

S+ARCK



Designer: Philippe Starck, Beretta Pistol Hand Gun Lamp, 2005

Section 2 – Design Studies – Question 7

Background Information

Philippe Starck (born January 18, 1949) is a French designer known since the start of his career in the 1980s for his interior, product, industrial and architectural design, including furniture. The son of an aeronautical engineer, Starck studied at the École Camondo in Paris. In 1968, he set up his first company, which produced inflatable objects. In the same year, Pierre Cardin appointed Starck as the art director of his furniture sector. While working for Adidas, Starck set up his first industrial design company, Starck Product, which he later renamed Ubik, and began working with manufacturers in Italy, such as Alessi, and Kartell, and internationally, including Austria's Drimmer, Vitra in Switzerland and Spain's Disform. His concept of democratic design led him to focus on mass-produced consumer goods rather than one-off pieces, seeking ways to reduce cost and improve quality in mass market goods.

"Why doesn't furniture show that everything is a political choice? I am a designer and design is my only weapon, so I use it to speak about what I think is important." - Philippe Starck

Philippe Starck created the Guns Collection to make a powerful statement. The Gun collection is a series of lamps consisting of table and floor models. Although designed by Starck, they are manufactured and sold by an Italian company called Flos who specialise in lighting. The Bedside Table model is a replica of a Beretta Pistol Hand Gun, whilst the Gun Table Lamp is a Kalashnikov AK47 gun and the Lounge Edition Floor Lamp is a M16 Rifle. 20% of sales from the Gun Collection is donated to charity by Flos. The charity, 'Frères des Hommes' is an organization dedicated to abolishing poverty around the world.

Cultural / Social / Other Influences (including inspiration)

Philippe Starck's intention with the Gun Lamp range from Flos was to create objects which remind us that our own state of well-being is the result of somebody else dying.

- The Gun Bedside Lamp design is based on a Beretta pistol hand gun and has a body made of die cast aluminium with an injection moulded polymer overprint.
- The aim of the Gun collection is to draw attention to the global arms exports of numerous governments: Each Flos Gun is an exact replica of a typical fire arm from a certain part of the world. This Bedside Lamp represents Europe (Beretta Pistol Hand Gun), whilst the Gun Table Lamp symbolises the East (Kalashnikov AK47 Gun), and the Lounge Floor Lamp Gun stands for the West (M16 Rifle).
- The 18-karat gold of the weapons represents the collision between money and war. The Flos Guns series is a condemnation against the profit made from war and the weapon industry.
- The black shade signifies death.
- The crosses on the inside of the shade refer to the many lives lost to war and are also reminiscent of gravestones. The entire Gun collection shifts the context to a kind of memorial for the countless dead, who have been killed in the numerous and profit-oriented wars. The crosses also relate to the S+arck signature cross logo.

Target Market

This is a statement lamp that could be seen in very stylish interiors. Due to the expense of the product and the materials used to construct it, this lamp is only available to those able to afford it. It may appeal more to males, due to the masculine imagery and colours used. Having two choices of colour may appeal to a wider audience, as it could match different décor.

Function / Fitness for Purpose

The fixtures provide direct light for reading and, at the same time, diffused light to illuminate the entire room. There's an electronic dim switch on the cord which makes it easy to set the right mood, from dim ambient lighting to bright light.

Cost

This lamp is an expensive piece of design costing in the region of £1150. The use of 18-karat gold undoubtedly affects the cost. The Philippe Starck name also makes this an expensive product, due to it being fairly exclusive. The production process may also increase the cost.

Ergonomics

This bedside lamp is quite small in size at 42.6cm tall. It would therefore be easy to use. The lamp is operated by a dimmer switch on the cord.

Aesthetics

Any design by Starck guarantees original concepts. This sleek and edgy lamp is designed to shock due to the imagery of the gun used for the base. It is available in two colour combinations: 18K gold with a black shade, or a chrome finish with a white shade. The inscription in the base, "Happiness is a hot gun", adds detail to this area. The cross detail on the inner lampshade also provides interest on an otherwise plain shade.

Materials & Techniques /Method of Construction

The 'gun' is made of a die cast aluminium with injection-moulded polymer overprint and a polished 18-karat gold-plated finish. The shade is matte black plasticized paper with a silk-screened gold printing on the inside. (The base is also available in a galvanised chrome finish with a white lampshade with silver print). This lamp is mass-produced by Flos.

Safety

The base is quite heavy at 4 lbs, so is unlikely to topple over. The lampshade provides protection from the heat generated from the bulb. As with most lamps, the cord could pose a tripping hazard.

Durability

Philippe Starck / Flos create durable, high quality lighting. The base is aluminium and so would be very hardwearing. The plasticized paper lampshade would be more delicate, due to the nature of the materials.

Description of Design

This sleek and edgy bedside lamp is part of the Philippe Starck's Guns Collection, making a statement while doing good. "Design is my weapon," says Starck, who donates 20% of the collection's sales to charity. The 18-karat gold lamp makes a statement about the fragility of life. In contrast to the gold plated body of the lamp is the black shade, symbolising the links between money and death. The shade features silk screen gold printing inside, with subtle S+arck signature cross decoration. The base is embellished on top with the words *Happiness is a hot gun*.

Style / Visual Impact

Weapons are a recurring icon and are used to see how far the boundaries of design can be pushed, in pursuit of a healthy disgust. The style and colour choice is striking, creating visual impact due to the imagery used. The simplistic style of the shade contrasts with the detail of the gun on the base.

Visual Elements (Colour, Shape, Pattern, Line, Texture)

The black and gold colour combination is very striking and quite masculine in appearance. The shapes used throughout are streamlined. The inner lampshade contains a repeated pattern of small crosses, which creates interest but also reminds us of the lamps theme (death). The texture throughout is smooth, which suits the sleek style of the lamp.

