

100% Design 2005 review

Where do you start with a show like 100% Design? From its meagre upbringing as a very small trade show 11 years ago the show really has blossomed in to a huge shop window for the creativity and talent that now exists, and more importantly is nurtured and accepted, in our society. Having blossomed the show has also spread its wings with “sister” shows and derivatives in other countries (100% Tokyo and Moscow for example) and corners (100% East in Brick Lane).

Having had the sense to pre-register (did you see those queues?) I potted along to 100% on the Friday morning. Having just had my chest scanned and walking through the door I awarded myself a few Brownie points for almost taking out Lawrence Llewelyn Bowen; if it hadn't been the his cuffs acting as some bizarre flag alerting system he would have probably ended up in casualty. He's a lot smaller than I imagined (easy to say when you're 6'2") but seems to make up for his lack of stature by speaking loudly. Needless to say he was surrounding himself with a couple of luvvies, both of whom to be fair could have done with a make-over themselves; Carole Smilie was unfortunately nowhere in sight.

The diversity of exhibitors at 100% really is astonishing. Under one roof you have huge multinational companies such as Herman Miller and Amtico all the way down to one man bands who have produced some funky lighting or ceramicware. What balances the show though is that stand sizes are restricted meaning that no one exhibitor dominates, for this reason alone 100% works. The diversity of product areas is also phenomenal – lighting, soft seating, art, cooker hoods (that look like art), kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, carpets, cushions, bundles of twigs, designery gizmos, inflatable offices, the list is endless. With such a spread to feast on it's almost impossible to identify any trends, that said there is one constant – visitors come because the products shown are leading edge, stimulating and fresh. If you want to see what Heals, Habitat, Conran et al will have in store in the future then this is the show to attend. Yes, it's primarily focused on domestic or retail interiors but for a number of years I've had a philosophy that office furniture finishes lag 18 months behind kitchen finishes. And as we become more focused on design and the environments which we prefer to be in then it is inevitable that our domestic and retail environments will converge with our office space. You have been warned.

I haven't done any statistical analysis to ascertain which type of industry had the most space at the show but over the last couple of years I've noticed certain niches being more prevalent. For example last year I recollect loads of carpet and floor covering companies, this year however it seemed to be lighting and showers (best not mixed).

100%Design, like so many other UK shows, provides a great opportunity for catching up with old colleagues and friends. Behind the realities of the business front end there's a real sense of fun and frivolity at the show. An old friend from my student days is now running a lighting company and whilst chatting with him on his stand I could hear a whole host of professional cameras starting to whir and flash. Turning around it became evident that the flashes were directed at a product and person on the front edge of my friend's stand. What's going on and who's that, I asked. "Being follicley challenged you wouldn't know but that's Nicky Clarke, the hairdresser, promoting our award winning latest lamp design" came the nonchalant answer.

100% Design – leading edge design across all sectors with a few celebs thrown in. Gotta love it.

100% Design'06 21 – 24th September, Earls Court 2.



