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June 21, 2018

A Once-Obsolete Design Object Emerges from the Ashes
At Fisher Parrish, 96 artist-made ashtrays go on display
by Hannah Martin



Untitled (Ashtray), in MDF, plywood, plexiglass, burl veneer, nylon by Sam Stewart, \$800.

What makes an object functional can often be startlingly simple: a light bulb, a flat surface in the right place, maybe even just a name. It's a concept that has long intrigued Zoe Fisher, cofounder and director of Bushwick gallery *Fisher Parrish* and director of *Patrick Parrish* in Tribeca, who, two years ago asked 33 artists and designers alike to make lights for the Lamp Show at 99c Plus Gallery.

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"By performing one simple action an object becomes a functional item," she explains. "I think that frees everyone up in a very interesting way."

The idea stuck. Last year, she tasked nearly 100 creatives with resurrecting an odd item from the midcentury-modern deskscape—the paperweight—and this year she's extracted another seemingly obsolete accessory, ripe for reimagining: the ashtray.

"With increasing legalization of marijuana, ashtrays and smoking accessories are everywhere," says Fisher, pointing to companies like *Tetra* that are making high-design smoking accessories. "Having an ashtray in your home isn't taboo anymore."

Those in the market will have plenty options to choose from at the Ashtray Show, opening tomorrow night, where 96 ashtrays by 86 artists and designers including Tom Sachs, Misha Kahn, and Katie Stout will go on display across a series of 30 IKEA Lack tables.

Many things, you soon learn, can serve as a tray for ash—a tiny clay tower (Matt Borgia), charred wood (Cody Hoyt, Nick Fusaro, Christopher Kurtz), a pile of rocks (Chen Chen and Kai Williams), a bronze orange peel (Eric Timothy Carlson), a painting (Angela Heisch) resin-encased cigarette butts (Emmett Moore), even a bowl of ash itself (Werner Haker, Shawn Kuruneru). After all, there was only one requirement: it had to be smaller than a square foot. And while some sport pure, functional forms—like Visibility's steel *Cigarette for One*,—many—like Clemens Kois's *Unusable Ashtrays* in wax and plastic—are admittedly useless for the task at hand.

Prices (decided by the artists, not the gallery) start around \$50 and go into the thousands, but most hover below the \$1,000 mark, making the show approachable to a younger crowd. Says Fisher: "Artists get a chance to buy other artists' work."

In case you're wondering, gallerygoers won't be permitted to try before they buy. Says Fisher: "Sorry, there's no smoking inside."