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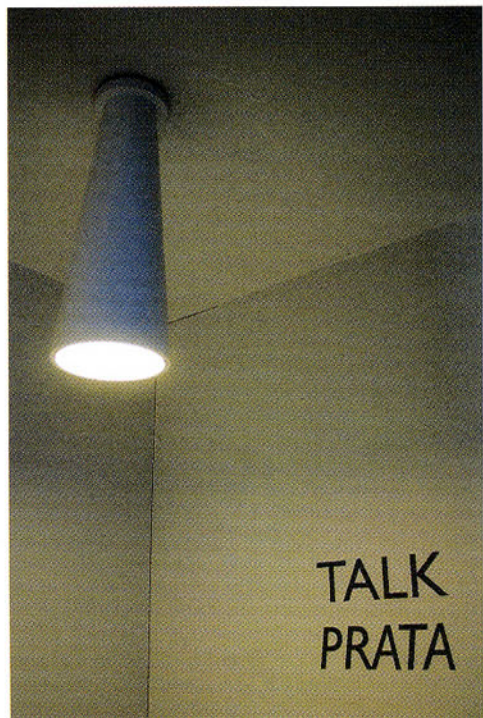
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Mood Lamp

furniture

Michael Anastassiades creates a new relationship between the person and the product.

In a world of technology, London designer Michael Anastassiades has created objects that respond directly to people's behavior—not just to their commands to print, send, or delete. A pair of his lamps takes this very personally, acting as differently as two opposite types of people. The Social Light lights up only when there is talk going on nearby. The Anti-Social Light turns on only when there is silence, functioning like a reading lamp. "It's about boundaries," Anastassiades says. "It has very much to do with respect for what the object needs and what it demands, or it won't respond the way you want it to. In an abstract way, it is almost like a companion that behaves a certain way in the house."



TALK
PRATA

Exhibiting at shows in Stockholm and Vienna last summer has allowed Anastassiades to see how people react to the sensitive lamps. As he has found with many of his designs, Anastassiades noticed that the lamps created an element of surprise, because people were not told how they worked. "The Social Light is almost therapeutic," he observes. "People can talk to it to get all their frustrations out."

Having a personal effect in a sometimes impersonal world can define a new function for objects, one perhaps as important as the primary function. With inspired uses of mirrors, Anastassiades brings the environment and the people in it into some of his designs. Mirrored vases show off not just what is placed in them but also what is all around them. A dining set includes a table with a concave mirror at the center that reflects dinner companions back to one another. For solo eaters, a chair with a mirrored back, set opposite, provides a reflection so that one is not dining so alone. This may make some diners think twice about where they sit. But as London designer Anthony Dunne, a fellow creator of "responsive design," says, "We don't promote order and neatness—we are weeds in the world of furniture design."

Though his pieces are finely made and often strikingly beautiful, Anastassiades is not creating objects so much as experiences. "The objects are really dealing with life," says Marco Susani, former director of Milan's Domus Academy Research Center, "the life of the objects themselves, the life that they collect, and the life that we can easily imagine around them." Though Anastassiades's lamps are not yet in production, Susani deems them and other responsive objects "absolutely necessary. Once we discover the new, deeper dimension they can bring into the domestic environment, we'll miss them—we'll wait for them to be available." —Jill Herbers



Michael Anastassiades's designs reflect the environments they're placed in. His mirrored dining table (top) and vase (left) do this quite literally, making the people and objects in the room part of the design. His Social Light (far left) switches on in the presence of conversation and is paired with an Anti-Social Light that responds to silence.