

Cologne

The Chipensteel chair,

by German designer Oskar Zieta, was one of the highlights of this year's IMM Cologne furniture fair, which was otherwise much less interesting than last year's.

The piece was shown in the Design Talents hall, a showcase for small practices and young designers that was one of the few spaces to pull a crowd outside of

cocktail hour. The chair is made from two metal sheets welded together. Liquid is pumped through at high pressure to expand the chair, giving it a quilted look, and legs are then folded into place. Other notable exhibits here included Henrik Drecker's light with a suction cup to stick to patio doors and windows.

Design Talents picked up the lost traffic that would usually flow through Stylepark, the central hub of the fringe events that take place around IMM Cologne and usually the focus of the festival. Last year, the organisers successfully mixed up the likes of Konstantin Grcic and Jaime Hayon with a wide selection of students and small practices. But this year it was scaled down to just two installations – furniture by Grcic and products by Patricia Urquiola in various stages of completion, taking a ride on a very slow rollercoaster.

It looked like Stylepark was

saving its money for June's Design Annual fair in Frankfurt, being whispered by a number of exhibitors as a potential alternative to IMM Cologne. But the result of the scale down was that many of the smaller practices disappeared entirely, and Cologne's design week lost its buzz.

A cluster of design companies showed at Vulkan.Köln, a complex of restored industrial buildings offering exhibition space away from the trade atmosphere of IMM. Peter Marigold, of Okay Studio, showed his Royal College of Art graduation project Make/Shift (icon 039) – an adjustable shelving system that can be rearranged to squeeze into any gap – now in production by Movisi.

In IMM Cologne's contemporary design hall, Ligne Roset was one of the few big manufacturers to launch a collection, including an origami-style rug that can be folded to make a stool. Across the road at Design Post, held in a former mail sorting depot, Droog showed a collection that's just gone into production, including Fatlamp by NEXT: Architects – a lamp filled with fat that melts when the light is turned on, eventually burning away completely. ANNA BATES

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Clockwise from above: NEXT Architects' Fatlamp light, Ligne Roset's Gregory rug/stool, Peter Marigold's Make/Shift shelving, Henrik Drecker's Lumir light, Oskar Zieta's Chipensteel chair

