Art & Design 2019

The worlds of art and design overlap more than ever, confronting the future with immersive experiences, sustainable materials and efforts to reclaim public space.

FEATURE
Designs that will make you think

INTERVIEW
Artist Santiago X on Indigenous Chicago

NEWS
Taking artistic licence with functional design
The architects who build art collections

While architects and designers are often inspired by the works of artists, their own acquiring habits are as varied as their influences.

By Kriston Capps

ON VIEW
SEPT 12 ~ FEB 23
Julie Fin: bound by spectrum
Remember Where You Are
Architectural Annotations

The late I.M. Pei, pictured at his home in New York, collected work by post-war artists including Jean Dubuffet and Naum Gabo.

When the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, opened its East Building addition in 1978, one feature especially ensured viewers’ attention: the so-called ‘wedge’—a wedge-shaped projection along the Modernist museum’s western façade—many visitors took to naming their hands along this 90-degree edge that they were rubbed smooth, and the stone now bears a permanent scratch that museum staff have to routinely clean.

Along the same side of the East Building is another work that visitors cannot keep their hands off: James Turrell’s Light/Space Mirror (1979). The fluorescent box sculpture that exactly fits to the left of the building’s entrance was commissioned by the building’s architect, the late I.M. Pei. The two had worked together on other projects, but Pei has never revealed the sculptor of this work of this magnitude before, nor whether Turrell has likely done it for any other architect.

Among these artists is J. O. DuChaufour, Moore, Anthony Caro—three very close friends of the artist during the process.”

For what it’s worth, Turrell never deferred to the building’s architect, but he felt Pei’s input was invaluable because of its political and practical, but a half-century vision. The artist said: “I think what I’m doing is important because I want to build something that is not just a building, but a building that is a work of art.”

As a collector, Pei acquired post-war contemporary work for his home by artists he knew well: Dubuffet and Cane, William de Kooning and Franz Kline. Pei’s Newman...
"An art collection reflects your own sensitivities, but it doesn’t have any connection to what you make"

Powers also collected many of Miller’s abstract paintings. Freeman says, ‘Phil often talked about art as a direct inspiration in his work. The theme of Miller’s Barnett Newman’s ‘The Pillow’ and ‘The Bullet’ series, for example, is echoed in Miller’s paintings.’ This connection between art and architecture is a key theme in Miller’s work. The artist often worked with architects to create environments that reflect his aesthetic ideas. Freeman says, ‘Miller’s work is a direct reflection of his love for art and architecture. He believed that art and architecture are inseparable.’