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The New York Times
Monday, December 14, 2009

Magazine

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THE 9TH ANNUAL YEAR IN IDEAS

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Hourglass Surfboard, The

IIIOT The classic longboard is an elongated, slightly concave ovoid, a shape that has changed little since surfing was invented by the ancient Hawaiians. But the Swedish designer Thomas Meyerhoffer's longboard, introduced in the spring, has a corseted waist and a narrow tail, with a bottom that is more deeply contoured than a typical board. All that curvaceousness is meant to lend the maneuverability of the shortboard, typically ridden by skilled surfers, to the more stable longboard.

Curves have always come naturally for Meyerhoffer, who created the biomorphic eMate laptop, Apple's predecessor to the iBook, and the beanbaglike Chumby, the first "soft" computer. After leaving Apple in the late '90s, Meyerhoffer embraced surfing. He started with longboards but soon began wanting a more agile ride, so he tried alternatives like the fish, a shortboard with a swallowtail. None could match the momentum he felt cresting a wave with the big plank of a longboard beneath him, however. His designer's curiosity piqued, he began wondering how he could make the longboard do more.

The answer came through subtraction. Since the longboard is ridden from the front or the back, Meyerhoffer reasoned that he could reduce mass from its midsection, giving his board its sinuous hourglass shape and making it lighter and easier to pilot while paddling for a wave.

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He tried eliminating the tail entirely but found he needed it to balance the rounded nose; instead he tapered it to a point, preventing the tail from getting caught so the rider doesn't lose speed on a turn. He also slimmed the rails — the board's edges — from soft and thick at the hips to a thin, sharp line at the tail, helping to draw water over the planed surface while gripping the wave from the back.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NICK ALLEN

For the longboard, Thomas Meyerhoffer reduced mass from the midsection, tapered the tail to a point and slimmed the rails (the board's edges).

Many seasoned surfers initially rejected Meyerhoffer's board on sight. But former pros have since championed it, younger riders have won competitions with it and several production runs sold out quickly. "I hope it will be the ignition for more new ideas coming from other shapers," Meyerhoffer says. **JESSE ASHLOCK**

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