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Flouting Conventions

For one Saturday night each spring, Soho's Greene Street design shops are packed with what, at first glance, appear to be quintessential customers. They wear wonky Alain Mikli eyewear and shapeless Comme des Garçons frocks, but they're not seeking a living room suite. Rather, they're drinking prosecco and hobnobbing, the antidote to a long day in Javits at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, the premier American modern design and furnishings trade show. By dusk, this design mafia descends on parties at Moss and Design Within Reach, but the impetus for the fête are the hyper-innovative products shown by the 600 exhibitors from around the globe. It's the kind of white-hot furniture that fills glossy magazines and boutique hotels—and Greene Street shops, of course. ICFF has American brands, too, such as Bernhardt Design, an offshoot of the North Carolina company that makes traditional furniture. This year it's showing a sofa by Due Studio so streamlined you'd hardly recognize it as American. It's not of course—the young designers hail from El Salvador and are so cutting edge they don't even wear spectacles yet. *ICFF at the Jacob Javits Center is open to the public on May 19; Tickets \$50; icff.com*
—Sophie Donelson

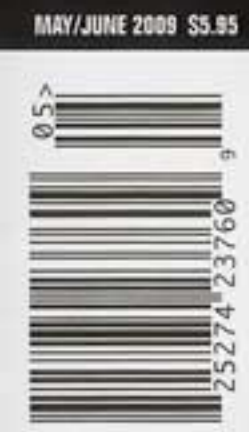


ULTRA COOL From top: Last year's ICFF opening party at MoMA; Due Studio's sleek sofa.



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