

SUMMER TRAINING

At

Ranvik Exports Pvt. Ltd.

SUHRID K. PALSULE

08613803

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Mr. Vikash Gupta, Director, Ranvik Exports, for his support and confidence in me from the beginning. It was under his able guidance that I was able to achieve all that is written about in the report. And to all the staff and my colleagues there. I also wish to thank all faculty and my batchmates for their support.

INTRODUCTION- Ranvik Exports Pvt. Ltd. Is located in an industrial area in Manesar, Haryana. The company has been involved in exporting leather products for the last 14 years. Recently, they have launched a retail brand under the name “threesixtydegrees”.

My interest in the company rose out of the desire to work in the so called *lifestyle* sector, the commercial, more “liberated” side of product design. Ranvik and ‘Threesixtydegree’ are involved in providing home and office solutions to clients in up-market Gurgaon.

The company produces a wide variety of products. Almost all are clad in leather (cladding being the prime activity in the unit). They offer custom-made products to people. The chance to be able to interact with clients and get hands-on experience in the production process was a very good opportunity in the area of my choice.

The following is a preview of some of the company's products;



People:

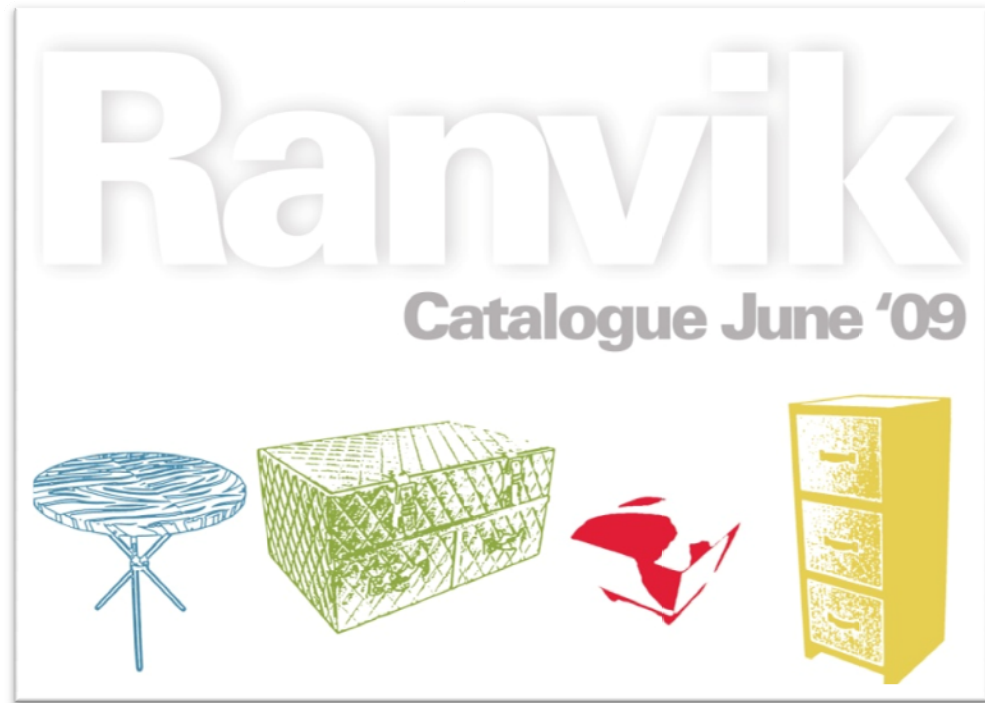
I was working directly under the director, Mr. Vikash Gupta. Most of my interaction was with the carpenters (Ravinder, see pic.) and the leather workmen. Although I interacted with a whole lot of other people on a daily basis. There was regular interaction with the clients, either via phone, or e-mail and in person, on the days I spent at the shop.



Work: I intended to put to use my design education in refining existing designs and creating products of my own. Time was at a premium. I and my boss at the company, Mr. Vikash Gupta (the director) decided to break-up the duration in weeks and plan my internship week-wise.

Week 1: In the first week, to get acquainted with the company and its operations, I worked on the company's database of products. The unit had produced, over the years, a huge number of products of varied styles. There was a lot of variety even in a particular product category. I was tasked to sort-out and improve the databank of products. This work was much needed and appreciated and entailed into me making a catalogue for the company to send to its buyers (see fig.).

I also spent the first weekend at the store outlet, *threesixtydegree*. There was a flurry of activity at the weekends and a lot of potential customers would come. Offering completely customized furniture was a USP of TSD. Hence a lot of people would come with their particular requirements. They had varied needs and differing tastes. It was interesting to have face-to-face interaction with the clientele. Mr. Vikash Gupta (the director) was very helpful and involved me in the discussion of every project that came our way. Threesixtydegree is a new brand and is getting fairly popular in the area.



The experience of spending time in a retail outlet would be something I will remember forever. The job was challenging mentally as well as physically. Some of the customers were exacting to work with and dealing with so many people in rapid succession was a challenge. But it was exciting nevertheless.

Mr. Vikash Gupta is an entrepreneur with amazing energy and attitude. Working with him was exciting as well as inspiring. More entrepreneurial work came my way. The director was happy with the way the store was going and was keen on opening a new shop. The presentation for the DLF management (the company in whose mall we wanted to open the new store) was also done by me. By the mid of the second week, I'd had enough of desk work. And right at that time, came along my first assignment.

Week 2: A buyer based in the U.S. was looking for a manufacturer in India to supply him with "trunks" that he wanted to sell in the States. The style, size and particulars were also provided through mail. The brief was clear and any correspondence, if needed took place through his agent in Delhi. There were a total of six trunks, three each in wood and steel. We decided to make three samples - two in wood and one in steel.

I was assigned the complete project and given full authority (and responsibility), and although the director had the last word he gave me a free hand throughout. The task was challenging since the deadlines were short and the samples were for a probable future order of a large no. of pieces. I needed to design the trunk, handle production issues (sourcing, selection and production supervision) including correspondence with the buyer's agent in Delhi, through whom all communication was done. The project continued till the very end of my internship, with the buyer's visit (for inspecting the samples) held after my internship was through, although I was present at the meeting.

Week3: While this project was underway and taking up all of my time, another interesting request came our way. A customer needed a stroller trunk made for him, the kind with wheels at the ends, for travel. He was into the business of selling suits and wanted this trunk to be a custom-made carrier for his suits. This task of making a transportable, attractive and yet economical trunk and with wheels attached was especially exciting for me as it would be my first design to be put to test immediately. I got right onto the task.

Week 4: I spent a lot of time in the carpentry area. This was especially good for me as I love working with wood. The unit had fabulously talented carpenters from whom I learned a lot. It was amazing to see them work.. They were very skilled and worked very efficiently. There was a great deal of learning in the manufacturing of the trunks (I goofed up in my first trunk- it was made in a sandwich of ply + MDF which made it heavier and more expensive. It had to be made again).

Week5: Involved final stages of both projects. Completion of woodwork, cladding processes, finishing detail etc..

Stroller trunk;

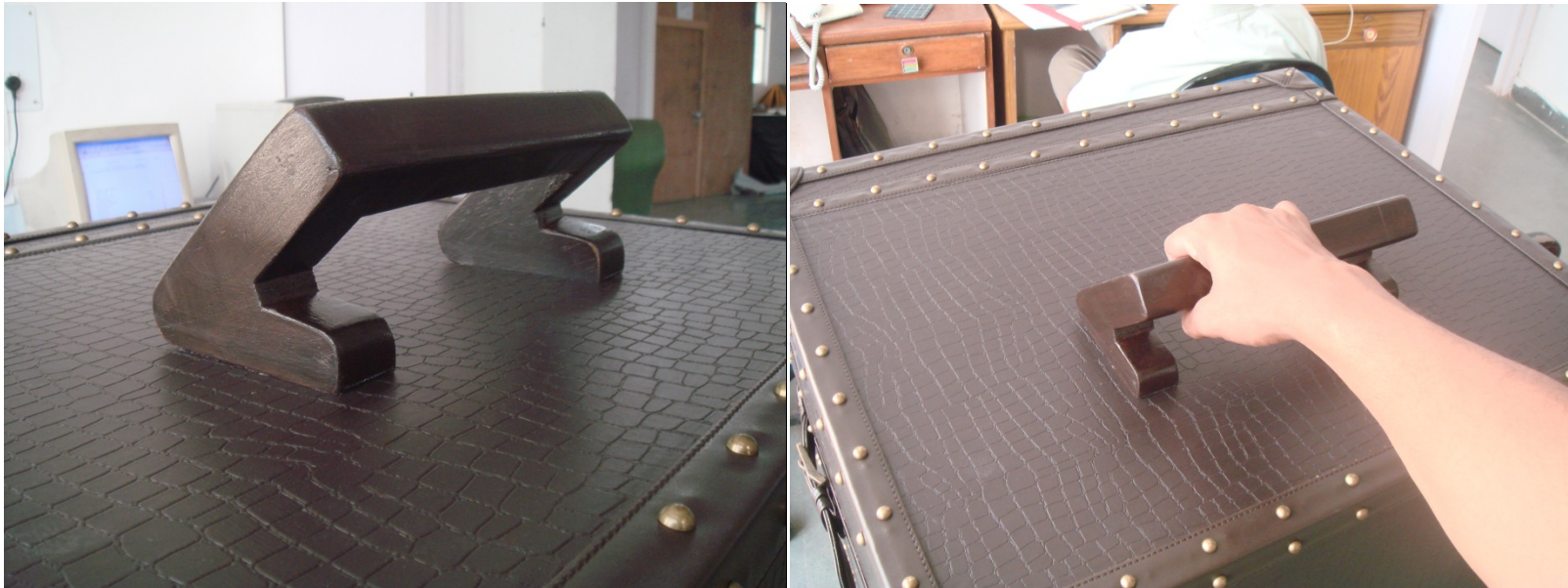
1. The project was borne from the client's desire to have a trunk made for his particular requirement, which was of a trunk that had wheels on it for easy transportation and some other additions and changes, like a lock, a rod to hang suits and an extendable handle. The trunk was meant to carry business suits while they hung from a rod inside the body.
2. Design- Since the need was clear and precise, finalizing the design did not take long. The sketching I did was mainly put to use in explaining the product to the carpenters and other workmen.
3. Production- (Woodwork): I had been given the inside dimensions by the client. Most wood products are begun by first simplifying the design down to a box. Hence in this case, too, the trunk-making began with cutting and nailing together 3/4th" plywood to make the box of the required dimensions. This part was easy. Next step was to cut a lid out of the same. The depth of the lid was governed by multiple factors such as the resulting weight of the lid post-cutting, the kind of leather work to be done on it later and what sort of lock was needed to be put on it and how much space that would need.

The depth of the lid was 3.5 in. . The next task and probably the most crucial was the attachment of the wheels. I wanted the axis of the wheels to coincide with the bottom edge of the trunk. Such that only three-quarters of the wheel would remain visible. This seemed the best both aesthetically and functionally. This was achieved by cutting just the right-sized (and right shape) holes in the required places. The wheels were fixed onto a separate wooden plank that was attached later from inside the trunk. Leather and fabric cladding would cover the plank from outside and in, respectively.

Next, the rod and lock were fixed. The lock needed a lot of improvisation as it was not the right kind. It was the kind that was to be inserted in the cavity of the doorway. The rib provided smooth mating of the lid and the trunk but

proved to be a bother in installing the lock. A false base for the lock and a self-made steel plate for the latch was the final solution to the problem.

The handle should have been the extendable-type that we see in strollers at airports and in executive baggage, as requested by the buyer. However, a ready-made handle of that size and strength could not be found. A custom made handle was needed. It was a natural decision to have a wooden handle. I was certain of the fact that a leather handle would be completely wrong as pulling a box of this size would be very straining. So instead, a wooden handle was made and it did the job very well.



4. Cladding: The trunk was to be clad in faux leather (artificial) and fabric. The fabric was to line the inner walls of the trunk and the leather on the outside, as can be seen in the fig. . The trim was given in a different color and brass hardware was used.



Storage Chest:

1. The order came through the buyer's agent here in India. The buyer had supplied a wealth of information on how he wanted the chest to be. The target consumer base was upper-class Americans. There is a huge demand for antique-looking leather-clad furniture in the States (the client later told us) and he was eager to get this done in the right "look". But my main concern was regarding the production of the wooden chest.
2. Same as the stroller trunk, the making of the wooden chest also began with a box. This was a lot harder than it sounds, as one had to take into mind almost all the inner dimensions as well as the thicknesses of the wood and hardware.
3. Again, after the box had been made, the lid was cut. This time its height was 4.5 in. . After that the sizes of the four drawers were drawn on the box front and the respective holes were cut. Then the cut pieces were nailed to other cut pieces of ply to form the complete drawers. Steel channels were attached and MDF partitions were put where needed. This was the final step in the woodwork.
4. The leather and fabric work was a big part of this project. The chest was massive in size (50" x 50" x 20") and it was important that all cladding work be accomplished to the right effect. The cladding work took the lion's share of the time needed for this product.
5. The work began by making a paper pattern of the whole trunk and taking its required measurements. The client had decided a particular type of leather. The trade name for it is Oily split. The leather skins are of odd shapes and geometrical shapes are cut out of it. The handles are punched out of a similar sheet. All the hardware is also added at various stages of the cladding process.



- All surface panels, handles, corner-patches, belts and edge strips are made in genuine leather
- The wood trim is hand-polished teak.
- All hardware (buckles, rivets, lock and fasteners) are made in brass and given an antique finish.
- The insides are lined with twill fabric

Epilogue;

I have always categorized objects as either *functional and purpose-built*, or simply good-looking and *high on visual-appeal*. Of course I understand that all things do have both attributes, but in varying proportions. Although Industrial design is indeed a noble profession that concerns itself with the betterment of people and society; however, a large lot of us designers are in the pursuit of creating objects that although are visually stimulating and pleasuring to the eye, are many times, low on purpose or, simply put, shallow.

The experience that I gained by working in the “lifestyle” sector has been invaluable. Dealing directly with customers was enlightening. However, there were some aspects which made me stop and think about this line of work. There seemed to be a very few who were sensitive towards details in the design. A general disregard for refinement was seen. Sometimes even in the company. A lot of time and effort was spent on trivial matters of choice of hardware and fittings, many of which could be done away with completely. The “look” of the product was the main concern and functionality took a back-seat. It was concerning.

As my attraction towards such objects diminished, my love for functional, useful and sensible products grew manifold. For a designer, the fulfillment of a need, achievement of the purpose is and should always be the prime concern in all design decisions. Attaining that through the simplest and most efficient way, should be the next. Therein lies the beauty of the product.