

DAVID ORTH

Sculpture
Liturgical Art
Furniture for Home & Office
Design & Craft Education

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Selected Exhibitions: Group & Solo

- 2016 *CREATIVE FURNISHINGS*, Bridgeport Arts Center, Chicago, Chicago Furniture Designers Asso.
- 2015-18 *SUMMER SOLSTICE SHOW*, Old Courthouse Arts Center, Woodstock, Illinois.
- 2012 *ALTARS & ASHES: THE CEREMONIAL WORK OF DAVID ORTH*, Burning Bush Gallery, Wheaton, Illinois.
- 2009 *REGIONAL MASTERS: EXTRAORDINARY FURNITURE*, Lubeznik Gallery, Michigan City, IN.
- 2006 *MENTALMETAL*, Function+Art Gallery, Chicago.
- 2005 *SUSTAINABLE FURNITURE*, The Chicago Cultural Center, curated by John Kriegshauser & Lee Weitzman.
- 2005 *UNBUILDABLE*, The Furniture Society. A juried exhibition of digital models curated by Tom Loeser and Wendy Maruyama.
- 2001 *BEYOND FUNCTION: THE ART OF FURNITURE*, The Chicago Cultural Center.
- 1999 *DAVID ORTH & VORTEX DESIGN: 4 GENERATIONS*
Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design.
- 1998 *LITURGICAL AND SACRED ART*, Springfield Art Association, Springfield, IL.
- 1997 *ARTFUL FURNITURE*, Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL. Curated by Michelle Rowe-Shields.
- 1992 *NEW CHICAGO FURNITURE*, Chicago Athenaeum
to
1996 *Museum of Architecture & Design, annual exhibition and awards.*
- 1994 *FUNCTION/DYSFUNCTION*, Gwenda Jay Gallery, Chicago.
- 1993 *TABLESERVICE SONATA*, National dining-table & accessory competition sponsored by the Springfield Art Association.
- 1992 *TRADITIONS & TRANSITIONS: AMISH & MENNONITE EXPRESSION IN VISUAL ART*, Canton Art Institute, Canton, Ohio. Curated by Stanley Kaufman.
- 1991 *DAVID ORTH: FURNITURE & SCULPTURE*, Loyola University Fine Arts Gallery, Chicago.
- 1991 *FURNITURE OF THE 90'S*, Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York, and American Society of Furniture Artists, Houston, TX. Juried by Franklin Parrasch, Rick Snyderman, and Adam St. John.

Selected Commissions & Collections

"Meeting", a public sculpture in oxidized steel with concrete seating array, installed at the center of a labyrinth, Peace Park area within the Dick Tracy Park, City of Woodstock, Illinois, 2016

Cross, Altar, Paschal Candle Stand, St. Benedict Episcopal Church, Bolingbrook, IL, 2016

Altar & Font, St. Francis Community Center Chapel, Salina, Kansas, 2015

Community Memorial Urn, Chicago Community Mennonite Church, 2014

Hymn Board, St. Andrew Parish, Chicago, 2014

Wall Cross & Bench for meditation room, Johnson Center Bldg., North Park University, Chicago, 2014

Altar, Font, & Lectern, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Chicago, 2012.

"St. Paul's Cross", top finalist, national competition sponsored by St. Paul's Episcopal Church of Louisville, KY. Installed 2011.

"Tempest Table", acquired for use as chapel altar, St. Norbert College, DePere, WI, 2009.

"Water from the Rock", a tallitot and kippot sculpture, Congregation Beth Am, Buffalo Grove, IL, 2006.

Portico, The Gurdjieff Society of IL (Covered outdoor meeting and entryway space - Alden, IL.)

Processional Cross, St. Eulalia Church, Maywood, IL. 1998.

Torah Holder, Oak Park Temple - B'nai Abraham Zion. 1993.

Coffee table, dining table, & serving unit, Carl Rogers House, Oak Park, IL, collectors George & Nita Kubricht. 1988 - 1992.

Processional Cross and Hiroshima Memorial, Church of St. Giles, Oak Park, IL. 1991.

Communion Table/Altar, Oak Park Mennonite Church, Oak Park, IL, 1990.

Foyer table, H.P. Young House, Oak Park, IL, interior remodeling architect Frank Lloyd Wright, collectors Louis & Joan Mercuri. 1988.

Dining table and lighting, George Furbeck House, Oak Park, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, collectors Mr. & Mrs. Kouvel. 1987.

Tabernacle, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, Glen Ellyn, IL, (sanctuary by architects Buderus, Sunshine, and Jager). 1986.

Dining table, Charles E. Roberts House, Oak Park, interior remodeling architect Frank Lloyd Wright, collectors Mr. & Mrs. Lofgren. 1986.

Podium, Unity Church of Oak Park, 1984.

.... and about 300 other residential & liturgical commissions.

Industrial Design

David Orth has worked as a freelance designer for the furniture industry: introducing a variety of wood & metal furniture designs manufactured, marketed, and sold by Ello Manufacturing Company, Elite Manufacturing, Stratus, The Lam Lee Group, and Costantini – companies in Illinois, California, Texas, Wisconsin, China, the Philippines, and Italy.

Published Writing & Public Speaking

“Aboriginal Art & the Furniture Designer: Ethical Questions and New Perspectives”, talk given to the Chicago Furniture Designer’s Association, 2010.

“The Shamanic Dimension of Design”, talk given to the Chicago Furniture Designers Association, 2009.

“Clearing a Space on the Workbench: How Focusing Helps Me Build”, essay for *The Folio: Volume 21, #1, 2008*, a journal of psychology published by the Focusing Institute, Spring Valley, New York, Fall 2008.

“Embracing the Problematic, the Disturbing, and the Haunted: a Process Model for Designing, Building, and Marketing”, talk given to the Chicago Furniture Designers Association, 2008.

“Garrett Rietveld and Architectural Mysticism”, talk given to the Chicago Furniture Designers Association, 2007.

“The Riddle of Craft”, essay for *Material for Thought* (on line issue), 2004, www.farwesteditions.com.

Teaching

JAPAN – FOLK CRAFT & BULLET TRAINS

Partnering with boutique tour outfit, [Adventures in Japan](#), Orth leads educational tours with a focus on Japanese design & craft. Orth has long been influenced by Japanese art & the unique chemistry between traditional art, science, & spirituality that engendered it.

ACADEMIC AND STUDIO INSTRUCTION:

- FAST & FURIOUS CURVES, Minnesota Woodworker’s Guild, Fall Seminar 2016
- KAYAK BUILDING, Marc Adams School of Woodworking (MASW), 2015, 2018
- SCULPTURE & FURNITURE WITH BOAT BUILDING STRATEGIES, MASW, 2006, 2013, 2014, & 2015
- FURNITURE DESIGN: Interior Design Department, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL, 2006 & 2008.
- METALSMITHING FOR THE WOODWORKER, MASW, 2007, 2014, 2016
- BUILDING A STEREOSCOPE & STEREO PHOTOGRAPHY, MASW, 2007, 2014
- BRONZE FABRICATION, MASW, Indianapolis 2005 & 2006.
- HAMMER VENEERING: MASW, Indianapolis 2006, 2012, 2014, & 2015
- FURNITURE DESIGN I: Designed Objects Department, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004.
- FURNITURE DESIGN I: Interior Architecture Department, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1998.
- WOODWORKING: Sculpture Department, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1996.
- PHILOSOPHY of TECHNOLOGY, Philosophy Department, Northwestern University, 1979.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS: Chicago Furniture Designer’s Association, Illinois Institute of Technology, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago, Ray College of

Design, College of DuPage, Loyola University, Wheaton College, Triton College, International Academy of Merchandising and Design.

ORTH FURNITURE APPRENTICESHIP: Orth founded and directed a one year, full-time internship in the furniture arts that operated 14 years from 1989 – 2003. A traditional apprenticeship with some modern innovations. Over 20 men and women ranging in age from 20 to 65 were certified by the Orth Furniture Apprenticeship. All graduates seeking employment were hired by other furniture studios or by the industry. Most graduates have gone on to further art or engineering degrees, shop foremen, industry management, or their own studios.

ORTH STUDIO INSTRUCTION: Orth currently provides individual instruction in woodworking & metalworking.

Selected Media

Artisanal Urns, R. Daniel Foster, L. A. Times, Home & Garden Section, October 31, 2015.

500 Tables, Lark Books, 2009, p. 318.

Pat Gerlach, "Artfully Made", West Suburban Living Magazine, May/June 2004, p.86-88.

Muskan Taurani, "Art as Furniture", Latest Magazine (published in the United Arab Emirates), November 2003, pp. 70-73.

Chicago Home & Garden Magazine, Spring 2003, p.114.

Featured on Ron Hazelton's House Calls (TV), January 2003.

Woodwork Magazine, December 2002, pp. 52 & 53.

Log Home Design Ideas Magazine, January 2002, pp. 170-173

Hyun Jin Lee, "David Orth", Crart (Korean Art & Craft magazine), July 2002, pp. 94-97.

Spencer Hart, Wright Rooms, Chartwell Books, 1998, p. 106. Dining table and light for George Furbeck House.

Robin Langley Sommer, The Genius of Frank Lloyd Wright, Barnes & Noble, NY, 1997. Foyer table on page 41.

Jim Tolpin, "Accented Joinery", American Woodworker, July/Aug 1994, p. 52.

Design Book Six, The Taunton Press, 1992, p. 67.

Design Book Five, The Taunton Press, 1990, p.37.

Design Book Four, The Taunton Press, 1987, p.48.

Carla Lind, The Wright Style, Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp.199,200 & 217.

Elizabeth Horner, "Prairie Pieces", Inland Architect, May-June 1991, pp.7-9.

Nancy Stetson, "A Design Philosophy", Chicago Tribune, April 14, 1991, Sec. 15, pp. 1 & 3.

Diane Douglass, "Chicago 1984: Contemporary Furniture," New Art Examiner, June 1984, p.20.

Education

MA, Philosophy, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. 1979. (Emphasis on phenomenology, aesthetics, philosophy of technology, and world religions).

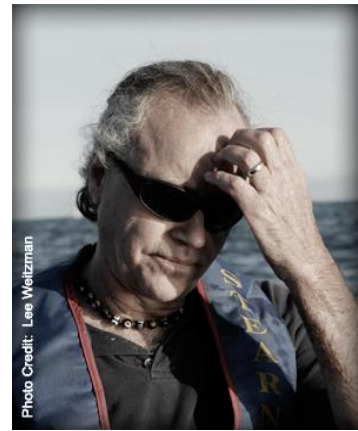
Informal influences in the arts:

Grandfather Ray Judd: electrical engineer, amateur mechanic, & woodworker

Mother Barbara Judd Orth: fine art painter and graphic designer

Carlos, Tadeo, & Samuel: craftsmen mentors from childhood years in Costa Rica (Tibas) & Guatemala (Huehuetenango & Guatemala City), 1963-1972

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DAVID ORTH – bio, career, & philosophy:

American sculptor, studio furniture artist, industrial designer, & liturgical artist, b.1953. Working in wood, steel, & bronze.

Orth was born in Texas, but lived with his expatriate family in Costa Rica & Guatemala during the 1960s. In his 20s he lived briefly in Amsterdam. He has lived and worked in the Chicago area since then.

Orth's work shows contrasts between mainstream 20th Century design and ideas from archeology, anthropology, tribal art, & Japanese design. True to his own personal conflicts, Orth's work exhibits Gothic/ Existential drama and the simple play of Mid-Century Modern – sometimes within the same piece. Orth's early projects were highly polished, residential furniture in a range of Arts & Crafts, Prairie School, & Modern styles. However, for the bulk of his career Postmodern issues have been a priority – producing work featuring weathered & deconstructed surfaces, fine art patinas on wood and metal – and a wide range of functionality (or lack of it) including public sculpture and alternative liturgical and funerary objects. The work celebrates craft for its engagement with materiality & function - and fine art for its mysticism and experimentation. Orth has been serially engaged with the Western design movements starting with the Shakers & the Arts & Crafts movement, through to De Stijl, Postminimalism, Deconstruction – and with non-western art & architecture, especially Japanese design, traditional & modern.

Orth's sculpture & furniture have been featured in museums and galleries since the early 1980's. He has taught sculpture, interior architecture, and designed objects at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is a member of the Chicago Furniture Designers' Association and served on its board of directors for five years. He teaches metalworking, boatbuilding, and a bit of woodworking at Marc Adams School of Woodworking and gives occasional presentations at local guilds & clubs. One of his academic interests is *developable form* (think boat or seedpod structure), analyzed digitally or manually, and applied to the design of sculpture and functional objects. Besides his studio work, he currently leads tours on Japanese art in partnership with [Adventures In Japan](#).

While two degrees in philosophy are an unusual background for this line of work, the habit of constant questioning & restructuring enters his work at multiple levels. The broad idea that serious craft might be a way of seeing and engaging the world took hold of him during graduate work in philosophy and redirected his attention to design. In his own words, art offers “highly-electrified connections between ordinary life, human longing, and the insane immensity of the universe. Philosophy takes entirely too long to get around to that”. He describes ‘design’ in words adapted from T. S. Eliot.

“Every [design] is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.”

The furniture and sculpture that result are broadly appealing, critically acclaimed, and unexpected. James A. Mangum, author of the Dos Cruces Trilogy has called Orth's work “Amazing, overwhelming, musical. Rock and roll, the blues, arias.” Designer Sandy Hill says the work has “wonderful, mess-with-your-mind appeal.”