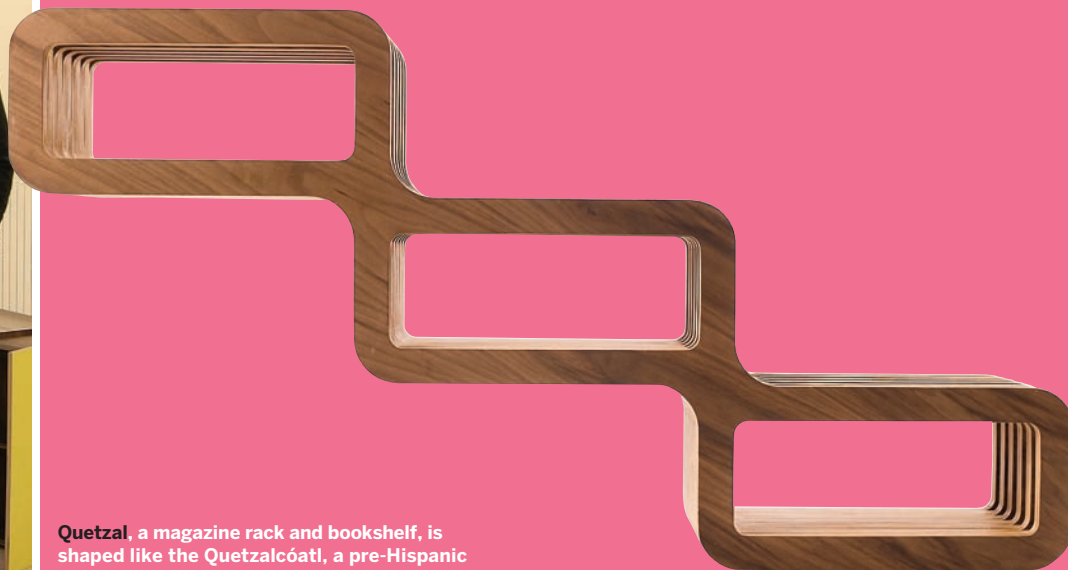




Nel Collective (left to right): Emiliano Godoy, Ricardo Casas, Alejandro Castro, Cecilia León de la Barra, Héctor Esrawe



Quetzal, a magazine rack and bookshelf, is shaped like the Quetzalcóatl, a pre-Hispanic god in the form of a feathered serpent, commonly depicted descending a pyramid.

Name
Nel Collective

Current partners
Emiliano Godoy, born in Mexico City, master's degree in industrial design, Pratt Institute (2004)

Ricardo Casas, born in Mexico City, bachelor's degree in industrial design, Universidad Iberoamericana (2003)

Alejandro Castro, born in Mexico City

Cecilia León de la Barra, born in Mexico City, bachelor's degree in industrial design, Universidad Iberoamericana (1999)

Héctor Esrawe, born in Mexico City, bachelor's degree in industrial design, Universidad Iberoamericana (1992)

Exhibitions and installations

Satellite City, FuoriSalone, Milan (2008)

Pack of Dogs, Handled with Care, London (2007)

Packs of Things, Salone Satellite, Milan (2007)

Tres en verano, Galería Mexicana de Diseño, Mexico City (2006)

Fill in the Cat, Salone Satellite, Milan (2006)

Stitch Kit, Salone Satellite, Milan (2005)



Irak is a rug shaped like a map of Iraq with tiny cut-outs of gun-wielding soldiers invading from all sides.

Starting with a bang

Cecilia: We created Nel because we wanted to go out there and show everyone that there is design in Mexico, there's talent in Mexico. Milan is the door to that. So we [Esrawe, León de la Barra, Casas and Óscar Núñez, the group's original members] did our first collection, Stitch Kit, inspired by this very downtown Mexico City culture and using its colourful quotidian materials, like cheap vinyl string common in outdoor furniture. After Milan in 2005, Emiliano joined, and then Alejandro. That's the idea of Nel: it's not one person's design; it's all of us together.

Ricardo: We're always looking to use new materials – Fill in the Cat was born in part because we visited an EPS factory – and also to rescue traditional Mexican materials and processes and reinterpret them in the language of contemporary design.

Out of Mexico

Emiliano: Milan is a pretty ruthless test. For a Mexican, a Chilean or an Argentine to go to Milan, it's an effort that can break you, and not just because of the travel.

Héctor: There are systems that operate in Europe and the U.S. oriented to supporting design – fairs, publications, magazines, technology, the whole cycle – and here we're creating that cycle. Every time, we're playing all of our cards, betting it all, putting all our eggs in one basket.

Alejandro: What's incredible is that more Mexicans are going now. This year, there were a few, but I think next year there will be even more. They know we can do it now.

Collaborative creativity

Emiliano: When we each work on our own, in our own offices on independent projects, there is a series of strong commercial requirements: functionality, the client's requirements, the market's effect. In Nel, that disappears. We have a much stronger conceptual base. So if we're trying to communicate one particular message, everything else – technique, material, production – becomes secondary to what we're trying to express.

Héctor: When we sit down at the table, none of us is the protagonist. We each feed Nel, and we each take from it and feed that into our individual work, so there are two learning processes, one

coming and one going. We wonder sometimes, if this is where we arrive at, meeting on Saturday mornings and in our free time, what would we arrive at if we really dedicated ourselves to this? Maybe nowhere – maybe the fact that we do it after the week is over purely for the pleasure of it is the point.

Emiliano: It's clear, by the crudeness of some of our prototypes, that the final manufacturer likes it because of an affinity with the concept.

Alejandro: Since we do concepts more than pieces, it can't be easy for manufacturers to see what we do and pick something up, understanding that they might never sell it.

Local and global stories

Héctor: If you're in this city and it doesn't impact you, change you, infect you...

Alejandro: ...then what are you doing here?

Héctor: Well, then you're impenetrable. My relationship with any other place I go to has to do with what I know and who I am, and that's shaped by the fact that I've always lived right in this city. Nel's best work comes from observing quotidian scenes, local customs, idiosyncrasies.

Alejandro: Like the Mexican habit of finding a