

# Mordag Design

## The Studio of Rational Art offers charming design services

Mordag Design - The Studio of Rational Art has been designing products for a wide range sectors that span industrial products, office wares, furniture, underwater, equipment, urban furniture, architectural installations, accessories and more. It offers design services from concept generation to design, from development & manufacturing to communication design. Thanks to its innovative approach and engineering infrastructure, it has provided over 25 patented products and ideas to its customers. Within this broad market spectrum, more than 100 designs from Mordag Design Studio, which has awards in 6 different sectors, meet its users in 25 countries.

Contract Business has recently conducted an interview with Mete Mordag, Founder of Mordag Design. Full text of the interview follows:

### Can you tell us about yourself and your relations with design? What triggered you as a mechanical engineer to be involved in design?

I have graduated from Deutsche Schule and Bosphorus University Department of Mechanical Engineering in 1996 and 2001, respectively. My desire to combine the passion for creative arts and the



affinity for positive sciences led me to the world of industrial design. I returned to Istanbul in 2005 after I completed my master's degree in Industrial Design at the University of Sydney, New South Wales. This Industrial Design education in Sydney brought design into my life irrevocably. Before founding Mordag Design Studio I worked as a product designer for Eczacıbaşı Vitra and T-Design. I can say that my passion for creative arts and my curiosity for the positive sciences has led me to the industrial design. Because industrial design is a unique area of in-between arts and engineering.

### You have been in designer roles for significant firms. How did the idea of founding Mordag Design emerge?

I was very impressed by the diversity of materials and production methods offered by the industrial design world. A cupboard design for your bathroom, cosmetic bottle group, soup bowls, pens, modems, shopping carts, bus stops, diving computers... The variety of solutions and form repertoire you have to offer in all of these are both really fascinating. Back then, answering all of these demands in Turkey was only possible

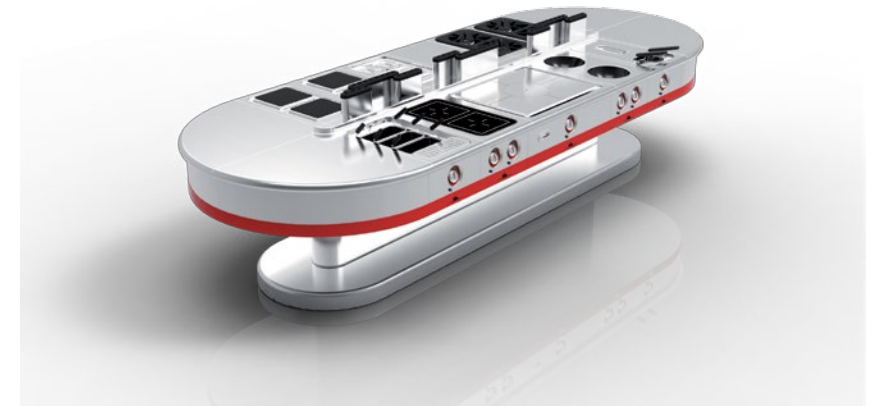
by a new design studio. In 2007, I worked up the courage and founded Mordag Design. After 12 years of intense work, it is sublime to look at Mordag Design's wide range of projects and brands ranging from kitchen to underwater, from city furniture to technology startups.

Which aspects are the starting points for you as a designer? Functionality, visuality, etc.

For me, the universe is proven to be a great expert in aesthetics, because its rational approach to the creation is flawless. All curves, connections, and measurements behind all the "unexceptional beauty" presented by the universe have undeniable reasons. Music, colors, forms... All of them have certain mathematics leading us to the truth and beauty. Design is supposed to learn and apply this mathematics in its own field. In this regard, I relentlessly pursue "unexceptional beauty" through this approach that I call rational art.

We actually can divide all projects into two groups: Projects that heavily depend on Form and projects that heavily depend on Technique. For the projects where the form is at the forefront, I examine all the words, images, and texts that the product or function evokes before grabbing the pen and paper. The forms or the ideas brought to my mind by these can lead the project to unexpected directions. For a chair design that requires an aquatic theme, first, I throw objects onto the water, taking shots of the surface forms initiated by sinking of these objects of different forms. The design of a soup bowl, for example, starts by reading the history of the soup and researching the etymology of the word "soup". Then I, suddenly, find myself pouring hot water on bread slices. These style-seeking techniques add a story to the creation process of the product, and thus significantly contribute to the marketing and launching activities later on.

On projects that depend on technique, the design comes to life



as a way of problem-solving art. You are trying to solve a problem through geometry, physics, and materials, and the astonishing visual beauty of the right solution becomes the beautiful ornament of your design. In that regard, it would be appropriate to say that industrial design is not only an

area of expertise that offers aesthetics but it is the art of producing rational solutions to the problems all around us. Instead of being a profession that only offers same objects in different covers to the market, industrial design develops new solutions and produces ideas that advance the

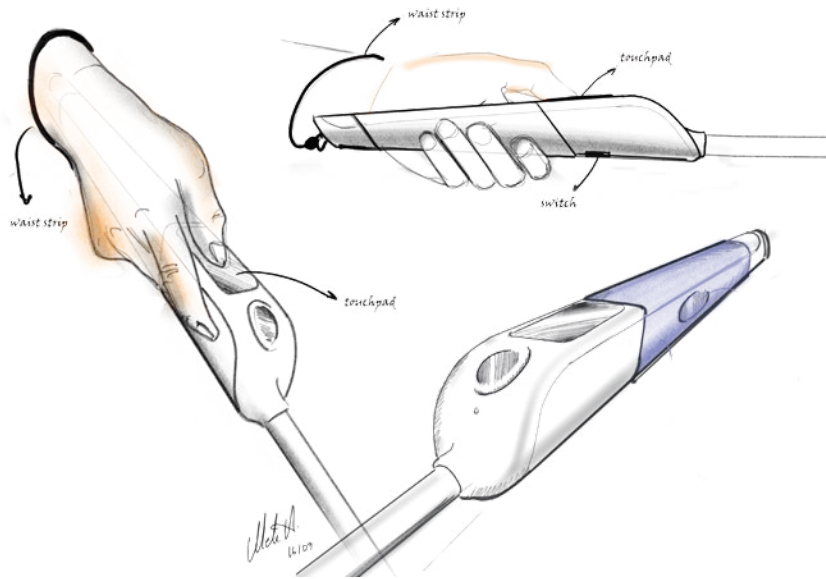
social life.

**Can you tell us about your award-winning designs? Or share the starting points of the designs that have a special place for you?**

Having worked on a wide range of products & sectors in the last 14 years, choosing the special ones out is not an easy one. Regardless of how technical, technological, or cosmetic-oriented the project is, they all were very exciting. If not, it is actually my task to find a way to design them into exciting ones. Each of them most importantly is very valuable in my evolution of creation.

Undertaking the industrial design of the world's smartest cane WeWALK, developed by YGA (Young Guru Academy) and Vestel engineers for the visually impaired will always be a great source of pride for me. Having revolutionary features such as obstacle detection, telephone integration, and open-source platform, WeWALK was presented to the visually impaired users on last May. In addition to being selected as one of the best inventions of 2019 by Time Magazine, WeWALK also received one of America's most prestigious awards for innovation, the Edison Gold Award. In addition to its ultrasonic sensor for obstacle detection, vibration warning system; it has a rechargeable battery, an ultrasonic sensor for obstacles detection, vibrating warning system, as well as a touchpad and Bluetooth connection that allow the visually impaired to use it without holding their phones. Industrial design plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of ideas that advance the social life, and WeWALK is one of the finest examples of this.

Gördes home appliances collection I designed for PlastArt, is an excellent example of how good design can produce great added value just via



visually. The series consists of items such as laundry and dirty basket, trash can, storage containers, WC brush, and the main design theme is the "Turkish Knot" geometry in carpet weaving craft. The first two items of the series, the laundry basket, and bin were launched in Germany. They broke a record by getting 5 million orders in a week.

It has been an additional source of motivation for me to get 4 good design awards from 4 different sectors in Design Turkey, which was held for the eighth time this year. These designs are Miops'Capsule 360 camera motion box, which was funded in Kickstarter with 600.000 USD; Palmiye's bioclimatic pergola system Skyroof Prestige; Kayalar Mutfak's modular cooking group for

industrial kitchens Pole and Redon Technology's fastest CNC Unit Hybrid that was developed for dentist clinic and laboratories.

**How is sustainability achieved in design?**

Sustainable design, in its simplest definition, is to think, draw, develop, produce, and market by considering the impact of the service and/ or product on the environment.

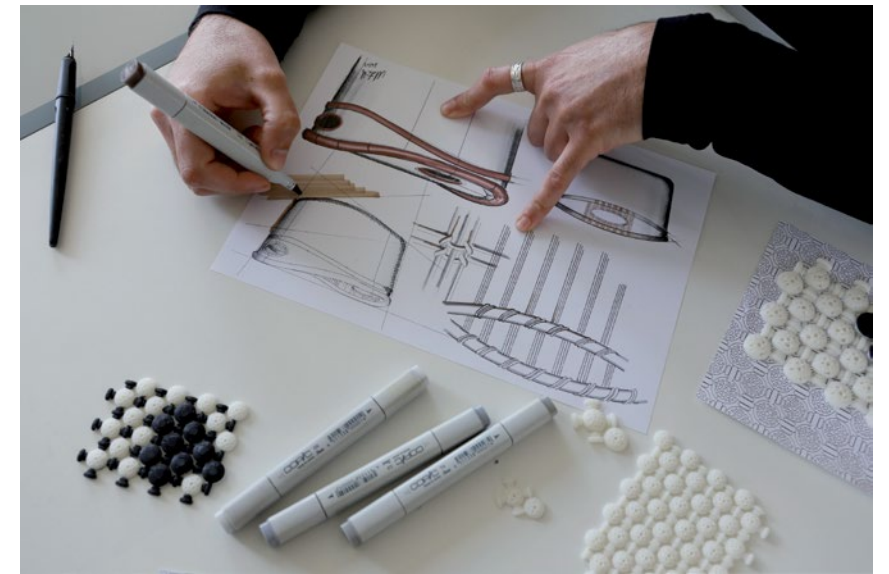
We should underline once more that industrial design is not only an area of expertise that offers aesthetic, boutique, or fashion products, but it is the art of producing rational solutions to the problems all around us. Solution makers such as James Dyson, who introduced the vacuum cleaners to our lives, or Dieter Rams, the chief designer of Braun from 1960 to 1997 and one of the most prestigious names of functionality, are among the pioneers of this tradition. The industrial designer has to aim to advance society with his/her development, added value, and innovations. Each project, each piece brings along heavy investments and additional weight on the environment. Thus, we no longer have the right to do all of this for offering visual variety, to come up

with meaningless fashion products, which need to be reproduced every year to keep up with the market. The industry has to approach design with awareness to create timeless, sustainable products.

**How do you interpret the human-nature relationship in your designs?**

The world of design follows a highly consistent evolutionary process in both aesthetics and functionality. This is no different than the evolution that nature has indulged over millions of years. Product design and architecture continue to use the most recent materials and production methods to the fullest. It consistently tries to make products and structures more functional and more durable with less material less consumption. It is inevitable that all kinds of objects, vehicles, and details around us will resemble more and more to nature-inspired objects. That is not because these forms sell better. But, since fluid forms increase the volume/material and strength/material ratios, after some point, they become the only designs that can respond to high levels of efficiency required by the technology.

This approach is the sole method that nature and evolution process have used for millions of years. Everything continually works to make the balance around us more efficient. The reasons behind the decisions taken in that direction are obvious. I believe that design is a small practice of this approach. Every line drawn or be erased, should be there to achieve the solution in a more efficient way. This phenomenon I call rational design is the only method evolution uses for millions of years in its development. Every line that nature has drawn in that way has been in great harmony with the aesthetic values of humankind. Because human is also the outcome of this design process.



**Can you tell us about your contract project works? Do you have any prestigious domestic and international hotel, hospital, or office projects?**

The first thing that comes to my mind is Kayalar's Pole Industrial Cooking group, which got us one of our good design awards this year. Pole, with its 750 and 900 series, is a modular cooking group

designed for industrial kitchens. One of the most essential criteria in industrial kitchen environments is hygiene, each part should be cleaned easily and quickly. It was the basic requirement that led to Pole's round and clean design. Due to the patented modular structure of the design, Kayalar Mutfak was able to offer the most suitable and efficient structural solution for every kitchen with a single product group. We're designing the brand's new generation

industrial kitchen group with all the experience and the know-how we gathered in this project. I believe it'll be launched as Pole-Plus in the second quarter of 2020.

The camera and pen designs as part of Wollox's interactive projection system have been completed and are now in production. This device has an incredible technology that instantly transforms any surface regardless of the size into a touch screen; firstly, any kind of screen and projection wall. The area is not limited to these but has very entertaining additional applications as well. The surface you want to transform into a touch screen can be a whole wall in your living room home, your children room's ground, or a meeting table in the cafe. Whatever comes to your mind...

The Kanna Chair I designed for the Holiday brand, are now being manufactured in Italy. The brand plans to start the mass production in the first quarter of 2020. We are quite sure that Kanna Chair will break the turnover record of the Gördes Home Appliances series, which I designed for the same company's Plast'Art brand.

Miops' Capsule360 camera motion box that set a record with a 600,000 \$ fund at Kickstarter was launched this summer. We are currently working on the new generation camera triggers with the company.

Additionally, I designed the packaging group for personal care & cosmetic line of UltraCompact. I believe they will also be on the shelves in the second quarter of 2020.

**You are also a well-known designer abroad. What kind of a design process do you follow abroad?**

The word 'industrial' in industrial design should definitely be underlined here. The foreign market has a lot of experience of how industrial design needs to be



used in product development. This experience results from the fact that the brands have realized long before that the design is an irreplaceable parameter in terms of the value they present to the market. The scope of the briefing given to the designer, the way the marketing team manages the design process, its experience in practicing the aesthetic and innovative features with the users is more extended than Turkey's. Therefore, the product development process is progressing more efficiently and quickly. On the other hand, in producing new designs, Turkey has taken significant steps

over the past 15 years. When we look at the development of the top 20 countries in industrial design registration between 1980 and 2017, we see that Turkey entered the list in 1995. Following this, its rise continued. In 2008, Turkey outpaced countries such as Britain, Germany, Russia and entered among the top 5 countries, including countries such as China, Japan, and the USA. That is a huge success when you consider the number of design faculties, market size, and population of our country compared to these world giants.