

Aldo Bakker

Dutch, born 1971

Milk or Oil Can 2005

Water Carafe 2007

Salt Cellar 2007

Oil Platter 2007

Vinegar Flask 2008

Porcelain

Gifts of Helen Drutt English and
H. Peter Stern

Bakker thinks of the objects he sets out to design as characters that respond to—and are informed by—our interactions with them. These tableware items' monochrome forms were inspired by the movement and shape of their contents, as well as by the ways they're used. The Milk or Oil Can and Water Carafe, which do away with handles and lids, mimic the act of pouring liquids. The Salt Cellar's form combines container and spoon. The Oil Platter, when tilted, forms a dipping pool while its vertical axis reduces oil drippings. And the Vinegar Flask's spout is a small protruding cup that allows the user to pour precisely the desired amount.

Gilbert Baker

American, 1951–2017

Rainbow Flag 1978

Nylon

Fabricators:

Lynn Segerblom (American,
born 1956)

James McNamara (American,
1950–1999)

Gift of the designer

Some symbols can move the whole world. The Rainbow Flag, first unfurled at the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade on June 25, 1978, is a gleaming example. Led by Baker, a political activist and designer, thirty volunteers hand-dyed and stitched rainbow flags for the event. Baker, who called the rainbow a “natural flag in the sky,” was inspired by the proliferation of the US flag in popular culture as a symbol of commemoration, power, and festivity. MoMA first displayed the contemporary, mass-produced version of the flag on June 26, 2015, the day the US Supreme Court made the historic decision to legalize same-sex marriage. The rainbow flag continues to symbolize pride, acceptance, community, diversity, and, above all, love.

Don Pettit

American, born 1955

Astronaut cups 2008

Porcelain

Gift of the designer

The zero-gravity cup was the first patented product to be invented in space. NASA astronaut Pettit designed it for use on the International Space Station. Astronauts normally drink out of plastic bags with straws, but Pettit wanted to “recreate how people drink their beverages on Earth,” thus adding “back the dimension of what it’s like to be a human being” while in orbit. He made the prototype using a plastic file divider and high-temperature resistant Kapton tape. The design is based on the principle of capillary channel flow, in which liquid moves through a narrow space as a result of surface tension rather than gravity, such as when water collects in our tear ducts when we cry.

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Ray Eames

American, 1912–1988

Rocking Armchair (model RAR) 1948–50

Fiberglass-reinforced polyester, steel,
birch, and rubber shock mounts

Manufacturer: Herman Miller, Inc.,
Zeeland, MI (est. 1905)

Gift of the manufacturer

The Fiberglass Chairs: Something of How They Get the Way They Are

1970

16mm film transferred to video
(color, sound)

8:58 min.

Preservation stewards: Eames
Office, LLC

Committee on Architecture and
Design Funds

The Eameses often adapted industrial materials to bring affordable, mass-produced designs to American households. Designed for MoMA's 1948 *International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture Design*, launched to respond to the needs of a burgeoning middle class in the postwar period, the RAR was originally made of stamped metal. The Eameses later turned to fiberglass, invented in the 1930s and used during WWII only for military applications. The chair was initially offered in three neutral colors—"parchment," "elephant hide grey," and "greige"—and with several different bases. At the time, it retailed for \$9.88. A few decades later, the RAR remains in production as an evergreen icon of mid-century modern design.

Charles Eames

American, 1907–1978

Ray Eames

American, 1912–1988

Gregory Ain

American, 1908–1988

Harry Bertolia

American, born Italy. 1915–1978

Norman Bruns

American, 1921–2005

Marion Overby

American, born 1909

Study for a Glider Nose

 1943

Molded basswood plywood

Manufacturer: Evans Products Co.,
Molded Plywood Div., Venice, CA

Gift of Lucia Eames Demetrios
and purchase

Ever pioneers in new materials and techniques, the Eameses developed in the early 1940s an innovative method to bend plywood to produce furniture, using a homemade molding machine they called the Kazam! The machine worked by layering wood veneer and glue in a mold, then inflating a balloon inside the machine with a pump to press the wood into shape. During WWII, the US Navy commissioned Charles and Ray to design leg splints as well as an experimental glider, both manufactured by the Molded Plywood Division of the Evans Product Company in Detroit. After WWII, they worked with Evans to manufacture plywood furniture.

Donald T. Chadwick

American, born 1936

William Stumpf

American, 1936–2006

Aeron Office Chair

1992

Glass-reinforced polyester, die-cast aluminum, Hytrel polymer, polyester, and Lycra

Manufacturer: Herman Miller, Inc.,

Zeeland, MI (est. 1905)

Gift of the employees of Herman Miller

The Aeron Office Chair was an ergonomic revolution when it first launched in 1994. Thirty years later, it remains the gold standard for office seating and is Herman Miller's best-selling chair. Its seat and back are made of a breathable textile called Pellicle—a material that can flex in multiple directions and is visually appealing enough to stay exposed without additional upholstery. The Aeron was designed to be comfortable for a wide range of body types: its cables and connecting levers, which were inspired by those on bicycles and motorcycles, allow users to finely adjust nearly every aspect of the seat, including its angles, lumbar depth, arm height, tilt tension, and posture alignment.

Apple, Inc.

United States, est. 1976

Steve Jobs

American, 1955–2011

Jerry Manock

American, born 1944

Macintosh 128K Home Computer 1983

ABS plastic and other materials

Manufacturer: Apple, Inc.

Gift of the manufacturer

The Macintosh 128K was Apple's original all-in-one desktop computer, combining monitor, computer tower, and speakers in one unit. It had 128KB of memory—roughly enough to store a low-resolution image taken with a contemporary smartphone—and came with a keyboard, a single-button mouse, and two applications: the word processor MacWrite and MacPaint, a drawing program that turned the mouse into a paintbrush. Introduced during the 1984 Super Bowl with a commercial directed by Ridley Scott, the computer sold seventy thousand units in the first one hundred days. Its graphic user interface was intuitive and user-friendly, featuring icons designed by Susan Kare. With the 128K, Apple established the desktop computer as a necessity not only in the office but at home.

Art Fry

American, born 1931

Spencer Silver

American, 1941–2021

Post-it Note c. 1977

Paper and adhesive

Manufacturer: 3M

Purchase

In 1968, while conducting experiments with adhesives for aerospace applications, Silver, a research scientist for 3M, inadvertently concocted a glue that did not stick permanently. Dissatisfied, he shelved it. Years later, Fry tested Silver's "failed" adhesive to make reusable paper bookmarks to keep his place in the hymnal while singing in his church choir. His idea became Post-it Notes—slips of paper with the reusable adhesive stacked into a pad—one of the most useful, transformative, and iconic inventions of the past century. While the original Post-it Notes were small yellow squares, there are now more than one thousand Post-it products in many different sizes, shapes, and colors.

Décolletage Plastique Design Team

France, est. 1945

Bic Cristal Ballpoint pen 1950

Polystyrene, polypropylene, and
tungsten carbide

Manufacturer: Société Bic, France

Gift of the manufacturer

The Bic Cristal Ballpoint pen, a humble masterpiece and the best-selling pen in history, is designer and inventor Marcel Bich's improved version of László Biró's early ballpoint pen design. The first ballpoint pen had issues of clogging and leaking, but Bich's version uses a 1 mm ball for the pen tip, so that the ink flows more evenly. The Bic Cristal features two holes: one in the cap to prevent choking if swallowed, and another on the pen barrel to prevent a vacuum from forming within, which would stop ink from flowing to the nib.

Albert Nagele

American, 1935–2018

Cellular Telephone (model V3682) 1996

Polycarbonate plastic

Manufacturer: Motorola, England

Gift of the manufacturer

At the time it was introduced, the V3682 was marketed by Motorola as the world's lightest and smallest mobile device. The US company trademarked the term *flip phone* to describe the clamshell design: two sections that fold at a hinge to protect the screen and keys from damage, while also making the device more compact. The V3682 included new technological features such as a holographic display, stub antenna, internal headset, contacts storage, vibration alerts, and a battery that could support three and a half hours of talk time. Like the Walkman, the V3682 enabled users to carry their private space anywhere, expanding one's metaphysical sphere beyond one's physical confines.

Barbara Ambrosz

Austrian, born 1972

Liquid Skin Drinking Cup 1998

Blown glass

Manufacturer: Glasatelier

Steinschönau, Austria

Gift of the manufacturer

Ambrosz took an action as old as humankind and turned it into design. The form of this cup is based on the instinctive act of drinking from a natural water source with your bare hands, cupping them to act as a vessel. The cup is best held with both hands, cradling the rounded base using the indentations on the sides. Because the vessel is transparent, it becomes almost invisible, creating the illusion of enjoying water directly from your cupped palms.

Gaetano Pesce

Italian, 1939–2024

Pratt Chair (no. 3)

1984

Urethane resin

Tracy Gardner Purchase Fund and
Rob Beyer Purchase Fund

Designers' experiments with new materials have marked important turning points in the history of design. Pesce never stopped experimenting with them—in particular with resins. This chair is one of nine he produced as part of a project for the Pratt Institute, a renowned art and design school in New York. Pesce made the chairs by hand-injecting urethane resin of increasing densities into the same mold. The first chair is so soft that it cannot support its own weight. The third chair, shown here, stands precariously, able to withstand a small child's weight on its warped base. Only the ninth chair is strong enough to support an adult.

Forrest Mars

American, 1904–1999

M&M'S late 1930s

Milk chocolate coated with a
candy shell

Manufacturer: Mars, Inc.,
United States

Gift of the manufacturer

Mars—the first *M* in M&M's—visited Spain during its Civil War (1936–39), where he saw soldiers enjoying in their rations small chocolates with hard sugar coatings that prevented melting. Upon returning to the US, Mars made his own chocolate pellets and brought the idea to the president of Hershey Chocolate Corporation, William F. R. Murrie (the second *M*). Mars proposed a temporary partnership in which Hershey would provide capital and chocolate, as the company held control of rationed chocolate during WWII. His design was patented in 1941, and M&M Ltd. began production in Newark, New Jersey. Originally, the chocolates were packaged in cardboard tubes and only available to the military.

Patrick Jouin

French, born 1967

One_shot.MGX

Stool 2006

Laser-sintered nylon

Manufacturer: Materialise NV, Leuven,
Belgium

Gift of the A+D Circle

In the early days of 3D printing, Jouin was the first to successfully adapt the technology to furniture design. To make this stool, he used selective laser sintering (SLS), a type of 3D printing that uses a high-powered laser to fuse small particles of powder material into a solid structure. He produced the entire structure—seating surface, legs, and hinges—in one shot. The stool emerges from the printer in its final form, which contains both its folded and unfolded state. An integrated handle in the seat allows the stool to be expanded with a simple, elegant twisting motion.

Alfonso Bialetti

Italian, 1888–1970

Moka Express

Designed 1933 (this example
manufactured in 2008)

Aluminum and plastic

Manufacturer: Bialetti Industrie
S.p.A., Italy

Gift of the manufacturer

Introduced during the Great Depression (1929–39), at a time when impoverished Italians visited cafes less frequently, the Moka Express allowed them to make affordable espresso on their stovetops, at home. Bialetti’s design features a lower chamber that you fill with water; when the water boils, steam increases the pressure inside, which forces the water through ground coffee in the funnel filter. Brewed coffee then collects in the upper chamber. Because aluminum is an effective heat conductor, the Moka makes coffee relatively quickly. Today, nine out of ten Italian households own a Moka Express, and each machine features Bialetti himself—the little mustached man of the logo.

Sony Corporation

Tokyo, est. 1946

“Walkman” Portable Audio Cassette Player (model TPS-L2) 1979

Plastic, aluminum, steel, and
electronic components

Committee on Architecture and
Design Funds



Subway riders listening to Walkmans, New York,
May 22, 1981. Photo: Dick Lewis/NY Daily News
Archive via Getty Images

Personal listening devices have changed the way we exist in the world, allowing us to carry a bubble of expansive private space everywhere we go. The Walkman was the first. It came to be because Sony cofounder Masaru Ibuka wished to listen to music while on an airplane. The TPS-L2, released in Japan in 1979, was an immediate success. Only slightly larger than a cassette tape and featuring ultralightweight headphones, it also had two headphone jacks, for two people to listen simultaneously, and a “hotline” button to pause music so listeners could speak to one another through a built-in microphone.

Golan Levin

American, born 1972

Shawn Sims

American, born 1986

Free Universal Construction Kit 2012

Laser-sintered nylon

Gift of the Committee on Architecture
and Design and Shapeways

The Free Universal Construction Kit illustrates the copyright-busting potential of open-source data sharing. In the open-source design movement, participants make digital blueprints available online for anyone to freely use and modify. Levin and Sims's set of approximately eighty 3D-printing files are for adapter parts that enable interoperability between ten different popular children's construction toys, including Lego, K'Nex, and Tinkertoy. By opening up the possibilities for hybridization between well-known brands, the Free Universal Construction Kit subverts corporate interests—a fact cheekily underlined by its acronym.

Bernadette Thompson

American, born 1969

“Money Manicure” artificial nails

Designed 1990s (reproduced 2017)

Acrylic nail tip, acrylic paint, imitation paper money, 3D acrylics, imitation pearl, rhinestone, plastic, and metal

Gift of the designer

Acrylic nail extensions—one of the most notable twentieth-century developments in the nail industry—are an outlet for artistic expression and a powerful form of identity communication design. In the 1980s, manicurists turned to dental suppliers like Odontorium Products Inc.—known today as the nail company OPI—and adapted the acrylic used for dentures to create nail extensions. As the trend proliferated, a few celebrated nail artists rose to fame, New York-based Bernadette Thompson among them. In 1995, she created the “money manicure” for rapper Lil’ Kim in the video of The Notorious B.I.G.’s newly released single “Get Money” using strips of US paper currency.

Unidentified designer

Monobloc Chair 2024

Thermoplastic polymer

Monobloc chairs are among the most widely used pieces of furniture in the world. They are affordable, stackable, waterproof, lightweight, and easy to clean—a quintessential example of a successful mass-market product. On the flip side, they have also come to exemplify plastic pollution and overconsumption, the dark aspects of mass production. The Monobloc was born in the 1950s, thanks to the development of new thermoplastic technology. A plastic chair could by then be formed in one step: injecting plastic pellets within a steel mold at high pressure and temperature. The original Monobloc designer is not known, as a patent was never filed, but Henry Massonnet's Fauteuil 300 from 1972 is considered the standard-bearer for this universal design.

Gabriel Fontana

French, born 1992

Studio Fontana

France, est. 2018

Multiform 2019–ongoing

Cotton and polyester

Courtesy the designer

Social design is a practice that focuses on social issues, rather than on particular functions. Multiform is a physical education program modeled on inclusivity. Developed by Fontana in collaboration with Rotterdam-based schools and philosopher Nathanja van den Heuvel, it features an original team sports game with transformable uniforms. During the game, players rearrange their uniform layers when they hear a whistle, switching teams to match colors. The number of players in each team isn't always equal. These unpredictable shifts in alliance and balance help students to develop collaborative strategies and to appreciate fluidity through embodied learning. In an ideal world, this game would start a chain reaction, transforming power structures first in school, then in society at large.

Crocs

Colorado, est. 2002

Crocs Sandals 2002

Croslite foam

Despite being labeled one of the ugliest shoes in the world, Crocs have seduced millions with their comfort, quirky style, movable heel straps, and venting holes that double as attachments for decorative charms. Before Crocs, entrepreneurs Andrew Reddyhoff and Scott Seamans had experimented with injection-molded products made of a firm and rubbery EVA foam called Croslite, including medical shoes that resembled traditional wooden clogs. The idea for Crocs came up during a sailing trip with Seamans and his friends George Boedecker and Lyndon Hanson. The original Crocs were introduced in 2002 as a slip-resistant and non-marking boat shoe. They have since attracted designers and celebrities, resulting in daring, sometimes wacky collaborations.

Bruce Blackburn

American, 1938–2021

Richard Danne

American, born 1934

**National Aeronautics and Space
Administration (NASA)**

United States, est. 1958

NASA logo 1976

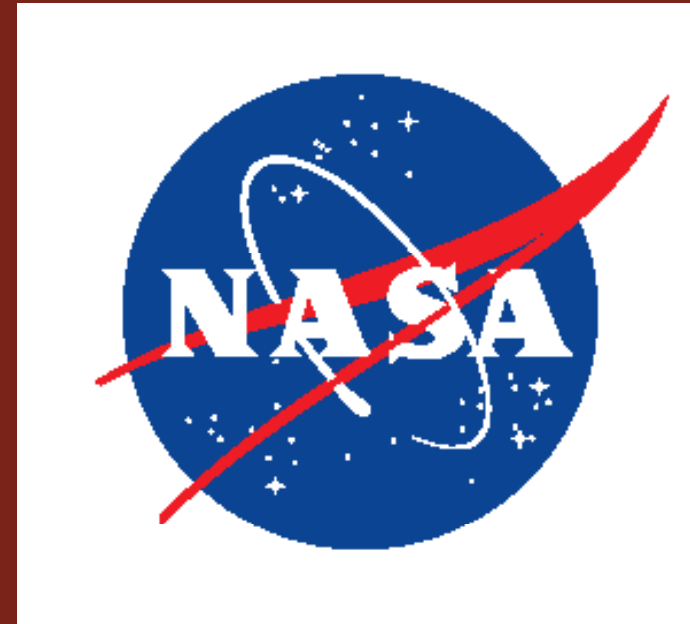
Digital image

Gift of NASA

**NASA Graphics
Standards Manual** 1976

Digital scan of the original

Gift of Bert Ulrich and David Rager



NASA logo, nicknamed “the meatball,” designed by James Modarelli in 1959. © National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Used by MoMA with permission

This logo, which NASA refers to as “the worm,” was commissioned in 1975 by the National Endowment for the Arts under the Federal Graphics Improvement program, which sought to modernize US federal agencies. NASA’s employees intensely disliked the worm, deeming it sterile and soulless. They longed for the original 1959 logo, called “the meatball”—a blue planet with stars, aerospace wings, and an orbiting spacecraft. In 1992, NASA reintroduced the meatball and stated that the worm “slowly . . . will die.” Recently, however, the worm has experienced a nostalgic resurgence both within and outside NASA, appearing on rockets, souvenirs, and even items from a 2017 collection by the fashion label Coach.

Piero Gatti

Italian, born 1940

Cesare Paolini

Italian, born 1937

Franco Teodoro

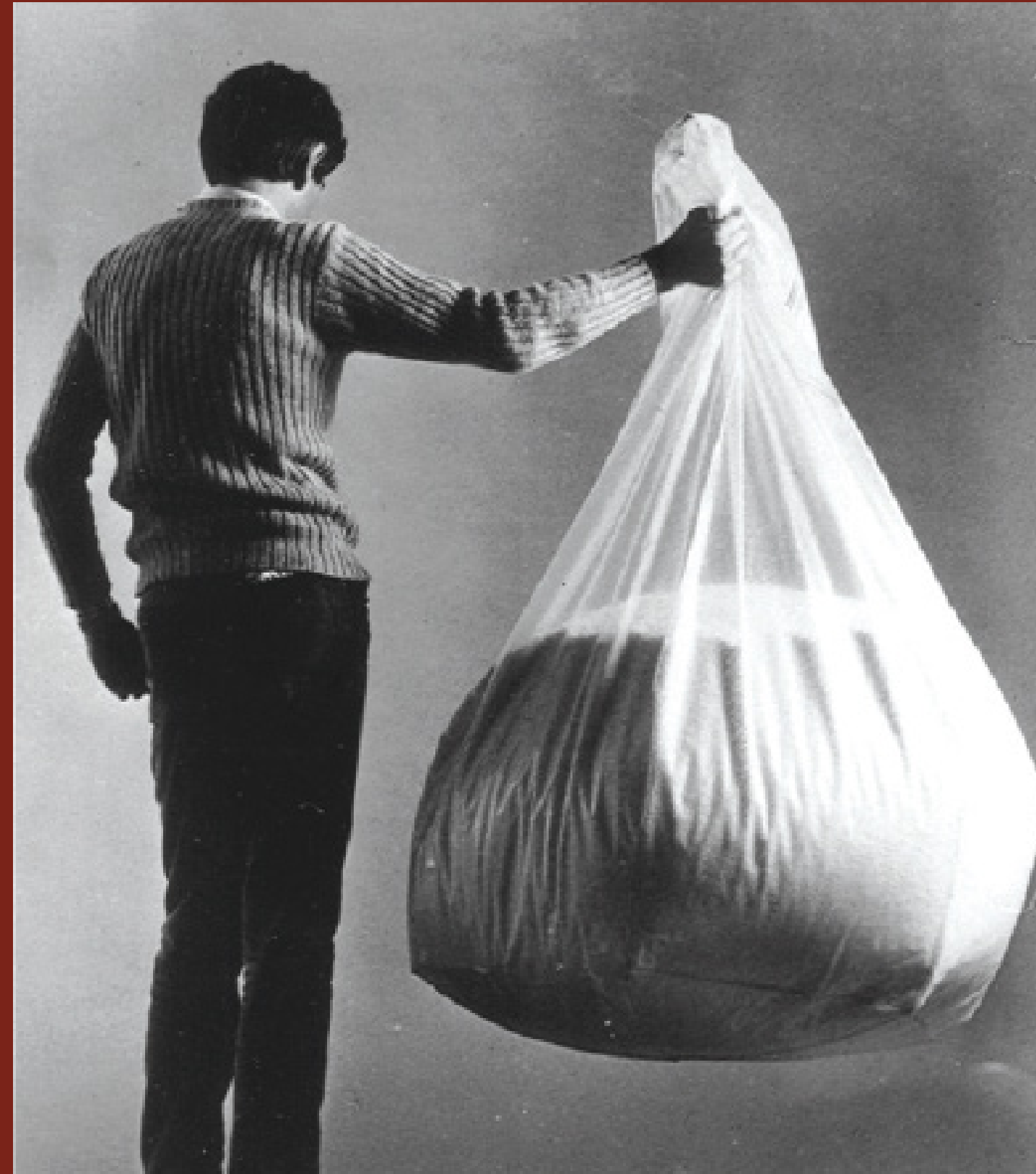
Italian, 1939–2022

Sacco Chair 1968

Leather and polystyrene beads

Manufacturer: Zanotta S.p.A., Italy

Gift of the manufacturer



Original promotional image for the Sacco Chair, c. 1968. Image courtesy Zanotta S.p.A., Italy

It is hard to think of a more disruptive chair than the Sacco in its embodiment of Italian Radical Design, a movement that emerged in the late 1960s and rebelled against modernism, rationalism, and consumer culture. Its name comes from the Italian word for *sack*, referring to its undefined shape. Gatti describes it as “like snow”—“you throw yourself into it and make an imprint.” A leather bag filled to two-thirds capacity with polystyrene balls, the Sacco is a versatile, oddly ergonomic seat that easily adapts to any body in any position—even fully laid back. The designer was inspired by “old mattresses stuffed with chestnut leaves, widely used by peasants.”

Mario Bellini

Italian, born 1935

TCV 250 Video Display Terminal 1966

Sheet steel and vacuum-cast
ABS plastic

Manufacturer: Ing. C. Olivetti &
C. S.p.A., Ivrea, Italy

Gift of the manufacturer

Bellini designed devices for Olivetti in the 1960s and '70s that introduced a new, biomorphic formal language for electronic objects. The TCV 250 was an advanced communication device consisting of a slanted keyboard; a sloped, cylindrical video screen; push buttons; and stacks of circuit boards, which he unified with a continuous surface shaped like a stretched membrane. Because of the size of the components, Bellini designed it as a freestanding table rather than a desktop machine. The terminal was made using a vacuum-forming process: a sheet of PVC plastic was heated and laid over a mold, air was sucked from the underside, and the plastic cooled, assuming the shape of the mold.

Junichi Arai

Japanese, 1932–2017

Crinkled Metallic Fabric

c. 1995

Polyester and aluminum split yarn

Gift of the designer

Contemporary Japanese textile designers have broken expressive grounds with their inventive use of technologies old and new, especially in fashion, where they have allowed innovators like Issey Miyake to uproot Western concepts of the ideal silhouette. Arai was born to the sixth generation of a textile mill–owning family in Kiryu, a city with a thousand-year tradition of silk weaving. His textiles combine historical and experimental materials and methods; for instance, he applied computer technology to traditional tie-dye techniques. He attained thirty-six patents for his work in fiber chemistry and metallic fibers, including a “melt-off” process, in which metallic thread is dissolved to leave behind a transparent cloth, and an inverted version of this process called “burnt-out.”

Marcel Wanders

Dutch, born 1963

Knotted Chair 1995

Carbon and epoxy-coated
aramid fibers

Gift of the Peter Norton
Family Foundation

“That a piece of rope became stable, [and] we could sit on it—it was a little miracle,” Wanders has said of the Knotted Chair. Designed for the Dutch collective Droog Design, the chair blends the traditional technique of macramé, through which textiles are made using knotting, with high-tech industrial processes. Wanders collaborated with the Delft University of Technology’s aviation faculty to produce a cord composed of aramid fibers—a strong, lightweight, and heat-resistant material used in aerospace engineering. To make the chair, aramid cords are twisted around a carbon core, knotted together by hand, and draped over a mold. The soft net is then infused with epoxy resin that hardens as it dries.

Ingo Maurer

German, 1932–2019

Zettel'z Hanging Lamp 1997

Stainless steel, glass, and paper

Manufacturer: Ingo Maurer GmbH,
Germany

Gift of the designer

Starting with his first lamp in the mid-1960s, a Pop art–inspired light bulb within a bigger light bulb, Maurer liberated the concept of a lighting fixture, allowing designers to bring their poetic and humorous selves when working with illumination. With *Zettel'z*—*Zettel* in German means a small piece of paper for writing on—he invites the owner to become part of the design process. Its shade consists of eighty Japanese rice paper sheets with inscriptions, poems, love letters, and sketches, as well as forty-nine blank pages for the owner to fill in as they see fit. The sheets are clipped to narrow stainless steel rods, which are set in a perforated cylinder. The effect is a fluttering cloud that crowns the light source. Direct or diffused light is emitted depending on how the rods are arranged.

Hajime Sorayama

Japanese, born 1947

Sony Corporation

Tokyo, est. 1946

AIBO entertainment robot (ERS-110) 1999

Various materials

Gift of the manufacturer

The first commercially available robotic pet, AIBO took the world by storm when it was introduced in 1999. Its ability to engage humans on an emotional level made it an instant hit; its first release sold out within twenty minutes. Its name is an abbreviation of **Artificial Intelligence RoBOt**; the word *aibo* also means “partner” or “pal” in Japanese. Featuring eighteen joints throughout its body, AIBO is programmed to simulate the behaviors and movements of a dog. The robot reacts and learns—it performs tricks, responds to touch and sound, recognizes its ball, and emotes through its eyes and tail. Many owners became so attached to their electronic companions that they mourned the AIBOs as if they had “died” when they stopped working.

Leading Edge Design Corp.

Japan, est. 1991

Shunji Yamanaka

Japanese, born 1957

Kinya Tagawa

Japanese, born 1976

Jun Homma

Japanese, born 1975

Tagtype and **Tagtype**

Garage Kit 2003

ABS plastic, rigid urethane, and
aluminum

Gifts of the designers

Engineers and designers have worked for decades on efficient alternatives to the traditional QWERTY keyboard and other standard keyboards in various alphabets. Tagtype is a ten-button device for Japanese characters that was initially developed for a disabled novelist, Ransei Etō, and is today offered as a DIY kit. Its design was based on the *gojūon*, a five-by-ten grid that shows the combinations of vowels and consonants that form the syllables of the Japanese phonetic alphabets (hiragana and katakana). By replicating the *gojūon*'s logical structure in a compact and ergonomic layout, Tagtype makes typing in Japanese easier and more intuitive.

Konstantin Grcic

German, born 1965

360° Chair and Stool

2009

Steel, die-cast aluminum,
polyurethane, and epoxy resin

Manufacturer: Magis S.p.A., Torre di
Mosto, Italy

Gifts of the manufacturer

In the late 1990s, a heightened awareness of the dangers of repetitive strain injuries and poor posture led to the introduction of new types of seating that privileged movement. Sometimes the results were slightly unwieldy, as in the cases of the 360° Chair and Stool. As indicated by their names, they were made to swivel in a complete circle. They are also adjustable in height and can accommodate different postures. Grcic described them as “furniture that should move around without a fixed place, something you pull up for a certain situation.”

Massoud Hassani

Dutch, born Afghanistan 1983

Mine Kafon Wind-Powered Deminer

2011

Bamboo and biodegradable plastics

Gift of the Contemporary Arts Council
of the Museum of Modern Art

There are 110 million land mines still lurking in the ground of seventy countries. A single land mine costs as low as \$3 to make and install but anywhere between \$300 and \$1,000 to remove. Mine Kafon—*kafon* means “explosion” in Dari—attempts to cut costs and streamline the removal process. Inspired by paper toys he played with as a child in Kabul, Hassani designed it to roll across the ground, detonating land mines as it does so. About 155 pounds, the device has 175 bamboo arms with plastic feet. When it detonates a mine, only a few arms are damaged, allowing it to set off multiple detonations before needing repairs. An embedded GPS chip guides deminers safely out of the field when repairs are necessary.

Markus Kayser

German, born 1983

Solar-Sintered Bowl

2011

Fused sand

The Solar Sinter 2011

Video (color, sound)

6:06 min.

Gifts of the designer

This object looks simultaneously ancient and distinctly contemporary. To make it, Kayser explored materials found in nature as well as advanced technology. His research led him to the desert, where he embraced two readily available elements: sun and sand, whose silica component solidifies as glass when heated to its melting point and allowed to cool. Kayser developed a manually operated solar 3D-printing machine, which he first tested in Morocco in 2011. Later that year, he completed a fully automated, computer-driven version, which he called the Solar Sinter, and tested it in the Sahara. The Solar Sinter produced this bowl, in which grooves left by the 3D-printing process are visible.

Richard Malone

Irish, born 1990

Jumpsuit Specimen

2017

Recycled acrylic knit and
plastic boning

Gift of Ted Chung

Malone, an artist and fashion designer based in London, grew up working class in rural Ireland. For this piece, they were inspired by the functional clothing worn by construction workers. Looking into historical jumpsuits that were assembled from one piece of cloth, Malone employed a recycled stretch-acrylic fabric supplied by a factory near their studio in London, which they steamed, split, and sculpted. The result is a unisex garment, intended to be one-size-fits-all. “I was always quite aware of the difference between what uniforms ask of a woman or . . . a man,” Malone says. “I think we’re at that point where people are buying and wearing things from either category . . . the fit is what’s inevitably really important.”

Martin Margiela

Belgian, born 1957

Maison Margiela

est. 1988

Tabi Boots c. 1990

Leather

Gift of Linda Loppa



Model on the runway for the Maison Martin Margiela spring/summer 1989 collection.
Photographer unknown

Tabi is the term for traditional split-toe Japanese socks, which date back at least as far as the fifteenth century and were originally worn with *geta* or *zori* thonged sandals. Inspired by this design, Margiela introduced his signature shoe in 1988 in his first runway show. He instructed models to dip their white boots in red paint, so that their footprints decorated the white canvas-lined runway as they walked. Margiela incorporated the footprint-patterned cloth into garments of future collections. Margiela's Tabis reflect his broader, influential approach to design, in which he translates preexisting forms, materials, or techniques into idiosyncratic garments that eventually become leitmotifs within his practice.

Jock Kinneir
British, 1917–1994

Margaret Calvert
British, born 1936

Simon Morgan
British, born 1957

Primary route sign for British roadways

Designed 1957–67

Retroreflective sign face sheeting,
composite substrate, and aluminum
alloy support channels

Manufacturer: RBLI – Royal British
Legion Industries Limited

Committee on Architecture and
Design Funds

Prior to the 1960s, British road signs were a confusingly inconsistent collection of various sizes, symbols, fonts, and colors. Kinneir and Calvert developed a standardized signage system with pictograms, colors, directional arrows, and a custom font named Transport—all designed from the driver's point of view. They developed instructions detailing the spacing and dimensions of the visual elements in any sign, so local authorities could make consistent signs without the help of designers. By 1965, the uniform signage system appeared on all A-roads—major roads between regional towns and cities—throughout the United Kingdom. Kinneir and Calvert's system soon expanded to every road type.

Hella Jongerius

Dutch, born 1963

Unfoldable Cubes

2021

Yarn, paper, foil, and solar strips

Gift of Jongeriuslab B.V.

Jongerius is a designer known for her groundbreaking experiments in domestic furniture, color, materials, and textiles. Her Unfoldable Cubes are multilayered weaving constructions that she refers to as “pliable architecture,” which will be used in industrial applications such as car interiors. An Unfoldable Cube is woven using a hand-operated, digital jacquard loom called the TC2. Once taken off the loom, specific layers are cut, pulled apart, then partially removed to form a lightweight, sturdy open cube that folds and unfolds. In future, Jongerius plans to add photovoltaic strips that will act as energy sources, enabling the cube to open and close autonomously.

Margaret E. Knight

American, 1838–1914

Charles B. Stilwell

American

Flat-Bottomed Paper Bags

Designed 1870s–80s

Paper

Manufacturers: Union Paper Bag

Machine Company, Philadelphia, PA,

and Duro Bag Manufacturing

Company, Elizabeth, NJ

Gifts of the manufacturers

Many great examples of design have become so ubiquitous that we tend to gloss over the innovations they embody. Take the humble flat-bottomed paper bag, whose standardized, geometric form and economical use of materials are defining features of industrial production. Knight, one of the first women to obtain a US patent, designed the machine that produces them, improving the earlier, structurally weaker paper bags that resembled large mailing envelopes. When folded, the bag is flat; when open, its flat bottom creates a sturdy container, intended for leaving both hands free for the rapid packing of a customer's products.

Smart Design

New York, est. 1979

Good Grips
Paring Knife 1989

Good Grips
Peeler 1989

Stainless steel and synthetic rubber

Manufacturer: OXO International,
New York, NY

Gifts of the designers

Sometimes an object designed to improve one person's life can also improve those of countless others. After entrepreneur Sam Farber noticed his wife, Betsey, struggling with a peeler because of her arthritis, he approached Smart Design to develop a line of kitchen utensils that would be easy to wield, regardless of the strength, size, or anatomy of one's hand. They designed an oval-shaped handle formed out of thermoplastic elastomer—a soft synthetic rubber—with gill-like incisions to facilitate grip. The handle has since been paired with knives, can openers, peelers, and other products for OXO, the company Farber went on to found. By designing tools that are usable not just by arthritis sufferers but everybody, Good Grips exemplifies the concept of universal design.

Tejo Remy

Dutch, born 1960

Droog Design

The Netherlands, est. 1993

“You Can’t Lay Down Your Memory” Chest of Drawers 1991

Metal, wood, paper, plastic, burlap,
contact paper, and paint

Frederieke Taylor Purchase Fund

In the early 1990s, Remy and other members of Dutch collective Droog Design often adapted existing materials into new works, elevating the practice of using intentionally limited means to an aesthetic philosophy. Named after a lyric in the 1985 song “Knockin’ on Joe” by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, this chest was made from salvaged drawers rehoused in custom maple housings and strapped together with a belt. The piece “symbolizes the way our memory works,” Remy explains. “You place something specific in each drawer; I’ll put papers in this one, or something precious in that beautiful drawer. That way you always know where you’ve put things. Since memory is a bit messy for me, I had to tie it all together.”

Shiro Kuramata

Japanese, 1934–1991

Miss Blanche Chair

1988

Synthetic roses, acrylic resin,
and aluminum

Manufacturer: Ishimaru Co., Japan

Gift of Agnes Gund in honor of
Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

Named after Blanche DuBois, the self-deluded protagonist of Tennessee Williams's 1947 play *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Kuramata's Miss Blanche Chair is an icon of postmodern design. Kuramata initially experimented with embedding natural roses in the chair, but the flowers burned in the acrylic resin, so he instead used artificial ones. "It has to be fake because Blanche DuBois is a fake," Kuramata said. The synthetic roses appear to float within the chair's acrylic body, which rests on purple tubular aluminum legs. The tranquil design belies its painstaking construction process—each rose was held in place with tweezers while the surrounding resin hardened.

Swatch AG

Switzerland, est. 1983

Watch (model GB100) and GK 100 Jellyfish Watch 1983

Plastic and metal

Manufacturer: Swatch AG, Switzerland

Gift of the manufacturer

Swatch redefined the Swiss watch industry when it emerged in the 1980s, shifting the perception of timepieces as expensive, lifelong investments to affordable, stylish, and collectible accessories. It resulted from the merger of two Swiss watchmakers, SUAG and SSIH, who were struggling to compete with the inexpensive digital watches coming out of Japan. Whereas traditional Swiss watches were handmade in metal and comprised as many as 150 parts, Swatches were made of plastic and only fifty-one parts using automated assembly. The debut line consisted of watches in twelve colors, including the transparent GK 100 Jellyfish and black-and-white GB100 designs.

Michele Gauler

German, born 1973

Design Interactions Department

est. 1989

Royal College of Art

United Kingdom, est. 1837

Digital Remains 2006

Aluminum, wood, acrylic, and
electronic media

Gift of Marva Griffin-Wilshire

What happens to our data when we die? In the conceptual design piece *Digital Remains*, Gauler envisions hardware elements that function as objects of remembrance. “New technologies bring new ways of mourning,” she says. Connected to a computer via Bluetooth, a personalized and decorated data-storage urn allows users to access a loved one’s digital remains. Search algorithms dig through data, pulling out relevant personal traces—like photographs from a holiday spent together or a favorite song—that evoke the deceased’s presence.

Refugee Nation

Yara Said

Dutch, born Syria 1991

Refugee Flag 2016

Nylon

Gift of Refugee Nation

The United Nations estimates that there are 281 million migrants around the world—a number that will only increase as people continue to be displaced by conflict, political and economic instability, and climate change. This flag aims to bring people together in support of refugees. Refugee Nation is a nonprofit that was born on the occasion of the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro to allow refugee athletes to compete as one people. Yara Said based her design of the flag “on my own experience of crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece in a life vest.” “Black and orange is a symbol of solidarity with all these brave souls that had to wear life vests to cross the sea to look for safety in a new country,” she stated.

Spanx

Atlanta, GA, est. 2000

Sara Blakely

American, 1971

“OnCore” high-
waisted mid-thigh
short 2017

Nylon and spandex

Items Exhibition Fund

Though the term *shapewear* was coined in the 1970s, the concept of reshaping the human body using garments dates back to ancient times. Spanx brought this practice into the twenty-first century. Blakely founded the company in 2000, after designing for her own use a compressive garment that would not show under a beloved pair of tight white pants. It behaves like a control-top pantyhose but without the stomach-cinching rubber cord and thigh-pinching seams. Made with spandex, a synthetic polymeric fiber that offers exceptional stretchability, it features a cotton gusset at the crotch that eliminates the need for underwear, which can create a visible panty line.

Nifemi Marcus-Bello

Nigerian, born 1988

For the Community by the Community – Handwashing Station 2020

Steel, polyurethane containers,
and ceramic

Committee on Architecture and
Design Funds

During the COVID-19 pandemic, designers applied problem-solving and resourcefulness in response to the public health crisis. After talking to medical professionals in Lagos, Nigeria, Marcus-Bello learned that high patient volume was making it difficult for them to wash their hands. Doctors and nurses had to move quickly between patients, and sinks were in fixed locations. He developed this portable, contactless, and modular handwashing station in collaboration with local artisans. It features a tubular steel frame; ceramic components; water kegs inspired by *meruwa*, water sellers in rural Nigeria; and a battery-operated micro submersible pump with a forty-eight-hour runtime. The station is easily replicable using locally accessible components.

Telfar Clemens

Liberian-American, born 1985

Shopping Bag 2016

Faux leather

Committee on Architecture and
Design Funds

“It’s not for you—it’s for everyone.” This is the slogan for the eponymous fashion line by Telfar Clemens, known for his gender-neutral, trend-agnostic designs and commitment to inclusivity, accessibility, and equitability. Dubbed the “Bushwick Birkin,” this bag was launched in Telfar’s first collection and quickly attained cult status. It comes in a range of colors and three sizes. Telfar has a unique pricing system: after a collection drops, items are initially sold to consumers at wholesale cost. As demand increases, the prices rise, capping at the manufacturer-suggested retail prices (MSRPs) set by the brand. If an item sells out before reaching its MSRP, it remains at its discounted price permanently.

Sabine Marcelis

Dutch, born 1985

Candy Cube 2014

Resin

Courtesy the designer

Form matters. While aesthetics are only one aspect of design, there are objects, like the Candy Cube, whose unique presence can influence a whole generation of designers. A seemingly solid object with a magical glowing edge, the Candy Cube is a hallmark of Marcelis's work, highlighting her ongoing practice with material experimentation and color. The cast resin cube is polished and translucent. Its pink color appears darker at the center, fading to a pale pink along its edges. The cube's function is open-ended; it can serve as a podium, a side table, or even a prop. "There's an ambiguity that leaves space for interpretation," Marcelis explains.

Christien Meindertsma

Dutch, born 1980

Flax Chair 2015

Flax and PLA (biodegradable plastic)

Courtesy the designer

Flaxwood Tiles 2024

Press-molded boiled linseed oil,
pine rosin, wood dust, and
calcium carbonate

Courtesy Dzek and the designer



Production phases of the Flax Chair. Photo: Mathijs Labadie. © Christien Meindertsma

Designers like Meindertsma actively contribute to global sustainability and social justice efforts. In 2010, while researching local production methods and underexplored resources, she acquired a large harvest of flax from a Dutch farm, from which she developed the Flax Chair and Flaxwood Tiles. The chair is made by combining flax yarn with polylactic acid (PLA), a biodegradable thermoplastic produced from cornstarch or sugarcane. Sheets of this composite material are layered and heat-pressed to form a thick piece from which the seat and two legs are cut. The tiles are made using flaxseed oil, a key ingredient in traditional linoleum. Meindertsma blended flaxseed oil with wood dust and chalk, which is then pressure-pressed into tiles. She has described the material as similar to playdough—endlessly shapeable and durable.

Martino Gamper

Italian, born 1971

Gamper Mollino Chair No. 20 and Stool 7 2008

Enameled steel and vinyl leather

Courtesy Salon 94, New York



Carlo Mollino's chairs for the Lutrario Ballroom in Turin, c. 1959. © Rago Wright, LLC 2024

Through his work, Gamper transforms old into new. In 2006 he became the foremost champion of the upcycle and repair movement with his “100 Chairs in 100 Days” project. He made one chair a day for one hundred consecutive days using discarded pieces of furniture found on the streets of London. In this more recent project, Gamper similarly repurposed preexisting objects. Chair No. 20 and Stool 7 are part of a series of sixteen pieces of furniture that were produced using the parts of twenty-four chairs designed by Italian architect Carlo Mollino for the Lutrario Ballroom in Turin, Italy, in 1959.

Virgil Abloh

American, 1980–2021

**Transparent CDJ-
2000NXS2** and
DJM-900NXS2 2019

Hard plastics and PCBs

Courtesy Gymnastics Art Institute and
Virgil Abloh Securities

In collaboration with Pioneer DJ, Abloh—an artist, fashion mogul, and entrepreneur—designed transparent renditions of classic DJ equipment. Devoid of branding, the “skeleton CDJ and DJM,” as Abloh has referred to these models, expose their internal wiring, circuitry, and mechanisms. When turned on in the dark, the machines illuminate with a vibrant rainbow of colors. Abloh hoped this collaboration would inspire a different sound while DJing and demonstrate the harmony between music technology and human interaction.

Müholos

Leipzig, Germany, est. 1909

Hairdryer 1930s

Brass and metal

Marshall Cogan Purchase Fund

“Form ever follows function,” American architect Louis Sullivan famously wrote in 1856. Even though changing times and cultures have challenged its apparent infallibility, Sullivan’s statement is still widely considered a definition of good design. This hairdryer follows his idea with particularly expressive results. Shaped to the contours of the human head, perforated hollow tubes form the hood—similar to the hairdryers used in salons today—and evenly blow hot air to dry the user’s hair.

Susan Kare

American, born 1954

Graphic icon sketch

1982–83

Pencil and ink on gridded paper

Mac OS Icon sketchbook 1982

Digital scan

Gifts of the designer, jointly owned by
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
and the San Francisco Museum of
Modern Art

Kare's icons for the Macintosh System 1, Apple's first computer-operating system, changed the communication interface between humans and machines, making it easier and friendlier in tone. To design them, Kare used the decidedly analog method of pencil and pen on graph paper, each square representing a single pixel. Her icons are perfect translations of various word-processing and operating functions—a pair of scissors for cutting text and a trash bin for deleting files. These pictograms were designed to be a language intelligible to users in any country—a fully intuitive graphic user interface (GUI) whose influence remains evident in today's devices.

Accessible Icon Project

est. 2009

Tim Ferguson Sauder

American, born 1972

Brian Glenney

American, born 1974

Sara Hendren

American, born 1973

Accessible Icon 2009–11

Digital image

Design iterations 2009–11

Pencil and color inkjet on paper

Project sticker 2009–11

Adhesive-backed print

Parking sign intervention

2009–11

Ink on paper on enameled steel

Parking sign 2009–11

Enameled steel

Gifts of the designers

The Boston-based Accessible Icon Project overhauled the International Symbol of Access, which was designed by Danish design student Susanne Koefoed in 1968. In the previous version, the icon featured a stationary wheelchair user, seemingly resigned to being pushed to a destination. The new version shows a person in forward motion—a driver in charge of their own fate. The designers introduced the new symbol in a street art campaign, layering transparent stickers on existing accessibility signs. As the icon spread, the project evolved from guerilla activism to social design initiative. Today, the icon is used by hundreds of institutions and cities worldwide, including New York.

Ben Fry

American, born 1975

Aesthetics + Computation Group

Cambridge, MA, 1996–2003

MIT Media Lab

Cambridge, MA, est. 1985

**Genomic Cartography:
Chromosome 18** (detail) 2001
Digital image generated from Processing software

Gift of the designer

While pursuing his doctorate with the Aesthetics + Computation Group at the MIT Media Lab, Fry—a central figure in the field of information and data visualization—devoted himself to translating information about the human genome into a visual format. The genome, a complete set of genetic instructions, consists of 23 chromosome pairs made up of DNA, which is built from four chemical bases, represented by the letters A, G, C, and T. The entire human genome’s genetic code comprises more than three billion letters. In this translation of chromosome 18’s seventy-five million letters of genetic code, darker colors depict code sequences used by a cell as instructions for building a protein; medium tones depict the instructions interrupted by unused code; and gray areas currently have no known function.



Chromosome 18 (detail)

Milton Glaser

American, 1929–2020

I ♥ NY concept sketch

1976

Ink and tape on paper envelope

I ♥ NY concept layout

1976

Paper, ink, and tape on board

Gifts of the designer

I ♥ NY Presentation Board

1976

Ink and collage on board

Gift of William S. Doyle

A native New Yorker, Glaser designed I ♥ NY in 1976, at a time when New York City was contending with looming bankruptcy, rising crime, and a garbage collection strike. Governor Hugh Carey pointed out that, despite everything, people still loved New York, and enlisted Glaser in a campaign to repair the city's image. The designer scribbled I ♥ NY on a paper napkin while riding in the back of a taxi cab. This doodle would evolve into one of the world's most recognizable slogans. Glaser explained, "The original imagery derived from my memories of carvings in tree trunks where the initials of lovers were combined with a heart."

AROUND THE CORNER:

Ray Tomlinson

American, 1941–2016

@ 1971

ITC American Typewriter Medium

Deeply embedded in contemporary life, the @ symbol is actually centuries-old. Some scholars believe it dates back to the sixth century AD; others believe it originated in sixteenth-century Florentine trade as a symbol of an amphora, a vessel whose size became a standard unit of measure. The @ began to appear on typewriter keyboards in the nineteenth century. Because of its use in commerce and accounting, it became known as the “commercial a.” In 1971, when Tomlinson engineered the world’s first email system for the US government’s Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET), he chose the @ symbol to connect a user’s name and the location in the host terminal because it was an existing and underused key on the keyboard as well as a fitting preposition.

OPPOSITE WALL FACING THE GARDEN:

Ed Hawkins

British, born 1977

Warming Stripes
1850–2023 2018–23

Digital file, data visualization graphics

Courtesy Professor Ed Hawkins
(University of Reading)

This diagram, which represents the rise in global temperatures due to human-caused climate change over almost two centuries, was designed by Hawkins, a climate scientist at the University of Reading, England. Each stripe represents one year's average global temperature. Red stripes are hotter years and blue stripes cooler in relation to the average temperature in 1971–2000. In 2023, the average global temperature exceeded all previous records, forcing an expansion of the color scale with darker shades and a change of the reference period to 1961–2010. The stripes show a rapid shift from blue to red in recent decades, emphasizing the increasing urgency of taking action to mitigate climate change.

To learn more about Hawkins's Warming Stripes visit showyourstripes.info.

OPPOSITE WALL FACING THE GARDEN:

Jens Eilstrup Rasmussen

Danish, born 1966

Google Maps Pin 2005

Digital image file

Gift of Google Inc.

Google Maps has changed the way we move around the world. More than just a map, it offers photographic views of roads and streets; directions for walking, driving, and biking; routing options via public transportation; and much more. The unique upside-down teardrop design of the Google Maps Pin was designed to be both recognizable and functional, precisely indicating a location without obscuring the surrounding area. Originally, the pin featured a black dot at its center, which served as a focal point indicating the precise location on the map. Over time, the dot was removed, further simplifying the pin while still retaining its recognizability.

American Type Founders

est. 1892

OCR-A 1966

Digital typeface

Gift of Monotype Imaging, Inc.

OCR stands for Optical Character Recognition, a technology that converts printed or typed—and now even handwritten—text into electronic data by scanning and identifying individual numbers and letters. OCR-A was designed to be easily read by machines. Originally, OCR-A was mostly used by banks and other businesses that process large amounts of printed data by machine. Lately, however, OCR-A has become a popular choice among graphic designers interested in the retro-tech aesthetic.

Fernanda Bertini Viégas

Brazilian, born 1971

Martin Wattenberg

American, born 1970

Wind Map 2012

Interactive software

Gift of the designers

While information design has arguably existed for centuries, the digital evolution and the availability of more and more data have given it a very important role in society. Wind Map pulls information from the publicly accessible National Digital Forecast Database, which the US National Weather Service maintains. The app gathers these forecasts, which are time-stamped and revised every hour, to create a “living portrait” of the wind landscape over the United States. The result is an intricate pattern of swirling currents. “An invisible, ancient source of energy surrounds us, energy that powered the first explorations of the world, and that may be a key to the future,” Viégas and Wattenberg have explained.

Charles Harrison

American, 1931–2018

View-Master (Model G)

1962

Injection molded plastic

Manufacturer: Sawyer Manufacturing

Anonymous gift

Harrison was the first Black executive at Sears, Roebuck and Company and one of the few Black professional industrial designers of his time. He worked on everyday items, such as toasters, lawn mowers, and trash cans. He's perhaps most well-known for his redesign of the View-Master. The device, which debuted at the 1939 New York World's Fair, was accompanied by a thin cardboard disk containing seven pairs of Kodachrome color photographs that appeared 3D through the viewfinder. With his introduction of the Model G in 1958, Harrison made the View-Master lightweight—switching to injection-molded plastic from the heavy Bakelite previously employed—and easier to use.

Federica Fragapane

Italian, born 1988

Space Junk 2019

Land Defenders 2021

Digital images

Gifts of the designer

Information design often goes beyond mere description to become an expressive interpretation of reality. Designers like Fragapane analyze and describe all sorts of phenomena and data—from literary history facts to urgent social, political, and ecological issues—by sometimes also designing their own datasets. Land Defenders illustrates Brazil’s deforestation rates in correlation with the deaths of environmental defenders, represented by blood-red leaves. Space Junk depicts the amount of debris orbiting around our planet using lines to represent distance from Earth and colored circles to represent object types.

Ed Hawkins

British, born 1977

Global Temperature

Spiral 2016–ongoing

Digital video

Gift of the designer

This animation went viral when Hawkins—a British climate scientist—posted it on Twitter in 2016. Since then, it has continued to advance the public’s understanding of global warming. Comprehensible and visually arresting, the animation illustrates the steady rise in global temperatures from 1850 to 2024. Each revolution of the spiral represents a single year’s average temperature. The concentric circles allow us to see how the temperature has changed relative to the baseline, which Hawkins set as the average in 1850–1900, the preindustrial period. His animation shows how rapidly temperatures have risen during the twenty-first century; we are precariously close to the 1.5°C increase limit set by the 2016 Paris Agreement. An increase of 2°C is considered a critical threshold.

Fernanda Bertini Viégas

Brazilian, born 1971

Martin Wattenberg

American, born 1970

IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center

United States, est. 1961

History Flow 2003

C-print from Java software

Gift of the designers

To deliver messages clearly and effectively, information designers often rely on formal elegance to attract attention and command respect for the subject matter in question. In 2003, Viégas and Wattenberg, leading figures in contemporary visualization design, set out to investigate the dynamics behind the editing histories of Wikipedia pages. The colorful diagrams transform lengthy editing sagas into images. In this example, the pink graph shows the edit history for the entry “chocolate,” while the green one shows the edits behind “abortion.” Zigzag patterns represent back-and-forth edits, often disagreements between editors. Black gashes show points where the represented article was deleted and replaced with comments—a virtual act of vandalism.

Gay Freedom Day Parade, San Francisco, June
24, 1979. © Vici MacDonald/San Francisco
Chronicle via AP Images

Europe's New Borders (detail), 2015.
Photo: Rasmus Degnbol

Jonathan Harris

American, born 1979

Sep Kamvar

American, born 1977

We Feel Fine 2009–15

Interactive software

Gift of the designers

Harris has described We Feel Fine as “basically a search engine for feelings.” Launched in 2005 and active until 2015, it scoured the web every ten minutes, searching for newly posted blog entries with the phrases “I feel” and “I am feeling.” The system would record the full sentence, identify the feeling, and save the author’s age, gender, geographic location, and local weather conditions. The database of human feelings often increased by fifteen to twenty thousand new entries per day, resulting in a visualization of millions, with each feeling represented by a particle.

**Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans
Frontières**

est. 1971

Middle Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measuring device 1994

Polypropylene

Manufacturer: Trapinex Sérigraphie-Offset

Gift of Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans
Frontières (MSF)

Colloquially called the Bracelet of Life, the MUAC demonstrates the powerful impact of innovative design in addressing an important global health emergency. Volunteers with Doctors Without Borders use it in the field to quickly identify cases of acute malnutrition in children aged six months to five years. Bypassing language differences, it measures the circumference of a child's upper arm and signals their nutritional status via color: green for sufficiently nourished, yellow for moderate malnutrition, and red for severe malnutrition. The Bracelet of Life campaign began in 1998, drawing attention to the devastating famine in Sudan.

Grete Lihotzky
Austrian, 1897–2000

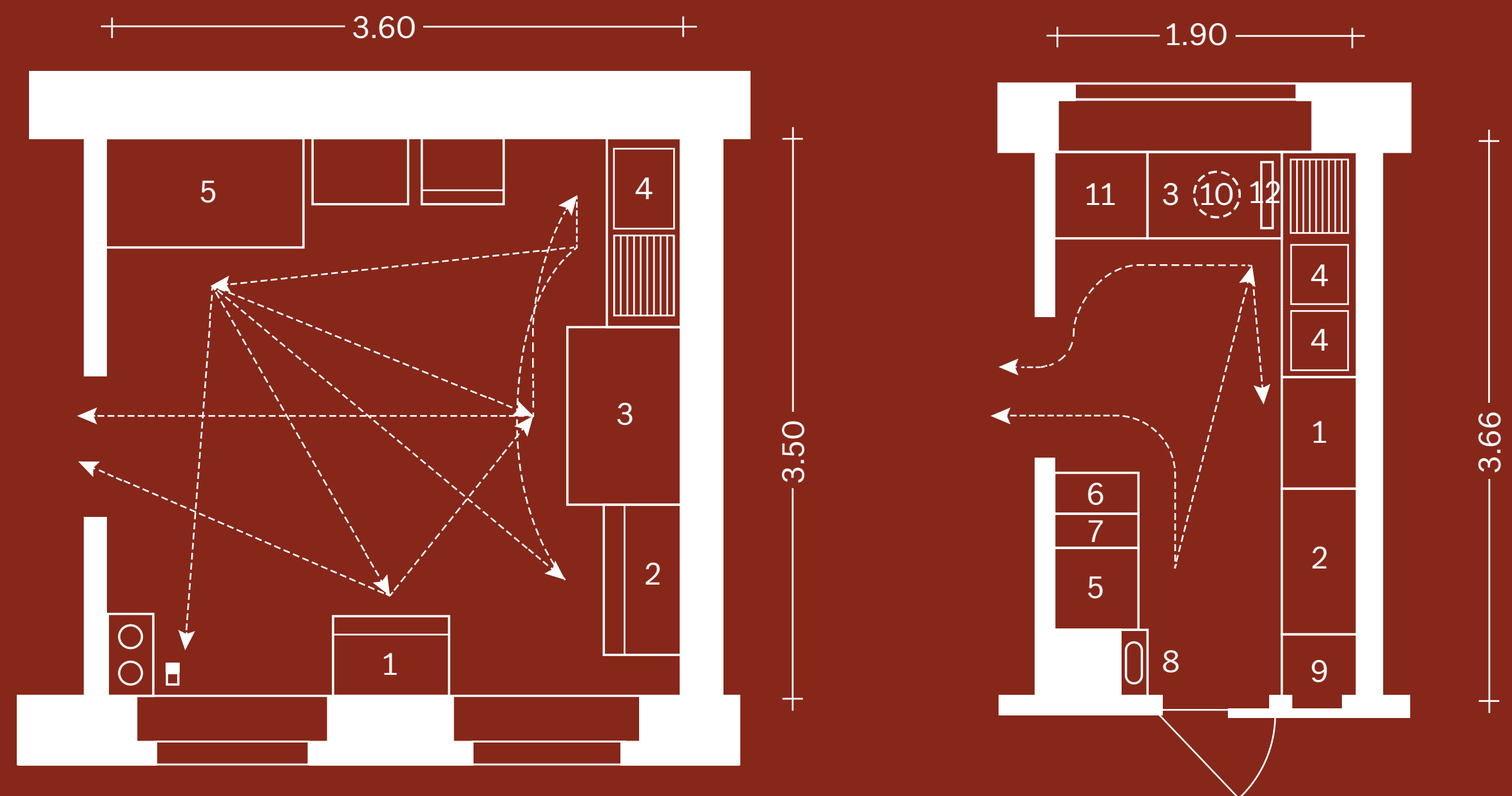
Frankfurt Kitchen from the Ginnheim- Höhenblick Housing Estate, Frankfurt am Main, Germany 1926–27

Various materials

Gift of Joan R. Brewster in memory of her
Husband George W.W. Brewster, by exchange
and the Architecture & Design Purchase Fund

Many German cities faced a housing crisis in the 1920s, in the wake of World War I. Under the direction of chief city architect Ernst May, Frankfurt became a testing ground for modern architectural forms, new materials, and innovative construction methods. Lihotzky designed the Frankfurt Kitchen to ease domestic labor, applying scientific-management principles originally used in factories to promote efficiency, hygiene, and seamless workflow. It included a revolving stool, gas stove, built-in storage, and labeled aluminum bins for staples. Oak was used for flour containers to repel mealworms, and beech for cutting surfaces to resist stains. This iconic room, a hallmark within modern design history, introduced features that are considered standard in today's kitchen.

- 1 = Pantry
- 2 = Pots cupboard
- 3 = Work surface
- 4 = Sink
- 5 = Gas stove
- 6 = Haybox
- 7 = Countertop
- 8 = Radiator
- 9 = Trash and broom closet
- 10 = Swivel stool
- 11 = Food cupboard
- 12 = Garbage drawer



Floorplan of a conventional kitchen (left) and the Frankfurt Kitchen (right), illustrating the steps saved.

Jens Eilstrup Rasmussen

Danish, born 1966

Google Maps Pin 2005

Digital image file

Gift of Google Inc.

Google Maps has changed the way we move around the world. More than just a map, it offers photographic views of roads and streets; directions for walking, driving, and biking; routing options via public transportation; and much more. The unique upside-down teardrop design of the Google Maps Pin was designed to be both recognizable and functional, precisely indicating a location without obscuring the surrounding area. Originally, the pin featured a black dot at its center, which served as a focal point indicating the precise location on the map. Over time, the dot was removed, further simplifying the pin while still retaining its recognizability.

**International Electrotechnical
Commission (IEC)**

Switzerland, est. 1906

Power symbol 1973

Digital file

The power symbol is the brilliant result of evolving technology. Originally, power controls and binary switches were denoted with the words *on* and *off*. As technology evolved, the words were replaced with the line “I” for “on” and circle “O” for “off,” meaning a closed electrical circuit (device on) and an open circuit (device off). In 1973, these two symbols were combined into one icon, initially referred to as “standby.” Thirty years later, an international committee of scientists and engineers recommended that this combined symbol should stand for its more commonly accepted understanding: power.

Zuzana Licko

Slovak, born 1961

Oakland 1985

Digital typeface

Graphic Design Firm: Emigre Inc.

Gift of Emigre, Inc.

Licko founded the design company Emigre Graphics with her husband, fellow typographer Rudy VanderLans, in 1984. Their associated magazine, *Emigre*, was lauded for its innovative and experimental graphic design and fonts, which Licko designed on the Macintosh 128K, Apple's first desktop computer (also featured in this exhibition). The 128K "forced us to question everything we had learnt about design," Licko said. She made Oakland and other early digital fonts as bitmap designs, meaning they were designed on a grid of pixels. These fonts were soon rendered obsolete by technology improvements and by the arrival of high-resolution computer screens and printers in the late 1980s and early '90s. Today, however, bitmap fonts are enjoying a nostalgic resurgence, mostly in print.

Muriel Cooper

American, 1925–1994

David Small

American, born 1965

Suguru Ishizaki

Japanese, born 1963

Earl Rennison

American, born 1965

Robert Silvers

American, born 1968

Lisa Strausfeld

American, born 1964

Jeffrey Ventrella

American, born 1960

Yin Yin Wong

American, born Burma (now Myanmar) 1964

Information Landscapes

1994

Multimedia video and software with audio

28:08 min.

Gift of Lisa Strausfeld and David Small

The Information Landscapes project, developed by Cooper with her students and colleagues at MIT's Visual Language Workshop in Cambridge, MA, explored what, at the time, were radical possibilities for graphic design in the digital realm. The VLW, which Cooper founded in 1974, was one of the most fertile creative environments in interactive design and data visualization, then a growing field. The project comprised a graphical interface for creating dynamic 3D visualizations of complex real-time financial, statistical, and spatial information, among other types of data—marking a significant departure from pie charts and other traditional methods of data depiction.

Shigetaka Kurita

Japanese, born 1972

NTT DOCOMO

Japan, est. 1992

Emoji 1998–99

Digital image

Gift of NTT DOCOMO, Inc.

In 1999 the Japanese telecommunications company NTT DOCOMO released a set of 176 emojis for mobile phones and pagers. Designed on a twelve-by-twelve-pixel grid, the emoji—a combination of the Japanese words *e* (“picture”) and *moji* (“character”)—enhanced the visual interfaces of text messaging and mobile email, thereby facilitating communication. Drawing on sources including manga, the typeface Zapf Dingbats, and emoticons, Kurita, a designer at NTT DOCOMO, included illustrations of weather phenomena, pictograms like the heart symbol, and various facial expressions. Emojis allow for more nuanced intonation in electronic communication, filling in for body language and reasserting human presence. With more than 3,700 currently in use, emojis have evolved far beyond Kurita’s original set.

Sarah Ortmeyer

German, born 1980

PS NEW YORK 2018

First draft of logo for Performance Space
New York, scissor-cut by Milton Glaser

Binder and pigment on paper

Committee on Architecture and Design Funds

Ortmeyer often recontextualizes recognizable symbols and images—such as chess boards, devils, and palm trees—in her multidisciplinary art practice. For the new visual identity of Performance Space New York, a nonprofit arts organization based in New York’s East Village, she collaborated with Milton Glaser, designer of the iconic I ♥ NY logo (on view nearby). While visiting Glaser’s studio, also in the East Village, Ortmeyer presented him with a painting of a black heart. He cut off its top-right corner, symbolically opening it up. The open heart embodies Performance Space’s commitment to fostering “cultural, theoretical, and political discourse” and to “dissolving the borders” between different creative disciplines.



Logo of PS New York. © Performance
Space New York

Tobias Frere-Jones

American, born 1970

Retina 1999

Digital typeface

Gift of Hoefler & Frere-Jones

The Wall Street Journal commissioned Frere-Jones to design this typeface for its financial tables to increase legibility while condensing the letterforms to save space. Informed by how the human eye perceives fine print, he designed Retina to be used at small sizes—7 point or below—and made its letterforms as dissimilar from one another as possible, prioritizing readability over visual uniformity. He cut notches, or “ink traps,” into the glyphs—the visual representations of characters, such as letters or punctuation marks, in typesetting—to compensate for ink spread on poor-quality paper. Many newspapers now use Retina for high-density texts, including stock listings, sports scores, and classified ads.