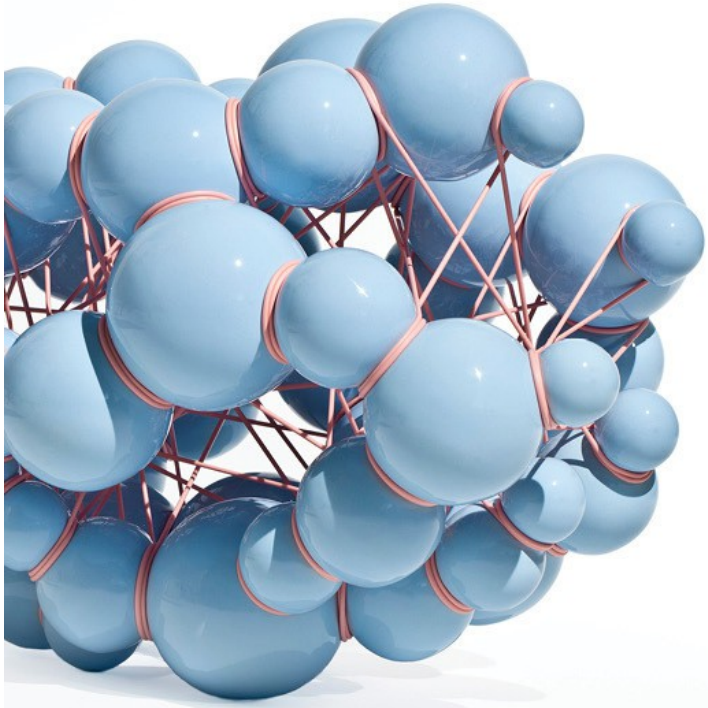


Throughout his 20-year career, the New York-based

ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER STEVEN LEARNER

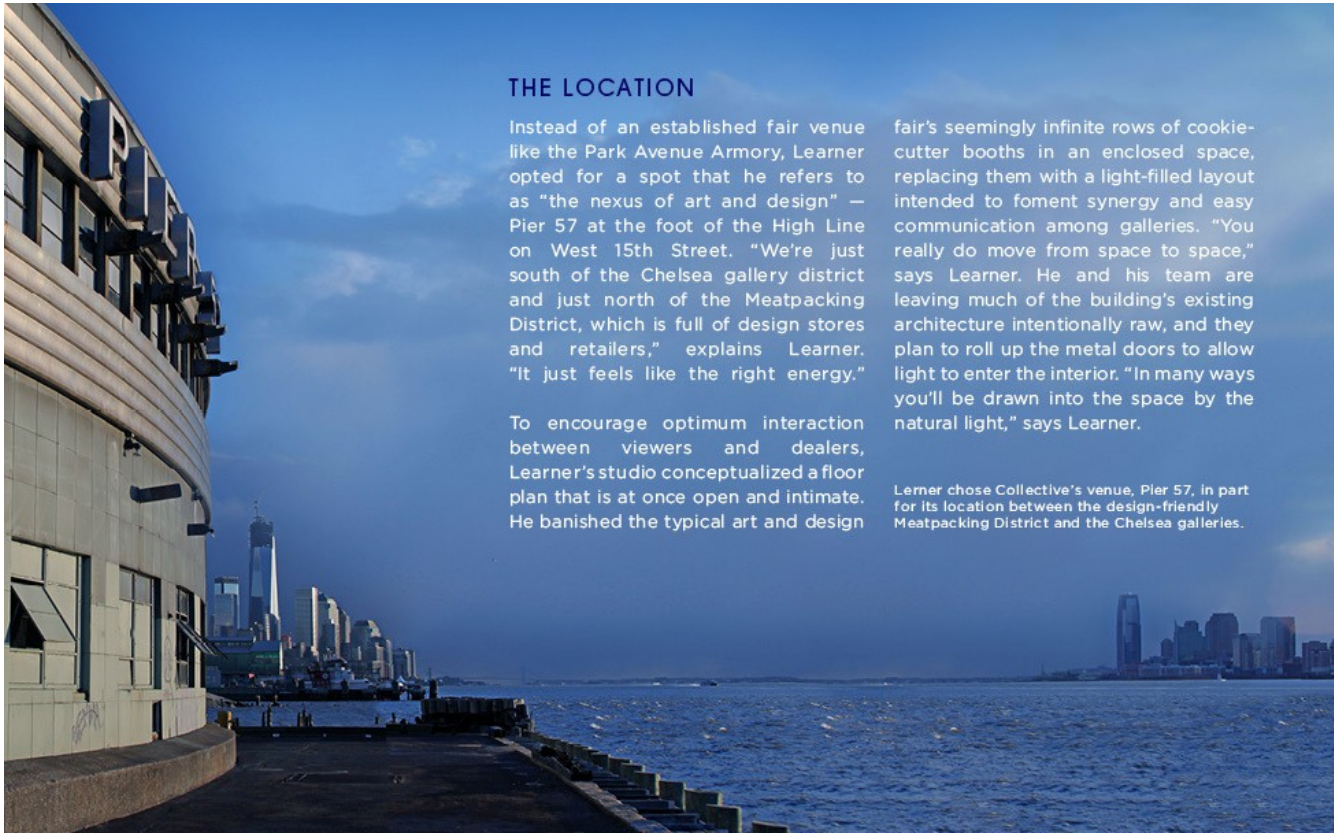
has always sought out great design at established fairs in cities such as London, Miami, Milan and Paris. The more he found himself traveling to those events, however, the more he wondered why New York — a city of sophisticated tastes, important dealers and serious clientele — had yet to establish a major fair focused on modern and contemporary design that also had staying power. So Learner figured, why not start one? The result is Collective .1, the inaugural edition of which runs from May 8 through 11 at Pier 57 on the Hudson River.

Steen Ipsen's *Tied up 12*, 2012, will be on view at the inaugural Collective .1 design fair, taking place at New York's Pier 57 from May 8 to 11. Photo courtesy Steen Ipsen and J. Lohmann Gallery

HOW IT BEGAN

About a year ago, the Harvard-trained Learner — who honed his skills under architect Richard Gluckman and who has created gallery spaces for such dealers as Sean Kelly Gallery and Blain Di Donna and private museums for collectors including Melva Bucksbaum and Ray Learsy — began reaching out to local dealers, designers, curators and collectors to float the idea. "When I raised the question, 'Why doesn't New York have a great design fair?' they all agreed with me that it should," says Learner. "And when I told them I was interested in launching one, they all agreed to help." He quickly assembled a powerhouse "collective" to carefully curate a group of around 25 exhibitors. Along with Learner and Sarah Medford, the fair's strategic development director, the team includes collector Beth Rudin DeWoody; Caroline Baumann, acting director of the Cooper-Hewitt; and architect Alexander Gorlin, as well as New York dealers Cristina Grajales, Todd Merrill and Evan Snyderman and Zesty Meyers of R 20th Century, all of whom are also among the fair participants.

Steven Learner launched Collective after asking the question "Why doesn't New York have a great design fair?" Photo by Perry Hagopian



THE LOCATION

Instead of an established fair venue like the Park Avenue Armory, Learner opted for a spot that he refers to as "the nexus of art and design" — Pier 57 at the foot of the High Line on West 15th Street. "We're just south of the Chelsea gallery district and just north of the Meatpacking District, which is full of design stores and retailers," explains Learner. "It just feels like the right energy."

To encourage optimum interaction between viewers and dealers, Learner's studio conceptualized a floor plan that is at once open and intimate. He banished the typical art and design fair's seemingly infinite rows of cookie-cutter booths in an enclosed space, replacing them with a light-filled layout intended to foment synergy and easy communication among galleries. "You really do move from space to space," says Learner. He and his team are leaving much of the building's existing architecture intentionally raw, and they plan to roll up the metal doors to allow light to enter the interior. "In many ways you'll be drawn into the space by the natural light," says Learner.

Lerner chose Collective's venue, Pier 57, in part for its location between the design-friendly Meatpacking District and the Chelsea galleries.

WHY IT WILL WORK

For one thing, it's been smartly timed to coincide with the big spring auctions as well as the second edition of Frieze New York and the satellite art fairs like NADA that have joined it on the calendar in May. And because of its focus, Collective fits into a relatively open niche on the New York fair circuit. The city has hosted several design fairs over the years, the longest running being Modernism. It lasted 25 years before ending in 2011 due to changes in the market and the economy, according to Jill Bokor, marketing director at Sanford L. Smith and Associates, which produced the fair. Modernism's organizers eventually folded it into Salon: Art + Design, which just had its first edition last fall. Since 1989 Haughton International Fairs has presented the annual International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show each fall, but it offers a huge range of mostly historical material. The Pavilion of Art and Design's (PAD) New York edition, held at the Park Avenue Armory in 2011, did not come back for a second year because it lost its time slot, but producers still have plans to return.

Sebastian Errazuriz's *Lampara de Lagrimas*, 2011, comprised of crystal, metal and taxidermy birds, will be on offer at Collective by Cristina Grajales Gallery.

Learner's rendering of his vision for Collective reveals his plans for a fair with a layout that's more open than most. Image courtesy of Spencer Purdy

"STEVEN HAS MANAGED TO PULL TOGETHER A GROUP OF FASCINATING MINDS."

So what will make Collective .1 different? Unlike Salon: Art + Design, the International Fine Art & Antique Dealers Show and others, which have included fine art, Collective will exclusively show 20th- and 21st-century design. This focus means the dealers will benefit from the growing interest in the field. Collecting design is "no longer the stepbrother of collecting art," says Learner, who adds that in the past 10 years, "the value of design objects has grown enormously."

James Elkind, owner of Lost City Arts, notes: "This will work because of the strong customer base of the dealers who are participating." The fair will include established dealers and such cutting-edge younger exhibitors as Nicholas Kilner, who recently opened his eponymous gallery in SoHo. Kilner thinks the strong reputations of the Collective team guarantee the fair's success. "Steven has managed to pull together a group of fascinating minds," he says, adding that it's "the perfect New York fair. The genesis was *in* the city *for* the city, and I think that's what's going to separate it from anything that has come before."

The Collective, standing from left: Helen Toomer, Kyle DeWoody, Zesty Meyers, Steven Learner, Sarah Medford, Alexander Gorlin, Caroline Baumann, Todd Merrill. Seated: Sebastian Errazuriz, Nessia Pope, David Wiseman, Evan Snyderman, Cristina Grajales

Suzanne Demisch of Demisch Danant gallery agrees. "This fair is unique in that it really celebrates this local group of dealers, and American dealers in general," she says. "And it seeks to exhibit beyond what's being shown generally in existing [New York] fairs. Design deserves its own identity and a celebration of that alone." Aside from Collective's strong contingent of New York–based exhibitors, its roster also includes Jousse Enterprise, from Paris, and Modernity, from Stockholm.

THE FUTURE

Expect to see Collective .2 in 2014 — Learner is already planning the next edition, which will include more exhibitors and additional cultural partners, and he's anticipating a .3, .4 and beyond. "We hope to see Collective become an ongoing part of the design calendar in New York for years to come," says Learner.

Kete Aronui, from David Turbridge's "Baskets of Knowledge" series, will be offered at Collective by Wexler Gallery.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

Pietro Chiesa designed this exceptional and rare mirrored chest of drawers in the 1930s, during his early years as the artistic director of Fontana Arte, the glass and lighting company launched by Luigi Fontana and Gio Ponti in 1933. Chiesa sculpted this piece by encasing it in mirror glass, using the material in what was then a very modern application.

— Ugo Alfano Casati, Casati Gallery on Pietro Chiesa's Bleu Mirror chest of drawers

The shape of this Facet vase is one of the first forms explored by young L.A.–based designer David Wiseman and continues to be one of his most enduring motifs. The Facet vase, with its dark patina, is a minimally elegant homage to the honeycomb pattern found throughout the natural world.

—Evan Snyderman, R 20th Century on David Wiseman's Facet vase in bronze, 2012

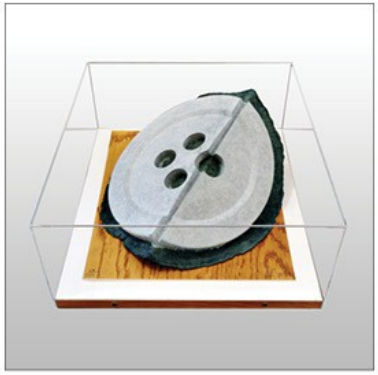
Though Maria Pergay is known primarily for her works in stainless steel, she began her career in 1957 exploring the design potential of silver. Over the next decade she created more than 85 different objects, including cigarette boxes and desk accessories adorned with her signature belt motif. This 1969 Nautilus lamp in silver-plated brass demonstrates both her affection for silver as well as her profound appreciation for natural forms.

— Suzanne Demisch of Demisch Danant gallery on Maria Pergay's Nautilus lamp, 1969

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

François Corbeau's creation interacts with its environment in intriguing ways, reflecting color and light to create patterns on undulating surfaces. His originality is expressed in the way that an object is integrated into its environment, and how the environment relates to the object. In effect, this piece becomes a mirror that reflects the world around it.

—Renaud Vuaillat of **21st twenty first Gallery** on a François Corbeau 2-Door cabinet, 2012



A wonderful and iconic assemblage by Pop artist Claes Oldenburg, this work — made of pressed paper and silkscreen — is number 97 from an edition of 100 and signed by the artist.

—James Elkin of **Lost City Arts** on Claes Oldenburg's *Button*, 1981

Using materials such as concrete and steel, Vivian Beer still manages to create work that is sexy. She incorporates curves that one doesn't expect from the materials she uses. I feel strongly that she is a rising star.

—Lewis Wexler of the **Wexler Gallery** on Vivian Beer's Infrastructure Chair, 2012

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

Designed in 1951 and produced by Cassina, the 813 Egg chair is among the most important of Parisi's designs. In response to the chair's lauded debut, Gio Ponti wrote a letter, which is preserved in the Como archive, to his friend Parisi: "My dear, your Egg is a marvel. You are a master, and all that is left for me is to retire and live in Civate in oblivion."

—Nicholas Kilner of **Nicholas Kilner Gallery** on a pair of Egg chairs by Ico and Luisa Parisi, ca. 1951

For his "Enignum" series, Joseph Walsh has stripped ash wood into thin layers, manipulating and reconstructing them into free-form compositions. This low table is olive ash with a white oil finish and glass insets. The series' title derives from the Latin words *enigma* ("mystery") and *lignum* ("wood"), and for Walsh they sum up the series: The mystery of the composition lies in the material.

—Todd Merrill of **Todd Merrill Studio Contemporary** on Joseph Walsh's wood and glass table, 2011

This piece is from interior designer Carol Egan's line of minimalist carved-wood furniture. To create these pieces, Egan collaborates with Russian engineer Vladimir Krasnogrov and American cabinetmaker Thomas Newman. Their process synthesizes the use of 3-D modeling technology with the traditional art of woodcarving, as each piece is carefully hand crafted. The wood is never twisted; rather it is carved from large slabs in a manner that emphasizes the natural lines of the grain.

—Julia Hartshorn of **Maison Gerard** on Carol Egan's walnut stool, 2012

WHAT YOU'LL SEE

We are thrilled to show an amazing new collection of porcelain vessels and vases by the Danish artist Sandra Davolio that she created especially for the Collective .1 fair. The movement of this contemporary piece is mesmerizing and reminds me of the designs from the Art Nouveau period.

—Joern Lohmann of **J. Lohmann Gallery** on Sandra Davolio's porcelain vessel, 2013

With its fluid form, Johnny Swing's Quarter Lounge commands the room with a strong sculptural presence. As the interior designer Geoffrey Bradfield recently wrote of this piece, "Not since Warhol romanced the dollar sign have we seen Art embrace currency in quite a such a sensual fashion."

—Fabiana Faria of **Sebastian + Barquet** on Johnny Swing's Quarter Lounge, 2008

This desk, done in the style of postwar French designer Joseph-André Motte, showcases the multidimensional approach many designers took in the 1970s by combining form, function and new industrial materials.

—April Magen of **Magen H** gallery on a circa 1970 wood and metal desk in the style of Joseph-André Motte.