



Meet our Co-founder and head of design

Lemon's co-founder Kevin Frankental is not one to place himself visibly at the forefront of his business. Preferring instead to focus on teamwork and a strong design strategy, he's happier behind the scenes building Lemon into a local brand to be reckoned with. But the fact remains that it's the people behind a business who make it what it is, and for that reason, we thought it time to introduce one of the integral members of the Lemon community.

A graphic designer by training, Frankental launched Lemon with his brother Ricky around a very specific service focus. At the time, it was one of the few studios offering custom design-oriented print products and filled the niche neatly, creating project-specific designs for interior architects and corporate clients. 'I have always loved the graphic nature of our products. I like the relationship between a pared-back piece of furniture against a graphic wallpaper or bold print. It adds dimensions to a room,' he says. This appreciation for dynamic spaces and design beyond print eventually began to require a more varied outlet - prompting the company's expansion into furniture. The result is a range that allows designers to create well-rounded environments using Lemon designs.

A stickler for detail, Frankental dived into learning about the manufacturing process in order to be able to deliver products he was proud of. The process of creating, as much as the end result, is where the satisfaction lies. 'I love the making, Trying products with different materials and mediums - making mistakes and really working a product until we are happy with it. It takes a lot of time to do it this way but my process has always been to do less on the computer and more in the physical realm,' he says.

This dedication to craft comes through in the range - each item honed with a great deal of passion. The simplicity of the pieces often belying the process of design, trial, error, and refinement. The goal of this approach - and for Frankental it's the core of the company's ethos - is timelessness: to make something that lasts because it's made well, as well as the fact that it doesn't belong to any one era. 'I try to design products that I love now, and will love 20 years from now. I want to look back at them and say - this product really adds value to the interiors it inhabits,' he comments.

This ethos applies to the artists and designers Lemon works with - collaboration is a big part of the brand, and Frankental is adamant, even fanatical about aligning only with those that share this set of values. This has resulted in a close-knit community of creators combining their skills to produce beautiful, unique designs. Designs that Kevin himself chooses to live with in his own home.

Outside of Lemon's repertoire he favours those who celebrate materiality, tradition and understatement, and cites Italian purveyors of beauty Dimore Studio, master of low-key luxury Joseph Dirand and British designer Max Lamb, for his mastery of natural materials, as personal favourites. He also has a soft spot for the classics unsurprisingly - timeless pieces that retain their relevance. 'I love anything by Charlotte Perriand. What's interesting for me about her is that she worked with Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and later with Jean Prouvé. So ultimately she collaborated with some of the best design minds of the century, and for me her work feels like the best parts of each of them in a way,' he adds.

It's also enduring designs from the past that inspired some of his favourite Lemon pieces - the Winston server is an ode to Franca Helg, while the Kent armchair, designed by Yaniv Chen, draws on 1950s Italian design elements. 'They're versatile - great for a home setting or an office, and just represent what we stand for: fine craftsmanship, beautiful materials and understated elegance,' he notes.

What they also have in common is the patience it took to create them. Lemon's evolution over the years has taught Frankental that good design takes time. 'It's always tricky because you have to pay the bills but I would prefer to produce fewer pieces - that have been considered and thought through,' he adds.

The view to the future, likewise, is considered and deliberate and, like the brand's approach to design, long-term - a plan that places emphasis on exposing South African design to the world. Currently in Amsterdam and SA, Frankental wants to go broader. 'We want to open in more cities and expose our design and quality to the world. I would also love to incorporate objects and lighting in the range in future,' he adds.

About Lemon

To us, good design is thoughtful design. We live comfortably in the space where beauty and function meet and aim always to create pieces that are both useful and decorative.

We obsess over how our designs are made. It's crucial for us that there's a balance between the practical and the aesthetic, and that our pieces feel good to use as well as to look at - and it's the small design details that make this difference.

We design with longevity in mind. The antithesis of mass production, our pieces represent our belief in conscious consumption, the idea that less is more and that universal beauty has no expiration date.

We work with manufacturers who understand this - and who share the same passion for quality and considered design. To ensure that our quality is never compromised, we seek out specialists in their fields - from artists and metalworkers to upholsterers and carpentry aficionados. Whatever their particular skill, a shared appreciation for quality and skill is essential.

Because craft is a central tenet of Lemon's identity, much of what we create is done by hand - from prints, to wallpapers and furniture manufacturing. Our business has a huge emphasis on craftsmanship. We are not in this to mass produce, but rather to create pieces with care and made with attention to detail.

To that end we partner with young as well as established South African designers to create collections in line with our design philosophy. South Africa is a rich resource of raw and often untapped talent and our mission is to support and grow the local industry while building our own.

