d).



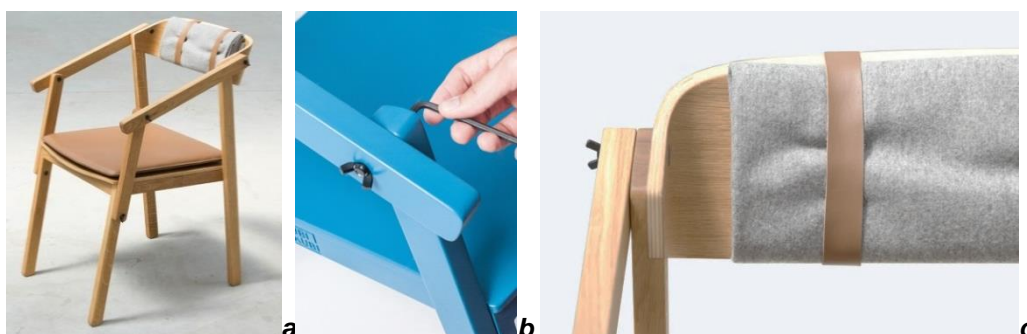
Fig. 1.

a - Marco Stool; b – Marco Bar stool; c - Marco Bench; d - Marco, metal connectors.

With the *Atelier* set, 2015 - office chair and table, Dragoș Motică achieves more than a new furniture idea. His aim is to simplify as far as possible, meaning to pursue the extreme standardization of the wooden slats, which becomes the focus point of the project. These pieces remind us not only of Breuer's wooden slat-chair from 1923 (Gleiniger 2006), but also of the avantgarde position of furniture towards other creative fields (Droste 2002). Thus this attitude specific to the beginnings of the Bauhaus School (Droste 2002) is reiterated now after 100 years. We know that under Walter Gropius' guidance „the furniture workshop was the first to respond to the standardization need”. At the same time the *Atelier* set offers the idea of home assembling of components (DIY), due to their simple fastening with butterfly screws. This economic type of assembly taken by the designer from the world of technical fittings has a direct effect upon manufacturing costs.

This set is not named *Atelier* accidentally, indeed its concept, form and materials remind us the artist's studio (*atelier*) easel. The designer is also attentive with the details that provide comfort. For example the chair's seat and back get leather cushions and a blanket is attached to the backrest. When not in use the blanket is attached on the back of the seat (Fig.2, a,b,c,d). Underneath the tabletop there is a detachable drawer which can be mounted at the left- or right-hand side. Made of ash- or oakwood the set bestows upon the wood craft a fresh contemporary expression which makes no stylistic concessions (Fig.2, e,f,g,h)

The ideas presented in the *Atelier* ensemble are carried on in the *Fair and Square* Set, 2018. The timelapse that flowed between the two moments seems to have confirmed their veridicity. Here the designer resorted to square-section slats, a shape able to contribute even more at simplification, thus delicately interpreting one of Rietveld's famous joints. The components of this set are like *Marco*'s: bench, barstool, chair. They are made of beechwood, with a limited number of dimensions, in order to bring more efficiency to the manufacturing process. The efficiency is also enhanced by the DIY option, the personal mounting/demounting of the elements, allowing the flat-pack solution (Sabău 2017) an approach which is both economic and creative (Fig.3, a,b,c,d).



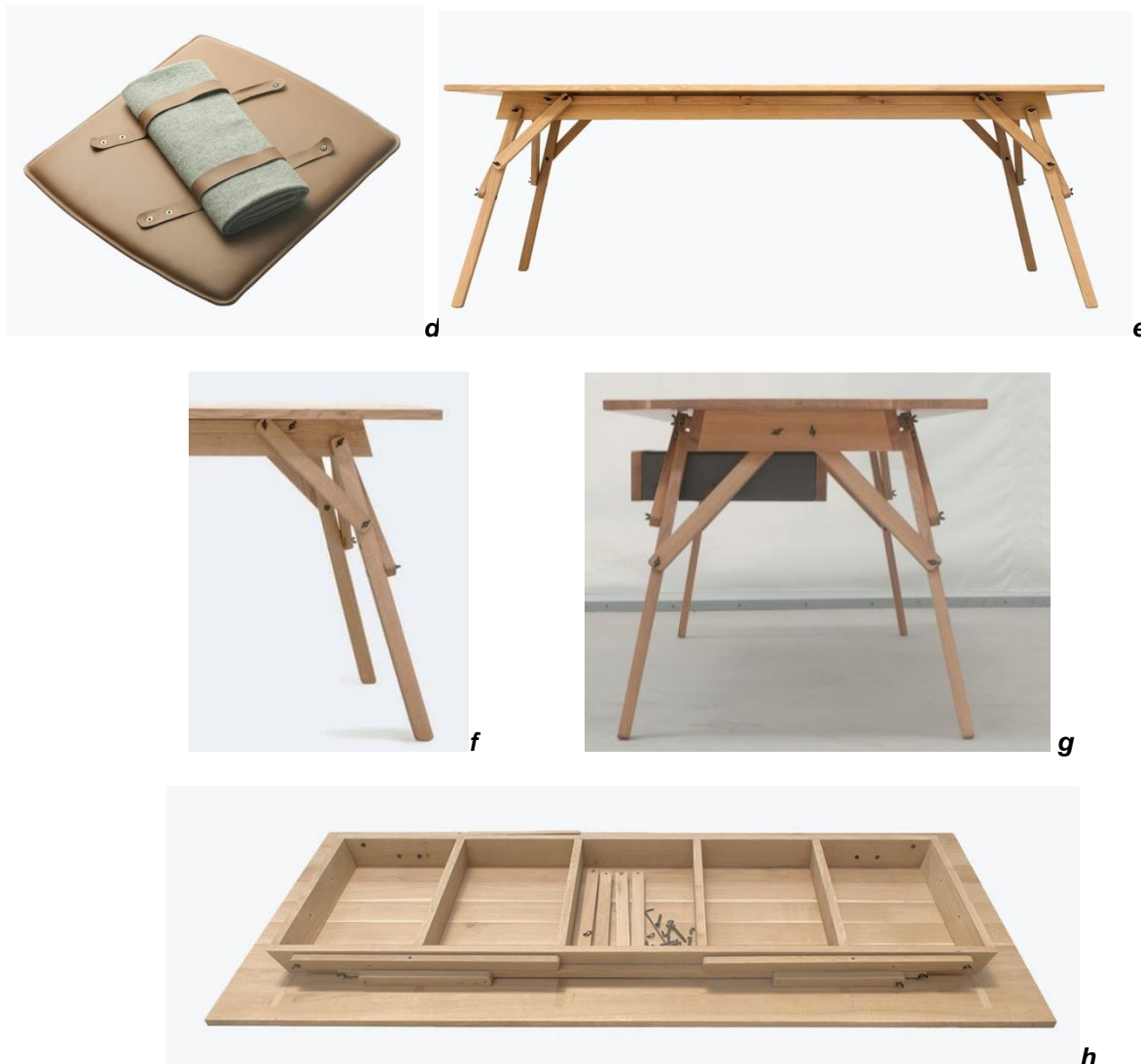


Fig. 2.

**a – Atelier chair; b – Atelier chair, fastening detail; c – Atelier chair, backrest&blanket;
d - Atelier chair, back of seat cushion and blanket; e - Atelier table; f - Atelier table, detail;
g - Atelier table, drawer; h - Atelier, table flat-pack.**





Fig. 3.

a - Fair&Square, bench; b - Fair&Square, chair; c - Fair&Square, bar stool; d - Fair&Square bar stool flat-pack.

A special attention given to comfort possible when working with molded plywood determined the designer to create the bar stools *Version 3*, 2018. The two versions with different seat heights have a slender outline which is also solid and reliable. The seat and back form a continuous line, softly rounded for an ergonomic sitting position. These stools can be used in public and residential buildings (Fig.4, a,b).



Fig. 4.

a - Version 3, bar stool; b - Version 3, bar stool detail.

Efficiency, reduced occupying space, maximum utility, these are attributes characterizing the *Folding chair*, 2018, a chair which is able to play a „secondary” role as well, when increasing the number of sitters at a table. Its simple silhouette, with legs made of solid ash wood, highlights the generous components (seat and backrest made of molded plywood veneered with ash wood or walnut) which are softly curved (Fig.5, a,b).



Fig. 5.

a - Folding chair; b – Folding chair, lateral view.

Bathroom furniture, rarely visible in the Romanian design landscape, is approached by Dragoş Motică from the same perspective of simplification. He created the *Fold* collection, 2016, with its three components (sink stand, mirror shelf and towel rack), with a unified structure. The reduced concept of this set is certainly seductive: less elements do not seem possible. Made of ashwood, all components are supple, but solid, configuring a discreet and elegant presence. Square-section slats are used for all of them, thus applying at this bathroom furniture the same kind of thinking as for the *Atelier* and *Fair and Square* sets (Fig.6, a,b,c).



Fig. 6.

a - Fold, bathroom furniture; b - Fold, sink stand; c - Fold, towel rack.

He announced the flat-pack concept for the first time when the set *My Way* was released (2014). The set is composed of a table and two benches. The table top and the seat of the benches are made of oakwood, they have metal legs and rails. They are easily demountable, a practical solution for packaging, transport and storage (Fig.7, a,b).



Fig. 7.

a - My Way, table and bench; b - My Way, detail.

Strim is a very modest household object to be present in one's portfolio, but showing a relevant professional attitude. The designer started from his own observation on the juice left by fruits and vegetables when minced on a trencher. To eliminate this unpleasantness, he provided grooves for collecting the juice, manufactured on a CNC machine. Simple, efficient, ingenious! (Fig.8, a, b).

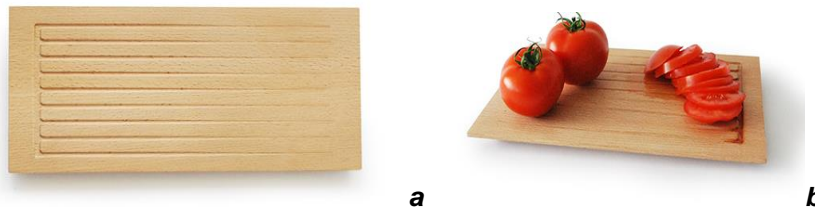


Fig. 8.

a - *Strim*, grooves of the chopping board; b - *Strim*, using the chopping board.

More than a useful object, through its concept and carrying out, *Strim* essentializes the designer's vision of an object, the way he thinks about it, even if it plays a supremely modest role in everyday life. Maybe in this respectful attitude lies the richness of his design creation, conferred by layers of design perception and human understanding.

CONCLUSIONS

In his furniture design Dragoș Motică uses principles of efficiency which other Romanian designers do not seem to be attracted by at all. The objects he creates are reduced at the least quantity of resources involved: materials as well as manufacturing processes. Also he used and developed in most of his creations the flat-pack concept.

At the same time, he is one of the designers able to combine harmoniously and efficiently the functionality of the object with a significant formgiving, a relationship to be found in the very name of the objects, like in *Fair and Square*, *Marco*, *Atelier*, *Fold*, *My Way* examples.

Aknowledgements

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