

NEWCITY



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**THE
DESIGNED OBJECTS
ISSUE**

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We are living in an extraordinary time—a threshold cluttered with people, places and things. To some, it may seem like a room stuffed with too much past and not enough future. To others, it may recall the antiseptic waiting room in the film “2001: A Space Odyssey,” where the moment’s nakedness seems to yearn for the cover of nostalgia. ■■■■■ It’s unclear how far out into the future this threshold actually extends. At least for now, it seems like the design of objects is racing forward, taking with it a little of the past and a techno-vision of the future. Designers here in the Midwest, like their colleagues around the planet, are stuck in the present tense, poking and fussing, fiddling and fuddling. While trying to make sense of it all, they leave meaning in their wake. ■■■■■ Let me begin with this simple truth. Designed objects embody the presence of people responsible for their conception and are imprinted with the stories of the people who were at the table or in the room at the times of their birth. Avatars. Replicants. ■■■■■ The sheer number of designed objects clamoring for our attention may be obscene, but occasionally we find ourselves face-to-face with things that we might love—with which we might actually have intimate sensual relationships. This is the bright side of consumerism. It’s intensely personal to take something into our hands, bring it up to our eyes, press it against our lips, absorb it with our ears, and ultimately take it right into our minds’ heart. What was once business, is now a love/hate relationship with things—objects. The designed object in some peculiar way commemorates us even as it represents an invasion of our personal space. ■■■■■ This year’s selected objects and their stories highlight a midwestern sensibility—a *Midwest Modernism* insistence on appropriate materiality, meticulous craft, and motivated by a conceptual charm and wit. These objects unleash a version of now, yet hold the past in conscious regard. Oddly familiar objects reflect our lifestyle, our singular blip on the timeline, providing a wry and prolix commentary of who we are and who we might like to be; a chorus of personal voices immortalizing this conflicted moment. ■■■■■ It may sound cliché, but there’s real magic in the air. It is not just some echoing, high-frequency radio signal broadcast from a delivery room far far away, but rather the calling of things worthy of our discerning attention. The following pages are but snapshots from the nursery, captioned with comments by the local parents and caregivers of these recently designed objects.

Cover photos by Ross Floyd
Collaborative Art Direction by RV
Text set in Alright V2 by Jackson Cavanaugh
Okay Type, Chicago
Design by RV and Anna Mort/Thirst

MARK KINSLEY

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TAMERA LEIGH STATEN

- WHY** do you design in Chicago?
WHAT does this object say about you and your practice?
HOW do you gauge the success of an object?

Our city itself seems to share this affinity for resonating contrasts. We were both born and bred in the thriving modern metropolis of Chicago, so proximal and connected to the quiet, open space of the surrounding midwest. And with these two elements, we are empowered to connect to two very different worlds of artisans and manufacturers—exposing ourselves to greater diversity of material and methodology. **Jax** embodies the poetic juxtaposition which drives and defines our work—the precarious merging of the unlikely into one storied object. Pairing the machined with the handcrafted, **Jax** reinterprets the traditional chandelier for that familiar and yet unplaceable future past, collectively reimagined time and again in the pages or frames of science fiction and fantasy. A modern, precision-machined, star-shaped hub powers hand-polished cut crystals, connecting light, in endless modular configurations, like constellations with each prism throwing its own starbursts. A subtle chamfer crosses both materials, nodding to the archetypal cuts of chandelier prisms. The final futurist form of each chandelier system nods to a dreamt up intersection of architecture, light, power, time and space. As with every piece we create, **Jax** tells a story both in function and form. **Not every story should be told and not every idea is worthy of being**

brought to life—we bear this weight of creation with each object born from our husband-and-wife studio. Every piece must be iterated through the fires of our personal dichotomies, engineer and artist, male and female, function and form. The marriage of these seeming dichotomies—machined and handmade, precise and imperfect, relevant and timeless—is the crux of our work and our story. Our work is not a collection from individual designers; rather, each piece could only exist through the merging of wills and minds. There is no meeting in the middle, which fully pleases no side. Rather, it is the undertaking of discovering an elusive line that orbits and encompasses both. Once a piece has found that line, we ask how it will age, materially and soulfully, through time. If we cannot imagine living with it in one-hundred years, we begin again.



Jax, Precision machined aluminum with satin anodized finish, high-powered LEDs, hand-polished cut crystal in clear or smoke finish

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