Adam Cornish’s twist on design is bringing him international cred. He spoke with Gina Morris.

WITHIN 18 months of graduating from RMIT, 29-year-old designer Adam Cornish (below) was showcasing his work at the Milan Salone International Furniture Fair.

His first collection — a series of three bowls (Trinity), a range of wire tables and stools (Twist) and a stunning plywood hammock (Flex) — has attracted interest from the likes of furniture giant Giulio Cappellini and the curator of The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

THINGS HAVE MOVED FAST?
Yes, I suppose it is a bit unheard of. I went to Milan as representative of the Melbourne Movement, which was founded by [RMIT professor] Kjell Grant. The hammock was a prototype I did in my final year at RMIT but it has evolved a lot. It was influenced by the human spine and has rubber vertebrae between each piece, which makes it comfortable.

AND THE TWIST CREATIONS?
They were made to resemble simple wire stools which have been picked up and twisted by imaginary giant hands. A force that would completely splinter and destroy a piece of wood will gently ripple and bend a piece of stainless steel in the most beautiful manner. I try to create objects using this simple observation.

WHY DESIGN?
It’s a bit of a cliched answer but it chose me. I have always pulled apart everything I’ve owned from a young age — bikes, guitars, anything. I’ve always had a curiosity and a will to modify things to better suit the task. Now it’s my profession and my passion.

WHAT OR WHO ARE YOUR INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATIONS?
I am inspired by the interaction of forces and materials and the shapes, patterns and structures they cause when combined. I like the invention side of design. To discover a new way of doing things and tackling something from left of field — the Howard Hughes and Henry Ford approach. Otherwise I try to keep my inspirations fairly clean. For me, it’s being inspired by everyone but copying nothing.

THE BEST PART OF WHAT YOU DO?
My father always said if you do something you love you never do a day’s work in your life. That’s how I feel. Getting a prototype back is like Christmas for me. To see something that I thought of, drew and put so much time and effort into, actually existing in my hands, that’s what it’s all about. Having other people see it and actually own it — that’s something I’ve only just started to experience.

ANY LOWS?
It’s a long road. You can have an idea for two or three years and nothing happens. So the waiting can be very hard. I also make a lot of mess and I’m constantly in trouble from my girlfriend — there could be anything on the kitchen table. The house is full of prototypes and so is

my parents’ garage.

PROUDEST MOMENT SO FAR?
When Giulio Cappellini came to look at my hammock. I saw him come in and I went over to give him a flyer and he said, ‘I’m here to see the hammock’. That was crazy. It’s what I’ve dreamed about. It’s almost too good to be true. My parents happened to be at my stall at the time, so it was a proud moment for them too.

WHAT’S THE DREAM?
To keep going. To have my work made available. I don’t want to design to fill the world with more stuff. I want my work to have a home.

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Left: Stools and tables with a twist. This wire furniture harnesses the visual dynamic of twisted objects. They give the impression of being created by imaginary giant hands, from $250-$1000.
Left: Flex (the plywood hammock) is a flexible structure inspired by the human spine and its range of motion, rrp $4750.

Below: Trinity, constructed from mild steel, is a series of three bowls, each utilising the same unique construction method. Width 450mm, diameter 450mm, height 140mm, rrp $350.