

New Love Interests

During a spring design week of industry uncertainty, New York flirted with fun, lighthearted furnishings ready to inspire a day (and night) of downtown romance

by ERIC MUTRIE

SOMETIMES, THERE'S NO BETTER ESCAPISM than a romantic comedy. In the genre's idealized version of Manhattan, characters know how to work hard and play hard, moving from a busy 9-to-5 to last call at a stylish cocktail bar. This year's edition of NYCxDDesign captured that cosmopolitan spirit perfectly. For one thing, Afternoon Light, a well-curated fair back for its sophomore edition after a buzzy debut last year, set up shop in the WSA building, a Financial District office tower with rare creative clout (thanks to tenants that include non-alcoholic apéritif brand Ghia and fashion label Bode). Standout introductions balanced playful spirit with corporate power: RAD Furniture debuted Post, a new "it" chair by designer Sam Klemick, while Teknion launched Ikonstudio, its new sub-brand dedicated to historic office furniture reissues. The views were great too — watching the sun set over the Brooklyn Bridge out the skyscraper windows, it was hard not to see New York through rose-coloured glasses. Of course, a moment later, an exhibitor visiting from Canada brought up ongoing tariff uncertainties and the bubble burst.

In reality, keeping pace in a city that's always on the move requires near-constant hustle. Just ask NYCxDDesign's main event, the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, which held its final spring edition before it makes the move to November in 2027 in a strategic play to boost business. (Acknowledging that America might not be the most welcoming setting for a global trade show right now, this year's theme was "Common Ground.") Traditionally, the fair has sat squarely between Milan's residential-focused festivities and Chicago's workplace spotlight; starting next fall, it will instead coincide with the hospitality-focused Boutique Design New York (BDNY) exhibition. This May, it was easy to see lighting launches from RBW, Studio Anna Dawson and Hollis+Morris as shoo-ins for hotel cafés and bars, while Warp & Weft and Bernhardt Design courted domestic and commercial designers. As a visitor, it's fun to pretend that New York is the city where you can have it all: the dream apartment, the dream job and the dream date. Here's an imagined day (and night) of modern courtship in the city that never sleeps. **AZ**

[1] 7:00 a.m.

Wake up to the realization that you watched too many episodes of that new streaming show last night. Thankfully, Dimwit's Anagrams dimmers (featuring pleasingly tactile acrylic knobs on ceramic-coated brass wall plates) are easy to locate even in an early-morning daze.

[2] 8:00 a.m.

Get dressed for work. Double-check that your socks match in Willett's Ora floor-length mirror, bordered by a handsome geometric steel frame.

[3] 8:30 a.m.

Stop on the way to the subway to pick up coffee. Admire the blown-glass Triple Glazed RBW fixtures hung in the neighbourhood café and decide to add a donut to your order.

[4] 8:55 a.m.

Arrive at the office and embrace retro corporate style on the steel-framed SOM79 chair, first designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill for fashion designer Halston's 1970s atelier — and newly reissued by Teknion sub-brand Ikonstudio.

[5] 11:00 a.m.

Greet new clients in the reception area, where they're sitting on Crews, the latest sofa by Terry Crews for Bernhardt Design. Break the ice by asking if they've ever seen Brooklyn Nine-Nine and discuss Crews's evolution from NFL player to sitcom actor to furniture designer.

[6] 1:00 p.m.

Wrap up meeting and head out in search of a wedge salad. Joke with your favourite lunch place cashier about lettuce being safe to eat again. ("Rejoice, the Cyclospora outbreak is over!") Flirty cashier tells you that the light fixture above the counter (Beaufort, by Hollis+Morris) just so happens to have been inspired by icebergs as well — oh, and would you be interested in grabbing a drink later?

[7] 6:00 p.m.

Head home to change but struggle with what to wear. Throw a bunch of shirts on RAD Furniture's plush Post lounge chair to evaluate the options. Give up and send a photo to a friend for advice. Receive unhelpful text back: "LOVE your chair — where is it from?"

[8] 9:15 p.m.

Arrive to the bar early and order a glass of orange wine. Note the resemblance to Studio Anna Dawson's hand-blown glass Dancer sconces on the wall.

[9] 11:00 p.m.

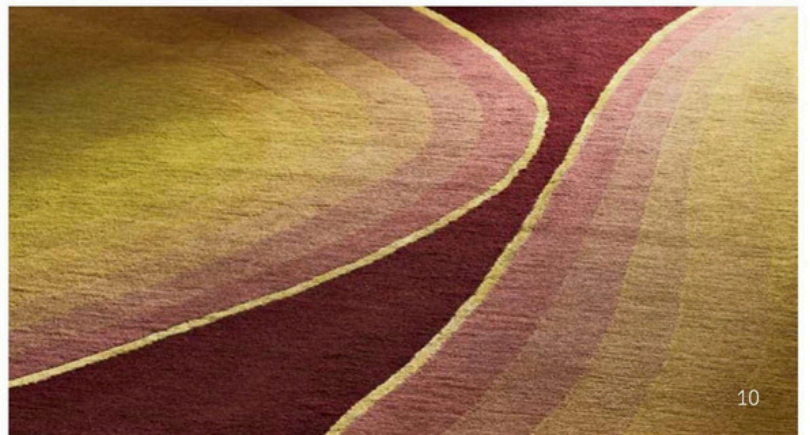
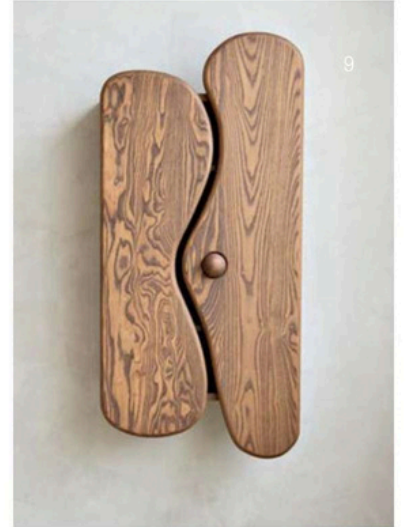
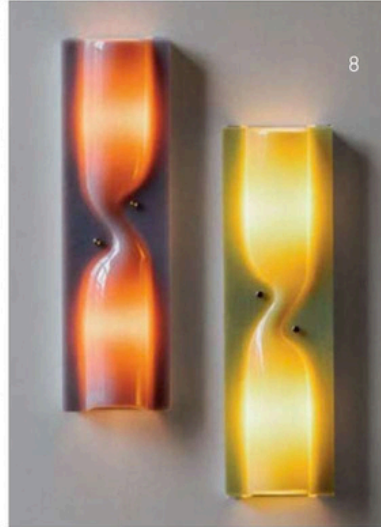
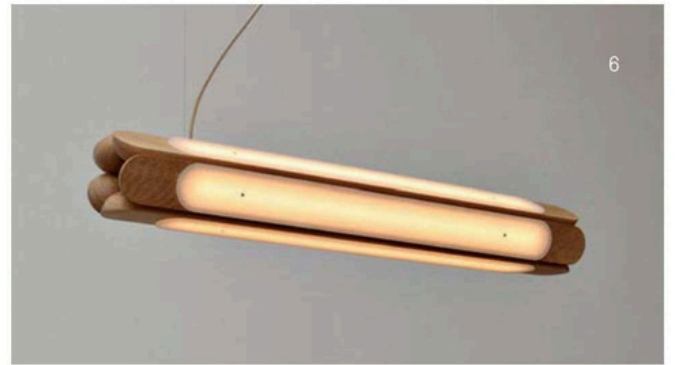
Return home with the charming bar date. Open the slightly tipsy doors to Mary Ratcliffe Studio's white ash Corral cabinet and pour two nightcaps.

[10] 11:30 p.m.

Date admires your hand-knotted wool and silk rug from Warp & Weft. "The design is named Motus, after the Latin word for motion," you say. Realize that sounded more forward than you meant it to...but maybe that's not a bad thing.



PHOTOS BY AUSTIN LEIS (WILLETT'S ORA); LEAH VERWEY (DIMWIT); MCQUIRE MCMANUS (STUDIO ANNA DAWSON); RYAN MCCOY (MARY RATCLIFFE STUDIO); TY COLE (RAD FURNITURE)



When the Going Is Good

With Gantri's latest collection, the San Francisco brand tackles portable lighting's biggest shortcomings

by ERIC MUTRIE



APPLE WAS NOT THE FIRST COMPANY to introduce an MP3 player or a smartphone. But in both cases, its designs marked a big leap forward for their product categories. With its new lineup of wireless lights launched at ICFF, lighting company Gantri (based in close proximity to Silicon Valley in San Francisco) follows that same playbook. For Gantri founder and CEO Ian Yang, the portable lighting craze of the past few years has produced one too many lamps that fall short of their promise — either because they are too dim, annoying to charge or quick to break. Gantri's latest launches are here to fix all that. Rather than a single design, Gantri Wireless introduces a full assortment of lighting, all powered by the same set of internal modules. "That way, we can invest in innovation more economically, because we're not just applying it to one product — it's a whole system in multiple form factors that work for both restaurants and residential," explains Yang. The fact that the clever product range resembles Apple's iPod family in its heyday — with mini, table and task lights and floor lantern sizes in a multitude of colours — is no coincidence: They were developed by Ammunition, the studio founded by Robert Brunner, a former director of industrial design at Apple. Here, Yang talks us through how Gantri and Ammunition developed portables that finally live up to the sector's potential. **A2**

1. UNTANGLE THE CORDS

"Most portables are charged via flimsy USB cables, which aren't really designed with a home in mind. We thought about where you typically use a light — whether it's a table or desk — and how to create a more permanent home for it with a dedicated charging base that stays put. You're still free to move the light wherever you want, but the beautiful base reminds you where the product belongs so you actually remember to put it back."



2. BOOST THE BRIGHTNESS

"One of our designs is a wireless floor lantern that can come outside with you. But most of the time, you'll probably use it in a living room or office — and it's 1,000 lumens, so it's actually bright enough to be a floor lamp. It dispels these misconceptions about what a portable lamp is, showing that it's not just for restaurant mood lighting. And we designed the whole system with both physical and digital inputs: It connects directly to Google Home or Apple Home so you can control it through those, too."



3. ESTABLISH A SENSE OF PLACE

"Ammunition pitched 100 concepts, and we landed on three core collections. A lot of industrial design studios have this minimalist Bauhaus aesthetic, but we pushed Ammunition to think about, What is authentic in terms of representing us? We came to the idea of us being a California-driven duo, so this whole collection was really inspired by California — Pier by coastal structures, Eave by the roof pagodas of Chinatown and Japantown, and Drift by the pebbles in the Yuba River. It's pulling inspiration from our local vernacular."

4. TAKE ORDERS

"We wanted to make the process of charging portable lights in a restaurant as efficient as possible. We called up a bunch of places to hear their pain points — from crossed wires to limited counter space to the ways they struggle to carry multiple lights out to all their tables. We developed a charging tray that charges six lights from a single outlet and has a handle, so you can just unplug it and take them all with you to a section of tables."

5. GET THE WORD OUT

"We're a queer-led company in San Francisco. When it came to our marketing images, we were thinking about colourful, queer underground raves and dance parties. Old-school iPod campaigns were a huge inspiration for us. We found a director [Toronto's William Ukoh, of the production agency Fela] who understood that, and the visuals have been a big hit on social media. I think it's a successful campaign because it shows exactly who we are."

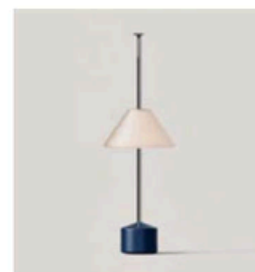


PHOTO BY WILLIAM UKOH (LEAD IMAGE)