

MakerLab:Milan 2011

a mobile workshop structure prototype



What happened

What happens when you take a group of Makers, a couple of tools and some innovative processes to the streets of Milan? This was what the [MakerLab Milan](#) expedition sought to find out, in doing so engaging with the public and the Milan Maker Scene.

Taking with us Makers and Creative Activists from different fields of expertise and experience, and combining them with tools, resources and public space, we occupied different public venues in Milan, each time engaging with different groups.

The events took place around the Y-Table, a compact and adaptable structure from The Anxious Prop, CNC-milled to incorporate tools, functions and materials, kindly supplied by Modulor. This mobile workspace now takes pride of place in [Open Design City](#) and serves as an infrastructure for future MakerLab events and workshops.

During the journeys from Berlin to Milan and back, Lea and Georgina documented all the activities in photographs and video footage. Over the course of the week the MakerLab team experienced the trials of wind, rain, and blazing sun, easily combated with Gelato, but also worked hard to provide spontaneous pop-up workshops and interact with the public in Milan's streets during the Salone.

Aim

The MakerLab is a platform for open design and the joint making of things, providing space, tools, resources and knowledge to share. Introduced during the DMY International Design Festival Berlin in 2010, the Makerlab is built on open innovation and collaborative processes. It offers an habitat of open design workstations inviting the public to get involved. It's formed by the instigators of an ever growing global community and the individuals which attend each of the events.

As a travelling event based hub, the Makerlab Milan provided a focal point to meet, share ideas, skills and take actions to positively hack the urban environment. By bringing tools, resources and expertise from Berlin, the Makerlab encountered the milanese maker community and the public. This is how a physical dialogue with the city's public space started and really challenged people to take an active role in shaping it. One of the other core goals of the MakerLab is to make design, making and fabrication technologies accessible to everybody. By demonstrating and inviting people to participate, to use a laser-cutter or a weaving loom, people could easily understand and experience the various processes behind the creation of objects.

Collaboration and Local Scene

In tune with the Salone del Mobile and the Public Design Festival, the Makerlab Milan launched a true public mobile workshop, which travelled through different spots in Milan. The venues for the workshop were provided by the [Public Design Festival](#), which is organized by Esterni.org. Equipped with hand tools, rapid prototyping machines, a working bench and experience in spontaneous design and making, the Makerlab Milan invited everybody to bring chairs, old furniture or locally found materials to then hack, modify and up-cycle them into new public furniture, or simply join one of the workshops offered. Over the course of the event the Makerlab Team connected with a number of local makers and creative activists (notably - WeFab, LeHub, Medianauta and many individuals and local designers), as well as international makers (the team of [Foundationprojects.eu](#) or the guys from [unfold.be](#)). Inspired by a life sized 3D printer found whilst the “Milan Breakfast” on Open Design at Studio Zeta, the MakerLab Team planted the seeds of a “Print your own Chair” project with [Dirk Van Der Kooij](#). Because Dirk’s 3d extrusion robot can print 1:1 chairs from recycled plastic, the MakerLab wanted to enhance the project by providing an easy way for everyone to draw his own chair, before it gets printed. The concept was prototyped on the Maker Bot and the Magic Box. From a hand drawing of a chair, a small model was printed shortly after.

Further connections also resulted from the process with the [Makerlab USA](#), Poland, and with [Fab Lab Italia](#).

Stories from the Streets

Of course, as with any MakerLab, the stories are too numerous to swiftly compile. However here are a few morsels, with a view to future activities and what was learned from the process.



Travis demonstrated how to get stuck right in by quickly building his own loom in a matter of hours, and engaging many passersby in the production of their own material.

Later collaborations, led to new material innovations in collaboration with Julia from Trial and Error, and Georgina - creating woven cloth from video tape. A more conceptual artistic work will follow as a result of this collaboration.

Regis and Anna showed the Milanese public how to produce their own objects in Concrete, and even experimented with the laser cutter (kindly supplied by Fa. Hagemann, Bremen) by incorporating laser cut forms in the casting process and later laser-engraving the concrete itself.

Later they began to grow their own bench with the help of the public and other makers. We believe parts of this bench are now firmly located in Milan - we are awaiting pictures upon their return.



A number of objects arose from concrete collaborations including a beautiful leaf imprint stool, and a ring by Travis for his beloved.

Hot on the furniture tip, Kito engaged the public in a production line of upcycled furniture, starting with a pallet chair, and later innovating with whatever materials he could find.



Pedro met two young designers (02mathery) with who he created the "Contact Wall", a wall/ bench that helps people silently connect... A more extensive documentation on this project can be found on this [blog post](#).



Miguel and Mendel, engaged with the public through the Makerbot 3d printer and the laser-cutter. People were intrigued by the simplicity of the DIY 3D printer and the power of cutting out drawings in wood or cardboard with a laser. Combined with GRL-Germany's magic box, Julia cut out some awesome glasses by holding an old pair on the box with her hand. The resultant silhouette cut out can be viewed below on many faces. Introducing as many people as possible to the simple process of drawing and sending to the lasercutter, Jay made that technology accessible, and so supported a core aspect of our goals, it demonstrates a process by which drawing can become physical object simply and directly.



What a future version could look like

Finally Julia from Trial and Error ran a great round up session, allowing the whole team to reflect on the process and future iterations. Every day the Makerlab Team met new people on the street, talking and exchanged ideas or techniques and explored common grounds within the workshops.

The MakerLab itself is still an evolving structure, which builds up on previous versions and tries to improve every aspect of the upcoming event. We wish to make this knowledge open for everyone interested in doing their own MakerLab, and believe that the MakerLab should be driven by the local Maker community or hosting community. We aim to build a template and share our findings with you, and thus create an open platform to facilitate sharing. However given that these things take time, some of the following guiding principles on how to run a MakerLab have already proven to be useful:

- Only facilitation should structure the MakerLab, not hierarchy
- It should assist the local Maker community in achieving their shared Objectives
- Prior a MakerLab, the instigators should get to know the local community and its environment
- Explore process or communication methods to allow easy engagement and distributive work
- Budgets and responsibilities are shared - as are profits
- Try to provide a minimum set of tools and technologies, be open to found and donated ones
- Everything generated by MakerLab is Open Source
- The MakerLab is Open Source
- Have fun
- Communicate the action extensively, reflect and write about it too
- ... [your guidelines]

Who participated, how, links

Finally a massive thanks to everyone who made MakerLab Milan possible:

The MakerLab Milan was shaped and realized by all the participants that came along:

Kito Colchester - kitocolchester.co.uk

Jay Cousins - [Open Design City](http://OpenDesignCity.com)

Travis Meinolf - [Action Weaver](http://ActionWeaver.com)

Anna Iwansson and Régis Lemberthe - [a&ré design](http://a&rédésign.com)

Mendel Heit - [Mendel Heit Design Lab](http://MendelHeitDesignLab.com)

Julia Vernerson - [Trial & Error KulturLabor](http://Trial&ErrorKulturLabor.com)

Pedro Pineda - [We Creative People](http://WeCreativePeople.com)

Miguel - [Systemschange](http://Systemschange.com)

Georgina Espasa - georginaespasa.net

Lea Kolling - [and suddenly its morning](http://and suddenly its morning.com)

Organized by Mendel Heit ([Mendel Heit Design Lab](http://MendelHeitDesignLab.com)), Jay Cousins ([Open Design City](http://OpenDesignCity.com)), Pedro Pineda ([We Creative People](http://WeCreativePeople.com))

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The original back story --> [od10beta](http://od10beta.com) <--

The activities have been documented by [Georgina Espasa](http://GeorginaEspasa.com) and [Lea Kolling](http://LeaKolling.com).

[Flickr group](http://Flickr.com/photos/makerlab)

Makerlab.info

[Vimeo Group](http://Vimeo.com/makerlab)





