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Pratt

The 4th Annual Umbra | Pratt Design Competition

WINNING DESIGNS TO BE PRESENTED
AT ICFF ON MAY 18TH

New York, May 1, 2008 – Since the beginning of February, over fifty Pratt Institute industrial design students have been defining and refining drawings and models of a variety of home accessories that were submitted for review in the 4th Annual Umbra | Pratt Design Competition. The winners were selected earlier this month and the student designers and the three winning designs will be presented during the ICFF show at the Javits Center this month.

The 2008 competition at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY – inaugurated on Umbra's 25th anniversary – was open to undergraduate and graduate students in Pratt's Industrial Design program, and was directed by Paul Rowan, Umbra's co-founder and vice president of design, and Matthew Burger, the Chair of Pratt's Industrial Design Department with the assistance of faculty member Noah King.

For this year's competition, Rowan asked the students to reinvent an everyday commercial object – to contemporize or improve the function, form or relevancy of this object; in other words, to reflect Umbra's philosophy on innovation, function and esthetic. The judges of this year's competition were award-winning designer and Pratt alumnus Harry Allen, founder of Harry Allen & Associates; David Sokol, former managing editor of I.D. magazine and currently a contributing editor at Surface and writer for Architectural Record, Metropolis, Azure, and Frame; and Paul Rowan, who with Les Mandelbaum founded Umbra almost 30 years ago.

First, second and third place winning designs from the 4th Annual Umbra | Pratt Design Competition will be unveiled on Sunday, May 18, 2008 during the International Contemporary Furniture Fair (ICFF) and NY Stationery Show at the Javits Center in Manhattan. The winning student designers will be introduced at a ceremony to take place at 2:00 pm at the Umbra exhibit on the concourse level, where the winning prototypes will be displayed throughout the show (through May 20, 2008). These designs will also be exhibited at the Umbra flagship concept store in Toronto.

If any of the designs are conducive to production, the designers will be given the chance to work with Umbra's design team to create a prototype. In turn, if a design is produced, it will earn a place in Umbra's catalogue and royalties for the student designer. Two previous winning designs – Conceal Shelf and Wishbone Soap Dish – have been part of the Umbra catalog since 2006 and continue to be among Umbra's

top-selling products. A belief that Pratt's students today will become some of Umbra's most successful designers tomorrow led to the creation of the annual Umbra Pratt Design Competition. "The Umbra Pratt competition allows students to tackle a design problem that is educationally beneficial and, if successful, may be produced and distributed worldwide," according to Rowan. "This is an invaluable opportunity and these students are not only very eager to learn, they are capable of creating professional product design, as was proven this year. Umbra believes design education requires a partnership with industry. Pratt should be commended for supporting this belief."

A percentage of the profits of the designs produced by Umbra will go towards Pratt Institute's industrial design program, which was ranked number four in the country by U.S. News & World Report in its 2009 guide to America's Best Graduate Schools, published in March 2008. Pratt's interior design, graphic design, and master of fine arts degree programs were ranked first, ninth, and fifteenth, respectively. As part of its America's Best Architecture Design Schools edition, monthly architecture and design journal *DesignIntelligence* ranked Pratt's interior design program second nationally, its industrial design program third nationally, and architecture ninth nationally.

"We are all very pleased with the results of this year's Umbra | Pratt Design Competition. This is the fourth year we've run this contest and the turn out was exceptional, both in terms of the number of students who submitted work as well as the quality of the designs themselves," observes Noah King, professor of industrial design, who oversaw the students' participation. "The three winners each did an excellent job of developing fresh ideas into working product designs. Their work is elegant and innovative with a playful spirit that makes the designs very appropriate for the Umbra brand. We're looking forward to continuing this collaboration in upcoming years."

ABOUT UMBRA

Umbra is the worldwide leader in casual, contemporary, affordable design for the home. The company's products are available at over 25,000 retailers in more than 75 countries. Umbra's award-winning design team – 30 men and women from all over the world and notable outside product designers – create products for every room. Headquartered in Toronto, Umbra's offices worldwide house more than 250 people.

In 2007, Umbra's first-ever retail concept store opened in Toronto to showcase its entire brand, including the U+ Studio Collection. The space provides a lab environment for Umbra's design team and present exhibits of commissioned works by international artists. The pink-clad flagship store – designed by Kohn Shnier Architects and the interior design studio Figure 3 – is a must-visit destination for anyone interested in architecture and design. The site has garnered much critical acclaim and was named Project of the Year at the September 2007 Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario (ARIDO) awards. Most recently, Umbra's concept store was featured in the "Design 100" issue of TIME Style & Design, Summer 2008.

ABOUT PRATT INSTITUTE

Founded in 1887, Pratt Institute (www.pratt.edu) is one of the largest independent colleges of art and design in the United States, offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs in the schools of architecture, art and design, information and library science, and liberal arts and sciences. Pratt is located on 25 landscaped acres in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn and has a Manhattan campus in a large, newly renovated building on West 14th Street.

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