



**R & Company to Present Exhibition of New Work By Designer
Luam Melake**

***Luam Melake: Furnishing Feelings*
On View February 3 – April 2023**

On February 3, 2023, designer Luam Melake will debut her first solo exhibition with R & Company titled, *Furnishing Feelings*. The gallery previously featured Melake in various group presentations, including the acclaimed *Objects: USA 2020* group exhibition and at Design Miami, December 2021. Originally trained in architecture, Luam Melake's dynamic practice oscillates between material research, exploration of form, and the creation of interactive, functional furniture pieces that encourage social and emotional engagement. In her forthcoming exhibition, Melake will present a new seating series designed to facilitate meaningful connections between its sitters and their surroundings.

Furnishing Feelings will feature eight new works, including Melake's coveted *Listening Chair* and her first loveseats. Each piece highlights familiar emotional concepts while exploring broader themes in interpersonal relationships; for example, the *Nestled Chair* encourages cuddling by drawing inspiration from social psychology and the history of psychotherapy. Melake's latest designs encourage the user to assume positions that stimulate intimacy and eye contact, pushing them to consider their physical relationships to space and other people. This exaggeration of the requirements of function and mobility prompts viewers to think differently about familiar objects in their lived environments.

Melake's practice also refers to the histories and methodologies of art, design, craft, architecture, and industrial manufacturing. She often borrows techniques and materials from each of these fields and combines them into new kinds of objects. This is supported by her singular process of making. Melake shapes upholstery foam into geometric forms that reflect the negative space left by the body. Thin layers of an industrial urethane coating are poured onto the foam to create a durable skin-like surface that functions like an exoskeleton, reinforcing the soft structure. Translucent dyes are used



*Luam Melake, Listening Chair, 2022. Photo by Joe Kramm.
Courtesy R & Company.*



to create painterly effects and dimensional color that enhance and relate to the sculptural composition. The resulting works are highly practical furniture objects that also reference painting, sculpture and the structural logic of architecture.

Among the works in the exhibition, Melake's *Listening Chair* is motivated by a humanistic approach and aims to encourage confessional discussion. The work recalls Italian Radical Design of the 1960s, and other luminary figures of this period such as Vernor Panton and Joe Colombo, who were also designing for new approaches to interaction. Physical positions borrowed from psychoanalysis prompts sitters to interact in ways that make room for intimate conversation, while allowing a single user to face people in different parts of the space. For example, the *Love Seat in Two Parts*, two bright yellow seats that can be arranged in multiple configurations, is optimized for a range of interactions. When the seats are pushed side by side, the work facilitates closeness, but in a different reclining pose, the seats reflect separation, as users refrain from making eye contact. The two sides can be further arranged to create elevated areas that offer two sitters privacy. Inspired by anthropological studies on the relationship between distance and behavior, this range of options offers users the opportunity to make conscious decisions about the types of interactions they want to have in their space.

Furthermore, inspired by mothering during the pandemic, the *Supportive Chair* is intended for stress relief. With its strong feminine shape, a headrest relieves the neck and causes the back to arch, allowing the arms to hang loose alongside high armrests. The chair creates a position for giving and receiving emotional support as an arm groove is incised into the back to accommodate for a one-arm embrace. The work can be used by multiple sitters as there are two side rests – up to two children can join one adult. By broadening the potential for chairs as a means for shaping key life experiences, Melake redefines how furniture design can shape our lives and relationships.

“We are delighted to present an exhibition dedicated to Luam’s pioneering and innovative practice. Her furniture objects are not only exquisitely crafted, but they also hold the power to transform our social interactions into more intimate and rewarding moments. She is reimagining the value and the place that these functional objects hold in our lives and the role they can play in our relationships, extending the significance of how we create and engage with our lived spaces.”

– Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman, Principals, R & Company

About Luam Melake

Luam Melake (b. 1986 in San Diego, CA) received her BA from the University of California, Berkeley in Interdisciplinary Field Studies majoring in Architecture with a minor in Art History in 2008. Solo and two-person exhibitions include *Sensitive Forms* at Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2021), *Luam Melake’s Curious Hybrids*, Artskop and Versant Sud, France (2020) and *Without Qualities* at Addis Fine Art, New York (2018). Recent group exhibitions include *For the Birds* at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York



(2022), *Objects USA 2020* at R & Company, New York (2021), *Sumegne / Ngaparou 2* at Fondation Blachère, Apt, France (2020). She has been Artist-in-Residence at prominent institutions, including Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha (2019), Fondation Blachère in Apt, France (2019) and The Museum of Arts and Design in New York (2017-18, 2022) and was awarded the Female Design Council Grant in 2021. Melake lives and works in New York. She is currently a research fellow at Parsons School of Design. Luam Melake is based in New York City and her work lives in the permanent collections of the Fondation Blachère, Apt, France and Palazzo Monti, Brescia, Italy.

About R & Company

For over 20 years, R & Company has championed collectible design, advancing the contemporary marketplace and actively growing a global collector base and clientele. Its founders, Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman, are widely recognized for identifying rising talent, deepening scholarship about collectible design, and developing new avenues for growth in the industry. R & Company maintains two dynamic spaces in New York: its expansive, inaugural space at 82 Franklin Street features a rotating display of interior environments highlighting gallery designers, while 64 White Street offers an active roster of solo and group exhibitions and includes a Library and Archive of more than 7,000 books, periodicals, drawings, and other materials. The gallery is committed to nurturing and sustaining the markets and careers of both emerging and established designers, as well as to maintaining and expanding commercial and academic interest in historical design. Its roster of international designers includes Wendell Castle, Sebastian Errazuriz, Rogan Gregory, the Estate of Greta Grossman, Serban Ionescu, Hun-Chung Lee, Joyce Lin, Jolie Ngo, Katie Stout, Johnny Swing, Studio Job, Joaquim Tenreiro, and Jeff Zimmerman, among many others. With its vision, passion, and expertise, R & Company serves as a critical platform for experiencing 20th and 21st-century objects and discovering innovative, rare, and significant designs.

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