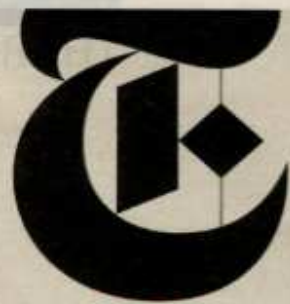# T

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DESIGN SPRING 2008

IT'S ALL ABOUT...

The 1980s ... Design From China ... Creative
Recycling ... Bear Necessities ...
A Whiff of Modernism ... A Curator Obsessed.

Stefan Zwicky's 1980 concrete chair, ''Grand
confort, sans confort, dommage à Corbu,'' was
his subversive take on Le Corbusier's iconic
steel-and-leather Grand Confort chair of 1928.

Jagged Edge

IN 1980S DESIGN, THE ONLY RULE WAS THAT THERE WERE NO RULES.

Checkout time The German designer Frank Schreiner turned a shopping cart into a manifesto in the 1983 Consumer's Rest lounge chair.

Last June, among the slick, limited-edition minimalist and staid blue-chip vintage pieces at Design Miami/Basel, the locally based Chart Foundation showed a group of 1980s furniture designs that were notable for their raw, awkward energy and sharp social and aesthetic commentary. The most striking of these was a chair by the Zurich architect Stefan Zwicky. A sly poke at Le Corbusier's famous Grand Confort chair, with its shiny tubular steel frame embracing fat leather cushions, Zwicky's version is rendered in unforgiving concrete and framed in crude steel reinforcing bar. Provocative and gleefully anti-functional, it brought back memories of that heady, subversive decade in which seemingly anything went.

Zwicky's chair popped up again in December at Design Miami (in Miami), when the Demisch Danant gallery put it in a show of radical '80s designs that also included pieces like the precarious-looking D8 chair (designed in 1987 for a cafe at Documenta 8) by the German collective Pentagon. Suzanne Demisch, one of the gallery's owners, explains that this work is "particularly relevant now," as it can be seen as a "comment on all the hype

around limited editions."

Two decades ago, this do-it-yourself, punk-rock equivalent of design was all the rage. Ron Arad, for one, made a chair out of a Rover car seat. Frank Schreiner, a German designer (known as Stiletto), turned a shopping cart into a chair he sardonically christened "Consumer's Rest." A young Jasper Morrison turned two sets of handlebars, a piece of wood and a circle of glass into a table, and fashioned a chair out of fiberboard and wing nuts. An even younger Marc Newson produced the iconic, industrial-baroque Lockheed Lounge.

While '80s work by big names brings good prices at auction — Morrison's Wing-nut Chair fetched $50,000 at Sotheby's last year, and we all know what the Lockheed Lounge is worth now — the edgier pieces are still under

the market's radar. "Radical German '80s design doesn't have an auction following yet," says James Zemaitis, who heads Sotheby's 20th-century design department. "But I want it to." He sees the decade as an important time for designers like Arad, Morrison, Martin Szekely and the great Shiro Kuramata, and for what Zemaitis calls the neo-Baroque work of André Dubreuil, Danny Lane and Elizabeth Garouste and Mattia Bonetti. The famed duo, who now work separately, first became known for their "barbarian" designs, which were both decorative and anachronistic. An example of their '80s work will be in Sotheby's next 20th-century design sale (March 28), along with early pieces by the fellow provocateurs Szekely, Massimo Iosa Ghini and Philippe Starck. Ah, youth. PILAR VILADAS

(1) Ron Arad's 1981 Rover Chair; (2) Danny Lane's 1987 Etruscan Chair; (3) Pentagon Group's D8 chair from 1987; (4) Shiro Kuramata's 1986 How High the Moon chair for Vitra; (5) Jasper Morrison's 1985 Wing-nut Chair.