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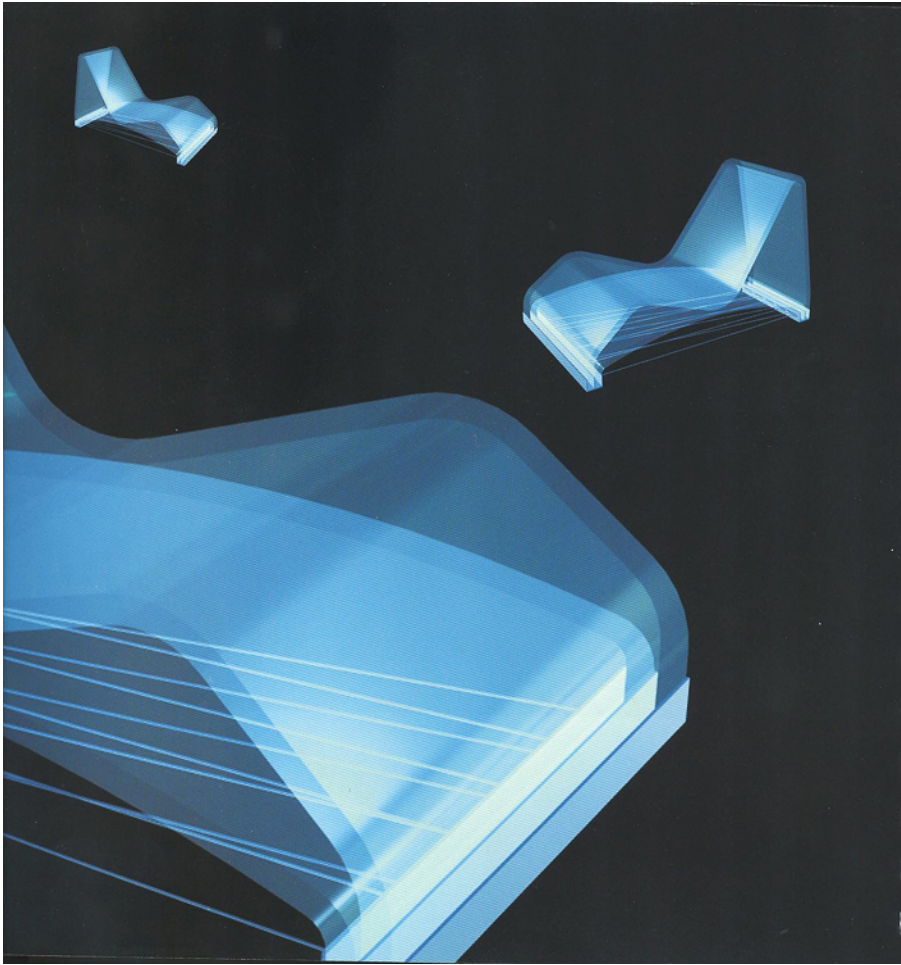
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The design and production of a glass chair allowed us to be involved not only in a work environment very close to the reality of design and construction, to production constraints and costs factors, but also in an environment where different kinds of technologies were constantly influencing the relationships between design concepts and decision making. However, we could say that despite this unique and rich studio environment, one of the most interesting challenges was not only to address all phases of the design process, but also to think critically how technologies can be used both as a medium for creation and as a mediator between professional experts.

Over the short term, two major transformations are foreseeable in this domain. First, with the spread of CAD/CAM technologies, costs of customized production will decrease and more free form designs will be achieved. Secondly, teamwork can be established remotely at a larger global scale, and

knowledge will be embodied in clusters of professional experts dispersed worldwide. The location of these high technological clusters could be placed then in a new digital and knowledgeable genius-locus, from which produced 3D prototypes would be virtually analyzed and shipped at a very low price. This would mean that investment in Rapid Prototyping Technologies wouldn't have to be supported specifically by architectural or designers' offices, but rather by highly technological centers sponsored by large companies, and by contractors and smaller construction companies investing in telecommunications technologies.

With this model in mind, the picture that emerges is of IST in Lisbon as the high-tech cluster of experts bridging the conceptual ideas of MIT's students with structural and manufacturing constraints, and with Infusao, the glass factory at Marinha Grande, as the skilled constructor. Moreover, the MIT students in Cambridge were designers with the skills that as enabled them to operate almost 24 hours a day by video-conferencing with IST team members in Lisbon, redesigning their own ideas during studio time at MIT, and remotely reviewing their 3D models with Jim Glymph from Frank Gehry's office in Santa Monica, California.

Despite this new global scenario, the design of the Glass Chair was also about sensibilities, culture, artifacts, hidden moments of history, art and silent sketches. As Alvaro Siza has observed (2000): "The design of a piece of furniture can only be definite. It lacks fixed references of scale, of ambience, and of need. The human body has evolved so little that Egyptian chairs are still perfectly usable today." At the same time that the Glass Chair embodies this spirit of simplicity, it also questions how our ancient body will rest on this delicate silhouette of glass.

REFERENCES

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