



# YubeCube

the versatile blocks that let you make your own mix-and-match furniture

by brianna snyder | photos courtesy yube

**Y**ube is so 2011. The company, which launched in January, makes LEGO-inspired modular-storage blocks you can personalize with your own photos or artwork. And, because they're modular, you can stack and click them together in a hundred different ways. Even the name — Yube — makes you think of YouTube, on which, by the way, you can watch a number of how-to-assemble-your-Yubes videos once you upload your artwork, pick your Yube-block pattern and start the simple process of Yubing your home.

The Internet looks great these days, doesn't it? Many websites have a design that is sophisticated, clever, artistic, well-organized. And I bet you've developed a sixth sense in the past 10 years or so. A digital sense, an intuitiveness about website and Internet navigation. You know when you click on a cluttered, ugly website that immediately bombards you with five blinking pop-ups that promise you a free iPod, that it's a good

idea to get out fast. It's like wandering onto the lot of a really grimy used-car outlet and getting pounced on by six greasy salesmen trying to sell you a junky car. It's uncomfortable.

The websites we've learned to trust have a lot in common. They're simple and sparse (Google, Tumblr). They're easy to use and walk you through registrations and purchase checkouts and other exchanges step-by-step (Amazon, the Domino's Pizza Tracker). They're blocky and compartmentalized and customizable (Facebook). This super-simple, less-is-way-way-more aesthetic is becoming popular in the home, too. Minimalism is in. Clutter is out.

We're also interested in things like carbon footprints, as in reducing those and living happily with less. Yube's Cubes are made with Woodlite, which, according to the company's website (YubeCube.com), is "a proprietary compound of non-toxic moldable plastic mixed with Bamboo, the planet's fastest growing renewable wood resource."



According to Jeff Greenstein, Yube's founder and president, Woodlite is a plastic-like material with a distinctly unplastic smell. He says Yube is one of the first companies to use Woodlite.

Woodlite is also relatively inexpensive to replace, and Greenstein says that allows for other you-customize-it qualities to the Yubes. "You can do with them what you want," he says, "and draw on them, stencil them and they're less than two or three dollars a piece to replace."

You can also upload and select images to be printed on Yubes. Another way to personalize Yube Cubes is in how the blocks are organized. Because they're assembled, Lego-like, by clicking, snapping and locking together, the blocks can be reorganized depending on what you're looking to use them for, which can be for anything from living-room bookshelves to dorm-room miscellany. To help you with your Yube configuration, the company's website provides a game-board-style grid, with prompts and op-



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tions to expand vertically or horizontally your entire Yube set. It's a little like reverse-Tetris. You build up and out, and with every added Yube, the grid indicates where the next Yube could go. (And here you will want to note that one Yube costs \$29.50. Then it's \$28.50 once you purchase four or more. And when you get to your eighth, each Yube is \$27.)

It's the doors to the Yubes that are customizable, whether by home stenciling or upload-and-printing. (They also are available separately from the cubes, which can cost between \$6 and \$28, depending on if and how you customize.) Patterns on the site include bright, square-y polka-dots in red, white, blue and yellow, Warhol renderings of Marilyn Monroe, solid colors and mixed. You can also add feet (\$10) to your Yube or Yubes to make a freestanding table or drawer (\$10 gets you a pair of drawers). And then you can mount them on the walls (\$20 for a pair of Polyglass shelves).

Greenstein acknowledged the web-in-real-life element to his Yubes, saying that people these days are interested in representing who they are. Why shouldn't their furniture do the same? "There are so many things in the retail environment, and so much of it is homogeneous," he says. When



you buy something from the mall, there's not usually much you can do to change it and make it fit you better.

"Everyone's immersed in social media," he adds. "They want to share things that are unique about them." And now they can do just that in their homes as well. @



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