

## Yves Béhar

### An artist's studio provides just the canvas for the LCD TV

'The design process is not often made visible and I really wanted to show it, to demonstrate it,' says San Francisco-based designer Yves Béhar. 'All around the FuseProject offices' – where he keeps a team of 30 multidisciplinary designers very busy – 'are monstrous sketchbooks and sketches.'

Béhar, 40, has the hair and air of a Californian surf dude – which is kind of what he has become. For this shoot he decamped to the San Francisco studio of artist friend Nellie King Solomon, taking a Samsung 40in LCD TV with him. King Solomon's studio is an untidy – if eloquent – stand-in and metaphor for Béhar's own studio. 'I guess that, in an artist's studio, the evidence of the creative process is more obvious,' he says.

Trained in architecture, King Solomon paints on large, translucent acrylic surfaces with brilliantly coloured paints, which create oily abstractions: pools and swirling seepages of carefully controlled colour. 'The slick paint both attracts and repels, like oil spills or hot, toxic colour fields,' says King Solomon. The translucent surface allows the edges to disappear into the wall. 'The wall misbehaves to reveal a painting, allowing the painting to become subversive architecture.' You can see why such a radical but simple creative process would appeal to a designer like Béhar.

The one piece of his own that Béhar brought along to the studio was his 'Leaf' light for Herman Miller, the American company responsible for bringing the designs of Charles and Ray Eames, George Nelson, Eero Saarinen and Alvar Aalto to the US market – but which nevertheless remained dormant on the domestic front for years. Until now. The idea behind the 'Leaf' was to create a piece that could do both soft, ambient lighting and hard, task lighting. It took Béhar and his team four years to design and engineer. Béhar developed his own set of LEDs and controls versatile enough for the job, plus a unique cooling system, which means the light can be pushed and pulled any which way without the fear of minor burns. Beautiful form meets innovative, elegant, logical function. This is why Béhar has a reputation as a designer's designer.

If anyone is in a position to judge the success or otherwise of a contemporary product design, it is Béhar. And he insists that Samsung's 40in LCD TV is a success in every way. 'I've really taken note of these TVs,' he says. 'They are such difficult things to design, a very constrained form. And the market is very stale, which means that this one really stands out. It's a very elegant solution.' >>

#### STUDIO AUDIENCE

Samsung 40in LCD TV in black,  
[www.samsung.com/lcd](http://www.samsung.com/lcd)

Photographed at Nellie King Solomon's studio in San Francisco, alongside Béhar's 'Leaf' lights for Herman Miller, in black and white

