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shape shifter

Multi-talented designer William Lee moves easily between disciplines, with his latest work a collection of geometric furniture.

WORDS CHRISTOPHER DEWOLF

For 10 years, William Lee worked as an industrial designer at some of Silicon Valley's biggest firms. Then he decided he was tired of all that. "It was time to evolve," says the Macau-born, San Francisco-raised designer. So last year, he packed his belongings and moved to New York, where he is now exploring the outer limits of his own creative interests. "I've always been interested in other disciplines. A lot of other areas of design have influenced me in how I do my work and what I create," he says. "I love graphic design, architecture, interiors, furniture. I'm an amalgamation of all of those things."

Lee's newest work, a collection of geometrically-inspired home furnishings, is a big step away from the consumer electronics and plastic parts that he was designing in California. Each piece tiptoes down the line between form and function.

One of the pieces, the Conform Chair, stretches a woven elastic surface over steel rod frames. From afar, it's hard to tell what it actually is, but when you sit down, the elastic canvas conforms to the shape of your body. "I wanted it to look like an abstract piece," says Lee. "If it's laid down sideways, it has these very pure, geometric shapes. It's very architectural, but it has to work so that it has a very human side to it."

Another piece, Checker, had somewhat less lofty origins. "When I first moved to New York I had a very small apartment and I thought about space saving," he says. So he designed a series of modular shelving units that can be arranged in variety of checkerboard patterns. When they are assembled they appear to be floating in space.

Lee is just getting started – expect his evolution as a designer to take him to some unexpected places. "With the corporations, it taught me a lot about design, how things are made, but here, my focus is different. It's a little bit more expressive, a little more personal." Soon, he hopes to start working in art direction, graphic design, sculpture and fine arts – and maybe even music. "I've been playing around with that," he says. "I'm basically like a sponge – I like to absorb anything and everything." idstrength.com 

