

NEWS

WALKER ART CENTER TO LAUNCH IDEA HOUSE 3, A NEW COLLECTIBLE DESIGN STORE FEATURING WORK BY LEADING AND EMERGING DESIGNERS

A Thematic Section Developed by Acclaimed Design Curator Wava Carpenter
Will Spotlight Midwest Designers

Opening November 16, 2023

MINNEAPOLIS, October 12, 2023—On November 16, the Walker Art Center will launch Idea House 3, a new retail platform within the institution that will feature the work of an international cadre of leading and emerging designers and celebrate design experimentation and innovation. The new 1500 square-foot collectible design store will be organized to suggest the different rooms of a home, with hand-picked furniture, lighting, tableware, textiles, and a wide array of design objects presented to capture how one might live with the works on view. Idea House 3 will emphasize boundary-breaking makers and craftsmanship in its many forms and give special focus to single and special edition pieces as well as new works exclusive to the store. To support its vision to present a diverse range of makers, the Walker will regularly invite design experts and creatives from across disciplines to curate the “Guest Room” of Idea House 3, exploring different themes and bringing a depth of perspectives to the space. The establishment of Idea House 3 adds a compelling new chapter to the long legacy of design within the Walker’s multidisciplinary program, which can be traced to its earliest days as a public institution. Once it launches in November, Idea House 3 Idea will have an online presence on the Walker website, allowing for broad engagement with the content.

The creation of Idea House 3 is being led by Asli Altay, the Head of Design, Content, and Communications at the Walker, as well as Felice Clark, the Walker’s Director of Business Development. For the launch, they have partnered with acclaimed design curator Wava Carpenter to curate the first “Guest Room” presentation, titled *Midwest Design Here & Now*. Dispelling notions that cutting-edge design is produced largely in cities on the East and West coasts, the presentation highlights the groundbreaking work of established and emerging designers from Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, the Twin Cities, and other places in the region. Among the designers featured are Ayako Aratani, Ebitenyefa Baralaye, Aaron Blendowski, Tanner Bowman, Alex Drew & NO ONE, Evan Fay, Steven Haulenbeek, Seth Keller, Jonathan Muecke, Cody Norman, Aleiya Olu, Jacob Polhill, Hayden Allison Richér, Chris Schanck, Jackson Schwartz, Daniel Shapiro, and Norman Teague.

“Underscoring the rich diversity of vision and style that abounds in the region, *Midwest Design Here & Now* shines a light on Midwest-based studios that craft narratively driven objects using innovative production techniques, locally sourced materials, and imaginative design approaches. Stretching beyond purely functionalist aims, the works in the show, each in their own way, tell engaging stories of identity, community, and place inspired by the makers’ unique experiences and perspectives,” said Carpenter.

Beyond the “Guest Room,” at any time, Idea House 3 will carry the work of more than 50 designers. Among the many featured for the opening are **Deborah Ehrlich** (Hudson, NY), who is known for her exquisitely simple crystal glassware; **Cooperativa 1050^o** (Oaxaca), a cooperative of potters from across seven communities in Oaxaca, Puebla and Chiapas that is committed to engaging people with millennia-old clay traditions from Mexico; and **T SAKHI** (Venice/Beirut), a multidisciplinary architecture and design studio co-founded in 2016 by Lebanese-Polish sisters Tessa and Tara Sakhi that is dedicated to sustainability and social consciousness. The designer selections are made with a view toward engaging a breadth of local, national, and international voices. To support the experience of the work on view, the Walker has partnered with the Zak Group, recognized for its many cultural collaborations, on the visual identity and spatial elements of the store.

Idea House 3 will also be the site of robust programming, including conversations with designers, curators, collectors, and other innovators and tastemakers. The supporting program is envisioned to amplify understanding of collectible design and its place in our daily lives and to serve as a platform for makers to engage a growing audience with their visions and practices. These events join other design-oriented talk series at the Walker, including the [Insights Design Lecture Series](#), which for more than 30 years has brought leading design thinkers to the Twin Cities to imagine and explore the future of design. The public engagement components are further enhanced by a specially curated selection of books on collectible design that will be available in the store.

“Idea House 3 offers a new vision to experience design, by bringing together retail with museum-quality presentation and the knowledge-building of public programming. The space offers an opportunity to connect with the power of design to create an atmosphere, evoke sensations and emotions, and shape our lives. With Idea House 3, we are offering the opportunity to experience the museum store as an exhibition of the latest in design innovation that you can bring home with you,” said Altay. “We look forward to sharing the work of so many talented designers with our communities.”

“Design emerged as an essential aspect of the Walker’s program alongside the institution’s transformation as a public institution more than 80 years ago. Since then, the Walker has maintained its commitment to design, encouraging audiences to recognize the way it permeates our lives. With the launch of Idea House 3, we are establishing a more permanent presence for design at the Walker and creating a space to explore the ways in which the lines between fine art, craft, and product design have and continue to blur,” said Mary Ceruti, the Walker’s Executive Director.

Highlights from *Midwest Design Here & Now* at Idea House 3

- **Ayako Aratani (Detroit)** is a designer and sculptor, whose practice is inspired by the natural world and her experiences living in Detroit. She embraces both the hard-edged lines of industry and the organic forms, repetitions, and imperfections that exist in nature. Her one-of-

a-kind pieces reflect her engagement with material experimentation and interest in the possibilities of storytelling. Aratani holds an MFA in 3D design from Cranbrook Academy of Art. For Idea House 3, she will present a new edition of her distinctive [Hideaway Chair & Ottoman](#), which Aratani created to give the sitter a sense of privacy and escape by ensconcing them in cozy, luxurious fabric.

- **Seth Keller (Chicago)** apprenticed as a carpenter and cabinetmaker before transitioning to focus on furniture and product design. Keller specializes in handcrafted wood objects, which he often creates from found, fallen trees. He also has a particular interest in bringing form to new concepts grounded in research and observation. He is a faculty member in the Designed Objects department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and serves as Director of SAIC's Sullivan Fabrication Studio. He is presenting his Throne for Nordic Queen Chair, made from a fallen tree found in St. Paul, and a cocktail table version of his [Prima Table](#), which uses no hardware and is held together by wedge joints and gravity.
- **Zoë Powell (St. Paul)** creates [organic sculptural vessels](#) made from locally sourced clays and minerals she collects and processes herself. Her practice is grounded in research into sustainability practices, which is actively evolving in the process of making. Recently, she has become interested in psychological pathology and is currently working on a series focused on transitional space and how certain forms can evoke a sense of comfort to an otherwise vulnerable viewer. A selection of her new and recent works will be featured in Idea House 3.
- **Mitch Iburg (St. Paul)** engages in a labor-intensive process to create his ceramic works, personally digging the clay from near the Minnesota River and obtaining approximately 1,000 pounds of material to use throughout a year. In addition to his ceramic works, Iburg makes wood-fired pieces from dead or fallen trees from around his home, centering sustainability in his practice. His tableware, vessels, and sculptures often appear to have been made centuries ago, giving the work a distinct aura. A range of his recent works will be included in the upcoming presentation.
- **Aleiya Olu (Detroit)** began her career in marketing and is recognized for co-founding Detroit Art Week. In recent years, she has also turned her attention to design—inspired by her time living in lofts that were converted from a 1920s furniture showroom in Detroit's Eastern Market. Through her design consultancy, called From Us to You, she both works with clients to create interiors influenced by the history of modernism in Michigan and makes her own distinct objects that draw on the experiences of her family and community. She will be debuting a new black version of her sought-after [Lyndon Chair](#), named after a street on Detroit's westside, and a new dining table inspired by her grandmother, which will launch exclusively at Idea House 3.
- **Cassandra Scanlon (Chicago)** is a ceramic and textile artist, who brings together the functionality of everyday objects with the history and formal qualities of abstraction. Prior to establishing her own design practice, Scanlon worked extensively in technical design and product development, giving her a keen understanding of how function can be expanded to embrace artistic innovation. To create her ceramic works, she uses a range of techniques,

including wheel throwing, hand building, and slip casting. Most recently, she has been exploring [Neriage pottery techniques](#), incorporating chattered surfaces to her stoneware to create finishes inspired by the natural colors and textures found in nature. A selection of these new works will be featured in Idea House 3.

- **Jonathan Muecke (Twin Cities)** creates works that blur the boundaries between design, architecture, and art, emphasizing how objects behave in space and in relation to other elements in their environment. His works have received considerable acclaim and are included in the collections of significant institutions such as the Museum of Art and Design in New York City, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Center National des Arts Plastiques in Paris, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Montreal, and the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2022, Muecke launched his own eponymous company, dedicated to accessible, made-to-order furniture designs produced using his own proprietary carbon fiber process. Idea House 3 will feature two new works from [the company](#).

ABOUT DESIGN AT THE WALKER

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. The Idea Houses were further augmented by The Everyday Art Gallery, which opened in 1946 and was curated by Hilde Reiss. The Gallery offered ambitious exhibitions on design and offered a dynamic bridge between the more accessible products of modern living and the less familiar world of modern art. These early installations ground the concept for Idea House 3, bringing the original concepts into the contemporary moment as collectible design is increasingly finding its way into museum collections.

Since those first presentations, 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 catalogs, books, and guides, with an emphasis on illuminating the work of artists and subjects through the form and aesthetics of the texts themselves. 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.

Idea House 3 enhances the daily experience of design at the Walker and within its multidisciplinary program, creating new opportunities for audiences to engage with visionary designers working across material, technique, and approach.

ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER

The Walker Art Center is a renowned multidisciplinary arts institution that presents, collects, and supports the creation of groundbreaking work across the visual and performing arts, moving image, and design. Guided by the belief that art has the power to bring joy and solace and the ability to unite people through dialogue and shared experiences, the Walker engages communities through a dynamic array of exhibitions, performances, events, and initiatives. Its multi-acre campus includes 65,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, the state-of-the-art McGuire Theater and Walker Cinema, and ample green space that connects with the adjoining Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The Garden, a partnership with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, is one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States and home to the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Recognized for its ambitious program and growing collection of more than 15,500 works, the Walker embraces emerging art forms and amplifies the work of artists from the Twin Cities and from across the country and the globe. Its broad spectrum of offerings makes it a lively and welcoming hub for artistic expression, creative innovation, and community connection.

Visit walkerart.org for more information about upcoming presentations, programs, and opportunities to experience the art of our time.

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