



Airia Desk & Media Cabinet

For Herman Miller

Kaijustudios

Airia™ Desk & Media Cabinet

Walnut, Laminate, Cast Aluminum, Powder Coated Steel

Designed for Herman Miller®

Launched May 2008



Photography courtesy of Herman Miller, Inc

The Opportunity

Herman Miller® identified a significant opportunity to re-enter the crowded but leaderless home office market. With their deep experience creating products for work and their legacy of high quality, modern furnishings for the home, Herman Miller was uniquely positioned to make a big move in this space.

An extensive research study on emerging technological and cultural trends surrounding the professional, personal and recreational activities that take place in the modern home (what Herman Miller called “lifework”) confirmed that the opportunity was real and growing.

Building on our long standing relationship, Herman Miller knew they could count on Kaiju Studios to help develop a portfolio of new products to capitalize on this opportunity. Key to this effort was synthesizing the research into products that addressed the increasing penetration of technology into every facet of daily life and the continual blurring of home and work boundaries.

40%

of the target audience worked from home at least some of the time¹

top 10

product search on froogle: Computer Desk²

most popular

special function room requested by AIA architects: home office³

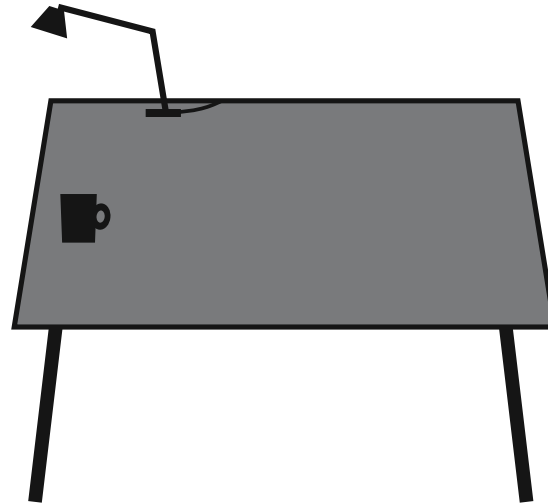
1. US Bureau of Labor and Statics American Time Use Survey, 2009 2. Google zeitgeist, 2005
3. American Institute of Architects Home Design trends Survey, Q4 2005

The Need

Our analysis of the industry revealed that desk offerings in the home office category populate the extremes of a spectrum that spans from stylish yet overly simplistic, to utilitarian yet uninspired.

The majority of products that were in competition for Herman Miller's target customer were essentially "table-desks" - a basic work surface elevated by a set of simple trestles or legs. Although this configuration represents a certain purity often romanticized in photo shoots, the simple elegance often turns to chaos when faced with the realities of the modern home office.

Our goal was to holistically consider the needs and desires of Herman Miller's target audience: dynamic, modern professionals who value authenticity, uniqueness and quality.



simple elegance



turns to chaos

The Brand



We take pride in our ability to internalize the values and character of the brands we work with. Although brands are not static and need guidance to remain relevant to consumers, we put our client's ambitions ahead of our own egos. Herman Miller has maintained an enviable image for decades, and we took responsibility to preserve their heritage of innovation, quality and stewardship that spans from the work of the Eameses to the iconic Aeron® chair and beyond. Best known by their residential customers for their diverse range of seating products, it was important that our design would be viewed as suitable companions to these products.

As is the case in much of the furniture industry, the visual attributes of Herman Miller's brand did not manifest in products conforming to a singular corporate design language. Our approach was to use materials, color and forms that would have enduring appeal, equally at home alongside design classics as with new styles. Recognizing the stakes of this venture, part of our intention for the Airia Desk was to help Herman Miller claim prominence in this category. Since its launch, the Airia desk has garnered the attention of the media and potential customers alike.



User Empathy

Through analysis of the target customer's demographic and psychographic profile, we came to understand that users were treating their computers as a hub of activity in the home. The notion of "lifework" extended beyond the responsibilities professionals take home from the office to include countless activities that individuals and families do on and off their computers: working from home, paying bills, shopping, social networking, gaming, etc. Our design acknowledged that the traditional home office was changing from a place for productivity to a social, dynamic, multi-purpose place that families congregate.

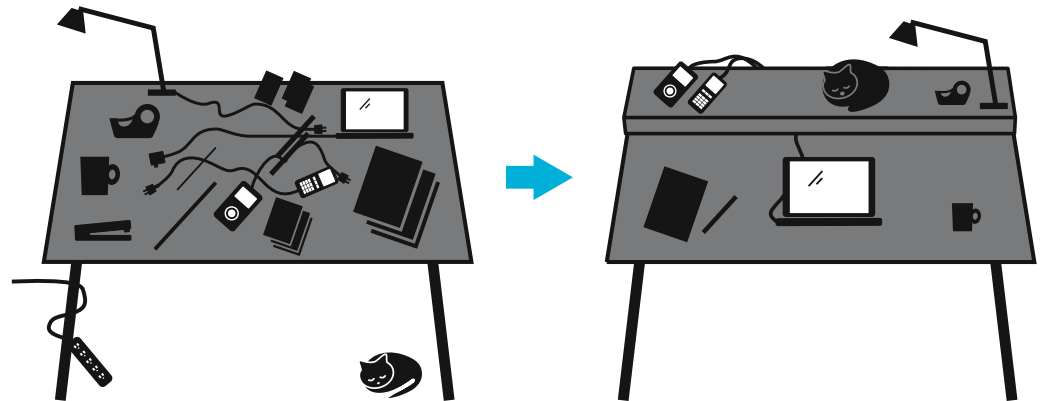
The implications of this trend was that "lifework" was less private and furniture was being used in new ways. Accordingly, we designed the Airia desk to be adaptable and flexible, in its use as well as where it could be situated. Herman Miller wanted to introduce products that were seductive, and aspirational. We envisioned an heirloom quality product that the user would form an emotional connection to; success would be a product that works well, but also makes the user feel good.



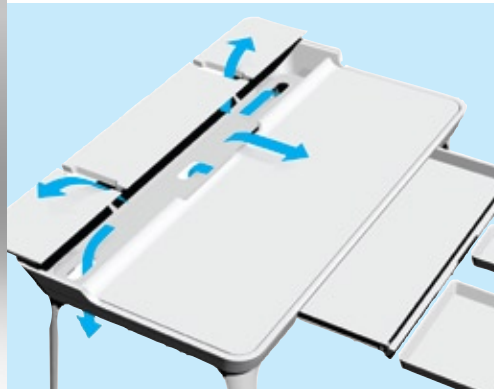
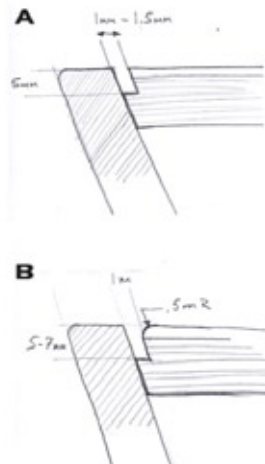
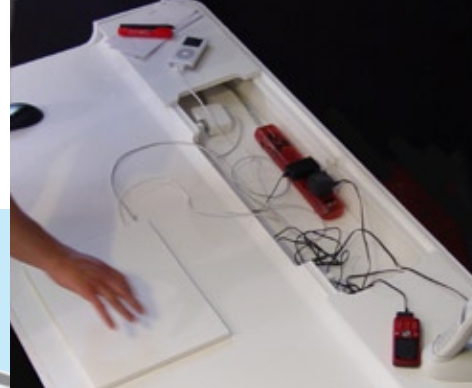
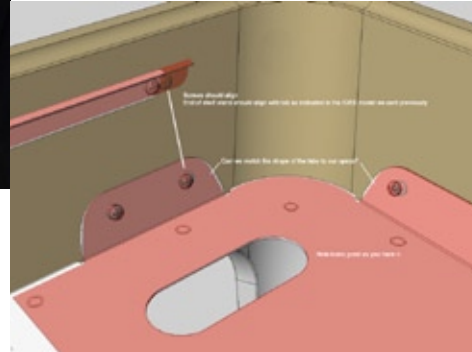
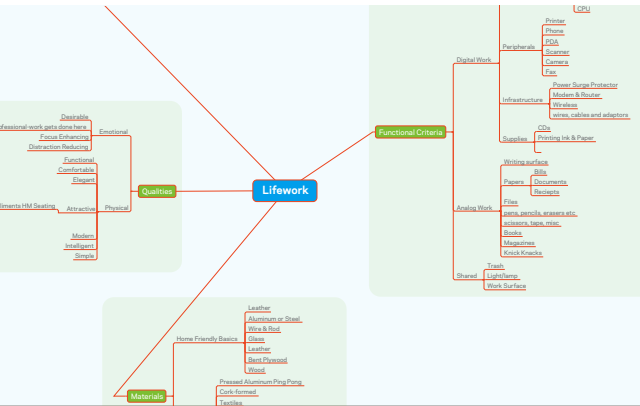
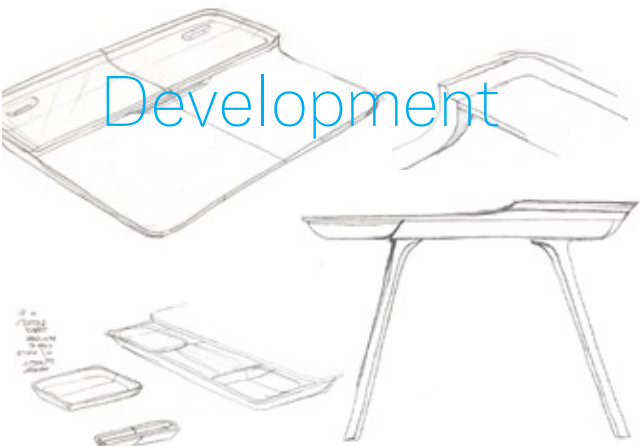
Our Approach

After surveying the marketplace and analyzing the target user, a simple yet comprehensive objective led our thinking: high style, high quality, and high performance. An intense charrette of brainstorming yielded dozens of concepts. Along with hand sketches and CAD models, an important step in bringing the few stand-out concepts to the next level was mocking them up full scale. Doing this allowed us to get first hand experience using the product, but it also verified the functional, dimensional and visual integrity of the specifications we delivered to Herman Miller.

Several distinct designs were presented for this project and two of our concepts were sampled for a review with retail partners. Because this program was running on a very aggressive schedule, our successful collaboration with the client's engineering, design and marketing team was essential to ensure progress was made within schedule and budget constraints.



Development



The Results



Launched at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York in 2008, The Airia desk has been a big success. As part of Herman Miller's Lifework® collection it shared the ICFF Editor's Award for "Body of Work" and was given the Good Design Award by the Chicago Atheneum. The media took notice as well, with favorable coverage in the New York Times, Wallpaper and Metropolis.

For Herman Miller, the project was not only about revitalizing the category, but it also represented a strategic shift in the way they do business. In an effort to expedite development timelines and globalize their supply chain, the Airia desk was developed from project brief to launch in just over a year and relied on an expanded network of partners. Maintaining their strict social, environmental and production quality standards while working with new off-shore suppliers further compressed the design phase and necessitated an efficient working relationship with Herman Miller's engineering team. Although the product launched as the economic downturn took its hold, the Airia desk has been a top seller in the Lifework collection.



"This was an ambitious project for us on several levels, not least of which was the compressed development cycle. Airia was in some ways a prototype for new product development at Herman Miller, and we are excited with the results."

Don Goeman, Executive Vice President of Research, Design and Development at Herman Miller.

"Kaiju Studios' Airia desk and media cabinet explore the delights of hidden storage compartments and evoke a visual balance between work and home"

Metropolis, "Out of the Shadows" June 2008

NOTCOT.

"its gorgeous down to the tiniest details... It really is nice to see a desk that goes out of its way to not only look good, but help make hiding the inevitable cable clutter during use."

NotCot.com, May 2008



"...the Airia Desk...manages to meld an up-to-the-minute look with a certain warmth and sexiness."

Men's Journal, "Perfect Things" September 2008



About Kaiju Studios

Kaiju Studios creates meaningful products and experiences through poetic simplicity, creative thinking and elegance in function and form. We believe that successful design can only be achieved with a thorough understanding of the needs and aspirations of both client and their customer, and we cultivate this knowledge through research, observation and analysis. We also believe that creating an emotional connection between objects and individuals is more art than science. It's something we achieve with intuition informed by experience. In all our work, Kaiju Studios attempts to marry the rational and the emotive.

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