

NEWS

Walker Art Center Appoints Mark Owens as Director of Design, To Oversee the Institution's Acclaimed Design Studio

Owens Brings Extensive Experience as a Designer, Writer, and Curator To His New Role

MINNEAPOLIS, SEPTEMBER 29, 2022—The Walker Art Center today announced that it has appointed Mark Owens as its new Director of Design. Owens has extensive experience as a designer, writer, and curator, and most recently led his own design practice, working with non-profit and commercial clients to develop dynamic and engaging exhibition graphics, publications, merchandise, brand identities, and other projects. In his new role, Owens will oversee the Walker's acclaimed design studio, expanding and re-imagining the institution's approach to content creation, publications, and the presentation of innovative design online, in the galleries, and in print. He will formally begin in his new position on October 3, 2022.

Owens' appointment reflects continued growth in the Walker's design and content development teams. In 2021, the institution hired Asli Altay, a designer and former Creative Director at Apple, into the newly established position of Head of Content and Communications, which bridges the work of the design studio and the Walker's broader communications initiatives. Owens will work with Altay as well as a group of in-house graphic designers, editors, and content producers.

"We are delighted to have Mark join our team. The Walker has a long history of embracing architecture and design in its curatorial and public program and of experimenting with the form and function of printed and digital materials. Mark's creative vision and depth of experience will be essential assets as we continue to amplify the role of design within our multidisciplinary program and explore new ways of engaging our audiences. We look forward to having his leadership voice and to collaborating with him on a wide range of design-focused projects," said Mary Ceruti, the Walker Art Center's Executive Director.

Over the past decade, Owens has worked with a broad range of cultural clients on exhibitions and publications, including MoMA PS1, ICA Miami, The Jewish Museum in New York, The Carnegie Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. He has designed monographs for artists such as Henry Taylor, Barbara Kasten, Lydia Okumura, Thomas Bayrle, Michelle Lopez, Jonas Mekas, Allan McCollum, and Claudia Wieser, as well as catalogues for group exhibitions like the Walker's *Question the Wall Itself*, ICA Philadelphia's *Myths of the*

Marble; and *The New Black Vanguard* (with Antwaun Sargent and Rush Jackson). He has also contributed to the Walker's online design publication, *The Gradient*, and worked with such commercial clients as Jordan Peele's Monkeypaw Productions and MTV Networks. His work has been featured in *IDEA* (Tokyo), *GRAPHIC* (Korea), Phaidon's *Area 2*, the TypoJanchi International Typography Biennial, and the Walker's *Graphic Design: Now in Production*, among others.

Alongside his professional practice, Owens has also served as an important voice in critical conversations around design. He co-edited, with Zak Kyes, the catalogue for the exhibition *Forms of Inquiry* at the Architectural Association, London; guest curated the exhibition *The Surface of Design* at the School of Art + Design at Purchase College, SUNY; and most recently penned the title essay for Our Polite Society's archival exhibition and book, *The FACIT Model*. His essays on design, music, and material culture have appeared in *Dot Dot Dot*, *Grafik*, *PIN-UP*, *Bricks from the Kiln*, and Experimental Jetset's *Statement and Counter-Statement*. He has served as a critic at Yale, RISD, and Art Center College of Design, and as visiting faculty in the MFA program at CalArts and in the Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania. He holds an MFA in graphic design from Yale University and an MA in English from Duke University.

"After many years working closely with artists, curators, arts institutions, and students, it is an honor to join the esteemed design studio at the Walker and to build on its rich legacy of mentorship as an incubator for design talent and as a platform for design discourse. As someone with an abiding interest in the "public" in "publication," I look forward to working with the Walker's leadership and the in-house design team to advance an expansive understanding of design and its capacity to address diverse communities. I can't wait to get started," said Owens.

The Walker's design legacy can be traced to its earliest days as a public art center, when its first director, Daniel Defenbacher, an architect by training, initiated several groundbreaking projects about modern design. This included the installation of *Idea Houses I and II* (1941, 1947), which featured the latest innovations in domestic architectural, product, and interior design. Since those pioneering origins, the Walker has organized dozens of exhibitions exploring the work of visionary architects and designers and the interplay between design, art, and community. Among the many examples are *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (2015) and *Designs for Different Futures* (2020). The institution has also been a leading voice in the development of printed materials, exploring new approaches to exhibition catalogues, books, and guides, with an emphasis on illuminating the work of artists and subjects through the form and aesthetics of the texts themselves. Among the most recent titles are *Paradox of Stillness*, *Paul Chan: Breathers*, and *Jannis Kounellis in Six Acts*. This vision has also extended to the digital realm, and the Walker continues to explore new opportunities to embrace design within a wide range of online assets that advance both scholarship and public understanding.

"The Walker has a strong foundation in experimentation, testing the boundaries of what design and publishing can become, fueled by curiosity and candor. Mark is uniquely qualified to both

push the discussion further and lead the team towards making thoughtful, well-crafted work. I am very excited to have him on board and looking forward to start further molding the design department together and building cultural conversations around what we put out into the world,” said Altay.

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER

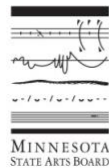
Known for presenting today’s most compelling artists from close to home and around the world, the Walker Art Center features a broad array of contemporary visual arts, music, dance, theater, and moving image works. Ranging from concerts and films to exhibitions and workshops, Walker programs bring us together to examine the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, cultures, and communities. The adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States, holds at its center the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen as well as some 60 sculptures on the 19-acre Walker campus. Visit walkerart.org for more information on upcoming events and programs.

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



Thank you, Walker members, for your generous support.