

Ashoke Chhabra

The work on view at this exhibition represents two distinct periods in my artist career. The first mainly draws inspiration from the brief Art Nouveau movement along with the architecture and interiors of Greene and Greene. Having been born and raised in Pasadena, Ca the latter was located in my back yard. Early on I was lucky enough to tour the interior of the Gamble House and observe the incredible detail lavished upon every surface great and small. I was suitably impressed. The chief emotion was one of unbridled warmth. The dark woods, the jewel-like sconces, the wrought metal, all worked to convey an aura of what the Scandinavians call "hygge." Nor was it lost on me that to achieve such splendor came at the expense of hard work, and patience, and that these were worthy virtues in light of what I had witnessed. While I could not hope to live in such lavish surroundings I could dare to replicate the spirit of the place in the one or two of its attributes that caught my eye. I say spirit because my intention was never to slavishly replicate that which I saw. Instead I sought to use my impressions as a jumping off point from which I would apply my own aesthetic.

Lighting and its power to animate, when done correctly, was the chief take away from my wondering through the world of Charles and Henry Greene. Very quickly I sought to incorporate some aspect of lighting into all which I created. The vase-like lamp head which I developed over many years, became the hallmark of my work. Walnut became the wood of choice. To achieve the forms I desired I discovered stack-lamination, a method that allowed for large sculptural shapes while at the same time insuring structural integrity.

For me the creative process is non-linear. It is marked by a series of failures, happy accidents, wrong turns, and small victories. Occasionally the endless plodding is punctuated by the spark of an idea, one that changes the course of all future efforts. The new angular cubist work with which I am presently engaged really arose from the urge to further embellish the work I was then working on. I was aiming for thicker texture, for an almost segmented look to replace the sweeping curves that had marked my previous work. As to how to achieve this I was lost. After countless efforts that fell flat I more or less stumbled upon the solution. Even then I could not foresee the lengths to which such a move would force my hand. What I ultimately ended up with was what might be termed a modular method of construction. These bricks or building blocks spawned any number of forms, lighting mostly, that could be fashioned from their manipulation. Suddenly Birch plywood, a material for which I had expressed only passing interest, was the material best suited to the task at hand. Partner to this was the urge to embrace a lighter and simpler pallet. As of the present all my work is simply given a clear coat and all my light panes are of white acrylic or glass. The Chaos Table Lamp, on display here, is most representative of my current output.