

DIRECTOR'S LETTER



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MAY 2016

DEAR COOPER HEWITT FRIENDS,

Since our doors opened in 1976 at the Carnegie Mansion, there has been no shortage of beautiful design in Cooper Hewitt's galleries, and this spring is no exception. From *Beauty*, our fifth Design Triennial, to stunning and iconic works of modern design from the George R. Kravis II collection, to the iridescent Tiffany glass displayed in our Teak Room, the museum is showcasing design in all its glory. Outside, the Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden is bursting with new blooms, colors, and textures. It's our first summer in the garden since its redesign and there is now a lush green lawn, new seating and lighting, tables for dining, and table tennis. Best of all, the garden is free for all to enjoy all day!

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Longtime friends and collaborators, the preeminent collector of design George R. Kravis II and Curator Sarah Coffin celebrate the opening of our newest exhibition highlighting iconic works from the Kravis collection gifted to the museum.



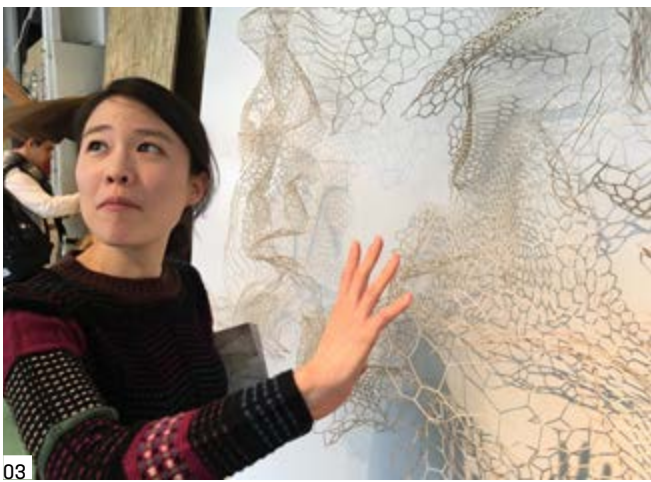
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We are proud to be the recipients of the New York Landmarks Conservancy's prestigious Lucy G. Moses Award for historical preservation in recognition of our thoughtful renovation and restoration of the mansion. To toast our fortieth anniversary in the mansion and to celebrate the visionary leadership and support of Cooper Hewitt board members, an elegant garden party is planned for June 8. Details for the event are on page 20 and I do hope you can join us. I am also very pleased to welcome Bart Friedman, Partner, Cahill Gordon & Reindel, and Alain Bernard, President and CEO, Americas, Van Cleef & Arpels, to Cooper Hewitt's Board of Trustees—a constant source of inspiration and support.

Taking full advantage of summer's longer days, the museum will offer a slew of public programming in the garden for visitors this season. June 16, we kick off Cocktails at Cooper Hewitt, which this year will include performances by some of New York's most exciting dance companies and music ensembles. Three of these evenings will feature the famed Juilliard School and, in conjunction with our neighbor, The Jewish Museum, and its exhibition devoted to the great Brazilian Modernist Roberto Burle Marx, we will offer two nights celebrating Brazilian music and dance. The garden will be further enlivened with the presence of Copabananas—wavy benches inspired by Burle Marx's abstract geometries. Designed for us by Hood Design studio, which is led by National Design Award-winner Walter Hood, the benches in the garden will combine with the energies of live performance to surround visitors with exciting music, arresting choreography, and breathtaking design.

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On March 12, Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to President Obama, paid a visit to Cooper Hewitt for Museum Day Live! Five hundred United States museums participated in this *Smithsonian* magazine initiative that offered free admission and special programming to engage women and girls of color in the museum experience.



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A major gift to Cooper Hewitt from the preeminent collector of industrial design George R. Kravis II inspired our newest exhibition. *Energizing the Everyday: Gifts from the George R. Kravis II Collection* celebrates Kravis's collecting vision and showcases highlights from this collection dating from the early twentieth century up to the present day. Its breadth and richness will bolster Cooper Hewitt's collection as one of the foremost modern collections in the United States. For insight into George's keen eye for design treasures, turn to pages 12–13, and see his interview with Curator Sarah Coffin.

On June 8 we open *Fragile Beasts*, an exhibition of imaginary creatures from our collection of ornamental prints of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For an extraordinary perspective of the otherworldly beings that inhabit these sinuous designs, check out the ultra high-resolution images from the exhibition available on our website. A transformative gift from the Morton and Barbara Mandel Family Foundation made possible the digitization of our entire collection, and I am very proud that Cooper Hewitt accomplished this goal in just eighteen months—an unprecedented achievement in the museum world. On pages 14–15, Deputy Curatorial Director Matilda McQuaid and Ken Rahaim, Mass Digitization Program Officer for the Smithsonian, explain the dramatic impact on how we “see” collections as rich and diverse as Cooper Hewitt's thanks to the technologies and processes developed through this significant collaborative venture.

Looking ahead to fall, be sure to mark your calendars for the opening of *By the People: Designing a Better America* on September 30. The third of our series devoted to humanitarian design, the exhibition will be an ambitious and inspiring survey of communities throughout the United States and across borders that have come together to solve social, economic, and environmental challenges through design. Don't miss the thought-provoking discussion on pages 5–7 among our Curator of Socially Responsible

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I'm so proud of our super-talented designer Ann Sunwoo, who was invited to exhibit her ethereal *Memory of Skin* at this year's Milan Design Week. Ann designs all of Cooper Hewitt's communications materials, including *Design Journal*.



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Design Cynthia E. Smith and the designers of the Detroit Future City project—featured in the exhibition—on design's contributions to creating a more equitable society.

Cooper Hewitt's commitment to a more expansive—and inclusive—understanding of design continues to raise the bar for what a design museum can do and be. I am honored Cooper Hewitt has been chosen to represent the United States at London's first ever Design Biennale. Opening in September, the Biennale will present installations curated by museums and design organizations from thirty-five nations.

Finally, please join me in congratulating the winners of the 2016 National Design Awards introduced on pages 16–18. These awards bring well-deserved international recognition to the best of American design, and I look forward to introducing these remarkable designers to DC-area high school students at our annual Teen Design Summit on May 13. We will shine a spotlight on the winners' achievements at our seventeenth National Design Awards gala on October 20.

I cannot wait to see everyone in the galleries and enjoying our garden. And if you are up for a game of table tennis, let me know! I have a mean forehand.

Sincerely,

Caroline

Caroline Baumann,
Director

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04 / 05
A warm welcome to our new Trustees Bart Friedman and Alain Bernard.



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PLANNING AND DESIGNING BEYOND EQUITY IN CITIES ACROSS AMERICA

INTERVIEW

Cynthia E. Smith talks with Toni L. Griffin and Chris Reed about their recent projects and how design can respond to social and spatial injustices. Griffin and Reed collaborated on the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework—an innovative, twenty-first-century planning model for urban revitalization. The project is one of sixty that Smith has included in *By the People: Designing a Better America*, a Cooper Hewitt exhibition opening this fall.



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Toni L. Griffin is Founder, Urban Planning for the American City, and Professor in Practice, Harvard Graduate School of Design. Chris Reed is Principal, Stoss Landscape Urbanism, and Associate Professor in Practice of Landscape Architecture, Harvard Graduate School of Design. Cynthia E. Smith is Curator of Socially Responsible Design, Cooper Hewitt.

Cynthia: Toni, you have been asking your students what makes a just city. How do you answer this important question?

Toni: This has been a question I've been thinking about for the last five years. How do people who have been marginalized in urban neighborhoods and cities gain equitable, inclusive access and the opportunity to live productive lives in safe, beautiful, and flexible environments?

Critical to that ambition is having a strong sense of inclusion and belonging. We are seeing a lot of civil unrest in public space that is surfacing peoples' fears and



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anxieties around being included and feeling a sense of belonging in cities.

Ownership is becoming very important to me as well. As we continue to debate the pros and cons of neighborhood change and gentrification, the sense of ownership in decision making or processes of decision making, as well as ownership of material goods like property and income, are very important for ensuring more inclusion and equity in neighborhoods.

Cynthia: And these are in addition to a whole set of metrics that you've put together prior to this, the Just City Indicator Metrics?

Toni: The Just City project is a couple of things. First, it has created a platform through social media and published essays for defining and discussing the just city, and is beginning to suggest that the role design plays in addressing issues of injustice in cities and neighborhoods actually must go beyond only seeking to achieve equity.

Second, we are developing a framework of metrics aligned with different social justice values to understand how the work we do as designers and planners has a positive impact on making changes to injustice. Work from the Just City Lab can be found at designforthejustcity.org.

Cynthia: Chris, Stoss describes its work as "landscape urbanism." How is this emerging area different from landscape architecture, and why now?

Chris: You can look at landscape urbanism in three ways. First, landscape

urbanism takes on the idea of urban and metropolitan landscapes as multifunctional and productive, that they can absorb the roles of traditional infrastructure (stormwater collection, flood control, environmental remediation) like many nineteenth-century urban park systems in America. Second, think about landscape urbanism as a bigger idea about how landscape systems can structure entire urban districts or metropolitan regions, whether these places are rapidly expanding or have shrunk in size like Detroit. And third, think of landscape urbanism as a more theoretical investigation into the operational aspects of landscape: how can landscape begin to play a bigger role in the way that cities are made, or remade, and function better over time?

We're confronting fairly serious issues stemming from climate change—food shortages, drought, and flooding—and we are seeing heightened differences among the ways that people live. Whether it's in older, postindustrial cities or newer emerging cities, we see a lot of different forms of social and environmental injustices, and landscapes of many types can help to address these challenges.

Cynthia: You have each worked in different cities around the country and recently together on the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework. From each of your vantage points, what role can design play in addressing systemic injustices in U.S. cities? Do you have any cautionary tales?

Chris: I think it can play roles in different ways. If we start with project examples, we might be able to extrapolate bigger principles. Three projects that come to mind that Stoss has been working on are, first, Movement on Main, a design competition organized in a neighborhood in Syracuse, New York, that's suffered population loss, lower incomes, and unemployment. It asked the questions: How do you rethink the role of the street in the life of the neighborhood? What role can landscape play not only in the reshaping of the image and the function of the place, but also in helping contribute to improving the neighborhood's overall declining public health?

Second, a midsize project of a much different kind based in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Atlanta—a former industrial site next to the Atlanta Beltline. This project looked at how to develop the site in a way that's relevant for the current neighborhood as well as bringing in new and future economic opportunities fostering the longer term.

The third project we're involved in is called the West Louisville FoodPort in West Louisville, Kentucky—an economically depressed area of the city that historically suffered through polluting industries—where a lot of minorities live. On the one hand, we're doing cleanup, so we're providing a kind of environmental service. But the project itself is all about healthy food and healthy eating—building a facility that's going to process, distribute, grow, and provide entrepreneurial opportunities, education, and demonstrations.

Toni: In my work as an urban planner, the injustices I constantly confront center on concentrated poverty, conditions of disinvestment and abandonment, and socioeconomic division. Embedded in these injustices is the need for both spatial and social applications. So my work in the urban planning and the design of spaces looks to reconcile both elements that are completely interconnected. The cautionary tale is to acknowledge that many conditions of injustice have actually been created at the hand of design and policy practices, like federal highway policies and urban renewal that once obliterated black inner-city communities.

The collaboration with Stoss was essential for looking at landscape in multifunctional ways, as Chris described. Design as active intervention was key to reimagining neighborhoods so they could produce higher qualities of life.

We designed an elaborate engagement process that was inclusive across all sectors of the Detroit community, identifying what their actual aspirations were going forward. As a result, we engaged nearly a fifth of Detroit's population through our efforts, and as a result of that, a diverse set of actors across business, civic, community, nonprofit, and government sectors are playing active in implementing the change that we proposed.

Cynthia: How do you begin to work with communities to determine their set of values so they can make planning and design decisions at the neighborhood and city scale? And how do you go about working directly with communities to either facilitate changes or inform your design?

Toni: For me, having practiced both as a private-sector consultant and as a public official, it's in thinking about how to actually set the table for implementation of a plan. I think both Chris and I would agree, the last thing we want to do is just design something that won't get executed.

Chris: That's correct.

Toni: With that in mind, it is imperative that multiple community actors be involved and participate in designing and implementing the change. Government doesn't execute neighborhood change by itself. Government has a set of tools that it can put on the table, as do the private and community sectors—and it's important that all work collaboratively. The time and effort that you

take to do that up front always yield more productive results in the end.

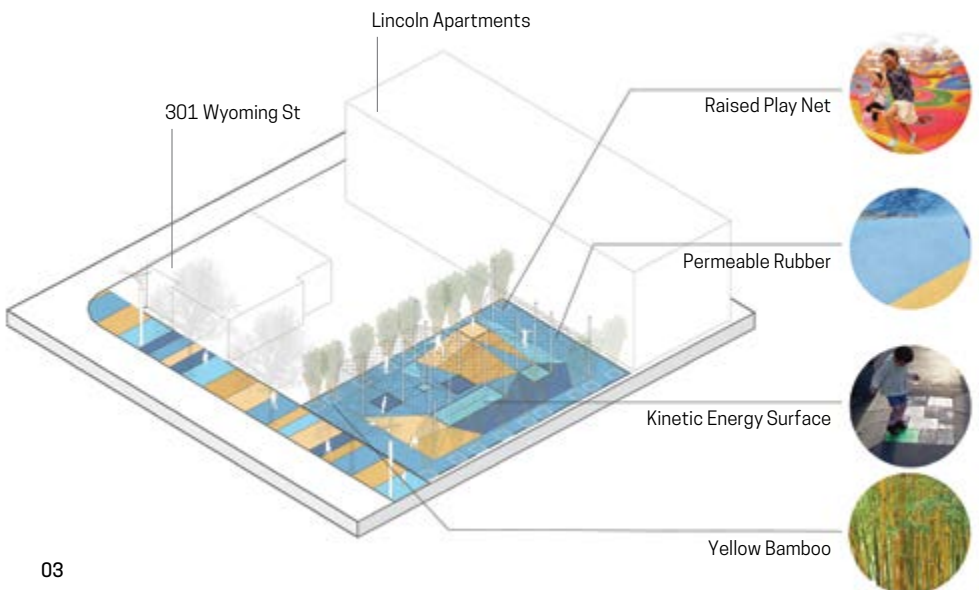
The other essential point is not to design to a universal standard. Certain communities have practices, traditions, and aesthetics that we have to begin to validate as a legitimate informant. Understanding authentic, place-based, and contextual elements can lead to more innovation in our work and more ownership and sustainability of a project.

Chris: The engagement that we do individually and collectively has to be deep and interactive. We try to find venues, forums, and techniques where we engage people in ways that allow them to interact with us in a more relaxed, interpersonal way. We try to set up environments that break down differences and establish trust. How do you engage kids and younger people? Games or exercises that allow them to express preferences, concerns—those sorts of things. Food is a great way to just get people around the table talking about what's possible in the environment.

Cynthia: You are both practitioners and teachers. What are the most important skills young designers should acquire during their studies?

Chris: In landscape architecture, it's important to understand the wide range of issues that might come into play in a project, including climate environmental, urban, and ecological issues, and the historical social injustices of the past.

Toni: I would agree with all of that, even from the perspective of urban planning. The challenges that I think our students will face—particularly as they go to work in urban environments—are cross-disciplinary, interconnected problems that



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have been created not by one discipline, but by a layering of different disciplines, conditions, and policies. Thinking about both spatial and social justice issues, for example, is critically important to the urban design or planning student today.

Work from the Just City Lab can be found at designforthejustcity.org.

By the People: Designing a Better America (September 30, 2016–February 26, 2017)

01 Part of the Detroit Future City citywide planning effort, the Detroit 24/7 online Community PlanIt game was designed to engage a younger demographic—42% of players were in their teens—over 1,000 players registered generating more than 8,000 comments about their own experience with Detroit and its future. Community leader Denise Kennedy and her grandson register for the game.

02 Community garden and farmer's market at the West Louisville Food Port, Louisville, KY.

03 Wyoming Street Playground, part of the Movement on Main initiative in Syracuse New York's Near Westside.

04 The broad-based Detroit Future City civic engagement was designed to let the community have a say in Detroit's future. Twenty-six interactive tactics were devised to engage a diverse range of participants, including posters that were hung throughout the city exposing assets and startling statistics about the area.

By the People: Designing a Better America is made possible by the generous support of



Additional support provided by New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation.

PHIL PATTON: RENDERING THE ORDINARY EXTRAORDINARY



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Celebrated design writer Phil Patton passed away in September 2015 at age sixty-four. Molly F. Heintz remembers her colleague and mentor.

When you walk into a room of strangers and then suddenly see a familiar face, it's like the sun coming out from behind clouds. That's how I felt in the fall of 2009, when, at a reception for new MFA candidates in the Design Criticism program at the School of Visual Arts (SVA), I overheard the distinctive drawl of Phil Patton. "You don't happen to be from North Carolina, do you?" I asked, having loitered nearby while he finished his conversation. Indeed he was, he said, and in the chat that followed, we found that not only did we have the requisite basketball and barbeque in common, but also we

had both graduated from Needham B. Broughton High School in Raleigh.

I had already known of Phil the journalist from his byline in the *New York Times* and *I.D. Magazine*, where he had written about the designs for cars, presidential-debate sets, and watches, among other topics. Over the next few years, I got to know Phil as a teacher, thinker, and colleague. Southern gent that he was, Phil was modest to a fault, quick to make a good-natured joke.

Hypothetical—not rhetorical—questions were a favored stratagem, and he used them deftly as a provocation in both his teaching and writing about design. Phil genuinely sought answers to all types of inquiry, from philosophical to scientific, and he pushed the graduate students in his SVA "Typologies" seminar to seek those answers, too. The concept of his course riffed on Aristotelian classification systems: "... insight comes from analyzing what is the same

and what is different in classes of objects," stated the syllabus. Above all, Phil made you look.

In the classroom, Phil was not a lecturer but an instigator of debate and conversation, and in true Socratic style, he usually met a student's question with a counterquestion. Each class meeting was foregrounded with yet more questions: "What can design learn from



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the material culture all around us? How does design reflect society?" The import of these questions, which could render even the most voluble of graduate students mute, was diffused by Phil's preferred subject matter for our investigations: folding chairs, potato peelers, and plastic coffee-cup lids.

Phil reveled in the design of the everyday. No object was too insignificant to escape scrutiny—the design of the new Euro, the Sears catalog, fruit labels, you name it. (His "Top This: Coffee Cup Lids" appeared in *I.D. Magazine* in 1996.) He was particularly interested in the history of American design, so it's no surprise that Phil often invoked the Renaissance man of the Colonial United States, Thomas Jefferson. But as an archaeologist of material culture, Phil never failed to put his own observations into context. For example, in his book *Made in the USA* (1992), Phil describes some of Jefferson's household inventions, but also notes, "Some of the gadgetry—the dumb-waiter and the revolving serving facility, for instance—served to hide the fact of slavery from his consciousness, even while much of this furniture and equipment was fabricated by Jefferson's slave Thomas Hemming." From a single object, Phil could unfold a universe.

He dissected the enmeshed layers of design, from its materials to its systems of mass production, drawing on other fields like statistics, sociology, and engineering to do so. With a graduate degree from Columbia in comparative literature and hundreds of hours logged writing on deadline for a newspaper, Phil wove this knowledge into engaging, accessible prose that often prompts the reader to nod at an observation that rings true or chuckle at an apt but unexpected comparison. In "Home of the 'Potato Chip,'" a 2001 article

about the modernist movement in Raleigh for *Dwell* magazine, Phil managed to include references to the mid-century Italian engineer-architect Paolo Nervi and Bigfoot trucks in the same paragraph.

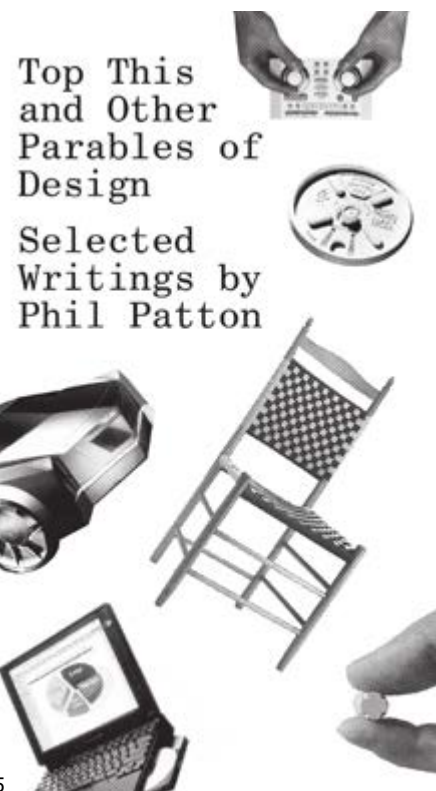
Phil regularly finessed these feats of design writing and criticism, and it was that combination of analysis and style as distinctive as his accent that led me to commission Phil to write exhibition and book reviews for *The Architect's Newspaper*, where I was managing editor following my tenure as Phil's student and teaching assistant. Phil also wrote for *Departures*, *Esquire*, and *Slate*, among other publications, and authored multiple books on design-related topics over the course of his career, which was tragically cut short last September.

As a journalist and mentor, Phil wasn't only curious; he was also generous—passing along story leads that he didn't have time to pursue himself or proposing young writers and editors as alternates for coveted spots on a press trip that he couldn't make. This generosity of spirit was also evident in his writing about design. Phil wasn't in the game to build his own brand. He was performing a public service informed by intelligence, honesty, and empathy, especially for consumers and readers. Like a ray of sun, with a few words and no fuss, Phil could make you see the familiar in a whole new way.

Molly F. Heintz is the cochair of the graduate program in Design Research, Writing & Criticism at the School of Visual Arts and the cofounder of the editorial consultancy Superscript. Heintz currently serves as a contributing editor at *Fast Company* magazine and *The Architect's Newspaper*.



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01 In the *New York Times*, Patton wrote about Prada's Spring / Summer 2012 collection, which featured shoes sporting automobile tailfins.

02 Phil Patton (1952–2015) in the late 1970s.

03 In "Home of the 'Potato Chip,'" Patton discussed the Dorton Arena in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a bold but colloquial statement of modernist architecture.

04 Patton's scores of notebooks that span decades of writing contain notes, quips, schedules, and doodles demonstrating his thought processes and ever-engaged curiosities.

05 Cover of *Top This and Other Parables of Design: Selected Writings by Phil Patton*, published by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2016.

SARAH & ELEANOR: THE HEWITT SISTERS

This spring, the Victorian Society in America honored Cooper Hewitt’s *Hewitt Sisters Collect* exhibition with an award for Outstanding Museum Exhibit in the category of Decorative Arts. Curators from the departments of Textiles; Wallcoverings; Drawings, Prints, and Graphic Design; and Product Design and Decorative Arts assembled the exhibition with contributions from the Digital and Emerging media department and a few exceptional researchers. Three rooms exhibit a compelling selection of birdcages, centuries-old textile fragments, a cast-iron stove in the form of a Greek goddess, art-moderne wallcoverings, and an intricately carved marquetry cabinet. The objects on display, both in the galleries and digitally, were originally collected by the two passionate, creative, and intelligent sisters for whom the exhibition is named: Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt. What follows is a brief look at these two women and their relationship to Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



WHY “COOPER,” AND WHO IS “HEWITT?”
Sarah (1859–1930) and Eleanor (1864–1924) inaugurated the Museum for the Arts of Decoration at Cooper Union in 1897. The museum’s opening and continued development over the following decades was the result of an upbringing immersed in a world of art, books, and travel, and the fulfillment of a lifelong wish of their grandfather, Peter Cooper (1791–1883)—who founded the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 1859—hoped to house a museum



within his school. It was Sarah and Eleanor, two of the six children born to Sarah Amelia Cooper (1830–1912), Peter’s daughter, and her husband Abram Hewitt (1822–1903), who made this dream a reality.

Influenced by their dynamic and worldly parents—an enterprising and intellectual father who was elected mayor of New York City in 1887 and a mother who loved the arts, travel, and garden design—Sarah and Eleanor became pioneers in their own right. Each developed a passion for

education, a cultivated aesthetic, and, as Eleanor wrote in *The Making of a Modern Museum* (1919), a “love of beautiful and exquisite workmanship.”

A GILDED AGE EDUCATION
Sarah (Sallie) and Eleanor (Nellie) compiled scrapbooks with their sketches from trips abroad and drawings evidencing their keen interest in architecture and design. Enthusiastic pursuits in the decorative arts and design, fashion, music, and theater filled their time and their social schedules. Dubbed “Swelldom’s Belles” by the press, the



two sisters formed a productive alchemy: Eleanor was reserved, observant, and diligent, while Sarah was bold, enterprising, and—as she described herself to Sue Bliss in a letter from 1920—a “babbling brook!”

RINGWOOD MANOR GUESTBOOKS
Sarah and Eleanor grew up in two large homes—9 Lexington Avenue in New York City and in Ringwood, New Jersey. Ringwood Manor—the Victorian great house with twenty-six bedrooms—was a hub for Hewitt country entertaining. Four Ringwood guest books are filled with testimonials, poems, anecdotes, and artwork from houseguests. The owl is a decorative element throughout Ringwood, and is on the family stationery and crest. Below is a poem and opposite a drawing from artist, poet, and *Vogue* writer Caroline King Duer—a dear friend and frequent guest at Ringwood—that captured the spirit of Sarah and Eleanor.

*The Hewitt owls
Those excellent fowls
And birds of great renown
Now Autumn is done
And winter’s begun
Are ready to go to town.*

WHO BUILT THE COLLECTION?
In addition to receiving support from their friends, Sarah and Eleanor benefited from the connections of their well-known family

and other donors, receiving important gifts of textiles, drawings from the twentieth century, prints, furniture, and wallcoverings. Cooper Hewitt has built a digital interactive exhibit exploring the social network of Gilded-Age and turn-of-the-century New York that embraced and enriched the sisters’ vision of the museum.

A TEACHING MUSEUM
Sarah and Eleanor’s collecting philosophy was ambitious. They viewed a museum’s collection as a tool for artistic education and were inspired by a similar institution—the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. According to Elizabeth Bisland’s *Proposed Plan of the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration* (1896), the museum’s mission was to be “an educator of public taste,” with an emphasis on “collecting beautiful specimens of art applied to industry” in order to encourage and inspire American manufacturers to “elevate the character of their products.”

Archival photographs from the years following the museum’s opening show women studying historical drawings and textiles. Similarly, today Cooper Hewitt visitors equipped with the museum’s Pen can interact with in-gallery digital tables to engage with the museum’s collection. While physical handling of the museum objects is rarely encouraged, Cooper Hewitt’s digitiza-

tion of more than 210,000 objects makes Sarah and Eleanor’s collection accessible to all inquiring design minds.

Sarah & Eleanor: The Hewitt Sisters, Founders of the Nation’s Design Museum, an in-gallery brochure chronicling the lives of the sisters and their creation of the nation’s first design museum, will be available at Cooper Hewitt in May. The *Meet the Hewitts* blog (cooperhewitt.org/category/meet-the-hewitts) created by Margery Masinter, Trustee, Cooper Hewitt and Sue Schutte, Historian, Ringwood Manor will continue to share new and untold stories relating to the history of Cooper Hewitt’s collection.

- 01 Watercolor design for a mandala by Sarah or Eleanor Hewitt.
- 02 Birdcage, Netherlands, 1750–1800; Tin-glazed earthenware, metal wire, and metal; H x W x D: 26.7 x 22.3 x 14.6 cm (10 1/2 x 8 3/4 x 5 3/4 in.); Gift of Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt, 1916–19–60-a,b
- 03 Illustration and poem in guest book from Ringwood Manor, by Caroline King Duer, 1899.
- 04 Students in the Decloux Room, Cooper Union Museum, 1920.
- 05 Sarah in day suit (*tailleur*) and boater hat, ca. 1890–92.
- 06 Eleanor in evening gown, ca. 1888.

FINDING ENERGY IN DESIGN:

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE R. KRAVIS II

George R. Kravis II has built an extraordinary collection of industrial and domestic design objects, with a focus on American design between 1930 and 1960. Kravis’s interest in collecting grew out of a childhood appreciation of items ranging from his family’s mid-century modern Russel Wright dinnerware to records, radios, signage, and advertising. His four-thousand-object collection—built over a fifty-year period—took flight when Kravis was able to connect online with collectors and dealers around the world. Kravis Design Center—in Kravis’s hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma—has been established as a collection facility and gallery for educational use, fulfilling his mission to share design with everyone of every age.

Energizing the Everyday: Gifts from the George R. Kravis II Collection, now on exhibition at Cooper Hewitt, features treasures from Kravis’s many gifts to the museum. His generosity—along with his passion and keen eye for collecting—has bolstered Cooper Hewitt’s collection as one of the foremost in industrial design in the United States.

Sarah D. Coffin—Curator and Head of the Product Design and Decorative Arts Department at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum—talked with George about his collection.



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Sarah Coffin: What sparked your interest in collecting industrial design objects, and how old were you when you made your first acquisition?

George Kravis: I liked anything that had a motor, a plug, a cord, a battery—that moved and made noise. I was maybe ten or twelve years old when RCA Victor came out with the 45-rpm record along with the changer that you could then hook up to a jack on the back of your television or another amplifier. I bought the changer only because I thought it looked better, and I have kept it through the years. I had it in my office in radio stations, and it’s just one of those things that was very appealing to me and cute because of the size of it.

SC: Did you have a fair number of records?

GK: I had some 45-rpm records, and I had an enormous collection of LPs. I have always liked music, but it was the cover art that made a real impression. Later on, the record collection grew very large after I started my FM radio station in 1962 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was called KRAV.

SC: How did you get into broadcasting?

GK: Interesting story. One of my fraternity brothers at the University of Oklahoma was into broadcasting sports, and he said, “Why don’t you come to the radio station with me?” I was interested in the music and all of the aspects of the broadcasting systems and equipment. The next thing I knew, I had a jazz program three nights a week using my own record collection.

SC: What was it that spoke to you about broadcasting that led you to building your business, later acquiring several radio stations? Is there any connection to your collection?

GK: The way the stations functioned and communicated. The utility, efficiency, and effectiveness are like the building blocks of a well-designed object, like a radio or an iron.

SC: At what point did you move from buying things you liked to considering your holdings as a collection?

GK: I bought a shortwave radio when I was thirteen or fourteen. Well, as I kept adding to it—my radio collection—I began looking for other models, most recently, for instance, the radio designed by Wells



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Coates, Ekco radio AD65 in green—from 1932. There are only four that are known to exist. And I’ve seen pictures of some of the others. But this is the best example. I liked it because it was well designed. Beautiful. Functional.

SC: So you didn’t go out to buy every radio, but you bought the ones that you found beautiful?

GK: Yes. It’s mine, and it’s going to be at Cooper Hewitt.

SC: When you travel, go online, or to a fair, do you set out to look for specific objects? Do you have a wish list of sorts?

GK: I do have a wish list, but I see things, you know, going many places. One of the things that’s so overlooked by many people is what’s in museum shops. Very often there is a really great product, and it doesn’t cost a lot of money. At some point you won’t be able to find it so easily anymore. That’s when it becomes valuable.

SC: Has traveling helped you make connections to objects or types of design?

GK: Yes, travel is extremely important. It’s good for the soul. We all learn by looking and seeing. I went on a trip to China with a group of American broadcasters. Afterward, we had a reunion and shared what we had recorded. I brought two carousels of slides, others brought photo albums, and there was even a tape from a very early Betamax recorder. When people looked at my images, they said, “Were we on the same trip? We didn’t see any of that.” The point being that everyone sees his or her surroundings differently.

SC: That’s great.

GK: So, it’s all about looking and seeing, observing. I think I have always been observant. I notice little things when I walk down the street. It might be the graphics



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of a sign, or, in someone’s house, I look at the art, but I also look at the design of the burglar alarm.

SC: How did your connection to Cooper Hewitt begin?

GK: My aunt and uncle lived at 46 East 91st Street, and my aunt had a key to the garden at the building. They sold keys to the people in the neighborhood. In the fifties and sixties, I think it cost twenty-five dollars a year. And you could just come and sit in the garden.

SC: Did you grow up in a home surrounded by collections and interesting design?

GK: We had art and nice furniture. It wasn’t precious, but it was good. We had a glassed-in porch that had a lot of mid-century modern furniture, and I kept all of that—Tommi Parzinger, T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. Our everyday china was Russel Wright’s American Modern in chartreuse.

SC: What’s your hope for your collection coming to Cooper Hewitt?

GK: I hope it starts a discussion and gets people thinking about good design. I have a friend—an architect—who came to my house and was looking at some of my electric irons. I pointed out how each of the cords were textiles of all different colors. She thought that was an interesting design detail and told her sons about it. One of them responded, “You mean somebody designed that?” and she said, “Well, it didn’t fall out of the sky.”

SC: Can you tell us about your poster collection?

GK: I have a large poster collection, which originally started when I was buying decoration for the walls of my radio station. I purchased them at Posters Original. They had this wonderful shop that was on Madison Avenue. These are posters by well-known artists that I either had in

my collection or would like to have in my collection. I continued to buy from museum shops as well, but wouldn’t store them flat. I framed them and hung them.

I’ve also been collecting magazines from the forties and fifties that show homes, how people lived, a whole history of advertising that marketed new products from that era.

SC: What is on your wish list?

GK: Everything! But at this point, I am also very interested in leading people through Cooper Hewitt’s galleries to talk about the objects. I’ve done that before when some of my pieces were in an exhibition. It wasn’t something that was announced. A woman came up to me and asked me a question so I began explaining an object, how it worked, details, and she said, “Oh, are you here every day?” I said, “No, I’m just the collector. I just happen to be here today.”

Energizing the Everyday: Gifts from the George R. Kravis II Collection is on exhibition April 28, 2016, through March 12, 2017.

- 01** AD-65 Radio, designed 1932, manufactured 1934; Designed by Wells Wintemute Coates (Canadian, 1895–1958); Manufactured by E.K. Cole, Ltd. (Southend, Essex, England); Compression molded Bakelite, chromium-plated metal, woven textile; H x Diam.: 38.1 x 35.6 cm (15 x 14 in.); Promised gift of George R. Kravis II
- 02** Model 4658 Desk, 1946; Designed by George Nelson (American, 1907–1986); Manufactured by Herman Miller Furniture Company (Zeeland, Michigan, USA); Walnut veneer on pine, tubular steel, leather, perforated sheet aluminum; H x W x D: 102.9 x 137.2 x 71.1 cm (40 1/2 in. x 54 in. x 28 in.); Promised gift of George R. Kravis II
- 03** Trade Catalog, *American Modern, Hand-made by Steubenville Pottery*, Designed by Russel Wright, between 1939 and 1959; Published by Steubenville Pottery Company (Steubenville, Ohio, USA); Printed paper; Smithsonian Libraries; Gift of George R. Kravis II

NEW WAYS OF SEEING: DIGITIZING THE SMITHSONIAN



01

By **Matilda McQuaid** and **Ken Rahaim**

With 138 million objects and specimens, 153,000 cubic feet of archival materials, and two million library volumes—all of which are housed in forty-one facilities operated by nineteen museums and nine research centers—the scale and diversity of Smithsonian collections present a unique digitization challenge. The Digitization Program Office (DPO) was created in 2009 to provide pan-institutional leadership and coordination to increase the quality and quantity of the Smithsonian's digitized collections, and to implement the Smithsonian's strategic plan of "Creating a Digital Smithsonian."

An ongoing series of Mass Digitization Pilot Projects (seven to date) has created a safe, cost-efficient, and scalable process that can be tailored to a wide range of collections. The success

of those pilot projects led to a series of Production Projects, the first of which included the entire paper-based Bureau of Engraving and Printing collection at the National Museum of American History (273,000 objects), which was completed in early 2015, and the Fern collection of the National Museum of Natural History's botany specimens (totaling 260,000), with ongoing work to digitize all 3.5 million specimens of the U.S. National Herbarium collection.

The first entire-museum digitization effort was initiated in collaboration with Cooper Hewitt in late 2014. With the major part of the project completed a mere eighteen months later in early 2016, over 180,000 museum objects have been successfully digitized from Cooper Hewitt's four major collecting departments: Product Design and Decorative Arts; Wallcoverings; Textiles; and Drawings, Prints, and Graphic Design. Contrast that with the traditional digiti-

zation approaches used at Smithsonian's Freer|Sackler, in which 45,000 museum objects were digitized over a fifteen-year period, from 2000 to 2015, and the success of digitization efforts at Cooper Hewitt is a game changer.

This new, comprehensive approach transforms a physical object (2D or 3D) from the shelf to a virtual object on the web in one continuous process, in the most efficient manner possible. Inefficiencies are attacked, reducing the turnaround time from the shelf to public access. For example, naming a file using a barcode scanner rather than typing an object name saves an average of fourteen seconds per file—that is a total of 103 working days over the course of the project!

Before the project commenced, very little of Cooper Hewitt's collection of 210,000 objects had been available to or seen by the general public. Now, there are over 220,000 images online

(multiple views of some objects increase the number), with more being added daily as the museum continues to photograph new acquisitions and significant holdings of sketchbooks and sample books. In the fourteen months following the museum's reopening in 2014, 347,000 users explored the collection in 486,000 sessions and averaged over four minutes per session. The users are as diverse as the objects—casual browsers, designers, curators, educators, students, and serious researchers—but for the first time in the history of the Smithsonian Institution, visitors can view almost the entire Cooper Hewitt collection without ever stepping into the museum.

Mass digitization also fuels Cooper Hewitt's in-gallery experiences and capabilities. Digital-table access to objects offsite creates collection transparency, and with that comes new visitor agency and engagement in ways only yet to be fully explored. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Brooklyn Museum—this list comprises a small portion of the art and design institutions around the world that are well on their way to digitizing their collections. Globally, natural history and science museum collections are also rapidly being digitized as institutions prioritize content and allot resources. Goals for museums to digitize collections include making content open, engaging digitally with audiences, using linked open data (meta data of object images in one museum can be connected with similar meta data in another museum), publishing online, and using technology to help advance conservation and conservation studies, among many others.

The mass digitization efforts at Smithsonian's museums represent a real paradigm shift in institutional digitization, which has been characterized by "random acts of digitization," or digitization when specific projects or circumstances warrant it. Mass digitization of entire collections allows uses that sporadic digitization of collections cannot—specifically, the application of new analytical tools like visualization, network analysis, statistical analysis, and image analysis to collections. Many of these studies are taking place in the area of digital humanities, but increasingly the information is being used by interested and knowledgeable individuals who are mining collections for information that museums



02



03

themselves would never have considered. When you capture entire collections via mass digitization, you can treat them as data sets, and that opens up a whole new way of "seeing" the collections.

The success of the DPO and Cooper Hewitt's collaboration has directly led to an even more ambitious project: to complete the digitization of an additional eight Smithsonian museums in one concerted effort starting in late 2016. The participating museums are the Anacostia Community Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the National Museum of African Art, the National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Smithsonian Gardens, and the Smithsonian Institution (Castle). A conservative estimate for completion of the additional museums is four years, but if the success at Cooper Hewitt is any indication, it's likely that digitization will be complete in twenty-four to thirty months.

Matilda McQuaid is Deputy Curatorial Director and Head of Textiles at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

Ken Rahaim is Senior Program Officer, Mass Digitization, Digitization Program Office at the Smithsonian Institution.

The mass digitization of the museum's permanent collection is made possible by the Morton and Barbara Mandel Family Foundation.

01 Conservator setting up ceramic object for digital capture.

02 Mass digitization pilot project at National Air and Space Museum (NASM). Seven views of process—each shot of 900 Aircraft Instruments in one week.

03 Drawing in position for digital capture.

2016 NATIONAL DESIGN AWARD WINNERS

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

MOSHE SAFDIE



Moshe Safdie is a leading architect, urban planner, educator, theorist, and author whose catalog of work and contributions to the dialogue on sustainable urbanism are unsurpassed in contemporary practice. Safdie Architects projects include the Mamilla Center in Jerusalem, Israel; Marina Bay Sands in Singapore; Khalsa Heritage Centre in Punjab, India; and the United States Institute of Peace headquarters in Washington, DC. Safdie continues to inspire the theory and application of ideas about housing, mixed use, and high density in cities around the world.

Habitat '67, an urban housing experiment built for the World Exposition in Montreal, includes 158 residences from 354 prefabricated factory units (Montreal, Canada, 1967).

DESIGN MIND

BRUCE MAU



Evanston, Illinois-based Bruce Mau is a world-renowned visionary, innovator, author, and designer. In 2010, he established his consulting firm Massive Change Network, where he applies his design thinking methodology to economic, cultural, governmental, environmental, and social change for internationally celebrated designers, leading companies, and countries around the world. In addition to leading Massive Change Network, Mau became Chief Design Officer in 2016 for Freeman, the world's largest producer of trade shows and exhibits.

Bruce Mau Loves Books, installation of 200 books authored or designed by Mau—part of *Work on What You Love: Bruce Mau Rethinking Design* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2014).

CORPORATE & INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY



The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a New York City-based nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities. Founded in 2001, CUP collaborates directly with communities to create simple, accessible, and visual tools for individuals to use to claim their rights, advocate for their needs, and fight for social justice.

Sewer in a Suitcase—a working model of New York City's combined sewer system—demystifies the workings of the city's water infrastructure.

MEET THE JURY

The 2016 National Design Awards Jury was composed of a diverse group of designers and educators from around the nation. The Jury convened at Cooper Hewitt in the early spring to select the Award winners.

Back row (left to right) John Christakos, Jeff Han, Caroline Baumann, Matthew Carter, Dan Pitera, and Uri Minkoff. Front row (left to right) Mariana Amatullo, Marisa Gardini, Julia Czerniak, and Chad Oppenheim.



DIRECTOR'S AWARD

MAKE IT RIGHT



Founded by Brad Pitt in 2007, Make It Right is a nonprofit organization that builds homes, buildings, and communities for people in need. All projects are LEED Platinum certified and Cradle to Cradle-inspired. Make It Right began as an effort to rebuild safe and sustainable homes in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina, working with architects including Frank Gehry, Thom Mayne, and David Adjaye. Since then, the organization has worked in neighborhoods across the country and educated others to change the way buildings are designed and built.

Exterior of Make It Right's first home (New Orleans, Louisiana, 2012). Architects: Frank Gehry and Gehry Partners.

COMMUNICATION DESIGN

GEOFF MCFETRIDGE



Geoff McFetridge is a graphic designer, artist, and founder of the Los Angeles-based design studio Champion Graphics, which has created works for international brands, Hollywood films, and local bike shops. In addition to graphic design, installation, painting, drawing, and printmaking are integral to his studio practice. Dedicatedly inventive, McFetridge has sought to expand on what both design and a design practice look like in his time.

Warby Parker mural, a mural transforming the store facade (Venice, California, 2015).

FASHION DESIGN

OPENING CEREMONY



Carol Lim and Humberto Leon founded Opening Ceremony in 2002. The company has grown to encompass the Opening Ceremony ready-to-wear, accessories, and footwear collections; retail outlets; a wholesale showroom; and an online platform. Opening Ceremony is also known for its innovative fashion shows, nightlife events, and collaborations, including with Chloë Sevigny, Intel, New York City Ballet, Pendleton, Spike Jonze, and Yoko Ono. In 2012, Leon and Lim were appointed creative directors of the French fashion house Kenzo.

Spring/summer 2016 campaign (New York, New York, 2016)

INTERACTION DESIGN

TELLART



Tellart is an international design studio that creates interactive objects, immersive spaces, and digital experiences for brands, museums, and multinational companies. Founded in 2000 by Matt Cottam (above left) and Nick Scappaticci, Tellart created the first fully web-accessible museum exhibition for Google through the Chrome Web Lab, imagined and prototyped future services for world governments with the Museum of the Future, and encouraged healthy living through mixed-reality gaming with Humana.

Chrome Web Lab, the first museum exhibition dedicated to serving online visitors as fully as in-person visitors (London, United Kingdom, 2012–2013).

ARCHITECTURE DESIGN

MARLON BLACKWELL ARCHITECTS

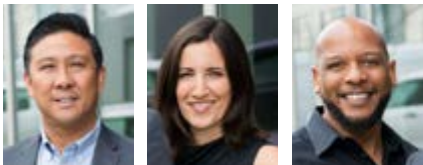


Marlon Blackwell is an architect and the E. Fay Jones Distinguished Professor at the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design at the University of Arkansas. His Arkansas-based practice, Marlon Blackwell Architects, combines vernacular traditions with rigorous formalism to create architecture that responds to the physical and cultural eccentricities of a place. Blackwell was the recipient of the 2012 American Academy of Arts and Letters Architecture Prize and was named a United States Artists Ford Fellow in 2014.

Moore Honeyhouse (Cashiers, North Carolina, 1998)

INTERIOR DESIGN

STUDIO O+A

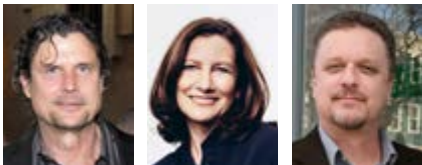


Founded in 1991, Studio O+A is a San Francisco-based design firm with clients that are some of the most dynamic companies in American business, including Facebook, Uber, Cisco Systems, and Yelp. Led by principals Primo Orpilla, Verda Alexander, and Perry Stephney, O+A built its reputation on understanding how the next generation of entrepreneurs is changing the work environment and how those changes are abetted by design.

Yelp offices (San Francisco, California, 2015)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

HARGREAVES ASSOCIATES



Led by George Hargreaves (above left), Mary Margaret Jones, and Gavin McMillan, Hargreaves Associates is globally renowned for the transformation of neglected urban sites, waterfronts, and campuses into memorable places that have become icons for their cities. Projects include the 274-acre parklands for London's 2012 Olympics, Crissy Field in San Francisco, and Louisville's Waterfront Park, as well as 555 Mission Street in San Francisco and Caruthers Park in Portland, Oregon.

Louisville Waterfront Park (Louisville, Kentucky, 2003)

PRODUCT DESIGN

AMMUNITION



Founded in 2007, Ammunition is a bicoastal studio dedicated to putting design talent at the center of imagining, creating, and operating new product and service ventures. Led by partners Robert Brunner, Matt Rolandson, and Brett Wickens, Ammunition's projects include Beats by Dr. Dre, June Intelligent Oven, Lyft Glowstache, Polaroid Cube, Square Stand, and UNICEF's Kid Power Band.

June Intelligent Oven, the first truly intelligent countertop oven (2015)

National Design Awards programming is made possible by major support from



Additional funding is provided by Design Within Reach.

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ndagallery.cooperhewitt.org is powered by Behance, part of the Adobe Family.

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STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

#THINKOUTSIDE



01

In partnership with Target, Cooper Hewitt launched its first youth national design challenge in January 2016, with the aim of engaging and inspiring the next generation of designers and introducing them to Cooper Hewitt. We challenged our nation's youth to be inspired by one of a selection of museum collection objects and to design an outdoor chair for Cooper Hewitt's newly redesigned Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden. One of the goals of the competition was to offer a real design experience for teens interested in entering the field of design. After receiving hundreds of submissions from students across the nation, five finalists were selected and matched with Target product designers, who mentored the students in their design iterations and presentations. All five finalists were then flown to New York City for a Finalists Weekend. The winning student designer, sixteen-year-old Claire Christianson of Wayzata, Minnesota, will continue her design experience this spring at Target's headquarters in Minneapolis. Claire will consult with Target's design team to further refine her design to meet production standards. With Target's support, five chairs will be produced and installed in Cooper Hewitt's garden, and two chairs will be produced for the winner to utilize in her community.

01 (Back row from left to right) Chad Bogdan, Manager Design, Target; Ryan Thompson, finalist; Jillian Lustig, Senior Designer, Target; Katie Larson, Designer, Target; Tanner Wall, finalist; Tim Martell, Designer, Target. (Front row left to right) Claire Christianson, finalist; Lauren Schremp, finalist; Justin Williamson, Product Engineer, Target; Valerie Taranto, finalist.

02 Winner Claire Christianson presenting her chair design process to the panel of judges.

03 Winner Claire Christianson's chair prototype.



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The Student Design Competition was organized by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, in collaboration with



**COOPER
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**NATIONAL
DESIGN
AWARDS**

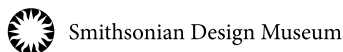
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COOPER HEWITT LEGACY SOCIETY

The museum is pleased to announce the establishment of the Cooper Hewitt Legacy Society in recognition and appreciation of those donors who have included a gift to Cooper Hewitt in their estate plans. Gifts of bequests, life insurance, or other assets provide a vital source of capital and endowment income needed to ensure Cooper Hewitt’s stability and future success. Becoming a member of the Cooper Hewitt Legacy Society demonstrates your deep commitment to the museum, and helps us continue to build the collection, conduct research, and above all, provide public access to the world’s best design through unique exhibitions, education programs, and online opportunities.

Cooper Hewitt Legacy Society members, with their permission, receive recognition in the museum’s online Annual Report of Gifts and the Smithsonian Annual Report, membership in the Smithsonian-wide Legacy Society, and invitations to special events to keep them informed of the museum’s advancements.

LET US HELP YOU DESIGN YOUR LEGACY

An estate gift such as a bequest is a simple method of providing future support to Cooper Hewitt. You may also consider establishing an endowment fund with your bequest, which can be named after you or someone you wish to honor. This is a tremendous way for you to create a lasting legacy and for your gift to support Cooper Hewitt’s national and international network of innovative exhibitions and education programs.

If you have included Cooper Hewitt in your estate plans, or would like to receive assistance in planning your gift to the museum, please contact us. We would like to welcome you as a member of the Cooper Hewitt Legacy Society and ensure that the museum can fulfill your wishes as intended. All inquiries will be held in strictest confidence.

CALL: 212.849.8322
EMAIL: chlegacysociety@si.edu
WRITE: Julie Barnes, Associate Director, Campaign & Major Gifts, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2 East 91st Street, New York, NY 10128

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AND EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF DESIGN!

Memberships start at \$75/\$65 for students and seniors, and offer admission to the galleries and summer Cocktails at Cooper Hewitt; members-only exhibition previews and offers; discounts on SHOP, cafe, and public programs; and a *Design Journal* subscription.

Design Insider, Design Watch, and **Global Design** memberships (\$350–\$1,500) additionally

provide invitations to exclusive events, passes to design and art fairs, access to reciprocal museums, and a *Smithsonian* magazine subscription.

Design Circle memberships (\$2,500–\$10,000) furthermore provide an intimate, behind-the-scenes look at the museum through the eyes of staff, Curators, and Director.

cooperhewitt.org/membership
chmembership@si.edu
212.849.8349

Image: Installation view of the PolyThread knitted textile pavilion, designed by Jenny E. Sabin, commissioned for *Beauty—Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial*.

COOPER HEWITT 40 YEARS

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01 UNSEEN BACKPACK**\$1450.00 / MEMBER \$1305.00****02 UNSEEN CLUTCH****\$910.00 / MEMBER \$819.00****03 UNSEEN WALLET****\$520.00 / MEMBER \$468.00****04 UNSEEN COIN PURSE****\$360.00 / MEMBER \$324.00****05 UNSEEN WRIST STRAP****\$150.00 / MEMBER \$283.50****06 UNSEEN CUFF****\$250.00 / MEMBER \$225.00****07 UNSEEN SCARF****\$1070.00 / MEMBER \$963.00****08 UNSEEN CARD HOLDER****\$220.00 / MEMBER \$198.00****09 A5 BOOK OF SHADOWS****\$50.00 / MEMBER \$45.00****10 A6 BOOK OF SHADOWS****\$38.00 / MEMBER \$34.20****11 ALCHEMY NECKLACE****\$85.00 / MEMBER \$76.50**

Lauren Bowker (British, b. 1985) founded TheUnseen as a creative house to explore the application of biological and chemical technology to wearable materials. Bowker developed color-changing inks that respond to environmental conditions. Applying these inks and compounds to fashion enables wearers, and those around them, to visualize otherwise invisible phenomena. TheUnseen is included in Beauty—Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial, on view through August 21, 2016.

[Your work] proposes a new mode of visual communication with inks that render invisible conditions into visual cues.

We wanted to bring technology to how a human interacts in their environment. It is about using color and form to express these different worlds beyond the eye, the ear, and the nose, beyond what we as humans see.

What are the possible applications for the material technologies that you develop?

We are interested in creating materials that can be inserted into everyday life to improve it—a universal color code that is an early-warning indicator of an oncoming asthma attack, or a material to easily communicate the state of your body or health. It is a catalyst to create knowledge.

What comes to mind when you hear the word “beauty”?

Beauty is in revealing something that you don’t normally notice. It is seeing the unseen.

Interview with Lauren Bowker (excerpt from Beauty—Cooper Hewitt Design Triennial © 2016 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum).