



MAN OF THE HOUSE

Fire up the teakettle! Break out the ironing board! When your hands are on **Scott Henderson**'s nifty, award-winning products, puttering around the house is a romp with high design. By Joanne Furio

SOHO COFFEE SHOP, 9:30 AM: WITH HIS JET-BLACK hair and boyish features, Scott Henderson admits that he has been compared to Donny Osmond and a young Orson Wells, "which is better than an old Orson Wells," he quips. Today, in a black nylon jacket with the collar up and his wavy hair combed back at the sides, he's looking more like a young Elvis. Or a rockabilly teddy from the 80s. "That's because I need a haircut," he says.

But it's not the looks of this 6' 5" star designer that cause curators and manufacturers to swoon. It's that every creation Henderson conjures up turns to gold.

"Scott's products are affordable and beautiful and comfortable to use," says Ellen Lupton, curator of contemporary design at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in Manhattan. In 2003, Lupton included four Scott Henderson objects created during his 12-year tenure at Smart Design in the museum's design triennial.

"Sometimes we think of design as rarefied, interesting objects to be looked at and admired," says Lupton. "These are objects that people use at work and at home in a daily way. And they're objects that make life more enjoyable."

In a 1998 *New York Times Magazine* article, a panel of experts went so far as to select Henderson's Dust Brush and Pan, created for OXO, as one of the best-designed products of the 20th century.

With a repertoire that ranges from the practically primordial mortar and pestle to the high-tech wizardry of hand-held electronics, the 38-year-old Henderson, who

made his mark as VP of industrial design at Smart Design, went solo in August to pursue his own consulting business. He runs Scott Henderson Inc. out of a three-bedroom Brooklyn brownstone apartment he shares with his wife, a bookings editor at *Glamour*, and their seven-year-old son and two-year-old daughter.

Leaving Smart also allowed Henderson to devote more time to Mint, a four-year-old firm he founded with designers Alberto Mantilla and Anthony Baxter, which is becoming known for everyday products in refined materials. Mint's already a darling of the design world, selling in about 100 stores and 20 museums around the globe.

Praised for creating objects as beautiful as they are useful is certainly music to the ears of Henderson. As he sees it, many designers have taken the early modernists' design dictum, "form follows function," too seriously, and have overlooked art and emotion. "It is a given that a product has to function well, but people's worlds are not just about physicality," he observes. "They have emotional needs, too."

Whenever he approaches a project, Henderson says his goal is to find the "big idea" that transcends conventional thinking. "A lot of designers create novel details. But once you've found that big idea, the stylistic details are not going to change it."

A native of exurban Yorktown Heights, New York, Henderson studied industrial design at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Though he held two other jobs before Smart Design, it was there that Henderson made his