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▶▶▶▶▶ In April 1994 Andreas moved to Milan, where he worked as assistant to the great Richard Sapper for a year, whilst also opening his own independent design studio in Milan. Clearly not one for sightseeing, Andreas was extremely productive, developing concepts and designs for Wilkhahn, B&B Italia and other enviable clients.

So, did Andreas always see design in his future? 'No,' he admits, 'I didn't know it even existed as a profession. I knew I wanted to do something creative. I went to an art school, but I thought that architecture was too much work – and I was a lazy person. I thought it was a fascinating profession but I couldn't see myself doing all that drawing all day. Product design suited me far better. I was always building things when I was little and we never used the garage at home for the car – it was always full of rubbish. My father was a bit angry about that! I had a sled, which I put wheels on – I made all sorts of things.'

And what about that year in Milan with the great Richard Sapper? 'I learnt a lot from him because he's very hands-on,' Andreas recalls. 'He has very detailed thinking. He also spent a lot of time travelling, which allowed me to work on my own things! It was an amazing year – but my wife took me home to Sweden. She's also from Stockholm. I still spend quite a lot of time in Italy and still work with my model maker from those days.'

We move on to talk a little more about Confair. The system that many believe was at the very forefront of the desk-sharing, flexible teamwork and project group revolution that is now so commonplace.

Andreas developed Confair so that it could accommodate individual persons, a group of eight and anything inbetween. It can be simply linked with other tables to form a table configuration, and, of course, can be instantly folded up and rolled away whenever necessary. 'It is well-engineered,' Andreas admits. 'They (Wilkhahn) were crazy in a way, because we did not know where this was going. They spent a lot of money on it – on the tooling – and made sure that if we were going to do it, then we should do it right.'

'I don't know how many generations (of Confair) there will be – we're now on the 2nd or 3rd generation. It's still relevant and I think it's still quite elegant. I think this is how it has survived. The quality of the design is extreme – we always wanted something that would last and that has paid off – for us as well as the users, I hope. It was a very new product when it first came out – the typology was extremely new. This addressed many things that hadn't been thought out previously. It worked for public sector projects – and also for areas such as Hong Kong where space is so important.'

'What I think is convincing about the product is that it is in some ways simply a table.'

'It was fun for me because when I finished my studies I already had my first product out and my rent was paid! I was very happy. Somehow, now – after many, many years – it has become even more complete with the new Timetable Shift product. I think this blends in very nicely with a lot of the existing products and doesn't need as much space. It has nice proportions. I think it is very silent – everything happens behind the scenes.'

We ask if Andreas takes the development of other similarly engineered folding tables as a compliment. 'I saw one at Orgatec,' he smiles ruefully. 'It's 17 or 18 years old now – and still these other products come and go. What is also carrying the product is that it is integrated into a philosophy here. It is extremely important, I think, ▶▶▶▶▶

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▶▶▶▶ that it is part of a programme of meeting furniture – and others might not do this to such an extent or in a continuous way.’

Longevity of design is something that is close to Andreas’ heart – and something that is built into all Störiko products. ‘I don’t really design for specific clientele or geographic areas. It’s a little bit like cars; you drive Audis here in England, for example, because they are well engineered and drive well. It’s the same with a table. They should be able to work all the way around the world and they should be able to last.

‘There should always be a need first – then it can last. It’s very nice for me, for example, that by continuing to talk with Wilkhahn we were able to move from Confair into Timetable and now Timetable Shift and the Aline family – because we saw this need to combine mobile and static elements.

‘There are always different reasons as to why you should make something in a different or new way. You should never say that something is simply finished. Tomorrow you might find out that it makes sense to use different or new materials – who knows?

‘In my eyes, the way I work at least, the office is unnecessary. You might as well sit in a restaurant and meet with people and enjoy the food, the wine, or sit in front of a fireplace. With the technology and the communications that we now have, for a large number of us, the office isn’t necessary. My office is in my bag. This will continue to change and the furniture will continue to change with it. It will continue to have a great impact on what we do.’

As well as the multi-award winning Aline and Timetable programmes for Wilkhahn, Andreas has recently developed a table system for LaPalma and the Volo seating programme for Lammhults back in Sweden. Who knows – maybe in another 17 years these products will still be making an impact, and we’ll still be talking about them, and even adding them to our list of iconic products. Well, the man has got something of a track record in that department ●

