THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS
EDWARD MARSHALL TRUST
The Edward Marshall Trust goes back to the time when Edward was a post-graduate student in furniture design at the Royal College of Art from 1990-1992. This was a pivotal period for furniture at the College – the end of the David Pye-inspired era of ‘the workmanship of risk’ and the beginning of the era of ‘product as cultural statement’. The history books are already saying of the late 1980s/early 1990s that post-modernism arrived in product design – which is a pretentious way of saying the same thing. Edward’s personal design philosophy – less how the object is made than what it means and how it interacts with the world – was ahead of its time. Still with a firm emphasis on utility rather than gesture.

Then Edward died, only weeks after his graduation, and the help and support given by the staff and students to his family during those dark days led to the formation of the Trust and its RCA Prize, which ran from 1993 to 1998 and actively encouraged design thinking of the kind Edward held so dear. The Trust is highly unusual: perhaps the only wholly private organization, funded from family resources, to promote through its work action in the fields of design, design thinking and craftsmanship. Since then there have been many successful and original interventions – among them, the Crafts Council seating, the celebrated matchboxes sent to Tony Blair, the De La Warr ‘modernist’ chairs – and the Trust has earned a powerful reputation. At a time when ‘making’ has become less valued than keyboards, when design is increasingly seen as a paint job, and when issues of sustainability are rising on the agenda (though not fast enough) the Trust’s work could scarcely be more timely. Its work and influence are the best kind of memorial to Edward there could be.
The Trust was borne out of tragedy. Edward Marshall died in a motorcycle accident in 1992 shortly after graduating from the Royal College of Art. He was aged 24.

“Ed was a strange person, exceptional in some ways,” remembers Clive, his father. Profoundly dyslexic, “When reading, his lips moved. He couldn’t read whole words, spelling them out, but at the same time he was exceptionally bright. He was trapped inside this disability – really it explains why he became a designer. He was an intellectual who needed to express himself in some way.” Ed himself once attempted to explain his situation. “I do not sit happily into the traditional role of education, that of academic exercises produced for artificial approval based on rules designed to make it possible to quantify an individual,” he wrote. “The bottom line is I create because I am able to. I have the time, means and inclination. It gives purpose and is the way I hope to communicate a sense of being.”
His contemporary at the RCA, Michael Marriott, describes Ed as “one of those people who was like a little dynamo. He was quite rebellious by nature. He always struggled with authority but had a wonderful enthusiasm and amazing energy.” This assertion is supported by Clive’s anecdote about Edward’s time at Newcastle Polytechnic. Apparently when the College decided it couldn’t afford to host the graduation show, Phil McNally, who became a founding trustee, and Edward led a gang of graduates who decided to ‘steal’ all the final year’s material and create their own event. His former RCA tutor, Alan Tilbury, remembers “He was very imaginative and was always looking beyond the obvious solution.” So how good a designer could Edward Marshall have become? Well, it’s a question impossible to answer. Certainly he found the RCA’s (at that time) slightly stuffy furniture department a little stifling. “I think he would have been a bit out of place at any educational establishment,” reasons Marriott, “but he definitely struggled with it there. It was quite an old-school furniture course in those days.”

Looking at his work now through the prism of hindsight it appears to be something of a hybrid. “He was anti-craft in a way,” believes his father, “although he could make things well, he thought gratuitous craft too often detracted from ideas.” Leafing through his old portfolio there are pieces, such as the Three Bolt Chair, which look classically crafted and have an understanding of wood in particular, but these are counter-balanced by objects that adroitly tap into more contemporary trends. His Oar chair (1989), for example, used a paddle for one of its legs and contains the kind of wit that is currently the vogue in Holland. Likewise his Folding Table, designed in 1991 and held together by ratchet straps, could, 15 years later, have nestled quite comfortably on Edra’s stand at the Milan Furniture Fair. Most interesting of all to the casual observer is the Bear chair (1990) that employed cuddly toys to upholster a seat. Over a decade later the Campana Brothers would take the same idea and use it to financial and critical acclaim.
The original aim of the Trust was to help talented young designers become established, but through negotiations with the Charity Commission it became clear all activities must be for the ‘public good’. By this token ‘helping individuals in business’ was barred. Acceptable, to the Trustees, were education and initiatives freely accessible to the public. The Trust is a completely independent organization, entirely funded from family resources, giving it an unusual flexibility and an ability to follow its own flights of fancy. It is rightly very proud of its ability to take risks.

Run and administered by its Trustees, it is in the happy position to use its goodwill to call upon a wide selection of specialist individuals as judges and mentors to join the Trustees for their awards. The Trust’s projects contain an innate sense of passion, quality of manufacture and craftsmanship as well as attention to detail. Even when some of the schemes themselves have proved to be short-lived, the experience obtained by the designers, administrators and Trustees involved has proved invaluable. It is also worth remembering that the Trust was founded at a time when design, in this country at least, was largely neglected. Since then, of course, so much has changed. In 1995, 100% Design was founded on the King’s Road, followed a few years later by Designers Block, and now the capital has its own festival devoted to the industry. But despite this the Trust still has a place and a job to do. As Clive says, “The importance of the Trust now – and in the future – is in its unique ability to bring to life ground-breaking projects in design and craft which without its intervention would never happen.” Through this the trust hopes to make a real, if modest, contribution to culture.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART COMPETITIONS 1993-1998
During its first five years the Trust ran a competition, for students, at the Royal College of Art. Prize winners, now recognized names, included Michael Marriott, Mark Bond, Thomas Heatherwick, Carl Clerkin and former Designer of the Year nominee Sam Buxton.

“The impact of the competition was to encourage free thinking,” remembers Clive. Importantly, during a period when the boundaries between design disciplines (and perhaps the college’s own departments) were more distinct than they are currently, the competition was open to everyone. The simple brief was to create an object, which proved that $1 + 1 = 3$ (the essential ingredient being something grabbed or borrowed from the outside world). The submissions were always surprising. To quote from Tom Heatherwick:

“At that time at the RCA I think some of the courses had got themselves into a little bit of a rut. The furniture course was furniture. Product was product. Architecture was architecture and you drew classic details. So I was quite frustrated actually. The Edward Marshall Trust was like a breath of fresh air, with encouragement and enthusiasm for ways of thinking rather than defined sorts of outcomes.” In fact he used the brief to help kick-start his career. “Time was near to completing the course and I knew I had the show coming up. I also needed every possible help in starting up. I’d built a pavilion structure that was outside the college and was acutely aware there were going to be 10,000 people coming around and that every pupil was going to be getting out their degree cards. You just knew in the simplest terms that people would get overwhelmed with another student handing out another business card. I didn’t want to do that but I knew I also wanted to give people a record – if they liked my work – of who I was. So as I was doing an outdoor thing and it was the summer, I thought maybe I could design my own ice-lolly. My name wouldn’t be anywhere, but they had to eat the whole thing. Then at the end the joke on the stick would be my fax number.” And $1 + 1 = 3$. 

Previous spread: Calendar/shirt rack “Today must be Tuesday” Ed Marshall 1991
Opposite: Tomato box Michael Marriott 1993
Right: Ice-lolly business card Thomas Heatherwick 1994
Another of the UK’s design talents has equally fond memories of the prize. In 1997 Carl Clerkin won. Looking back Carl believes that winning “started it all really. After that most of my work has been geared towards strengthening emotional links between objects or spaces and people.” It also helped in other, unexpected, ways. “I had to make a full-on talk to help launch the prize for the following year to all concerned in the main lecture theatre. Somehow it made me more confident about talking publicly and about what it is that I do.”

The Trust also funded a series of lectures, with speakers nominated by the students. These included Antonio Citterio, Floris van den Broecke and Ron Arad who, soon after, joined the RCA as Professor leading the newly formed Design Products within the school of Architecture. The prize and lectures came to a natural ending. The need for the college to metaphorically loosen its ties ceased in 1998.
Still in its embryonic phase, in 1994 the Trust took its first steps outside the comfort of the Royal College of Art and sent a letter to all the arts boards and councils in England and Wales inviting entries for an Award. Project ‘awards’ became the modus operandi for the trust, which continues to this day.
The first recipient was the Oriel gallery in Cardiff, run by the Arts Council of Wales, for a new art data centre. The designer, Tejo Remy, created a collection of furniture for an area of the gallery where visitors could access international art and design journals and, eventually, the Internet. Describing the Dutch designer’s work, Ralph Turner, the then gallery director, wrote: “Tejo’s work is more provocative and considered than most, with fresh thinking which unsentimentally recycles scavenged waste. There are many positive elements to this Dutchman’s ironic commentary with surprises in store as he moves materials and objects out of their normal context. Ruffling feathers of our consumer society, Tejo Remy’s ingredients for furniture read like culling from a city dump: milk-bottles, rags, old metal, newspapers and worn tyres.” Interestingly, at the 2007 London Design Festival a heavily trailed exhibition, Trash Luxe at Liberty, was based around a very similar premise — how designers are taking cheap materials and coming up with new products that have added value — suggesting that here was a project well ahead of the zeitgeist.

Opposite: Magazine display and table, bucket stools
Right: Bathtub chairs
Tejo Remy 1995
The Crafts Council was the second recipient of the 1994 award. They sought funding for prototyping a chair to be designed for their new lecture theatre. The brief, aimed specifically at those in the formative stage of their careers, was to design and make 50-80 chairs, which could be produced at a competitive price, for the Council’s conference room. The chairs needed to be durable, comfortable, supportive for long meetings, stackable when not in use, easy to handle and linkable. From the outset there was no preference for materials but the chairs needed to be suitable for batch production. The Trust’s judging panel – which included eminent furniture designer Ron Carter, Tony Ford (the then director of the Crafts Council), as well as its own Alan Tilbury – was looking for a brilliant design in tune with the spirit of the times and, rather happily, that’s exactly what they got.

From four entries short-listed, and funded by the Trust to produce a prototype, the winner was clearly the Comb Chair created by industrial designer James Cannon and Ravensbourne College furniture graduate Rob Melville, who together subsequently formed ‘Byproduct’. Steel was used for the legs but the element making it special was the material specified for its one-piece seat and back – birch aero-ply faced ‘honeycomb’, which proved a perfect substitute for the more usual steel frame. “It’s the same stuff used in doors, recycled honeycomb paper,” remembers Cannon, “which we managed to mould into shapes that had never been done before.” The way the legs were connected to the shell was an engineering ‘tour de force’ requiring months of work with active support from the Furniture Industries Research Association (FIRA) who continually tested the chair to destruction. Stackable onto trolleys and able to link, the honeycomb also meant the chair, while still being tough, was surprisingly light. Without doubt winning the competition had an immense impact on the young firm’s career. “It throws you into a whole new ball game, which is fantastic,” confesses Cannon. “I got involved in furniture-making because I wanted to, but I didn’t realize I was going to set up a company – that happened because we won the Crafts Council competition. We designed a chair that won the award, and the bonus was to make 80 chairs and complementary tables for the same room. Suddenly we went into production, and that was due to the Edward Marshall Trust in the first place setting up the competition.”
This Gallery scheme in Inverness is probably best described as a ‘grower’. It started with a request for a reception desk and ended with a radically new design concept for the whole building involving a collaboration of eight designer/makers – both established and new. “The architects for the project created a fusion of boundaries between art, architecture and design,” says Clive Marshall. The building received a RIBA Award in 1999.

Renovated by architects Sutherland Hussey, the Highland Printmakers’ building became a thoroughly contemporary fine and applied arts gallery. “In a way the building had quite a simple split,” explains former director Adam Sutherland, the inspiration behind the project. “The ground floor was high impact, very dramatic. It was meant to project out onto the street. Upstairs was quite sculptural but quite neutral – a bit of a white space really.”
and ourselves were developing a strategy whereby works of artists could be fully integrated into the fabric of the building, and Adam had approached The Edward Marshall Trust for their support. The gallery was successful in its bid, but what nobody had quite appreciated was that this was not going to be just a financial handout. The Edward Marshall Trust team arrived and before long we were all swept along by their extraordinary energy, their amazing enthusiasm for art and design and their generosity of spirit.

In many ways they played a large part in kick-starting our practice providing, as they did, the impetus to a longer interest in the relationship of art and architecture, culminating in our totally integrated project in Tiree, which was short-listed for the 2003 Stirling Prize.”

The gallery got its reception desk – from Juggernaut – and much more besides. The National Lottery matched the Trust funding, allowing the Trust to commission decorative door handles from Wendy Ramshaw, an extraordinary staircase handrail by Peter Chang, café furniture courtesy of Mike Malig, ceramics designed by Richard S Lee, an Andrew Tie aluminum balustrade, signage devised by Steve Hollingsworth and oak benches, which won the Scottish Design Award for furniture in 1998 for Robert Kilvington.

Charlie Hussey had nothing but praise for the process through which the project was made to gel. “Charlie Sutherland and I had just set up our practice and were working on this modest little renovation, Art.tm, in Inverness. The then director, Adam Sutherland, and ourselves were developing a strategy whereby works of artists could be fully integrated into the fabric of the building, and Adam had approached The Edward Marshall Trust for their support.

The gallery was successful in its bid, but what nobody had quite appreciated was that this was not going to be just a financial handout. The Edward Marshall Trust team arrived and before long we were all swept along by their extraordinary energy, their amazing enthusiasm for art and design and their generosity of spirit.

In many ways they played a large part in kick-starting our practice providing, as they did, the impetus to a longer interest in the relationship of art and architecture, culminating in our totally integrated project in Tiree, which was short-listed for the 2003 Stirling Prize.”

The gallery got its reception desk – from Juggernaut – and much more besides. The National Lottery matched the Trust funding, allowing the Trust to commission decorative door handles from Wendy Ramshaw, an extraordinary staircase handrail by Peter Chang, café furniture courtesy of Mike Malig, ceramics designed by Richard S Lee, an Andrew Tie aluminum balustrade, signage devised by Steve Hollingsworth and oak benches, which won the Scottish Design Award for furniture in 1998 for Robert Kilvington.

Charlie Hussey had nothing but praise for the process through which the project was made to gel. “Charlie Sutherland and I had just set up our practice and were working on this modest little renovation, Art.tm, in Inverness. The then director, Adam Sutherland, and ourselves were developing a strategy whereby works of artists could be fully integrated into the fabric of the building, and Adam had approached The Edward Marshall Trust for their support.

The gallery was successful in its bid, but what nobody had quite appreciated was that this was not going to be just a financial handout. The Edward Marshall Trust team arrived and before long we were all swept along by their extraordinary energy, their amazing enthusiasm for art and design and their generosity of spirit.

In many ways they played a large part in kick-starting our practice providing, as they did, the impetus to a longer interest in the relationship of art and architecture, culminating in our totally integrated project in Tiree, which was short-listed for the 2003 Stirling Prize.”
The £43m sustainability visitor experience, designed by Feilden Clegg Bradley and Bill Dunster, opened on colliery spoil heaps near Doncaster in 1999. It grew out of the decline and degeneration of the pits and coalfields and was an aspiring symbol of the renaissance of South Yorkshire. This project gave a clutch of young aspiring designers the chance to create a ‘family of furniture’ for the site out of recycled and sustainable material. The Trust launched a European-wide competition, receiving entries from 10 countries. The judges - Professor Olle Anderson, Thomas Heatherwick, Bill Dunster and Earth Centre executives, led by Dan Epstein - short-listed eight submissions using materials as diverse as hemp, glass, latex, carnauba wax, wire, PET bottles, terra-cotta and recycled aluminum. The short-listed participants were offered funds for further development. From this process the clear winners were David Germond and then artist Christopher Palmer. Tim Burke was commissioned to supply 20 green oak benches.

Overall winner Germond proposed to recycle old furniture by dipping it in latex. After stunning prototypes were made, the rubber company involved was pressed into emergency duty making gloves for the foot-and-mouth outbreak and David’s commission was sadly not completed. Palmer’s Torus bench fared better and won the outdoor award. Made from recycled steel wire, it relied on its curvilinear form to provide strength whilst being able to look incredibly light, almost transparent, and comfortably sit 10 people at the same time. “I actually had quite a few ideas but they were rough at the beginning,” says the designer, who now lives in Norway. “I had some conventional benches but most of them weren’t very promising. The Trustees saw that immediately and encouraged me to pursue the round one.” After going through the prototype stage, eight benches were created for the Earth Centre, five of which were loaned for use outside Earls Court, London during 100% Design in 2001. The product went on to be an award-winning design.

Six years, on Palmer can’t praise the Trust enough. “They were an incredible help – really inspiring in a critical way. They managed to get a lot out of all the people involved, not just the ones who won the awards. In fact, the whole thing was really exciting and allowed me to get a foot in the door of the design world and meet people and see how everything worked, which was exactly what I was finding difficult. It was invaluable.”
Marden House is a community centre located in the old wool town of Calne, North Wiltshire. Its activities include a lively arts programme, an annual music and arts festival, recitals, dance and choral singing. The 19th-century stone building was originally the canal wharf keeper’s house, converted in the 1980s. The tall interior space with stone walls had an unsatisfactory acoustic and a drab appearance.

The Calne Artists, a group of 16 local professional artists and designers, were asked if they could help make the space more attractive and improve the acoustics. Two of the members, Katherina Kronig and Alan Tilbury, had been working speculatively on designs combining felted wool and timber structures which they developed with the specific requirement to form a wall-hanging as a possible solution to both problems. The 4.25m x 2.8m hanging comprises eight full-height strips of felted wool and eight open timber frames. The hangings and frames, in three widths, can be arranged in any order to vary the composition and proportion of colour and line. A double hanging rail was fitted to three walls of the main hall to allow different arrangements to be created for different events and occasions.

The project has proved to be very popular and a great success, both acoustically and in bringing life to the interior space.
Spare Match took the Edward Marshall Trust into yet another new area working with the Big Issue Foundation. The young designer Afroditi Krassa had designed a set of individual matchboxes pre-stamped and pre-addressed to the Prime Minister’s office. Each contained a personal message from a homeless person to Tony Blair and the idea was that once all the matches had been used, you would post the empty box to Downing Street. The Trust funded the manufacture of 10,000 matchboxes together with flyers and stamps. They financially supported the Big Issue Foundation at the Glastonbury Festival selling the matches (aka ‘The Little Match Girl) to raise money for the Big Issue Foundation and highlight the issue of homelessness with the crowds at Glastonbury and the Blair government. For Afroditi, at an early stage in her career, the award provided a real boost of confidence. “It is unlike any other design award. Most awards last a few hours, translate to a big party, maybe a cheque, and then they end up on your mantle piece. The Trust award gives young designers the unique opportunity to work with a real client, acquire knowledge and experience and materialise ideas.”

Opposite: Spare match box
Right: T-shirt to promote match campaign
Below: ‘Three easy steps to pestering Tony Blair’
All artwork Afraditi Krassa 2004
DE LA WARR CHAIR
2004-2006
Designed in 1935 by Erich Mendelson and Serge Chermayeff, Bexhill-on-Sea’s most famous building, the De La Warr Pavilion, underwent a massive renovation by John McAslan + Partners to celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2005. A facet of the facelift was to replace the freestanding wooden furniture originally created by Alvar Aalto. Sadly, only a dozen or so pieces remained. Funding available by the Pavilion only allowed for ‘off the peg’ furnishings which, for this icon of Modernism, would have seemed an anodyne solution. A new design was required and in many respects Barber Osgerby, as designers, were the obvious choice, having found success working in wood for the classic manufacturer Isokon. Jay Osgerby recalls “The director of the De La Warr Pavilion, Alan Hayden, approached us. They had a budget to do something but it wasn’t really enough to do anything significant. At the time I think they thought they were just going to get a wooden chair.” The Trust stepped in and offered to fund the design and development.

Initially the brief was to design one chair for the Pavilion’s interior and another for the outside terraces. Barber Osgerby realized it was important that the keynote form and colour of the chair continued through the plate glass windows, giving the building transparency. Wood was out! One metal chair could suit both locations, but only cast metal would have the required sophistication of form. The tooling up for such a chair meant high production costs and consequently high sales. This is where the newly founded furniture manufacturing company Established & Sons fitted snugly in. “I don’t think they [Established & Sons] quite understood what it meant financially at that point,” he admits a little sheepishly, “but I guess they were intrigued by a new chair being designed for a building of such historical significance. Plus, of course, the fact the chair was British!”

So, ultimately, how important was the Trust to the making of a chair that has the hallmark of a classic? “Without them that project wouldn’t have happened,” he replied.

The input of the Trust – particularly of Alan Tilbury, who checked on the project’s progress every month – was keenly felt. “Our meetings with Alan were professorial. He basically gave us critiques,” says Osgerby. “Being an ex-tutor at the Royal College of Art, he’s done everything and knows design and manufacturing inside out. His experience was of extreme benefit to us. He was constantly asking questions and challenging things... In fact, it was a bit like being back at the Royal College with just a little more money at stake!”
From its initial competitions at the RCA, the Trust has transformed into something much more weighty. At the same time it has managed to retain an air of spontaneity. If you asked the Trustees what they’re planning next, chances are they’ll simply shrug their shoulders and tell you they’ll know when they see it. “I think that’s just the way we are, anarchists!” says Aloma Marshall. It’s a way of operating that means certain projects have met obstacles but none has ever been dull or lacking in significance for all those involved. Certain tenets have been retained from its early days, of course. “There is no point designing another chair in a world cluttered with objects unless the ideas embodied in it transcend and in some way change the way we live in the world,” says Will Marshall. He concludes with “It is percolating ideas that we hope is at the core of the Trust,” which has what it describes as an activist view of the role of the designer – in other words, that design should be used to inform and even perhaps question the user, to challenge preconceived ideas. It also remains remarkably open. All the Trust’s projects, bar one, have been selected via national ‘ideas’ competitions, while the designers for individual commissions have been chosen through a competitive process, leaving the door open for young talent to walk through. And, at a time when designers and design students are being increasingly removed from the manufacturing process, it has actively encouraged winners to take a hands-on approach familiar to practitioners working in craft or engineering. Looking back on the 15 years since his death, the Trustees believe Edward’s energy, which it was set up to emulate, still shows through and they look forward, with enthusiasm, to the next decade.

14 January 2008
Grant Gibson

Photobooth timelapse photography Ed Marshall 1989
THANKS

FOUNDERS
Bill & Caroline Barlow
Andrew Gilmore
Joselyn Greenwood
Chris Helson
Phil McNally
The Marshall Family
Sarah Panter
Jez Pearson
Alan Tilbury
Katie Walker

SETTING UP
Peter Ford
John Parr
Clerkenwell Green Association

SECRETARY
Hilary Welch

RCA STAFF
with special thanks to:
Ron Arad
Floris van den Broecke
David Field
Sir Christopher Frayling
Hilary French
Frank Thurston
David Watkins
Sponsor for the RCA Prize:
Etu Power Tools

AWARD JUDGES
Olle Anderson
Ron Carter
Dinah Casson
Bill Dunster
Tom Heatherwick

FUNDING
Whilst each Award is unique, funding available is generally up to £50,000. In many cases this is used as ‘seed corn’ by the recipients and releases further funding from other bodies (matched funding). Additionally, recipients receive ‘in kind’ benefits in the form of mentoring by experts, professional photography of the finished project, publicity etcetera.

TRUSTEES
Chairman
Clive Marshall
Vice Chair
Will Marshall
Hon. Sec.
Aloma Marshall
Treasurer
Linda Ward
Overseas Mentoring
Phil McNally
Alan Tilbury

PHOTO CREDITS
Royal College of Art Archive: 5
The Edward Marshall Trust Archive: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 37, 45
Phil McNally – Captain 3D: 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 28
Quasar: 22
Western Daily Press: 23
David Churchill: 24, 25, 32, 33, 35, 40, 41, 42, 43
Arcaid: 26, 27, 29, 30, 31
Frank Thurston: 18, 19
David Germond: 34
Kt Keevil: 36
Afroditi Krassa: 38, 39

CREDITS
© The Edward Marshall Trust 2008
Text: Grant Gibson
Design: Will Marshall and Alan Tilbury
Edited: Solveig Gardner Servian
Published: The Edward Marshall Trust
Printing and binding: Graphite Colour Ltd. Essex UK

CONTACT
www.edtrust.org.uk
info@edtrust.org.uk
+44 (0) 1483 570 801
The Edward Marshall Trust
Watford Old Farm
17 Cranley Road
Guildford
Surrey
GU1 2EW
You have read the book and, we hope, understood the spirit and frequency of our awards. Competitions will be announced on our web-site and in the design press. If you are looking for funding for a project which you think may interest the Trust please contact us - details on previous page.

Projects must be accessible to the public. We are not able to directly assist individuals in business.

The Edward Marshall Trust is a registered charity No. 1034660