

ALTHOUGH Mies van der Rohe may have been one of the first to bring the "indoors outdoors" with his German Pavilion for the Barcelona International Exhibition in 1929, the concept of integrating interior and exterior living spaces by using one overarching theme is one which still eludes most of us. A house may have been exquisitely designed by the latest trendy Clerkenwell architect, the furniture hand-carried from Italy, but as soon as you step outside, it feels as though you have stumbled into the back garden of an old country pub, complete with the

ubiquitous hanging baskets, white plastic chairs and splinter-ridden picnic tables.

Gardening programmes and magazines such as *New Eden* continue to proliferate, but finding funky outdoor furniture remains a challenge. All over Britain, architects are erecting vast sheets of glazing that put their clients directly into the landscape. Unfortunately, what often strikes them about the view is not the stunning modern foliage, but the sight of an irredeemably dull teak table or the decomposing metal chairs that came with the house. And while California-style wooden decking is now to be found in the most fashionable

London homes, all too often the same person trying to recreate Malibu in Britain seems perfectly happy to sunbathe on a fold-up green canvas chair that falls over every time you change positions (and needs to be taken indoors as soon as the less than Californian climate changes).

"It's amazing what people put outside," says architect John Pawson. "I understand why people use plastic – it never deteriorates – but it's unbelievably ugly." Pawson's own London garden is a mirror image of his basement kitchen/dining room, divided by a large sliding glass

Above: Le Corbusier's Beistégui apartment in Paris showed that the sky is the limit. Right: Alison Crowther's Modules stools, £705 each, from Flow.

door. The stone floor is the same indoors as outdoors. The kitchen counter also extends into the garden, where it

becomes a bench (which hides all the unsightly utilities such as the boiler) and an outdoor grill. The outdoor dining table, which is made of cedar, is almost identical to the one inside. Both areas are frequently used for entertaining and often simultaneously.

"We generally have the first course outside, then it rains and we come indoors, then it clears up again and we have dessert outside," says Pawson, who



Outside edge

Gardens are passé; these days it's the "outdoor living room". But who is making funky furniture to put in it? Helen Kirwan-Taylor seeks stylish alternatives to the ubiquitous white plastic set.

is presently designing an outdoor collection (not yet available) for the Italian design firm Driade, consisting of a table, bench and low table made in either cedar or teak. You could be forgiven for mistaking it for indoor furniture. "I see the garden as an outside living room," he explains. "It's got walls, furniture, a fireplace, just no ceiling."

The outdoor living room was a concept explored in 1931 by Le Corbusier with the Beistégui apartment in Paris. By setting a fireplace into the raised cement walls of the roof terrace, Le Corbusier effectively created a functioning living room that could be used year-round. He

made grass into a carpet (this was long before the days of astroturf) and hung paintings on the walls.

An outdoor living room is also the best way to describe Janice Blackburn's London garden, designed with the help

of landscape architect Tim Rees of Schoenaich and Rees. French windows in the basement open out on to a terrace, the stone floor of which extends from the dining room (the demarcation point from which Rees took over from the

architectural firm Allies & Morrison); here, a concrete table, a wavy bench which also features a grill, and a series of concrete vessels by Bowles and Linares make up a second dining area for the home. Plastic, metal and fibreglass chairs from The Conran Shop surround the table, which shows no signs of having endured a cold winter.

Rees's use of stainless steel trellis gives the garden a crisp and architectural appearance. But Blackburn and Rees also went out of their way to find mature plants which make the garden, finished only a year ago, look established. Blackburn, the curator of the ongoing



"In Focus" series on craft at Sotheby's, is a great lover of furniture and has employed this passion around her home. Two benches, one "upholstered" entirely in box with a camomile seat, and the other with a stone seat with a box surround, blend effortlessly into the surrounding greenery (although of course they also serve their purpose: to provide a comfortable place to sit).

The grass is dotted with a series of pale green square ceramic tiles by Rupert Spira. Everywhere you look, there are magical touches – an award Blackburn received from Mont Blanc has been planted into the garden, along with the head of Keats which once hung in front of her favourite pub in Hampstead and was rescued from a skip.

The final touch still to come will be a series of interlocking benches by woodworker Jim Partridge, which will sit in the centre of the grass area. This is not a sculpture garden which one walks through and admires and then goes to the terrace (or inside) to relax: this is a living room with endless corners and crevices in which to nestle with a good book. "We are always outside in the summer," says Blackburn, "so it was important that indoors and outdoors worked together."

The integration of indoor and outdoor spaces becomes even more important when the outdoor space is a small garden or a roof terrace. "One of the key things if you don't have room to store outdoor furniture indoors is that it has to be durable," says landscape architect Lindsey Whitelaw of Whitelaw Turkington. "More importantly, where boundaries are blurred between indoors and outdoors, furniture needs to be at home in either context." In a penthouse apartment in London's Clerkenwell, Whitelaw created a contemporary roof garden using decking, modern plants, a series of screens to protect from the wind, pebbles, and a shallow rectangular pond made of galvanised steel. Sliding glass doors create a sense of continuity between the wooden floors inside and the outside decking. But the contemporary duplex demands an



equally modern terrace; thus, rather than opt for the usual wooden furniture, the clients chose to enjoy the outdoor life reclining on sleek white metal chaise longues with a vinyl stripe and table designed by Richard Schultz for B&B Italia (prices range from £520 for a table to £1,183 for an adjustable chaise longue) and a geometric metal chair designed by the late Harry Bertoia.

Meanwhile, architect Anthony Hudson of Hudson Featherstone has taken the indoor/outdoor idea to the limit with Baggy House, built for Goldman Sachs partner Gavyn Davies in Cornwall. Here, he approached the ground level – which is linked with the garden via a mammoth glass window

which lowers electronically into the floor – as if it were a giant terrace.

The furniture is casually grouped so that when the window is opened, the indoors effectively becomes the outdoors, complete with several separate seating areas. "I wanted it to feel like you were outside when inside," says Hudson, who adds that he did not even have to use outdoor furniture as it's not necessary to protect it from the elements. "The window drops down, but when it rains, you just push it back up."

But even rain and frost (the traditional killers) are no longer an issue for outdoor furniture designers, thanks to the latest

Top and above left: Janice Blackburn's terrace, and bench in box. Above: mosaic table, Candace Bahouth. Left: Natamel Gluska's elm chair, £8,500.

produced Lord Yo and Toy chairs, both stackable and also made of propylene, which feature in the patio areas of many restaurants.

Also featured in the show were Arad's Tom Vac, a corrugated polypropylene shell chair with tubular steel powder-coated or chrome-plated base, and the Felt chair by Marc Newson, in rein-

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advances in technology. Viaduct's recent show, "The Great Outdoors", introduced the sophisticated new polypropylene technology with the launch of Philippe Starck's Slick Slick (£39.95), a stackable chair that can be used indoors or outdoors. Starck, always one jump ahead of the rest, has already

forced fibreglass with aluminium legs. The price, however – £1,790 – will have British purchasers hoping for a rapid acceleration in global warming so that they can see some return on their outlay.

The low elliptical cement tables and stools that come in shades of terracotta, green, yellow and grey that Maya Lin, an





American graduate of the Yale school of architecture, designed for Knoll (£490-£1,214), were also a big hit (they're already huge in the US), as were Ross Lovegrove's clever Pod Lens for the Italian Luceplan. These incandescent lights come with metres of cabling and can be hung from trees or walls or attached to tables to create different atmospheres. The Solar Bud, £79.90, also by Lovegrove, can be dug down into any part of the garden or exterior path and works on solar rechargeable batteries.

Any or all of the pieces can be used indoors or outdoors (in one magazine article the furniture was photographed under water), which shows that the division between how we furnish our indoor and outdoor spaces is increasingly hazy. The trend is illustrated by Jasper Morrison's popular plastic Lima chair, which is available in several fluorescent colours and features in as many lofts (and children's playrooms) as it does in roof terraces.

In fact, the name of the exhibition currently on show until May 27 at Flow in London's Notting Hill is "Inside Out".



Top and above: Janice Blackburn's concrete touches. Left: Jim Partridge hatstand. Right: Paul Anderson chair. Below right: Felicity Aylieff tulip vessel, £4,230, from Flow.

oak stools (£705 per piece) which are reminiscent of Christian Liaigre's Nagato stools. Jean Lowe's organic ceramic and stoneware pebbles, rock pools and boulders (which at a stretch could be used for seating) would make a nice change from the usual array of pots, as would Felicity Aylieff's glass and porcelain fountains, urns and sculptural shell-like forms. All designers can, of course, be commissioned.

Woodworkers have traditionally concentrated on interiors, but thanks to an increase in lottery money for public outdoor projects, many more furniture designers are now focusing on what can



be done on a larger scale. Jim Partridge, a graduate of the John Makepeace School, has designed sculptural seats and benches for public projects (such as Grizedale Forest in the Lake District) as well as private commissions. One of his pieces, a steel seat, is now being put into production by the Sussex-based design group, Lithic. Another star designer, Israeli-born Natanel Gluska, uses chainsaws to carve massive abstract seats, chaises longues and benches reminiscent of primitive African artefacts. It takes a brave man to plunge £11,000 into an outdoor seat, but that is precisely what Karl Lagerfeld has done (Donna Karan, meanwhile, prefers to keep her Gluska tucked indoors). Gluska is now

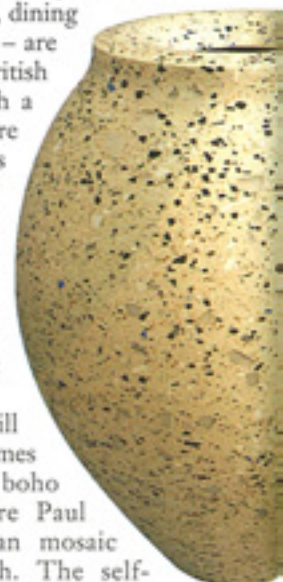
available through David Gill's London showroom, which represents leading contemporary lines. Architect of the moment Spencer Fung, who is currently working on the new General Trading Company store in London's Sloane Street, has also designed an outdoor collection called Java. The six "living room" pieces – a long seat, sofa, low table, dining table, bench and lantern – are made of solid slabs of British oak or ivoko wood with a graphite steel base, and are available through his London studio and Pucci in New York. Tougher wood can live outside, but many choose to keep it indoors (softened with cushions). Prices start at £860 for a chair.

Other designers who will appeal to those whose homes and gardens are more boho chic than city slick are Paul Anderson and American mosaic artist Candace Bahouth. The self-

It takes a brave man to plunge £11,000 into an outdoor chair as Karl Lagerfeld has done; Donna Karan keeps her Gluska seat indoors.

Curators Yvonna Demezynska and Vivien Fotiadis have gathered half a dozen talented craftsmen and artists whose work is entirely focused on the outdoors. The most celebrated designer is Alison Crowther, a graduate of the Royal College of Art, whose interest is in exploring the nature of unseasoned English oak (she carves into very large pieces of wood selected from whole trees at local sawmills). Her gorgeous "pod" seat – shaped like a giant spiralling ammonite fossil with a seat in the middle – is deeply comfortable and turns a shade of silver after a few winters. At £3,525, it is also an investment. Less expensive but equally intriguing are Crowther's Modules, a series of square

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taught Anderson (available through Designers Guild) builds chairs – thrones, in fact – benches and tables using salvaged and unseasoned green oak. Anderson's style is naive and looks deceptively simple, although much thought goes into creating each individual and expensive piece (prices start at £1,500). Anderson's work reads as contemporary art, although it is very much

and 1999 to great acclaim, adds a sense of the whimsical and fantastic to garden furniture. One of the most beautiful pieces is the mosaic tapestry chair – which looks as if it is made from tapestry but is actually all mosaic. Bahouth has created everything from benches to tables to grottoes and

Above: Spencer Fung's Java outdoor collection, from £860 per piece. Below right: Fung's Java table lantern, £280. Below left: long oak chair, price on application, by Natamel Gluska.

inspecting the huge array of plant life (courtesy of the teams of tenured gardeners), occasionally taking a seat on an ancient stone bench to admire the colours, the

smells and the composition.

Today, flowers have been replaced by hearty architectural plants or swathes of bamboo, and grass has mostly been supplanted by decking or Scottish beach pebbles. The only composition that matters is whether the two stainless steel chaises longues sit on the terrace or the minuscule area of green. As outdoor spaces are often as small, compact and expensive as our homes, every inch counts. If and when the sunshine does appear, we need to be seated comfortably, and stylishly, in anticipation. ♦

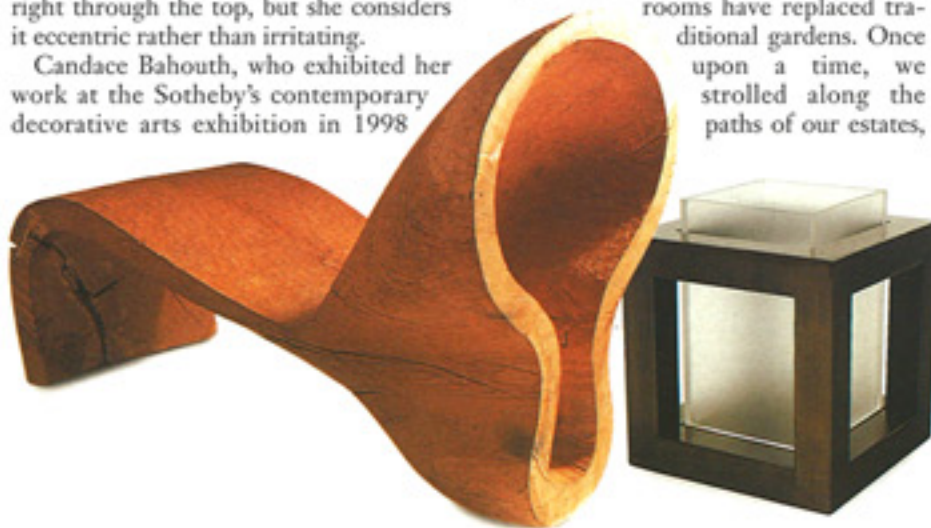
The legs of the dining table he made for Tricia Guild stick right through the top, but she considers it eccentric.

there to be used. "My work is about stretching the limits of furniture," says Anderson. "I like to baffle people: I like to tease them so that they are not always sure what things are for, and then finally to reassure them so that the piece becomes a favourite focal point." The legs of the dining table he made for designer Tricia Guild, for example, stick right through the top, but she considers it eccentric rather than irritating.

Candace Bahouth, who exhibited her work at the Sotheby's contemporary decorative arts exhibition in 1998

fountains in her signature colourful mosaics (commissions start at £1,000). For one client, she even made a mosaic table which looks as though it is made of leopard skin. Bahouth is now designing part of an outdoor living room in Florida for Susie Elson, the great American collector of British craft.

It could be argued that outdoor living rooms have replaced traditional gardens. Once upon a time, we strolled along the paths of our estates,



INS AND OUTS

Paul Anderson, 104 West Street, Hartland, Devon EX39 6BQ (01237-441 645). **Candace Bahouth**, 01749-890 433. **B&B Italia**, queries via Geoffrey Drayton, 85 Hampstead Road, London NW1 (020-7387 5840). **Bowles and Linares**, 32 Hereford Road, London W2 (020-7229 9886). **The Conran Shop**, 81 Fulham Road, London SW3 (020-7589 7401). **Designers Guild**, 277 King's Road, London SW3 (020-7243 7300). **Flow**, 1-5 Needham Street, W11 (020-7243 0782). **Spencer Fung**, 3 Pine Mews, London NW1 (020-8960 9883). **Natamel Gluska at David Gill**, 3 Loughborough Street, London SE11 (020-7793 1100). **Hudson Featherstone**, 49-59 Old Street, London EC1 (020-7490 5656). **Lithic**, 01480-403 400. **Pucci**, 44 West 18th Street, New York 10011 (001212-633 0452). **Schoenaich and Rees**, 188 Sutton Court Road, London W4 (020-8994-1944). **Rupert Spira**, 01588-650 588. **Viaduct**, 1-10 Summer's Street, London EC1 (020-7278 8456). **Whitelaw Turkington**, 354 Kennington Road, London SE11 (020-7820 0388).