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Ohio Arts Council's  
RIFFE GALLERY

*The Modern Table: Ohio Furniture Designers*  
**November 7, 2013 – January 12, 2014**

### **Curator's Statement**

Modern furniture refers to furniture, influenced by modernism, that were designed and produced from the early 20th century through the present..

Marcel Breuer's, *Wassily chair* and Mies Van Der Rohe's *Barcelona* series of the 1920s - along with designers of the 1940s and 1950s, such as Eames, Nelson, Knoll and Saarinen - are all icons of modern furniture design. Those few names, however, only begin to tell the story of the hundreds of designers who have continued designing modern furniture for the past hundred years. Modern furniture design evolved from a number of influences, including the Werkbund and the Bauhaus schools, and the great furniture manufacturers of the 1950s. Yet they all share one common theme: designers of modern furniture look for new materials and ways to construct their pieces, and they examine the essence of each material and that material's application.

The discussion about furniture as a piece of art - and furniture as a functional and accessible belonging - has always been a part of the conversation. Some of this conversation depends on whether we are looking forward or looking back. Regardless of the time in which they live, designers create from their view of function and aesthetic appeal as they see it at that time. Modern furniture, however, has been viewed by many, in retrospect, not only as highly functional, but as art. This is demonstrated by the number of modern furniture pieces in museums and private collections. Modern design is also viewed by some as cold and lacking in a certain level of comfort. These are two very different ways of looking at design, using personal and institutional filters.

This exhibit represents the work of thirteen product or industrial designers, three fine artists, three furniture makers, one architect, two engineers, and four others with various artistic backgrounds.

The first common element in this exhibit is a passion for modern furniture design. This passion manifests in many ways, depending on the background of the designer and his or her specific goal for their endeavor in furniture design. Some of the designers design and build furniture full-time; while others design only and have others build for them. The second common element is at the core of what defines modern furniture - the exploration

and exposure of the materials being used. From the simplicity of Jason Radcliffe's, *Mouse Desk* to the unexpected complexity of Mark Moskovitz's *Facecord*, what is always evident how the materials used inform the aesthetic and form of each piece.

A dining table would be the image many visualize when asked to think of the modern table. So, it is intentional there are no typical dining tables in this exhibit. The exhibit plays on the notion of the modern table and challenges the viewer to determine how they define modern and how they interpret each designer's passion for furniture design. The association with the dining table can also be seen through a relationship to the chairs and the seating included in the exhibit.

Beyond forming an opinion about each piece, it is my hope that viewers of this exhibit will gain insight into the process of the furniture designers that have been included. These designers create furniture within the context of the company brands they have developed and are promoting to market their work. These company names, along with the designers' names, are juxtaposed against the background and the current location of each designer. I also hope this information will entice some to find these designers on the Web and learn even more about them.

Tim Friar  
Owner, Grid Furnishings  
Director of Business Development, Design Central