

DAVID ORTH

Sculpture
Ceremonial Art
Studio Furniture
Design & Craft Education

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Selected Exhibitions: Group & Solo

- 2015-19 *SUMMER SOLSTICE SHOW, Old Courthouse Arts Center, Woodstock, Illinois. Curated by Gregory Gantner.*
- 2016 *CREATIVE FURNISHINGS, Bridgeport Arts Center, Chicago, Chicago Furniture Designers Asso.*
- 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, 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.

.... & maybe 400 other projects.

Industrial Design

2001-2006 Freelance design 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

“Fast & Furious Curves,” 5 talks/demos to the Minnesota Woodworkers Guild, Fall 2016.

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

“Garrett Rietveld: Architectural Mystic”, 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 ART ADVENTURES

Partnering with veteran Japan tour guide, Steve Adelman, Orth co-leads educational tours with a focus on Japanese art, design, craft, and landscaping. www.JapanArtAdventures.com

ACADEMIC AND STUDIO INSTRUCTION:

- *INTRO TO THE SHOP PRESS: BRONZE BOWL MAKING*, Marc Adams School of Woodworking (MASW), 2019 & 2023
- *KAYAK BUILDING*, MASW, 2015 & 2018
- *SCULPTURE & FURNITURE WITH BOAT BUILDING STRATEGIES*, MASW, 2006, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019 & 2023.
- *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, 2023
- *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 design studios.

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, 1st edition 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.

Betty Mussell Lundy, "The Craft Revolution", Chicago Tribune, Aug 16, 1987

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, world religions, and process thought).

Other than a few studio art classes I enjoyed as an undergrad, I have no formal training as an artist. For better and for worse, I absorbed my skills and direction from those around me, including artists, artisans, museums, & constant reading. My family lived abroad for many years. The input, both philosophical and practical, included anthropology, non-western art & philosophy, and archaeology (especially Mayan). Let me acknowledge a wealth of informal influences:

[Barbara Judd Orth](#): fine art painter, interior designer, graphic artist – my mom. While I did not inherit my mother's 2D fine art skills, I lived and breathed my mother's thoughtful, colorful world. She was not one to plant seeds, they simply fell from her hands as she worked. She was my first and most influential teacher.

Grandfather Ray Judd: career electrical engineer, amateur mechanic & woodworker. A bright, practical, thoughtful man, who handed me, at age 7, with no instructions, a drill and block of wood. I filled it full of holes at every angle I could manage and threaded a cord back and forth through the whole thing. Granddaddy Judd had a cluttered woodworking shop and, while mystified by it all, I grew up seeing how it might work. I inherited his old tools in my mid-20s just as I needed them.

Carlos, Tadeo, & Sammuell: craftsmen mentors from childhood years in Costa Rica & Guatemala 1963-1972

Carlos Jimenez was one of the first people I met when we moved from Texas to Costa Rica in 1963. He was a friendly university student living down our street in the coffee grove community of Tibas just outside San Juan - and somehow spoke English. His two sisters were beautiful & flirty, but I was 9 and had no idea what to do with that. He taught me to make stuff with whatever we could lay our hands on. We built a bobsled for grass hills from 2x4s, slingshots from pilfered coffee branches, tennis rackets, crossbows, and other things out of old broom sticks, nails, and rubber bands. Sometimes he took me to San Juan on the back of his little red motor bike. We and other friends spent hours lost in the huge coffee groves that surrounded the community.

The last names of Tadeo & Samuel are lost to time. Tadeo must have been in his early 30s and ran the small woodshop at the highland boarding school I attended in Guatemala. He made his own tools, built guitars, chairs, fixed anything - working without electricity except for a single bare bulb casting hard shadows into the corners of his small, one-room shop. He always had a smile for me and explanations of what he was up to as he worked.

Sammuel ran the busy workshop servicing the school in Guatemala City where my dad taught. He gave me a summer job at age 14. I watched him and his crew build solid panel doors in mahogany and sand-cast a flywheel for a broken lawnmower. These guys used centuries old methods and tools we might imagine primitive and slow. They were all incredibly able, clever, and fast.

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DAVID ORTH – bio, career, & philosophy:

American sculptor working with mixed functional and philosophical objectives - including residential furniture, public sculpture, alternative liturgical, ceremonial, and funerary objects. Orth's primary materials are wood, steel, and bronze.

Orth spent his first nine years in Texas, but then moved with his expatriate family to Costa Rica & Guatemala during the 1960s. In all these places he was mentored by local craftsmen working with centuries old methods & hand tools. In his 20s he lived and worked briefly in Amsterdam. A longtime fixture in the Chicago design community, he recently moved his studio to Northwest Arkansas.

Orth's work shows contrasts between mainstream 20th Century design and ideas from archaeology & world art. True to the perennial dialectic between principles of beauty and honesty, Orth's work displays Gothic tragedy and the happy play of Mid-Century Modern – often within the same pieces. Orth's early projects were highly polished, residential furniture in a range of Arts & Crafts, Prairie School, & Modern styles. His direction mid-career ran parallel to De Stijl, Postminimalism, and Postmodernism. Lately, deeper older influences would be Edo period Japan & Celtic Ireland with their inseparable aesthetics and spirituality.

Orth's sculpture & furniture have been featured in museums and galleries since the mid-1980's. He has taught sculpture, interior architecture, and designed objects at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He was a longtime member of the Chicago Furniture Designers' Association and served on its board of directors for five years. He currently teaches at Marc Adams School of Woodworking and gives presentations at guilds & clubs. Orth leads educational tours in Japan with attention to traditional & modern crafts, architecture, & landscaping.

While two degrees in philosophy are an unusual background for this line of work, the habit of constant questioning & restructuring enters David's work at both conceptual and technical 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 returned his attention to working with his hands. In his own words, art offers "highly-electrified connections between daily life, human longing, and the insane immensity of the universe. Philosophy takes entirely too long to get around to that. Plus I'm not that fond of sitting."

The resulting furniture, sculpture, & ceremonial objects 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."