

Daily Serving  
May 19, 2010

Roy McMakin: In and On  
by Allison Gibson

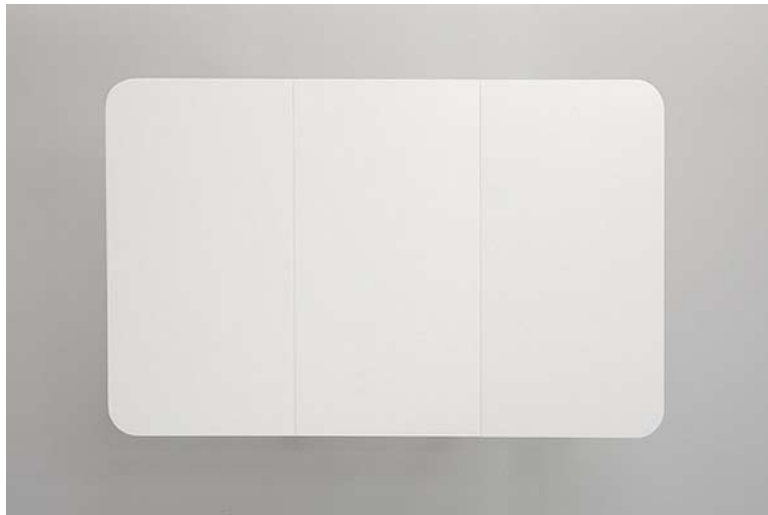


Roy McMakin, My Slatback Chair with a Pair of Attached Chairs, 2010

Maybe it's a case of seeing something a lot because I am hyper-interested—like when you suddenly notice that every other car on the freeway is a VW Jetta after you begin to drive one yourself—but I have been seeing a lot of design making its way into the fine art world of late. I'm talking about capital "D" Design, which for the purposes of this piece refers to furniture and other functional objects that also assume a glossy aesthetic that reach beyond pure functionality into the realm of art. Design is actually a process, but as a noun these days it is used to describe what we see when flipping through an issue of Dwell or the pages of the Design Within Reach catalog. Because even the great academic of our time, Wikipedia, can't pin down a true definition, I can't either in so many words. But I recognize that so-called fine art and design maintain separate identities (and followings) in large part.

I would be doing my Art History degree an injustice if I didn't acknowledge that, yes, design has been an important player in the fine art world for a long time. What I'm seeing these days is in fact a resurgence of the Bauhaus-like interest in the coexistence of all arts, and a Meret Oppenheim-like playfulness in approaching the definitions of each genre. Still though, design hasn't penetrated the white cube of the contemporary art gallery as much as painting or non-functional sculpture has over the years, until recently. As design makes its way into the exhibition scene, definition derives from context more than anything. Who among us hasn't feared taking a seat at The Museum of Contemporary Art because we had doubts as to whether the bench was for resting upon or a part of the exhibition?

# lora reynolds gallery



Roy McMakin, A Wall Sculpture of a Drop Leaf Table, 2010

In his recent solo exhibition, *In and On*, at Lora Reynolds Gallery in Austin, TX, artist Roy McMakin presented a body of work that dives head-on into the ever-murkening waters of design and fine art. McMakin, who is also a furniture designer (again, the artist's bio requires a distinction between his trades), combines found objects of the minimalist and much celebrated Mid-Century Modern design traditions with his own sculpture work, essentially reassigning all components new roles, or stripping them entirely of their original intentions. A minimalist drop leaf table hangs on the wall as a purely visual object; a duo of Mid-Century chairs gets tacked to McMakin's slatback chair to form a disjointed piece wherein the latter loses its functionality and all parts become simply "art." [Click here](#) to listen to the artist discuss his work from a March 24th gallery talk.

Roy McMakin lives and works in Seattle, WA where he owns and operates Domestic Furniture. He earned his BA and MFA at the University of California, San Diego. His work has been exhibited widely, including at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York and Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR. He has been commissioned by The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle and The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, among other institutions.