

# curve

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# snapshot



Yiannis Ghikas



## On stable ground

"I've always wanted to design a stool," explains Greek designer, Yiannis Ghikas, who was awarded a red dot concept award in 2009 for his Monarchy Rocking Stool. Uniquely designed, the chair rocks forwards and from side-to-side, and swivels without falling over, giving the user ultimate freedom.

Started as a self-initiated project, Ghikas says it's hard to know what originally inspired him.

"Inspiration comes from the complexity of my being. My stool is called Monarchy because, apart from the fact that it has a crown-like shape, it is also designed not to be overturned. Monarchy as a regime enforces 'stability', while Monarchy as a stool allows the user to escape the dullness of ultimate stability. Maybe I called the stool Monarchy to contradict the imposed stability that is associated with the meaning of Monarchy as a regime."

Made from oak – in natural finish or lacquered in different colours – the Monarchy Rocking Stool was designed to be used on any occasion where a small auxiliary seat is needed, giving more freedom to the user.

"For example," explains Ghikas, who works by himself in his apartment-based studio in Greece, "when the user wants to change body direction they can swivel the stool using their legs; when the user wants to access an object that is located a little further away, they can lean the body and Monarchy follows the movement, and so forth. Although, I wouldn't recommend climbing on it if you want to change a light bulb!"

Ghikas' design process starts with sketches, which evolve into 3D modelling software to design in detail, then a renderer to generate photo-realistic videos or images. After this, if necessary, a small-scale model is made, then a prototype is constructed, usually not by Ghikas himself. "Sometimes I use rapid prototyping techniques to make the prototype," he explains.

His award-winning design is particularly impressive in a small country like Greece, with an even smaller market for product designers.

"Greek designers are rarely commissioned by Greek companies to design for them. In reality, there aren't many companies that invest in new products. In Greece we import design and sometimes we copy it. There are of course a few exceptions. Most Greek industrial designers make their living from interior or exhibition design."

A significant problem in addition to the absence of industry, explains Ghikas, is that of education for up-and-coming young designers.

"Greece lacks design schools that are able to offer efficient and qualitative education on this field. When somebody wants to study industrial design they go to Europe, the UK, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, etc. After study, most of these people live and work abroad, so we can't say they belong to the Greek design scene, even if they are Greek."

Despite all these difficulties, however, Ghikas believes there are creative people that love to design, and the Greek industry will eventually evolve. A good thing for a designer who likes to discuss his designs with others in order to share his thoughts.

"My focus is designing objects that justify their existence and I hope to keep designing while I live in a country that discourages me from being a designer."

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