

SHOPPING WITH DROR BENSHETRIT

Beyond Lawn Chairs

NEW YORKERS are no strangers to collapsible furniture. Every summer, droves of folding chairs appear everywhere in the metropolitan area, from Jones Beach to the Great Lawn in Central Park.

But since May, when the city closed parts of Broadway to create a pedestrian mall in Times Square, lounging in lawn chairs on asphalt has become a favorite activity. Still, there have been debates about the seating chosen by the Times Square Alliance: webbed plastic and rubber chairs.

At least one product designer is working to give collapsible furniture a little more aesthetic appeal. Dror Benshetrit, an Israeli native who runs Studio Dror in Midtown and has designed for the likes of Swarovski, Rosenthal and Boffi, creates elegant objects that flip, flop or fold into many forms. "I'm always attracted to things that have two personalities," he said.

His Pick chair, for instance, collapses into a flat rectangle when not in use so that it can be hung on the wall as art (it has graphics on the seat and back).

This Sunday, Target will introduce limited-edition designs by Mr. Benshetrit, including a bookcase that can be assembled in various ways, a wall clock with a collapsible face and a mirror with a frame that opens to make it a table-top piece. One reason he is drawn to such transformable objects, he said, is the flexibility they provide for small living spaces. "Why should I be restricted to a single setup in my home environment?" he asked.

Shopping for collapsible products in shops and online, Mr. Benshetrit selected a few favorites. At the Cappellini showroom in SoHo, he admired the aluminum Stitch chair, which can be folded into a flat wafer and looks equally good open or closed, he said.

Nearby, at DWR: Tools for Living, he tried out the Strida 5.0 folding bicycle. "I've never seen a structure like that," he said of the single-triangle frame (most bikes use a double-triangle design). Although he deemed the ride less smooth than that of a conventional bike, he was impressed by the portability.

Uptown at the Conran Shop, he admired the Notebook portable grill, about the size of a laptop computer when folded, calling it a "simple beach solution," perfect for space-squeezed New Yorkers.

For a handy laundry hamper, he chose the Container Store's Double Folding Mesh Cube, which he uses in his West Village apartment. It has two nylon compartments that can be expanded one at a time or folded flat for storage.

Even if you don't collapse such products on a regular basis, Mr. Benshetrit said, "just knowing that you have the ability to control something means a lot."

