

7. Feasibility Study: Production of the Project Table and Chairs in Iceland

This study was carried out during the making process and before the exhibition tour began, between March and August 2004. Its purpose was to assess whether or not the table and chairs could go into production in Iceland, at what scale and what the estimated cost per unit would be. This was done by direct correspondence with the makers who had made the table and chairs in their workshops, Gretar Thorvaldsson, Geir Oddgeirsson, Fjolinir Hlynsson and Asa Hatun. A feasibility study form (see Appendix 11, page 244), was sent to each maker with a copy of the specifications, provided in Appendix 12 (page 248). The makers were asked to fill in the form and provide information with respect to their part of the production. The forms were designed to help assess the potential costs of producing the table and chairs in Iceland, for orders of one item at a time, and for batches of 100 or 1000 items. It was thought that the larger batch sizes would bring the costs down. The requested elements of production and summaries of the returned information provided by the different makers are provided below.

7.1. Gretar Mar Thorvaldsson

Gretar Mar Thorvaldsson, was requested to provide:

Cast aluminium components for both the chair and table, prepared to a finished state ready for final assembly with wooden elements.

Summary of returned information from Gretar:

- He could produce up to 100 sets of aluminium components for 800 chairs and 100 tables.
- It would take one week to complete an order for one set of aluminium components for 8 chairs and 1 table. It would take 3 months to complete an order for 800 chairs and 100 tables.

- Gretar did not want recognition or a royalty for helping to develop the table and chairs.
- It would be acceptable and cheaper to have it made in another country.
- It would cost £1240 for the production of one set of aluminium components (4 table leg brackets and 8 chair back legs/seat-frames). No cost was provided for larger quantities.
- The table and chairs could be sold on the internet.

7.2. Fjolinir Hlynsson

Fjolinir Hlynsson, was requested to:

Make wooden chair components including oil finish and assemble with aluminium parts, to a finished state. Disassemble the chairs and pack into packing crate, eight chairs to a crate. Packing crate also to be made and supplied.

Summary of returned information from Fjolinir:

- He could produce up to 1 set, 8 chairs and 1 table.
- He was not equipped or interested in heavy production, was not interested in large orders.
- The production of 8 chairs would take 1 month, at an estimated cost of £2616 (these figures do not include aluminium component costs).
- If someone else made the table and chairs recognition in its development and a royalty was requested.
- Production could take place outside Iceland.
- The table and chairs should be sold in furniture shops

Fjolinir wrote the following statement at the back of the form.

I'm pretty sure that this chair and table are "unfeasible" to produce from hand.

To produce them I think it would be necessary to ask professional furniture making companies that have specialized machinery, and a lot of experience. However it is a good design and it has built in some "hand-made" elements and serves the goal: "to make use of craftspeople skills to design a product for industrial production".

I am not sure that is should be the goal to get craftspeople to actually make the product, and I am not sure that craftspeople would like making things on such a scale, simply because that takes away the freedom they have.

I would like to see an estimate price from a factory also.

7.3. Geir Oddgeirsson

Geir Oddgeirsson was requested to:

Make wooden table components, insert aluminum discs into tabletop and apply cut line decorative details. Apply oil finish to wooden components. Make final assembly of table components. Disassemble table and pack into a secure packing crate. Packing crate to be made and supplied also.

Summary of returned information from Geir:

- Could produce up to 100 tables.
- It would take 9 weeks to complete an order for 1 table. It would take 24 weeks to complete an order for 100 tables.
- 1 table would cost approximately £2735 and 100 tables would cost approximately £191,845 (these figures do not include aluminium component costs).
- It would be acceptable for another company in another country to make the table, in return for development expenses paid and published recognition.
- The table and chairs could be sold in exhibitions.

7.4. Ása Hatún

Ása Hatún, was requested to:

Make felted wool seat covers and table mats. Pack mats and seat covers into parcels of 8 ready for delivery.

Summary of returned information from Ása:

- She could produce up to 1 set of 8 tablemats and seat covers.
- It would take 10 to 12 days to make one set of these items.
- No objection for others to make these items. Does not know about royalties or published recognition.

7.5. Combined Summary of Makers Returned Information

With consideration to the information returned from the makers it can said that:

- Production of the table and chairs by the selected makers could only be produced one set at a time, 1 table and 8 chairs. Tables on their own could be made in batches of 100.
- From the approximate costs provided, not including the costs of the woollen elements or delivery, £2975 for one table and £452 for one chair, would make the point of sale price too high for retail sales. As a wholesale price is normally half of the retail price, this mean the table would have a retail price of £6000, which is too high for the retail market.
- These products could only be made for an exclusive or one-off market and would be competing with bespoke furniture.
- The possibility to produce this furniture in quantity in Iceland can be ruled out, as the specialist manufacturers required for this do not exist in Iceland.