



KIT OF PARTS

ADD-ONS

A pencil clip, shallow tray, and dry-erase tablet attach to the shelf supports with a dovetail clip and can slide up, down, or around the tubes.

Richard Holbrook returns to basics with the easy-to-ship affordable Lucy desk.

10 PIECES

Lucy is comprised of ten carefully crafted parts: the hollow-body work surface is light and strong with a contoured edge and receptacles for the four legs and two tubular supports that hold the overhead shelf and two bookends. Holbrook says, "Every piece is designed to resonate with a clear expression of purpose."

MATERIALS

"Materials are used as sparingly as possible—no toxic chemicals or processes—and raw finishes on the metal components," Holbrook says. The wood is an American cherry veneer over molded birch plywood with a clear satin finish. The hollow-body construction makes the work surface about half the weight of a similar surface in solid wood or particleboard.

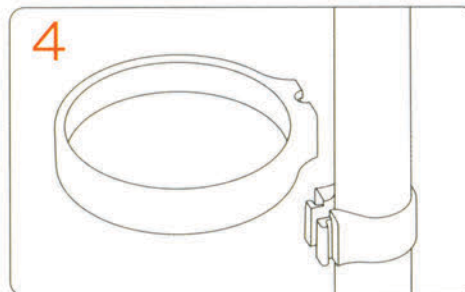
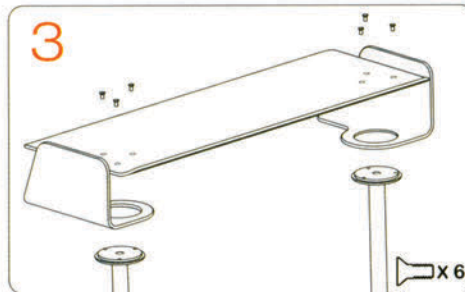
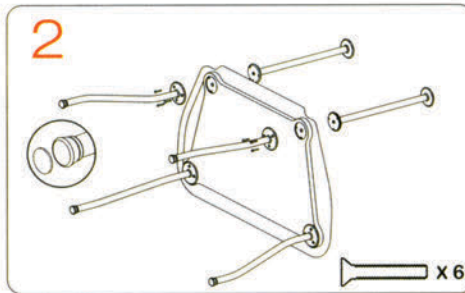
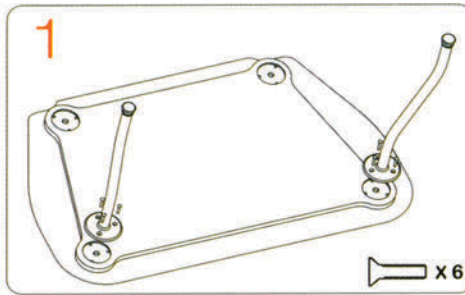
By Martin C. Pedersen

Industrial designer Richard Holbrook calls working for large companies “like being a director for a major studio,” adding, “you get a lot of research and marketing input from the company, and suddenly it becomes this big production with a cast of thousands.” Holbrook has successfully navigated these corporate waters—the Ambi work-chair and the Levity collection for Herman Miller met with critical acclaim, and his products for Thermador helped turn that company around—but the designer has also experienced his share of frustrations. Most recently production of DNA—his office system produced in collaboration with Teknion—was halted after two years (See *Enterprise*, June 2002, p. 78).

Lucy—a new desk launched in April by Design Within Reach and debuting at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF)—represents a return to basics. “For nearly twenty years I’ve worked with large corporations on very structured programs with big commercial goals,” Holbrook says. “I was focused on solving other people’s problems but had few opportunities to create a statement of my own sensibilities. I needed to do something that was a pure, simple expression.”

The desk, inspired by the hollow-body construction of guitars and named after B. B. King’s famous instrument, is part of the new Unplugged collection that also includes a second desk (with a side table), a table, and a bookcase. After creating the forms independently, Holbrook is now tackling issues of manufacturing, distribution, and price. “For this to work economically we have to make it in Thailand,” he says. “I can’t find manufacturers here who can meet my price point.” He wants to sell Lucy for less than a thousand dollars and plans to use feedback from ICFF to gauge commercial receptiveness to the line.

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4 EASY STEPS

Unpacking and assembly takes less than an hour and requires just a hex-key, which is included. The illustrated instructions show a full-size detail of the correct screw to use at each attachment. “When you fall in love with something in a showroom or catalog, you have certain expectations about how it will become part of your life,” Holbrook says. “If getting the thing home, unpacking, and assembling it are frustrating, it takes some of the magic out of the relationship.”

FINISHED PRODUCT

“Lucy is an expression of my personal ideas about design, integrity, beauty, and responsible use of resources,” Holbrook says. “It is just a desk, but a good desk, I hope a beautiful one. It won’t take up much space and brings a little lightness, warmth, and poetry into your life.”



HOLLOW-BODY CONSTRUCTION

Holbrook says: “My ‘big idea’ moment came one night while I was playing the guitar and realized I was holding in my hands an object that had tremendous strength, tactile richness, and warmth but was very light and used few raw materials. So I thought there might be a way to use molded plywood skins and some kind of simple frame to get the same benefits from a work surface.”



PACK AND SHIP

Designed to ship via standard ground service, Lucy packs in one carton and weighs 40 pounds. Double-weight cardboard, polyethylene bags, and foam protect components from rough handling; all are easy to recycle. “When you open the carton, the instructions are the first thing you see,” Holbrook says. “A label on the bottom of the work surface has cleaning and care information, and the parts come out of the box pretty much in order of assembly.”