



museum of arts and design

## MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN TO MOUNT EXHIBITION OF DETROIT-BASED ARTIST CHRIS SCHANCK'S OTHERWORLDLY SCULPTURAL FURNITURE

*Chris Schanck: Off-World* Opens February 12, 2022



Chris Schanck (United States, b. 1975), *Banglatown*, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Friedman Benda, New York.  
Photo: Michelle and Chris Gerard.

NEW YORK, NY (January 31, 2022) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present *Chris Schanck: Off-World*, featuring a series of tableaux that showcase the Detroit-based artist's striking, otherworldly furniture forms. Also included are several recently completed works that explore the artist's new directions toward the figural and the personal. On view February 12, 2022 to January 8, 2023, Schanck's first solo museum exhibition in New York is an in-depth look at the artist's commitment to blurring the boundaries of art and design. Deftly melding innovative material experiments with an expressive yet rigorous refinement of form, Schanck's elaborately carved, colorfully hued, and lustrous objects are contemporary talismans of stories from the past, present, and future.

Over the last decade, Schanck has emerged as a leading figure in the design world. Schanck established his independent Detroit studio in 2011, preferring to work outside of the conventional

2 COLUMBUS CIRCLE NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10019 P 212.299.7777 MADMUSEUM.ORG

coastal markets of the furniture industry. His studio crafts labor intensive, bespoke furniture and furnishings—from chairs and tables to case goods and lamps.

Each piece is meticulously handcrafted by a team of artists, designers, and Bangladeshi craftspeople from his neighborhood, who all make key contributions to the studio's collective practice. Alongside his team, Schanck continues to refine his acclaimed signature fabrication process entitled Alufoil. The studio's artisans burnish thin pieces of aluminum foil to the furniture's structural armatures, which are built up from pieces of steel and hand-carved foam insulation. Encased in a final coat of clear resin, like insects in bits of amber, the pieces exhibit a surface depth and smoothness that belies the encrusted forms and crinkled surfaces of the foil within. Expanding beyond this signature process, other pieces are cast in aluminum and bronze, while other works employ pigmented resins and dyes on found objects and wood particle board.

The artist's strange, unfamiliar forms suggest coral reefs, extraterrestrial worlds, and artifacts from ancient civilizations. Other works, particularly the latest figural pieces, reference mythology, poetry, and aspects of his own life. At the same time, Schanck's works remain grounded in the reality of humanity's neglect, necessity, and inventiveness. Schanck draws from a wide range of influences, ranging from his local surroundings of Detroit, Brutalist and Art Deco architecture, ancient Egyptian and Aztec iconography to motifs from the fringes of popular culture. As a result, each work is a gritty reflection of an alternative universe rarely explored in contemporary design.

"My works exist on a spectrum, on the one end they are practical and functional, and on the other they are aspirational and speculative—a blend of reality and fantasy. Imagine a child's bed that is shaped like a rocket or automobile. The practical function of that bed takes the form of a fantasy. We understand that you can't start the bed and fly away, but in the child it inspires the idea of speed and exploration. My work functions a lot like that bed," said Schanck.

Guest curated by Director of the Cranbrook Art Museum Andrew Blauvelt, the exhibition is a result of a long-standing creative dialogue between Blauvelt and Schanck, who graduated from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2011.

"Schanck is one of the most exciting artists working in contemporary furniture design today. His work represents the fruitful integration of art and design. Conceptually rich, materially inventive, and aesthetically adventuresome, it challenges our expectations of design—it does not quietly occupy space, but rather inhabits our minds and engages our senses," said Blauvelt.

Coinciding with the exhibition, MAD will host a year-long public program series in which artists and designers will explore the creative potential of industrially produced items discarded every day in the streets of New York City. Collaborators Thomas Barger, Shari Mendelson and Studio Nito will lead participants in hands-on workshops to transform trash into raw materials for art and design. This summer, MAD will engage its visitors to create a floating sculpture of discarded plastic bags called a Museo Aero Solar, an open-source project initiated by Tomas Saraceno.

## **CREDITS**

Support for the exhibition and its related publication provided by Friedman Benda.

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

Special recognition to the members of Chris Schanck Studio: Dan Adamczyk, Rahela Begum, Connor Ghena, Tony Hope, Tony Printz, and Delwara K. Shopna.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Chris Schanck was born in Pittsburgh in 1975 and grew up in Dallas. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from the School of Visual Arts and a Master of Fine Arts degree in design from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Upon graduating in 2011, Schanck founded a studio in Detroit employing over a dozen artists, students, and craftspeople. Based in a former factory in Banglatown, a neighborhood with a dense immigrant population, the local community plays a key role in Schanck's egalitarian studio practice, which brings outsiders into design culture.

The Dallas Museum of Art commissioned Schanck to create a work in dialogue with a late-19th century Martelé dressing table in their collection, which debuted in his first solo museum exhibition in January 2021. The Museum of Arts and Design, New York will present his first retrospective exhibition in February 2022. Schanck's work is held in the collections of the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI, Dallas Museum of Art, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Schanck lives and works in Detroit.

### **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN**

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit [madmuseum.org](http://madmuseum.org).

For high-resolution images, visit the press image archive: <http://press.madmuseum.org>

User ID: mad

Password: media

Folder: Chris Schanck: Off-World

#ChrisSchanckMAD @MADmuseum

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

#### **Museum of Arts and Design**

Wendi Parson

+1 212 299 7749

[wendi.parson@madmuseum.org](mailto:wendi.parson@madmuseum.org)

#### **Museum of Arts and Design**

Iman Nelson

+1 212 299 7733

[press@madmuseum.org](mailto:press@madmuseum.org)