

IIID 2012: Brief & Design Story

From the desk of Mr.Jinu Kurian

The brief for IIID Godrej Innovations 2012 had premises which seemed to be in conflict with each other. The brief called for the design of a high-end office suite for the 'CXO' profile individual in corporate organisations. Typically, a brief like this would demand a suite that was custom-built for an individual & exclusive. However, the brief also demanded that the suite be modular, customizable & flexible. There was also a need for it to be mass-manufactured. These were scenarios that were not necessarily compatible. Perhaps, the real challenge of the competition was in resolving those conflicts.

As a design team, we were quick to spot this challenge & chose not to respond immediately with design ideas. We initiated a set of pre-design studies on the following: the user profile, the activities of the user-profile at her/his workplace, ergonomics, the workplace in the digital context, materials & ergonomics. We also engaged ourselves in a study of workplaces used by the proposed user profile.

In parallel, we were also looking at the requirement of making the suite modular, customizable, flexible & mass-manufacturability

These studies acted as pointers to a host of design ideas. For a long time, we kept producing formal or tectonic variants. It took us some time to assemble a diverse set of thoughts in to a cohesive set of actions. The subsequent process can be summed up in 4 actions as below:

Classify: *Analyze the working patterns of the user-profile & classify them in to activities, gadgets & accessories. Respond to the classifications with products & accessories that are specific to a utility, flexible & customizable.*

Subtract: *Eliminate all the fixed element from a conventional workstation & provide them as independent attachments or as variables. Enable greater flexibility & customization in the process. Express the worktable as a light, uncluttered & contemporary product.*

Modify: Scale the worktop to reflect the profile of the user. Re-draw the profile of the worktop to create an extension that can accommodate gadgets & accessories. Create a work-pad in wood to act as a signature feature. Conceive the suite as a collection of primary elements: the table, side table & storage console

Add: Design a range of secondary elements/products like a discussion table, file holder, book end that can combine with the primary elements to offer a range of possibilities.

These actions acted as the foundation for further formal & tectonic alternatives. We adopted a design language that was clean, minimal while not being cold & sharp. We combined materials like brushed steel & solid surface with the warmth of wood & veneer to create sensorial contrasts. The suite is to be symbolic of the contemporary workplace: dynamic, creative & collaborative.

Post design process, we worked with a set of skilled craftsmen to produce the first prototype of the suite. Inputs & insights from the craftsmen were critical to the final suite.

The journey from design to prototyping to the stage when we are almost ready to take it to the market has been of high academic quality. We will be looking forward to the outcomes.