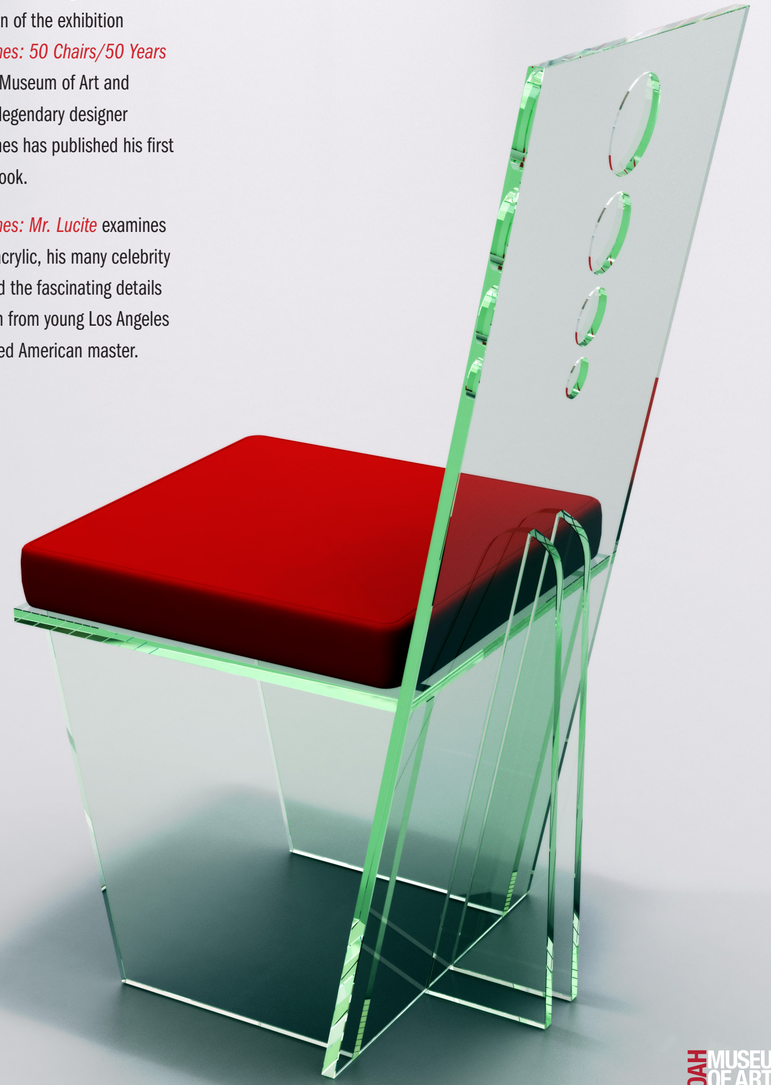
In honor of his decades-long career and to mark the occasion of the exhibition *Charles Hollis Jones: 50 Chairs/50 Years* at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History (MOAH), legendary designer Charles Hollis Jones has published his first comprehensive book.

Charles Hollis Jones: Mr. Lucite examines his novel use of acrylic, his many celebrity commissions, and the fascinating details of his progression from young Los Angeles designer to revered American master.



MOAH MUSEUM OF ART & HISTORY | 8C projects

Charles Hollis Jones Mr. Lucite

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES

MR. LUCITE

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES
MR. LUCITE

Introduction by **Andi Campognone**

Essays by **Jo Lauria** and **Peter J. Wolf**

Timeline by **Maile Pingel** and **Jo Lauria**

With extensive photos and drawings from the **Charles Hollis Jones Archive**

Renders by **Sky Burchard**

Q:

WHAT DO LUCILLE BALL, FRANK SINATRA, SAMMY DAVIS JR., STEVE McQUEEN, TENNESSEE WILLIAMS, JAMES BOND, JANET JACKSON, AND KRIS JENNER HAVE IN COMMON?

A:

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES *Mr. Lucite*

Published on the occasion of the exhibition
Charles Hollis Jones: 50 Chairs/50 Years
February 11 to April 16, 2017
Museum of Art & History (MOAH), Lancaster, CA
lancastermoah.org

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RIGHT: Detail shot of **Post Table**, designed in 1966; Palm Springs, CA, 2016.

I want to say one word to you. Just one word.
Yes, sir.
Are you listening?
Yes, I am.
PLASTICS.
Exactly how do you mean?
There's a great future in plastics.

THE GRADUATE, 1967

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Waterfall Line Double Waterfall Pillow Chairs,
Edward Cole and Chris Wigand Residence;
Palm Springs, CA, 2016.

INTRODUCTION

Andi Campognone

Museum Manager/Curator, Museum of Art & History (MOAH), Lancaster, CA

*Poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA), also known as acrylic or acrylic glass as well as by the trade names Plexiglas, Acrylite, **Lucite**, and Perspex among several others... is a transparent thermoplastic often used in sheet form as a lightweight or shatter-resistant alternative to glass.—Wikipedia*

Throughout the art world, Charles Hollis Jones is known as the king of Lucite, and for good reason: he has continued to redefine the use of acrylic in furniture for over fifty years. Lauded for its malleability, plastic has long been utilized in everything from the medical field to the fashion industry. Engineers and designers alike have applauded the material's versatility, but few have learned to appreciate plastics for more than their ease and utility. In this respect, Charles Hollis Jones is unique, a pioneer and a visionary. Where other makers saw plastic as a basic material, Jones saw a miracle of alchemy, which needed to be respected and understood in order to wield its fullest potential.

Plastics have also played a significant role in the history of the aerospace aviation industries, beginning with the modeling of aircraft windows and canopies in the 1940s. Access to the cutting-edge techniques used in these industries undoubtedly had a significant impact on Jones' practice, as working with the same material used in airplanes and spacecraft allowed him to achieve the clean, transparent aesthetic of glass within a wider range of structural possibilities. MOAH is excited to celebrate the intersection of art and history in Jones' oeuvre, and would like to celebrate Charles Hollis Jones for his fifty-plus years of innovation and to thank him for allowing us to exhibit his groundbreaking designs. ■

LEFT: **Charles Hollis Jones**, Burbank, CA, 2016.

RIGHT: Detail shot of a CHJ side table, Palm Springs, CA, 2016.

BELOW: **Elrod House**, Palm Springs, CA, 2006.

Waterfall Line Backgammon Table, c. 1970. Table and chairs made of Lucite; board is suede with a Lucite cover.

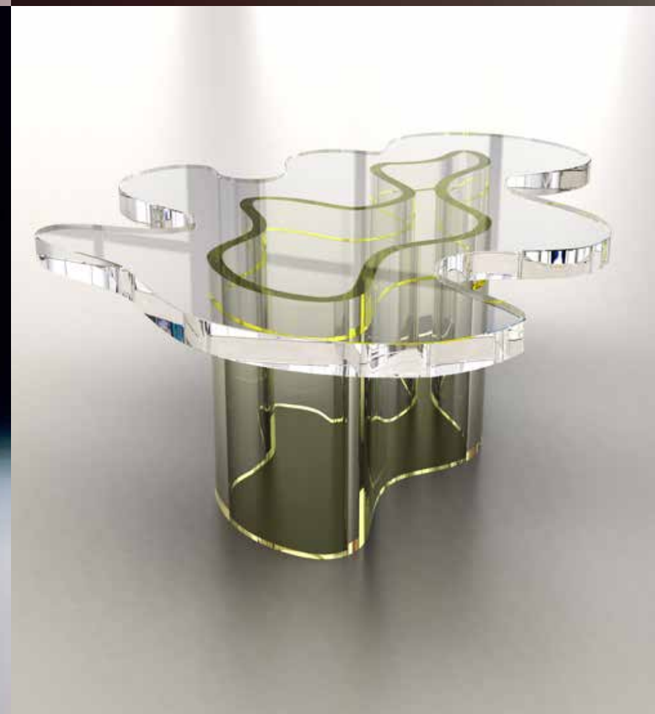
Opposite page, clockwise

Metric Dining Table, c. 1970

Scroll Cocktail Table, 1979

Puddle on a Duck Table, 2017

Edison Lamp, c. 1970



Signatures Showroom, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA, 1979.

ACRYLIC: UNEARTHLY LUXURY

Peter J. Wolf

Design demands that one understand the order. When you are dealing or designing in brick, you must ask what it wants, or what it can do. And if you ask a brick what it wants, it will say, "Well, I like an arch." And then you say, "But, uh, arches are difficult to make. They cost more money. I think you can use concrete across your opening equally well." But the brick says, "Oh, I know, I know you're right, but you know, if you ask me what I like, I like an arch."... That's knowing the order. It's knowing its nature. It's knowing what it can do.
—Louis Kahn, 1972[1]

By 1940, acrylic—developed not even 10 years earlier—was "being made into every conceivable kind of furniture and furnishing"[2] and was "challenging the interest of both architects and interior decorators."[3] However, prior to World War II, little of its promise was realized. Lucite,[4] writes art historian Jeffrey L. Meikle, "reflected a stylish frivolity as it became available to manufacturers who made jewelry from it or embedded flowers and seahorses in it to create desktop novelties."[5] The "apotheosis of frivolity,"[6] according to Meikle, was the scene from the 1939 film *Eternally Yours* in which actress Loretta Young emerged from a "chemical retort five feet high" made entirely of acrylic. But Young's connections to acrylic—and its decidedly less frivolous future—are intriguing. Dave Swedlow, whose firm created the retort for the film, would later apply the same manufacturing techniques to wartime production. "Loretta Young," he later joked, "deserves at least some of the modeling credit for the B-17 nose bubble."[7] Whatever her role in the success of the B-17, Young must have been impressed with her magical acrylic surroundings. She would later purchase, for her sprawling Los Angeles compound, several pieces of acrylic furniture and accessories designed by Charles Hollis Jones.

The story of Loretta Young and the B-17 "nose bubble" illustrates the intersection of two factors critical to Jones' success: the aviation industry and Hollywood—neighbors really, in 1960s Los Angeles. The impact of Jones having established himself there, from the very beginning of his career in 1961, should not be underestimated. Swedlow Aeroplastics Corporation (later Swedlow Plastics), which had developed various processes for the manufacture of acrylic canopies, nose cones, and gunner turrets during the war, was nearby in Garden Grove, for example. The cutting-edge techniques developed there were not widely available, due to their prohibitive cost (Jones' access to these manufacturing processes would prove to be a substantial advantage over his contemporaries). As important as the right technology was, however, the right clients were perhaps more important to his success. And again, Los Angeles was the place to be. Shortly after arriving

Elrod House, Palm Springs, during an event for *Dwell* magazine, 2006.

there in 1961, Jones' work was discovered by designer and architect Paul László, who quickly began selling it to Bullock's Wilshire, the upscale department store. And that was just the beginning. Interior designer Arthur Elrod, Jones' best client, used his designs in perhaps hundreds of projects, mostly in the nearby desert resort town of Palm Springs, a popular hideaway for the celebrity set.[8] Hal Broderick and, later, Steve Chase—both of whom worked in Elrod's office—also employed Jones' designs generously in their work. Designers from the well-established firm of Cannell and Chaffin (whose work was frequently showcased in *Architectural Digest*) often integrated his work into more traditional settings, demonstrating that it was to be taken seriously. And Jones' early work was endorsed enthusiastically by the highly influential Dorothy Buffum "Buff" Chandler, editor of the "Home" section of the *Los Angeles Times*.[9] In 2007, several of his pieces were selected for the "Young Hollywood" show at the Pacific Design Center, thus introducing the current generation of Hollywood celebrities to his work.

Imagine Jones' surprise, then, when in 1970, acrylic furniture was reported to be "surprisingly slow in gaining acceptance."[10] Its eventual success, suggested furniture designer Neal Small, was simply because, "Plastic sheeting is a beautiful, beautiful material," and, added Small, "it has worked its way into the high fashion market because it is the first different material that has come along. No other material can give that see-through look and be folded and worked in such interesting ways as acrylic."[11] However beautiful and different it was, though, acrylic furniture was hardly new in 1970. Americans had had 30 years[12] to warm up to the idea of transparent tables and chairs by that time. If acrylic furniture was finally being accepted in the mainstream, perhaps it was precisely because it had "worked its way into the high fashion market." And for that, the plastics industry, the designers, and the consumers had Charles Hollis Jones to thank. More than any other designer, Jones has pushed the limits and explored the possibilities of acrylic—and in so doing, transformed a material once seen as a mere novelty into the epitome of cool, sophisticated luxury.

IN his essay "The Stones of Venice," the nineteenth-century writer and critic John Ruskin demanded the honest use of materials with which the Arts and Crafts movement would be forever associated. "The workman has not done his duty," wrote Ruskin, "and is not working on safe principles, unless he even so far honours the materials with which he is working as to set himself to bring out their beauty, and to recommend and exalt, as far as he can, their peculiar qualities." Ruskin continues, citing examples relevant to the period. "If he is working in marble, he should insist upon and exhibit its transparency and solidity; if in iron, its strength and tenacity; if in gold, its ductility…" Such moral conduct (as Ruskin would have it) on the part of the "workman" would be rewarded, in that "he will invariably find the material grateful, and that his work is all the nobler for being eulogistic of the substance of which it is made."[13] Had Ruskin included acrylic (its development still more than 75 years away, at the time of his essay's publication) among the materials listed in his admonition, what "peculiar qualities" would he have had in mind? Transparency, of course, would be the most obvious. However, acrylic presents "the workman" with a number of very seductive structural properties as well. How, then, could the material be most "honored"?

When, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, acrylic began making its way into the American furniture market, it seemed to be a miracle material. Acrylic, it was said:

> "…looks like quartz crystal but can be carved, turned on a lathe or worked like metal. Though softer than glass, it has the durability of wood and the smoothness of porcelain. Besides being sawed, cut, drilled and polished, it can be molded to any desired form. Its great virtue in the decorative and architectural fields is its versatility in the workshop for, capable of being cast into sheets, rods and tubes, it serves as basic materials for manufacturing into a thousand and one usable objects."[14]

Acrylic's great utility—as a "basic material"—was often its undoing, as it was pressed into service in traditional roles where its virtues were rarely fully realized. During the 1940s and 1950s, its use in furniture was rather limited, its most common application being the use of acrylic rod to create see-through substitutes for bentwood and rattan furniture. Even during the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the peak of plastic furniture's popularity, the market was awash with "furniture that does not admit to being plastic at all."[15] But then, at the time, the plastics industry itself was described as being "in its adolescence, just as marvelous, incorrigible, and promising as any adolescent."[16] In 1969, the Museum of Contemporary Crafts responded to this dismaying state of affairs with its exhibit *PLASTIC as Plastic*. "The surfaces and forms of the objects included," were, read the show's catalog, "derived from the materials themselves rather than duplicating those conceived for other materials and fabrication methods."[17] Furniture designer John Mascheroni (whose work in both acrylic and metal Jones admires greatly) echoed the museum's sentiment. "When the youth of today reaches purchasing age," predicted Mascheroni in 1971, "it will not settle for urethane reproductions of antiques—it will want honest design, as made possible with plastics."[18] In fact, the "honest designs" purchased during the 1970s were to be celebrated as "antiques" only 20 years later, when they made a "big, if clearly transparent, comeback."[19]

Ball Line Boudoir Chair, c. 1963. In its all-brass version, this chair was a favorite of Lucille Ball.

Although Charles Hollis Jones was not the first to design acrylic furniture, he was among the first to treat acrylic as a unique material, to meet it on its own terms. The best designers of the period realized they were charting new territory, but none pursued acrylic with Jones' dogged determination. Many incorporated acrylic into their designs

Swedlow Plastics advert, c. 1953

(e.g., Vladimir Kagan, Milo Baughman, to name just two), but Jones built his entire career around acrylic, creating everything from table lighters to four-poster beds and custom staircases from the material. In the process, he developed a craftsman's knowledge, respect, and deep understanding of the material that few can match. Although he rarely builds his own work,[20] he works closely with some of the same factory artisans he began working with in the early 1960s. It has been his innovative approach—combined with a range of manufacturing processes—that has allowed Jones to transform acrylic's image from slick to chic. He has spent his career (a career that continues today with still new explorations in acrylic), attempting, as Ruskin would have it, to "bring out [the] beauty, and to recommend and exalt, as far as he can, [the] peculiar qualities" of his signature material. Of course, not everybody approaches acrylic with Jones's sensitivity. And, "the uneducated use of acrylic," says Jones, "is a disaster."

Signatures Showroom, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA, 1979.

"Plastic," suggested the French philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes, "…is in essence the stuff of alchemy… more than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation; as its everyday name indicates, it is ubiquity made visible." Barthes continues, "And it is this, in fact, which makes it a miraculous substance: a miracle is always a sudden transformation of nature. Plastic remains impregnated throughout with this wonder: it is less a thing than the trace of a movement."[21] Again, plastic is seen as a miracle material. In this case, however, it is not merely mankind's command over chemistry, but the miraculous transformation of nature itself. In the case of acrylic, man, had produced from "coal mixed with water and air"[22] a material superior in many ways to glass, its nearest approximation in nature.[23] People are skeptical of miracles, of course, which helps to explain acrylic's slow acceptance as furniture. Initially, many decorators demanded that Jones use glass surfaces in his tables and étagères because they were concerned about scratching. And he sometimes dyed the edges of acrylic sheets green—giving them the look of glass—in order to help clients feel more comfortable with acrylic.[24]

The "infinite transformation" Barthes referred to can be a trap. If the designer can do virtually anything with a material, then how does he or she know the "right"[25] thing to do? Acrylic is one of the most submissive—yet least forgiving—materials to work with, especially for the designer of furniture. It can be machined with ease and then assembled with glue or any number of mechanical fasteners. In many ways, acrylic furniture is easier to build than furniture of wood or metal (or even other plastics).[26] However, its transparency—the very same property that makes it so attractive—allows the designer to hide nothing. Fasteners of all kinds, as well as the inevitable excess glue, are suddenly exposed. No longer merely structural elements, these components stand in sharp relief (rarely flattering) against otherwise see-through forms. Even simple holes drilled through acrylic can become visual clutter, if they are left unpolished (as is usually the case). All the usual treatments used in furniture design—paints, coatings, veneers, and the like—are now off-limits, requiring the designer to re-think the entire piece from the ground up.

For Barthes, though, even the well-designed piece of acrylic furniture can't hope to compete with more traditional forms. Alchemy—however miraculous—has its limitations. Despite the wonders of plastics, it is forever relegated to second-class status, owing to its artificiality. It is nature transformed, not nature itself. "A luxurious object is still of this earth," writes Barthes, "It still recalls, albeit in a precious mode, its mineral or animal origin…"[27] Which is what makes Jones' work so compelling. He has created luxurious objects that are, as Barthes would have it, not of this earth.[28]

"Plastic… is in essence the stuff of alchemy… more than a substance, plastic is the very idea of its infinite transformation; as its everyday name indicates, it is ubiquity made visible."

Edison Lamp, c. 1970.

IF plastic itself is "the stuff of alchemy," then what does it take to make plastic "a luxurious object"? Architect Louis Kahn called it "order," the nature of a material—"what it can do." Unlike many of his contemporaries, Jones has never seen acrylic as merely a "basic material"—just as Louis Kahn never saw a brick as merely a "basic material." For Jones, acrylic's transparency—the very property that offers so many possibilities—also requires a substantial obligation on the part of the designer. This should hardly come as a surprise, considering he's worked so extensively with the material for more than 55 years now. His appreciation, though, came about in an indirect way. "My first love was really glass," he says. "I really fell in love with glass, but it couldn't do what I wanted it to do." In this way, Jones actually began his career with a reverence for what would become his signature medium. It served him well, too, that, as a young boy growing up on an Indiana farm, he'd learned firsthand how to get the most from available resources.[29] Farmers, he saw, essentially make a deal with their land. In order to reap the greatest rewards, a farmer must "give back"

to the land by rotating crops, replenishing nutrients, and so forth. Jones' father, he says, "always raised a lot of corn."

> And a lot of our neighbors would get 65 bushels to the acre… We were not allowed to tell the people what Dad got per acre. He got more than that per acre—quite a bit more. But he wasn't afraid to put the money in it, and he wouldn't plant the same area with the same stuff—he would change it, switch it around.

Jones has explored the "order" of acrylic in the same way his father explored the "order" of corn, and, like Kahn considering what his brick "wants", Jones considers the same of his acrylic.[30] His work, therefore, becomes a meditation on the material's "reply." Jones' designs are distinctive for their sensitive (and often generous) use of acrylic, carefully crafted joints, and subtle detailing.

Jones rarely uses thin sheets of acrylic, despite their structural capabilities. Countless "waterfall" tables in various forms (occasional, nesting, cocktail, etc.) have been made of heat-bent sheets of acrylic. Most are thin, and unremarkable—uninspired responses to what the material wants to be. Jones' versions, by contrast, stand out for their thickness (generally one inch or more). By using thicker sheets, the acrylic "absorbs" more light, giving it a much more dramatic presence. In this way, even Jones' most massive pieces have a mysterious lightness to them. Some of his best-known—and best-selling—work involves slabs of acrylic three and four inches thick. These designs take on a truly sculptural look and feel, as can be seen in the L'Ami Table. By "carrying the light," as Jones likes to say, the acrylic highlights the table's understated form. The sheer volume of acrylic gives it the appearance of being lit from within.

Where Jones does use thin sheets of acrylic, it's not because it's easy or inexpensive; again, the aim is to use the material to its greatest effect. His Waterfall Line barstools and vanity stools employ thin material not only for its surprising visual effect, but because they need to be moved frequently, and therefore are made as light as possible. The best example of Jones' use of thin sheets, however, is his Sling chair. Its dramatic presence is created precisely because of its thinness. Here, Jones has stretched the acrylic under carefully controlled heat—a technique for "reorienting [its] molecular chains," pioneered in the WWII-era aviation industry.[31] The result is a sheet of acrylic only 5/16ths of an inch thick but with tensile strength comparable to steel. Made from a thicker sheet, the Sling chair would lose its sublime beauty. It would become too *visible*.

Waterfall Line Sling Chair, 1967. *(see also page 34)*

One of Jones' trademarks is an absence of visible fasteners. Again, this has to do with his sense of obligation to the material. Because acrylic cannot hide the screws and other fasteners commonly used to assemble a piece of furniture, Jones either finds a clever way to hide them, or eliminates them entirely. His "Metric Line" is a case in point. For Metric 1, Jones simply hid screws out of sight. Later, for Metric 2, designed in 1965, he eliminated the screws entirely. Jones developed a proprietary process in which the acrylic is cooled—forcing it to contract—before assembly. It then expands into a metal joint as it returns to room temperature. The result is a clean, solid joint, free from the visual clutter of nuts and bolts.

Joining two pieces of acrylic is not complicated. "A good joint between two pieces of Lucite," reads a 1960s DuPont catalog, "is strong, transparent, and practically invisible."[32] But despite DuPont's assertion that glue joints are "practically invisible," this is rarely the case in practice. More often, glue joints are done sloppily—and rather than a welded bond, the result is a fragile mass of tiny air bubbles. For this reason, Jones uses glue only when the design demands it. He uses a special non-acidic version, applied with a craftsman's skill. Thus his joints are practically invisible—no bubbles or discoloration, only the smooth edges of two transparent planes of acrylic. Jones' preference is to avoid the glue altogether, which can be accomplished by casting molten material into a gap between

As Mies van der Rohe said rather famously, "God is in the details." In Jones' work, the details take many forms. Often the detail is not what's been included, but what had been judiciously left out.

Arch Line Le Dome Dining/Game Table, 1977
Blade Line Coffee Table, 1970.

two pieces of acrylic. This technique is a particularly demanding and time-consuming (and therefore expensive), but the results are unlike anything that can be accomplished with glue.

Glue and cast joints are further improved through curing, a slow, carefully controlled heating and cooling process that reduces the internal stresses on the acrylic (another process adapted from the aircraft industry). Or, as Jones says, his acrylic is "molecularly happy" after curing. Jones developed the process with the factory artisans he has worked with for more than 55 years. "They created the ovens… and they created them bigger and bigger all the time for me," he says. "That was developed right there at that little factory." Jones was told the process wasn't going to be cheap, but refused to back down. "I insisted on my joints being better than anybody else's," he says. "I wasn't going to do this unless it was going to be better that what I'd seen." The curing has additional benefits, too. Jones says that it keeps his acrylic pieces from yellowing, distorting or cracking.

As Mies van der Rohe said rather famously, "God is in the details." In Jones' work, the details take many forms. Often, the detail is not what's been included, but what had been judiciously left out. Where the process of heat-bending deforms the edge of an acrylic sheet (a tradeoff of working with thicker material), he adds one of a number of different details. The piece might be routed with a rounded "bullnose" treatment, a decorative edge, or simply cut square. Only after such attention, though, is the finished product truly finished.

Although fasteners are rarely visible in Jones' work, they are sometimes unavoidable. In that case, through holes are polished and threads (cut into the hardware, not the acrylic) are concealed. Specialty fasteners are used as well—never hardware store items. Sometimes

Charles Hollis Jones Showroom, Los Angeles, CA, c. 1975.

special tools must be made in order to build one of Jones' designs. Over the years, Jones has been asked to restore many pieces of his furniture because it was either unclear how one might disassemble them, or they'd been disassembled without any clear understanding of how it would all go back together again.

BY understanding the nature of acrylic—by "knowing what it can do"—Charles Hollis Jones has taken the alchemy that is acrylic and elevated it to a celebrated status far beyond that of a "basic material." One of the first to notice was László. What resonated with László (about whom it has been written, "Miesian severity and rigor were never his things"[33]) was the unapologetic (if understated) luxury embodied in Jones' designs. Jones says that on his way out of the Hudson-Rissman showroom, László would often stop himself. Then, over his shoulder, he would say to Jones, "Oh, and Charles, make it look the money."

Architect John Lautner, known for the imaginative organic spaces he created, appreciated Jones' work because, according to Jones, it never got in the way of Lautner's architecture. As Thelma Newman explains in *Plastics as an Art Form*, "Transparency blends with the environment and allows the surroundings to play within its transparent forms, the viewer being able to see through the material to its background. Outside movements play with the form."[34] By creating forms in which Lautner's architecture could "play," Jones actually helped to create luxurious space. Like Lautner, Elrod (whose Palm Springs home John Lautner designed) saw in Jones' work its potential to work harmoniously in the spacious desert homes he so often decorated. As Newman notes, "Transparency requires both reflected, incidental, and transmitted light for advantageous display of its internal and surface forms. It demands air space around it." Elrod's commissions were an ideal venue, then, for Jones' designs, having both ample light and ample space. "Nuances of texture, pattern, color, and form" concludes Newman, "integrate dynamically when plastics' full potential is realized." If Jones' work was complementary to that of both Lautner and Elrod, it was because in Jones' work, acrylic's "full potential is realized."

As to Barthes' assertion that "a luxurious object is still of this earth," Jones' work provides a compelling argument. Anne Volokh, Editorial Director and CEO of *Hollywood Life*, has commissioned four pieces from Jones—including a curved acrylic and brass railing, and a large étagère. "My idea of great design," says Volokh, "is it has to look inevitable. It has to look as if it were created by nature… after you have seen it—you cannot imagine that something else would have been, or could have been better." ■

Footnotes

1 Quoted in the article "On the Brick that Wanted to Become an Arch," by Gerhard Auer, *Daidalos*, March 1992.

2 From "Crystalline Furniture is Here," by Robert Medill, *Arts and Decoration*, April 1940.

3 From "Lucite—the New Plastic," by Dave Swedlow, *California Arts and Architecture*, December 1939.

4 The name given to DuPont's acrylic resin (trademarked in 1936); strictly speaking, cast and extruded sheets are Plexiglas, manufactured by Rohm and Haas.

5 *American Plastic: A Cultural History*, (1995) by Jeffrey L. Meikle, p. 87.

6 *American Plastic: A Cultural History*, (1995) by Jeffrey L. Meikle, p. 88.

7 "The Shoot and Scoot Helicopters," by Ray McGlew, *DuPont Magazine* 62 (October–November 1968). Cited in *American Plastic: A Cultural History*, (1995) by Jeffrey L. Meikle, p. 88.

8 A careful review of Elrod's many published interiors reveals his fondness for Jones' work. According to Jones, Elrod used more than 500 pieces of Jones's work, in about 100 homes before his premature death in a car crash in 1974.

9 If Jones had won over Hollywood, though, he was for years rather less well known on the East Coast, which might help to explain his conspicuous absence from articles about designers working in acrylic published during the 1960s and 1970s.

10 "Plastics: The Future Has Arrived," *Progressive Architecture*, October 1970.

11 "Plastics: The Future Has Arrived," *Progressive Architecture*, October 1970.

12 Minus the war years, of course, during which time little in the way of new domestic furniture was available.

13 "The Stones of Venice," by John Ruskin, 1853.

14 "Crystalline Furniture is Here," by Robert Medill, *Arts and Decoration*, April 1940.

15 "Plastics: The Future Has Arrived," *Progressive Architecture*, October 1970.

16 *Plastics as Design Form*, by Thelma Newman, 1972.

17 *PLASTIC as Plastic*, The Museum of Contemporary Crafts of the American Crafts Council.

18 "Plastics Please," by Monica Geran, *Interior Design*, June 1971.

19 "I Love Lucite," *Architectural Digest*, December 1995, p. 18.

20 An interesting exception took place during the development of his Arch Armchairs. After being told by the factory that they weren't able to bend the three-inch acrylic stock, Jones set about doing just that in his home's oven (after he had cut a hole in the back of it). He then returned triumphantly to the factory with the prototype in hand.

21 "Plastic," by Roland Barthes, 1957.

22 "Crystalline Furniture is Here," by Robert Medill, *Arts and Decoration*, April 1940.

23 And, interestingly, one that avoids Barthes' stinging criticism for colored plastics, which, in his estimation, actually "display only concepts of colour."

24 A trick he used to great advantage on his Wisteria Chair of 1968, in which a single cushion appears to float among four mysteriously-joined planes of glass.

25 To once again employ the moralistic language of Ruskin.

26 Which is not to say that there are not trade-offs, of course: wood has its beautiful grain, steel is resistant to scratching, etc.

27 Strictly speaking, of course, plastics are "still of this earth." The catch, as Meikle explains, lies in the fact that plastic—once made into plastic—"retain[s] nothing of its raw materials' earthiness."

28 Which might help to explain why they are often at their best when set against natural settings (e.g., étagères displaying ceramics, furniture and lamps in the organic spaces created by architect John Lautner, etc.).

29 Indeed, it seems certain that craftsman for generations have benefited from similar experiences.

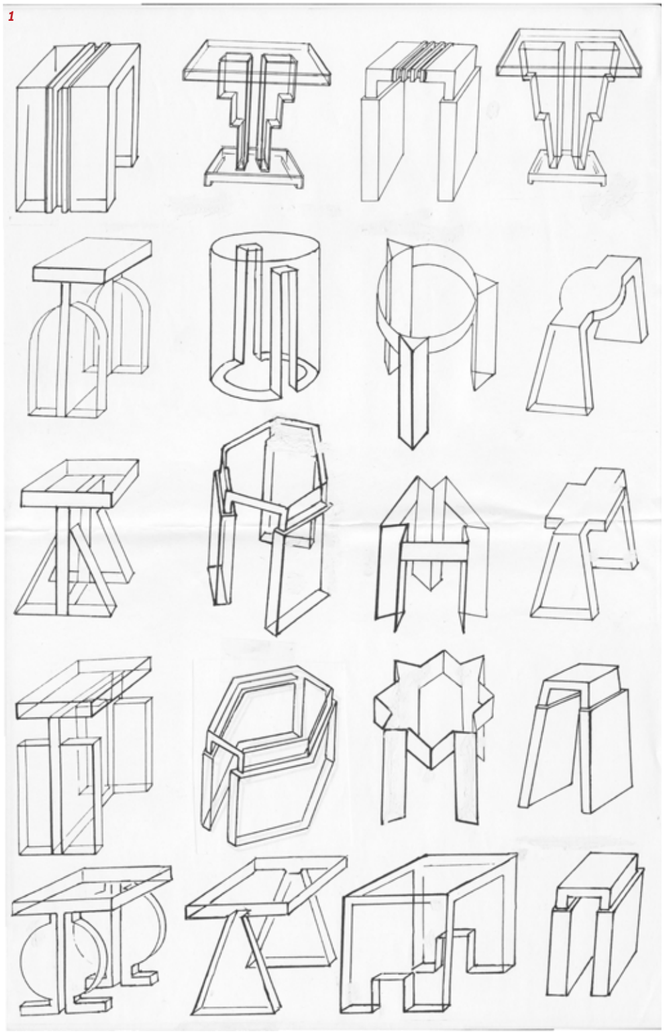
30 Including, it might be said, by following in his father's footsteps. Jones' wide range of designs—including accessories, furniture, and architectural installations—in an equally wide range of styles was his own way of "not planting the same area with the same stuff."

31 *American Plastic: A Cultural History*, (1995) by Jeffrey L. Meikle, p. 158.

32 DuPont product catalog, c. 1960s.

33 "Architectural Digest Revisits Paul László," by Philip Nobel, *Architectural Digest*, September 2002.

34 *Plastics as an Art Form*, by Thelma Newman, 1969, p. 96.



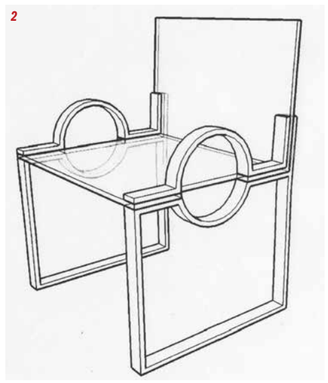


FIG. 1: **Sketches for Tables**, graphite on paper, 2014.

FIG. 2: **O Line Arm Chair**, Sketch Rendering, 2009. *(see also page 96)*

FIG. 3: **Waterfall Line Sling Chair**, 1967. *(see also page 34)*

FIG. 4: **Waterfall Line Veronica Boudoir Chair**, 1979. *(see also page 40)*

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES: CLARITY OF DESIGN

Jo Lauria

FIG. 5: **V Line Lounge Set W Chair**, 2010. *(see also page 60)*

FIG. 6: **Waterfall Line Harlow Chair**, 1979. *(see also page 38)*

Being on the edge is where designer Charles Hollis Jones finds his greatest inspirations. It is at this edge of possibility where Charles cuts through the clutter, dials-down the cacophony and finds the clarity that guides him to think clearly about design innovations. From a very early age Jones was attracted to the optical properties of glass but found the material too limiting due to its inherent fragility. Then he discovered the miracle of plastics and decided that acrylic would be his material of choice. This incisive decision has spawned over twenty-five lines of furniture, accessories, and architectural features in acrylic and metal over the course of Jones' fifty years as a professional designer. Often referred to as "the father of acrylic furniture," his signature style has come to be recognized as an elegant arrangement of the boldest, most elemental geometric shapes—circles, squares, and triangles. In precise combination and with an eye for refinement, these geometric elements create resolved designs. *FIG. 1 AND 2*

Through years of research, experimentation and innovations resulting in proprietary manufacturing processes, Jones has mastered the art of bending, stretching, twisting, fusing and casting acrylic into illusionistic furniture and accessories that function beautifully in the domestic environment and in public spaces. Jones achieves this by exploiting the optical properties of clear acrylic and by outlining the fluid contours of his transparent constructions in reflective polished-nickel, chrome or brass frames. The effect is magical: as one moves around Jones' furniture from point to point one sees through to the sides and edges, each view representing the contour of the completed design. Exemplars of this phenomenon are the Waterfall Line Sling Chair (1967) *FIG. 3* and the Waterfall Line Veronica Boudoir Chair (1979) *FIG. 4*: the thinly stretched acrylic forming the back and seat seem to disappear "into thin air" creating the impression of invisibility. The placement of the continuous bent acrylic fools the eye into thinking that the chair is weightless and without substance, subverting the reality of its solidity, tensile strength, and tactility. In fact, it is only through their supporting metal frames that the chairs are "exposed." Jones amplifies this idea in the V Line Lounge Set W Chair (2010) *FIG. 5* and the Waterfall Line Harlow Chair (1979) *FIG. 6*: the metal support structures are eliminated and the acrylic chairs are entirely see-through; in a room setting their physical structure seems to dissolve and they become points of light. There is always a sense of enchantment with Jones' play of reflection and transparency in his furniture: one imagines that the designer, like the eponymous storybook character in *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, has drawn in space the outline of a chair, table, or lamp and has coaxed it into becoming a thing of mass, weight and volume through pure trickery. *FIG. 7–9, NEXT PAGE*

FIG. 7: **View of Living Room: Residence of Charles Hollis Jones** c. 2004.

- **Sofa with Lighted Platform Base**, c. 1968; acrylic and upholstery; designed for Monty Hall, director of TV game show
- **"Let's Make a Deal" Side Table Lamps** (on each side of sofa), c. 1963; acrylic and polished nickel
- Pair of **Tumbling Block Chairs**, 2000; acrylic and polished nickel *(see also page 70)*
- **Ziggurat Table**, 1984; acrylic and polished nickel (from a series originally designed for the Mondrian Hotel, Hollywood, California)
- **Ziggurat Floor Lamp**, 1965; acrylic and polished nickel
- **Post Line Coffee table** (in front of sofa), 1965; acrylic
- Elizabeth Keck, **Starburst**, 1985 (over sofa); oil painting

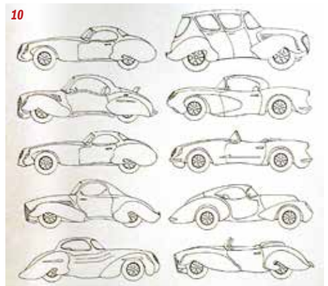
FIG. 8: **Reverse View of Living Room: Residence of Charles Hollis Jones** c. 2004.

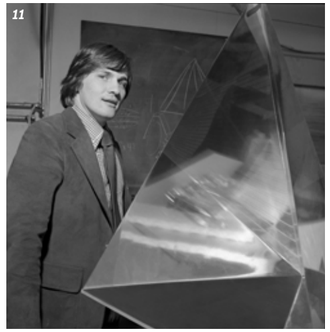
- Pair of **Ziggurat Floor Lamps**, 1965; acrylic and polished nickel
- Pair of **Tumbling Block Chairs**, 2000; acrylic and polished nickel *(see also page 70)*
- **Metric Line Étagère**, 1971; acrylic and polished nickel. *(All accessories on Étagère are designed by Charles Hollis Jones: chrome display bowls, chrome vases, candlesticks, side table lamp, and acrylic sculpture)*

FIG. 9: **View of Patio: Residence of Charles Hollis Jones**, c. 2004.

- **Dining Table**, c. 1970, acrylic and chrome
- Pair of **Waterfall Line Benches**, 1970; acrylic
- **Blade Line Wisteria Chair**, 1986; designed for Tennessee Williams; acrylic with upholstered cushion *(see also page 52)*—with Jones' dog, Shyla
- Ship Sculpture on table by Curtis Jeré

FIG. 10: **Drawing of cars by Charles Hollis Jones**, c. 1978–79, pencil on paper, 8.5 X 8 inches





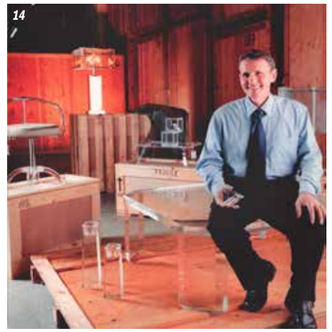


FIG. 11: **Charles Hollis Jones at Swedlow manufacturing facilities**, c. 1980.

FIG. 12: **Charles Hollis Jones at Swedlow casting facilities**, c. 1980.

FIG. 13: **Advert for The Swedlow Group "Signatures in Acrivue" Rainbow Bed**, c. 1980

FIG. 14: **Charles Hollis Jones with some of his designs to be auctioned at Christie's in Beverly Hills CA**, 2001.

But it would be a mistake to dismiss Jones' designs as mere parlor tricks. The underlying principles upon which his designs are based run deep below the surface. At their root, his designs are planted firmly in his youth as a boy growing up on his family's Indiana farm on Popcorn Road in a small town near Bloomington. Surrounded by farm equipment and assigned the task of tending the dairy cows, Jones experienced first-hand how farm machinery was engineered and how its construction determined its function (how form follows function) and he also learned the value of a day's hard work. His talent for design was revealed at an early age through his Erector Set creations and his precocious pencil sketches of cars—for Jones, automobile design has been a life-long passion. *FIG. 10* Tripping down memory lane, Jones recollects that he built his first piece of furniture at the age of fourteen. Through hands-on trial and experimentation, Jones designed and built a plywood cabinet for his father's office. By the age of sixteen Jones was designing furniture and domestic goods for Joe Roide Enterprises, a Los Angeles acrylic business that retailed their designs through high-end department stores such as Bullock's Wilshire in Los Angeles.[1]

Having visited Los Angeles during a summer vacation in 1961 while still in high school, Jones determined that LA was the place to make a mark as a designer. After finishing high school, Jones left his family's Indiana farm and set off on his own course, settling in West Los Angeles. Jones had secured a job as a sales representative for Hudson-Rissman, a well-appointed design and accessories showroom in Los Angeles. He began to learn the decorator and design business and work his way up through the ranks. His design career was formally launched in 1968 when he was appointed head of the design team at the Hudson-Rissman showroom. He held this position until 1974; within three years of leaving Hudson-Rissman, Jones established his own showroom in the fashionable Los Angeles design district. During this same time period, the mid-1970s through early 1980s, several of Jones' furniture designs were represented by The Swedlow Group in a line marketed as "Signatures in Acrivue." *FIG. 11–13* From the late 1970s onward, Jones has maintained his professional practice as a Los Angeles designer and entrepreneur. *FIG. 14*

Throughout his fifty years in practice, Jones has executed significant commissions for some of the most important twentieth-century architects, designers, and interior decorators, among them: Paul László, John Lautner, Arthur Elrod, Stephen Chase, Hal Broderick and John Woolf. Jones' work has also been

widely featured in museum exhibitions and publications internationally, most notably *Architectural Digest, California Homes, House & Garden, Metropolitan Home, Modernism, Wallpaper, the Los Angeles Times* and *The New York Times*.[2]

When queried about influences, Jones cites his father's adjunct trade as a restorer of wood-covered bridges in Indiana and his mother's homespun skills as a quilt maker. In distinctive ways, both of his parents provided creative inspiration for the design lines that would later evolve when he became a practicing designer.

Jones' sleek, visual forms that feature transparent construction and achieve a bold, graphic effect of silhouette derive, in part, from watching his father work. "I saw so many bridges exposed to the bones of their frames," Jones recalls. The experience gave him an understanding of the underlying structural framework and engendered an appreciation for the stark beauty and strength revealed in the bridge's uncovered, complex forms.[3] The designs of the Metric Lounge Chair and Ottoman (1965) most overtly exploit this concept of exposed infrastructure, where steel and acrylic meet at right angles to connect the frame. *FIG. 15-16* When one analyzes his forms, Jones' acrylic furniture is all about refined profiles and dynamic sweeping lines that make the pieces appear to float above the ground—in homage to the bridge—subverting the reality of their solid mass and sturdy construction. *FIG. 17*

Further, experiencing and studying the intricate patterns his mother created for the designs of her hand-stitched quilts contributed to Jones' early sensory education and helped shape his design vocabulary. Jones would later translate this visual information onto drafting paper, conceptualizing and inscribing the geometric outlines that would come to define his work. This is most readily apparent in the crescent-arch shape of the Crescent Chair (2009) *FIG. 18*—a translation of the quilt design "Cathedral Window;" in the Tumbling Block Chair (2011) *FIG. 19*, the profile of which is inspired by the "Log Cabin" and "Tumbling Block" quilt patterns; and in the design of the O Line Rocking Chair (2008) *FIG. 20*, which is an interpretation of the popular quilt pattern, "Double Wedding Ring."

Jones' childhood experiences fueled his intellectual curiosity for all things designed. A recent reminder that the Indiana farm is never far from Jones' drafting board is his design for the Tree Line Apple Chair (2000) and Tree Line Tree of Life Bed (2000). *FIG. 21-22* A product line designed in homage of Jones' father's work in wood, the "Apple" pieces demonstrate Jones' objective to connect his designs back to nature. The twisted, branch-like elements that comprise the back leg support and stretch over the arm of the chair, and the spiraling branches that grow upward and extend from the post to form the bed canopy evoke the sensation of wild, uncontrollable growth. And the dangling apple is the ultimate design tease as it is pregnant with symbolism. But for Jones, this design has returned him solidly to his taproots as the son of Indiana farmers. Although he arrived in the big city of Los Angeles some fifty years ago and has made the city his home and location of a successful career, Jones will be the first to tell you that his experiences growing up on the family farm still surge through his veins, and that his oft referred to "International Luxe" style is "as American as apple pie." ■

Footnotes

1 Excerpted from several interviews with the author from 2014 through 2016.

2 *Charles Hollis Jones*, essay by Peter Wolf, 2007, featured in limited edition book, published privately.

3 Interview with the author.

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FIG. 15: **Metric Lounge Chair and Ottoman**, 1965. Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, and chenille cushions *(see also page 32)*

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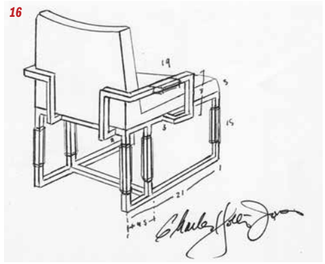

FIG. 16: **Sketch of Metric chair**, Graphite on paper; signed; undated.

FIG. 17: **Edward Cole and Chris Wigand Residence, Palm Springs—View of Living Room**, 2016.

- Pair of **Waterfall Line Bear Sofas**, 1970, Lucite base with lights, chenille cushions *(see also page 36)*
- Set of four **Waterfall Line Double Waterfall Pillow Chairs**, 2006, polished brass over steel, Lucite *(see also page 48)*
- **Waterfall Line Coffee Table**, 1983, Lucite
- Area floor rug by Edward Fields

FIG. 18: **Crescent Chair**, 2009. Polished nickel over steel and Lucite.

FIG. 19: **Tumbling Block Chair**, 2011. Polished nickel over steel and Lucite. *(see also page 70)*

FIG. 20: **O Line Rocking Chair**, 2008. Polished nickel over steel and Lucite. *(see also page 98)*

FIG. 21: **Tree Line Apple Chair**, 2010. Polished nickel over steel and Lucite. *(see also page 68)*

FIG. 22: **Tree Line Tree of Life Bed**, 2000. Polished nickel over steel and Lucite. *(see also page 66)*

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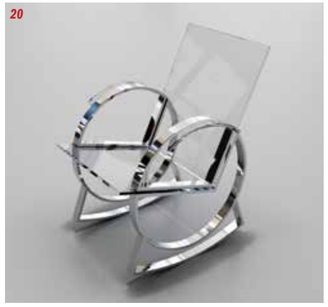


21

22

"Design starts with a simple action."

WORKS

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES

MR. LUCITE

METRIC LINE SIDE CHAIR

1965

Jones designed this line of furniture based on the metric system. At its core, it is acrylic slipping into metal with an obvious absence of bolts and screws.

CHJ499a | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 18"w X 21"d X 35"h

METRIC LINE SIDE CHAIR

1965

CHJ510 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 22"w X 26"d X 28"h

WATERFALL LINE SLING CHAIR

1967

The inspiration for the Waterfall line is drawn from the natural form of water flowing. The concept behind it was to capture marriage and love, as well as the softness that is represented in the rest of Jones' work.

CHJ2001 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 26"w X 26"d X 25"h

WATERFALL LINE BEAR SOFA

1970

"For the Waterfall Bear sofas, you didn't need pillows, I designed it so the arms were the right height to lay your head down."

CHJ2284 | Lucite base with lights, chenille cushions | Approximately 84"w X 36"d X 28"h

WATERFALL LINE HARLOW CHAIR

1979

CHJ2100 | Lucite | Approximately 36"w X 28"d X 36"h

WATERFALL LINE VERONICA BOUDOIR CHAIR

1979

CHJ2050 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 16"w X 22"d X 41"h

WATERFALL LINE DOUBLE WATERFALL SOFA

2000

CHJ573 | Lucite base with lights, chenille cushions | Approximately 120"w X 84"d X 28"h

WATERFALL LINE SHERRY HACKETT CHAIR

2006

CHJ2060 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushion | Approximately 16"w X 24"d X 41"h

WATERFALL LINE TRIPLE WATERFALL CHAIR

2006

CHJ2030 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 22"w X 32"d X 36"h

WATERFALL LINE DOUBLE WATERFALL PILLOW CHAIR

2006

"People say I'm a perfectionist. I agree that I am; this work wouldn't exist otherwise."

CHJ5051 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 27"w X 37"d X 28"h

WATERFALL LINE BEAR CHAIR SET

2010

"The concept here was the furniture embraced you like a teddy bear and floated above the room, putting you into a different mental space. To enhance the floating effect, we placed lights below."

Chair CHJ2236 | Lucite base with lights, chenille cushions | Approximately 36"w X 36"d X 28"h
Ottoman CHJ2234 | Lucite base with lights, chenille cushions | Approximately 24"w X 24"d X 18"h

BLADE LINE WISTERIA CHAIR

1968

This chair was designed for and named by Tennessee Williams. He said, “Charles, do you know what wisteria is? It’s a rich man’s bougainvillea.” Most of the pieces in the Blade line were made with 100% acrylic. This line is also noted for its unique repetitive line use on the legs.

CHJ5050 | Lucite, chenille cushion | Approximately 16"w X 22"d X 41"h

V LINE SIDE CHAIR

1994

The V Line is inspired by quilt work from Jones' mother, specifically the design known as the Texas Star. All of the line's pieces are based on the concept of a V incorporated somewhere in the shape and structure of the design.

CHJ6033 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 18"w X 22"d X 33"h

V LINE DINING SIDE CHAIR

2009

CHJ6090 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 22"w X 26"d X 31"h

V LINE PARADISE CHAIR

2010

CHJ6001 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 25"w X 40"d X 30"h

V LINE LOUNGE SET W CHAIR

2010

CHJ6010w | Lucite | Approximately 36"w X 25"d X 28"h

V LINE LOUNGE SET M CHAIR

2010

CHJ6010m | Lucite | Approximately 36"w X 25"d X 28"h

BOX LINE WINDOW SOFA

2000

The Box Line was influenced by Jones' mother's quilt collection, especially her Log Cabin designs. This line was originally created in 1966 for Hollywood star Loretta Young.

CHJ573 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 84"w X 34"d X 34"h

TREE LINE
TREE OF LIFE BED

2000

The Tree Line was inspired by Jones' father's tree business. His father would only cut down trees that were larger than 12 inches in diameter, and always replaced them with twice the number of trees. It was this nostalgic memory that inspired Jones to create a line of furniture that was organic, but still overlapped with his personal aesthetic.

"My life is not about taking anything with me, but leaving something for everybody."

CHJ775 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 72"w X 84"d, X 91"h

TREE LINE APPLE CHAIR

2010

CHJ7083 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 24"w X 24"d X 32"h

TUMBLING BLOCK LINE LOUNGE

2000

The Tumbling Block Line was inspired by Jones' mother's Tumbling Block quiltwork. Jones usually avoided using pyramid-like shapes because he felt they had been overdone; since the time of the Babylonians, the pyramid has been one of the most commonly used shapes in architecture. However, when Jones noticed the motif kept showing up in his mother's work, he decided to address it in the Tumbling Block Line.

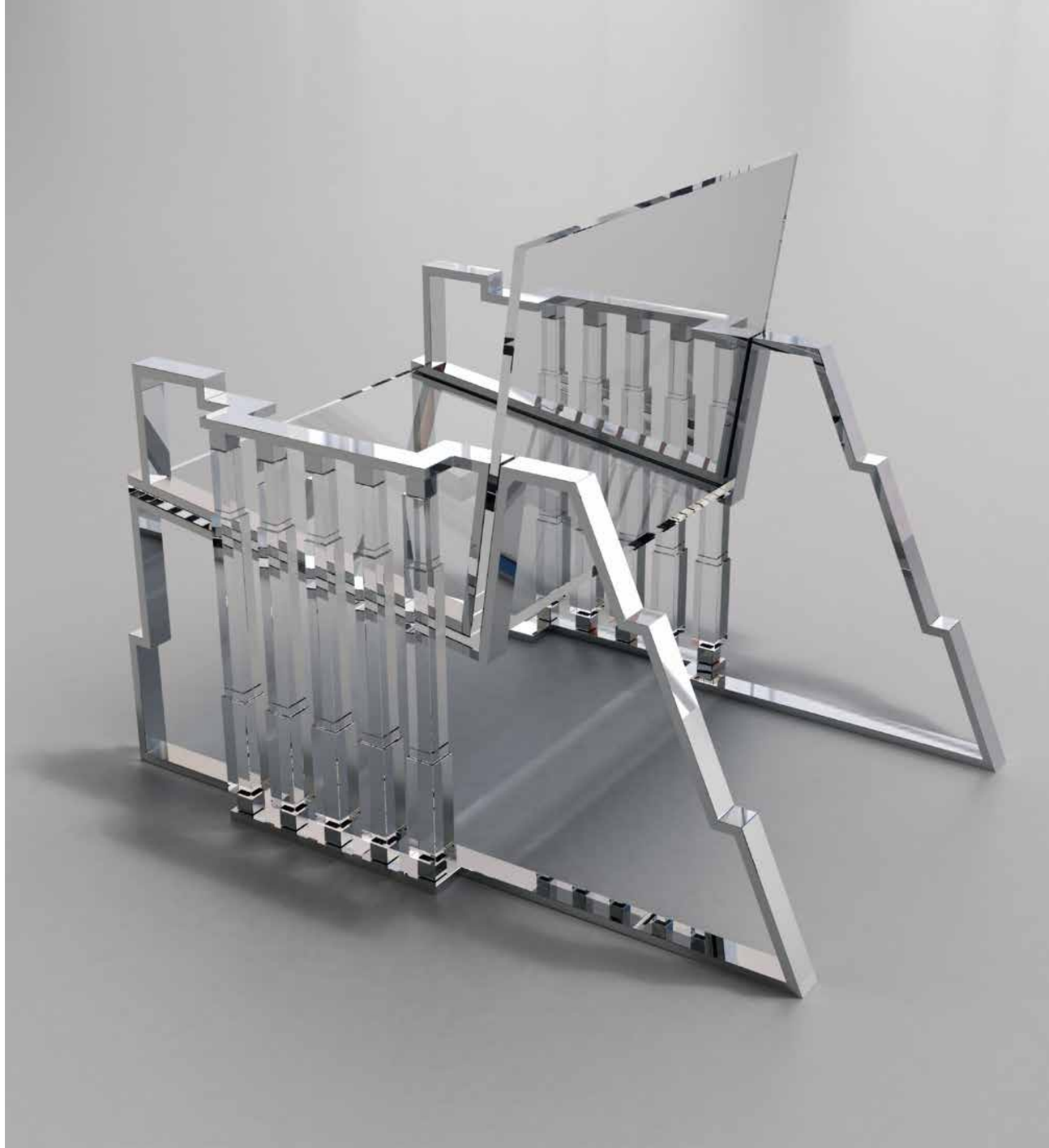
CHJ8055 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 27"w X 40"d X 27"h

TUMBLING BLOCK LINE BOLT LOUNGE

2008

"Resolve is my favorite word.
Is the design resolved here?
That's what I always ask myself."

CHJ8010 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 27"w X 40"d X 27"h



TUMBLING BLOCK LINE LOUVER CHAIR

2016

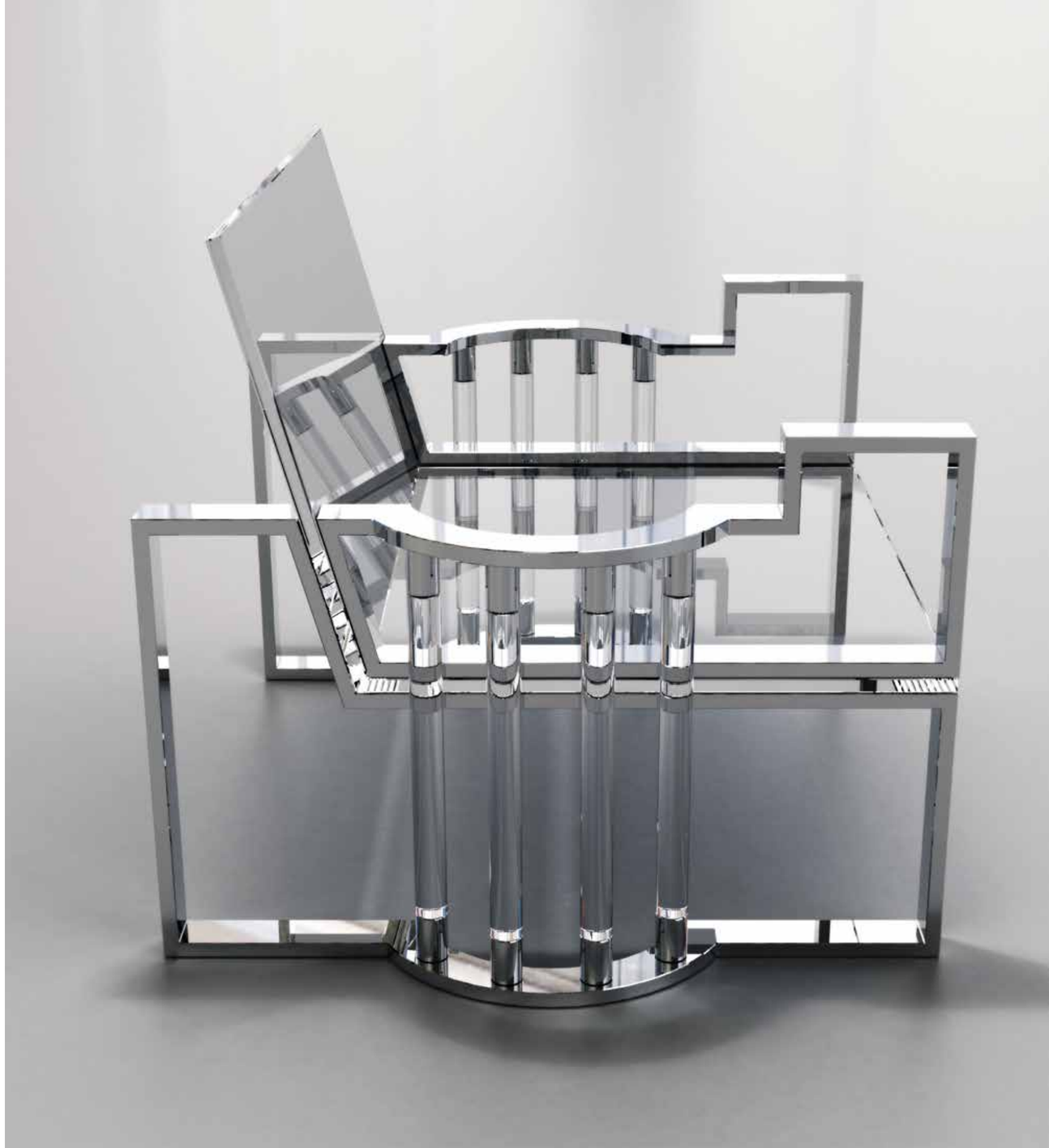
CHJ8591 | Lucite, chenille cushion | Approximately 21"w X 17"d X 28"h

POST LINE LOUNGE

2008

The Post Line originated in the '60s and was featured in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's groundbreaking exhibit and book, California Design, 1930–1965: "Living in a Modern Way." Here Jones incorporates the simple, timeless structure of a post, but ups the sophistication level through repetition and using the latest modern materials.

CHJ140 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 32"w X 28"d X 29"h



ARCH LINE ARM CHAIR

2010

The Arch Line was created after Jones started working with the owner of the Los Angeles Raiders football team, Al Davis. Jones designed the furniture for Davis' executive office in Beverly Hills.

CHJ176 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 29"w X 26"d X 28"h

CONNEXXION LINE ARM CHAIR

2010

The philosophy behind this line is to create things that go together and connect in life, especially in furniture, so people wouldn't have to buy multiple pieces with no relationship between them. Jones' focus was to showcase that one could own multipurpose furniture – it could be pieced together to make a statement as well as separated and enjoyed individually.

CHJ9200ac | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 23"w X 24"d X 34"h

CONNEXXION LINE KITE CHAIR SET

2010

CHJ9090 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 72"w X 22"d X 28"h

CONNEXXION LINE SIDE CHAIR

2010

CHJ9088 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 22"w X 26"d X 28"h

CONNEXXION LINE HOST AND HOSTESS DINING CHAIR

2010

CHJ9089a | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 22"w X 26"d X 31"h

CONNEXXION LINE ARM CHAIR

2010

CHJ9200ac | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 23"w X 24" d X 34"h

CONNEXXION LINE EAGLE SET

2010

Arm Chair CHJ9200c | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 24"w X 24"d X 33"h
Table CHJ9200t | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 26"w X 27"h

CONNEXXION LINE ARTHUR CHAIR SET

2010

CHJ9080 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 54"w X 22"d X 28"h

CONNEXXION LINE ARM CHAIR

2010

CHJ9080 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 20"w X 22"d X 41"h

O LINE ARM CHAIR

2010

CHJ5054 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 21"w X 21"d X 33"h

O LINE ROCKING CHAIR

2011

The O Line was inspired by the Wedding Ring quilt from Jones' mother's collection. One of the most notable pieces is the O Rocking Chair,designed for President Barack Obama. Charles also drew inspiration from chairs he had seen in Barcelona, Spain, circa 1968 – but it wasn't until 10 years later that he designed his first piece of O Line furniture.

CHJ5055 | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite | Approximately 21"w X 36"d X 28"h

BALL LINE BENCH

2016

Named after Lucille Ball, the Ball Line emphasizes gracefulness, softness, and delicacy – much inspired by the curves of a woman's body.

"Lucy asked me to make 16 pieces, but with the usual ball feet replaced with casters, so they could roll. Three weeks later she called and said, 'Charles, this furniture is chasing me around the room! Please put the balls back.'"

CHJ1033C | Polished nickel over steel, Lucite, chenille cushions | Approximately 52"w X 16"d X 18"h

TIMELINE

Maile Pingel and Jo Lauria with contributions by Jacqueline Falcone

1945–1960 FIG. 1 AND 2

Charles Hollis Jones is born in Springville, Indiana, just south of Bloomington. By the age of eight he is drawing cars and by age 14 he's designing and building furniture—his first piece is a wood cabinet for his father's office. Charles' parents would greatly influence his aesthetic through their own passions: his mother's quilting and his father's farming and woodworking skills.

1961 FIG. 3

Charles makes his first visit to Los Angeles at the age of sixteen, where he is introduced to furniture maker Joe Roide of Roide Enterprises. He begins streamlining Roide's existing designs and developing small furnishings and accessories of his own that are retailed through high-end shops like Bullock's Wilshire, where they catch the eye of well-known architects and designers like Arthur Elrod. The first of Charles' Hollywood commissions come in and he designs the Classic Line Bench (CHJ1033) for Desi Arnaz and the Classic Boudoir Ball Line Chair (CHJ97) for Lucille Ball's studio dressing room.

1962

More celebrity commissions follow with Sammy Davis Jr., for whom Charles designs the Classic Ball Line Barstool (CHJ1007), and Frank Sinatra, for whom he designs the Classic Line Barstool (CHJ106B).

1963

After graduation from high school in Indiana, Charles returns to Los Angeles and creates some of his most recognizable pieces: the Waterfall Line Three-Legged Side Chair (CHJ125); the Waterfall Bench (CHJ98); and the Swivel Boudoir Chair (CHJ997), which was done for Lucile Ball's home in Beverly Hills. He is also commissioned to design pieces for *Playboy* magazine's Pip's Club in Los Angeles.

1964 FIG. 4

The Classic Line, which was largely inspired by architect John Woolf and interior designer Gladys Belzer, grows to include two Classic Lucite Chairs (CHJ2002 and CHJ2002) with black pony-hide and white sheepskin cushions, respectively.

1965

Charles designs the Metric Lounge Chair with open arms (CHJ506) and an accompanying Ottoman (CHJ500).


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FIG. 1: Charles Hollis Jones, c. 1955

FIG. 2: Charles' parents, Fronia and Charles C. Jones, and sister Janet, c. 1955

FIG. 3: Charles with his beloved Aunt Dora, whose interest in style and design would inspire him for years to come, c. 1961

FIG. 4: Charles, c. 1964—fully immersed in Southern California style

FIG. 5: Cars have always been of interest to Charles, seen here in his 1953 Corvette

FIG. 6: Father Brown and Charles, c. 1966

FIG. 7: The Waterfall Backgammon Table melds Charles' affinity for accessories and furnishings

FIG. 8: The 1971 Lucite Folding Trays

1966 FIG. 5

Charles designs the Post Dressing Stool (CHJ123) and the Bugle Base Dressing Stool (CHJ1044).

1967 FIG. 6

Charles receives funding from his good friend Father William Turner "WT" Brown of St. Matthias church in Sun Valley, which allows him to renovate his showroom. He also begins working with Hudson-Rissman, eventually becoming their head of design—a position he would hold until 1974. He designs the upholstered Arch Chair (CHJ109) for Al Davis, owner of the Oakland Raiders football team, the Drop Arm Arch Base Chair (CHJ109A) and the Waterfall Line Sling Chair (CHJ2001).

1968

Charles begins traveling to Europe twice a year on behalf of the Hudson-Rissman showroom to collaborate with makers like ceramist Bruno Gambone in Florence, Italy, and with the Venetian glass companies Toso, Mazzega, and Seguso. He creates his first clock using Seguso glass, as well as several of his most iconic designs: the Edison Lamp (CHJ85), which would bring him great notoriety in the coming years, and the Blade Line Wisteria Chair (CHJ5050), designed for playwright Tennessee Williams' home in New Orleans. The momentous year also sees the completion of the Arthur Elrod house in Palm Springs, for which architect John Lautner commissioned forty pieces of Charles' work.

1969

Charles meets local interior designer and showroom owner Barbara Lockhart, who asks him to design a series of products based on the letter "z." The designs are a huge success and Lockhart encourages Charles to create larger pieces (dining tables and beds) that she can display in her showroom. Commissions from Hollywood celebrities continue with Charles' design of the black leather V Line Director's Chair (CHJ6100) for Dean Martin and the Director's Chair (CHJ90) for *Let's Make a Deal* host Monty Hall and producer Stefan Hatos.

1970 FIG. 7

Inspired by his childhood teddy bear, Charles designs the Bear Chair (CHJ2237) and the Bear Sofa (CHJ2284). He adds to the Metric Line with the triangle-frame Side Chair (CHJ510A) and the triangle-frame Armchair (CHJ510). He also extends the Arch Line with the new Armchair (CHJ515M).

1971 FIG. 8

Three of Charles' designs are included in *California Design 11*, the ground-breaking exhibition series organized by Eudorah Moore at the Pasadena Museum of Modern Art (now the Norton Simon Museum): the Edison Lamp, the Metric Étagère, and the Lucite Folding Tables (TV tables). His Post Table makes it onto the big screen with a cameo in the Oscar-nominated James Bond movie, *Diamonds are Forever,* which stars Sean Connery and is filmed at the Arthur Elrod house in Palm Springs. It is in this period of the early 1970s that Charles also shows his work outside of Los Angeles, with pieces at the Keller Williams showroom in San Francisco and at 39 East, a gallery in Miami, Florida.

1972 FIG. 9 AND 10

Charles' three designs that were honored in *California Design 11* are sent to Europe as part of a traveling exhibition, *What's New in America*. The Edison Lamp receives a special award from the German government for Brilliance in Design. Charles designs the Metric Line Barstool with a swivel seat (CHJ448) and is commissioned by John H. Johnson of Johnson Publishing Co. (publishers of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines) for several pieces to be used in the company's Arthur Elrod-designed Chicago headquarters. He also designs a mirror for Steve McQueen's Palm Springs home.

1973 SEE FIG. 24 AT END OF TIMELINE

Charles attends Art Center for the 1973–1974 school year, something he credits as "God's gift to me," for instilling self-confidence. He designs the Classic Line Acrylic Club Chair (CHJ2226), nicknamed the Watermelon Chair for its lobed form and pink and green silk upholstery.

1974

Charles' Culver City home and studio, designed in collaboration with interior designer Jerry Shimer, is published in the *Los Angeles Times' Home* magazine. He designs the Arch Line Barstool (CHJ29B) for singer Johnny Mathis and beings working with Diana Ross on pieces for her home.

1975

Charles opens his eponymous showroom on Robertson Boulevard in West Hollywood, a space he would maintain until 1991. He adds to the Waterfall Line with the Willincheck Chair (CHJ2228) and the Johnson Barstool (CHJ2220). His work is featured in Dona Z. Meilach's book, *Creating Modern Furniture: Trends, Techniques, Appreciation.*

1976

The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors recognizes Charles with a special award for the Metric Line. He is included in the *California Design '76* exhibition, held at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, and designs the Blade Line Side/Desk Chair (CHJ2024).

1977

Charles adds the Desk Chair (CHJ499) to the Metric Line.

1978 FIG. 11 AND 12

Charles signs a 5-year contract with Swedlow Plastics and produces the Charles Hollis Jones Signature Collection, which includes furniture, lighting and accessories—some of his most iconic designs, like the Le Dome Table, are produced during this time. Charles designs the Waterfall Line Sling Chair (CHJ2000), a variation of the 1967 design of the same name. He also receives more architectural commissions with a custom staircase designed for the Fred Winograd residence in Los Angeles. He begins working with new client Muhammad Ali.


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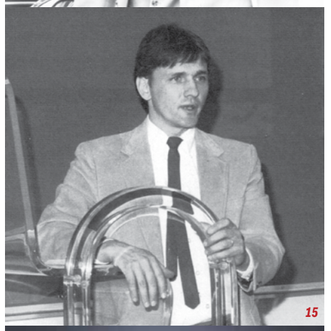
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FIG. 9: A 1972 portrait for an advertisement

FIG. 10: The mirror Charles designed for Steve McQueen

FIG. 11: A staircase designed for a Los Angeles home

FIG. 12: The four-post bed Charles designed for Sylvester Stallone in 1978

FIG. 13 AND 14: Charles' restored 1938 Chevy, which he famously used to drive Tennessee Williams to parties when the playwright would come to town

FIG. 15: Charles in the classroom at Otis

FIG. 16: A table from the Tumbling Block Line, c. 1985

1979

The Waterfall Line expands with the Elrod Sling Chair (CHJ2001), which features a sculpted backrest.

Early 1980s FIG. 13 AND 14

Hollywood commissions continue with the Classic Line Janet Jones Swivel Vanity Chair (CHJ333). Charles also designs the Mesa Line Pike's Peak Chair (CHJ1200) in 1981; the Director's Bench (CHJ90B) in 1982; and the leather-seated Waterfall Bench (CHJ98SP) in 1983. This is the decade that also sees Charles' designs on hit television shows like "Dynasty."

1984 FIG. 15

From 1984 to 1989, Charles' designs for the Swedlow Group are sold through the Pacific Design Center showroom, Signatures. He designs the O Line JM Barstool (CHJ29L) and receives one of his most significant commissions of his career: pieces for the public spaces of the new Hotel Le Mondrian on Sunset Boulevard. He also teaches design for two semesters at Otis College of Art and Design.

Mid-1980s FIG. 16

The Metric Line expands in 1985 with Charles' Small Chairs (CHJ499SM), which feature, for the first time, colored Lucite. In 1986, the line expands again with a triangular-based Chair (CHJ577). In 1987, the Scroll Sling Chair (CHJ2051) joins the Waterfall Line.

1988

Charles designs the Loretta Young Table (CHJ75) and the Wellman O Table (CHJ1590).

1989

The Post Line expands with the addition of the Accessory Table (CHJ61).

Early 1990s

The Harlow Chair (CHJ2100) is added to the Waterfall Line in 1990. The following year, the Waterfall Line expands again with the new Elliptical Chair (CHJ2080). In 1992, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation presents Charles with the Carl Bean Award in honor of his volunteer work on behalf of the ASID. Charles adds again to the Waterfall Line with the Bishop's Arched Armchair with custom back (CHJ515L).

Mid-1990s

The Gough Chair (CHJ507) joins the Waterfall Line in 1993. The V Line Tie Sofa (CHJ6084) and Tie Side Chair (CHJ6033) debut in 1994, with the V Line Tie Chair (CHJ 6021) added in 1995. Charles is commissioned to design custom furniture for hotel owner John Willard "Bill" Marriott Jr.'s Rancho Mirage home, built to plans by Frank Lloyd Wright and designed by Barbara Lockhart.

1996 FIG. 17

The new Solitude Line debuts with the Arrow Barstool (CHJ10010), the Lex Barstool (CHJ10030), the Luthor Barstool (CHJ2030), and the Snow Barstool (CHJ10015).

1997 FIG. 18 AND 19

Charles loans a selection of chairs and tables to the Getty Center for installation in the rotunda as part of the museum's opening celebrations. The Egg Dining Chair (CHJ204D) is added to the Waterfall Line.

1998

Kelly Lynch and Mitch Glazer purchase a John Lautner home in Los Feliz and become collectors of Charles' work. The Sherry Hackett Boudoir Chair (CHJ2060) joins the Waterfall Line.

1999

Charles designs the Janet Jackson Style Award for *Hollywood Life* magazine, and adds the Adirondack-style Trapezoid Chair (CHJ6002) to the V Line.

2000

Charles designs the Tumbling Block Lounge Chair (CHJ8055).

2001 FIG. 20

Eighty vintage pieces of Charles' design are included in Christie's May 16th "Innovators of Twentieth Century Style" auction in Los Angeles. The sale, of which Charles has said "It made me realize I was better than I thought," also includes works by modern masters like Raymond Loewy and William Haines. The sale garners Charles a profile in the *Los Angeles Times*. Side Chair (CHJ8100) is added to the Tumbling Block Line.

2002

Charles is included in two exhibitions: *XXe Siècle: Salon International de Mobilier & Objets* at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris and *100 Years of the L.A. Chair* at the Museum of California Design. He designs the O Armchair (CHJ5010).

2003

Charles' work, spanning some forty years, is exhibited at the Palm Springs Art Museum, alongside Julius Shulman's photography. He adds the Veronica Chair (CHJ2050) to the Waterfall Line.

2004

As part of its annual West Week celebrations, the Pacific Design Center honors Charles with the Product Designer of the Year award. The Getty House Foundation commissions Charles to design the City of Angels Award, which is given to five Angelenos who have worked to better the city—one recipient this year is Earvin "Magic" Johnson. The Dining Chair (CHJ499) is added to the Metric Line. As part of the annual Palm Springs Modernism celebrations, Charles gives a talk at the Elrod House on his history and friendship with Arthur Elrod.

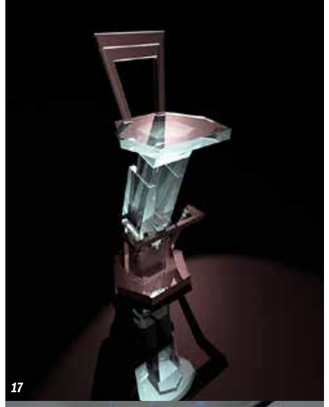
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FIG. 17: The Luthor Barstool from the Solitude Line, 1996

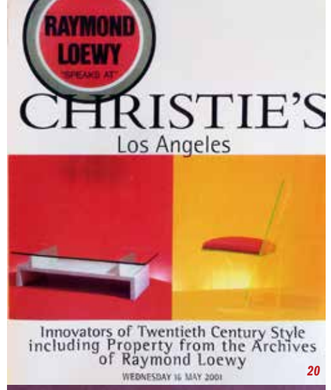
FIG. 18 AND 19: An installation of Charles' designs at a Getty opening party, 1997

FIG. 20: Charles' copy of the 2001 Christie's sale catalogue

FIG. 21: A paperweight of the letter he received for inclusion in the 1972 California Design 11 exhibition illustrates just how important the event was to Charles

FIG. 22: Charles and Julius Shulman at the Design Within Reach exhibition in 2008

FIG. 23: Charles at home in Burbank, 2011.



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2005 FIG. 21

Charles is featured in the book *California Design* by Jo Lauria and Suzanne Baizerman, which examines the history of the celebrated exhibition series. He receives additional press in the *New York Times* and is included in the Pasadena Museum of California Art's design biennial. The Double Waterfall Chair (CHJ5051) is added to the Waterfall Line.

2006

Charles's Sling Chair is included in the three-volume book, *Phaidon Design Classics*. The Waterfall Line expands again with the Triple Waterfall Line Chair (CHJ2030).

2007

Charles is nominated for the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. He is included in the Young Hollywood show at the Pacific Design Center and in the Jo Lauria and Steve Fenton book, *Craft in America*. The Egg Lounge Chair (CHJ2004) is added to the Waterfall Line. The Nouveau Vu Line is introduced.

2008 FIG. 22

Charles is given a retrospective at the Design Within Reach showroom in Los Angeles and is included in a *Los Angeles Times* feature on John Lautner's Garcia House, as well as the book *Modern Americana: Studio Furniture From High Craft to High Glam* by Todd Merrill and Julie V. Iovine, in an essay by Peter Wolf. He designs the Midnight Mission's 2008 Golden Heart Award to honor managing director Clancy Imislund's contributions to the organization and features prominently at the Palm Springs Modernism Show & Sale. New designs include the O Line Rocking Chair (CHJ5055) and the Post Line Chair (CH J-75).

2009

Charles adds the Paradise Chair (CHJ6001) to the V Line.

2010

Charles designs the Kite Chair Set (CHJ9090), part of the Connexxion Line, which explores the idea of furniture sets in terms of human relationships, dealing with notions of connectivity, harmony and partnership. The chairs are "connected" by his Bowtie Table.

2011 FIG. 23

Charles' work is featured in a number of publications: *10 Years in Tribeca*, a publication by Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman in conjunction with their R 20th Century gallery exhibition; *Golden State of Craft* by Jo Lauria and Emily Zaiden; "50 Titans of Design," a special issue of the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*; and the catalogue for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's exhibition *California Design, 1930–1965: "Living in a Modern Way."* He participates in the group show, *From Here to Eternity*, at Scion Installation L.A. Gallery in Culver City, and designs the Volt Chair (CHJ8010) as part of the Tumbling Block Line. At the behest of Senator Dianne Feinstein, Charles designs a special high-backed O Rocking Chair for President Barack Obama's fiftieth birthday. The back features an engraved presidential seal.

2012

Charles is included in two books, *The Iconic Interior: Private Spaces of Leading Artists, Architects, and Designers* by Dominic Bradbury and *Celebrities in Hiding* by Audrey Moe. He expands the Connexxion Line with the Arthur Chair Set (CHJ9080), which features a single chair flanked by round tables.

2013

The V Line is expanded with the Rainbow Chair (CHJ6022). The Tree Line makes its debut with the 4 Legged Apple Chair (CHJ7004).

2014

The Connexxion Line grows with the addition of the Dove Chair (CHJ9200) and the Loewy Breakfast Set (CHJ9012), a table and chairs for two. Charles also designs the Box Line Wilber Set Chairs (CHJ9202).

2015

Charles' work is seen again, as it has been for decades, in *Architectural Digest*, this time in the Rancho Mirage home of designer Michael S. Smith, proving Arthur Elrod's statement that Charles is "a designer's designer" still holds true. The 3 Legged Tree Chair (CHJ7083) joins the Tree Line. The Lounge Chair (CHJ140) joins the Post Line.

2016

Michael Jon & Alan feature Charles' work at Design Miami. Charles designs two new pieces for the O Line, the Barrel Chair (CHJ5052) and the Gough Chair (CHJ5053). He also adds the Charles Lee Desk (CHJ8040) to the Tumbling Block Line. New collector Kris Jenner purchases monumental pieces by Charles, including a one-of-a-kind Le Dome Table and a variation of the four-poster bed originally designed in 1978 for Sylvester Stallone. Charles' 1961 Ball Line Barstool (CHJ1006) is included in the exhibition *Fast Forward: The Architecture of William F. Cody* at the Architecture and Design Museum in Los Angeles.

2017

The Museum of Art and History (MOAH) in Lancaster, California, organizes the career-spanning exhibition *Charles Hollis Jones: 50 Chairs/50 Years*. Charles continues to add to his collection of more than 5,000 designs and 16 collections, with new designs currently in the works. ■

FIG. 24: Charles with a pair of his Watermelon Chairs, Edward Cole and Chris Wigand Residence, Palm Springs, CA, 2016.

CONTRIBUTORS

Andi Campognone has over 25 years of arts experience in the Southern California region. Campognone is the Museum Manager/ Curator for the City of Lancaster. She is responsible for the development and maintenance of partnerships and community engagement initiatives with local artists, local businesses, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Los Angeles County Supervisors office and higher level institutions. She develops curatorial direction for exhibition programming and educational programming and is directing the Museum accreditation process for MOAH. She is also the Owner/Director of AC Projects, a private consulting organization focused on promoting arts and culture. Projects include developing museum exhibitions, public engagement, mentoring programs and book and film publications of historically relevant Southern California artists. She has previously served the City of Pomona as Cultural Arts Commissioner where she co-wrote and implemented the City's Master Cultural Arts Plan and the adopted Arts in Public Places Policy. She volunteers as a regular speaker and mentor to art students at both the undergraduate and graduate level, she is the Founder of Kipaipai (an annual professional arts development workshop in Hawaii) and is on the advisory boards of *ARTltd Magazine* and Los Angeles Arts Association. Campognone has served on Los Angeles County Arts Commission and California Community Foundations granting panels. She is a current member of ArtTable.

Jo Lauria is a Los Angeles-based curator, writer and educator who received her curatorial training at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She is a specialist in the field of design and decorative arts; her focus is the objects and environments that define California lifestyle and culture which she explores through her publications and exhibitions. Among them *California Design* (Chronicle Books, 2004) and *Golden State of Craft: California 1960-1985* (Craft in America, 2011). She has authored monographs and organized exhibitions for seminal California artists and architects, most recently: *Peter Shire, Public Work* for the Architecture and Design Museum (LA: 2014–2015), *Ralph Bacerra: Exquisite Beauty* for Otis College of Art and Design (Ben Maltz Gallery, LA: 2015), and *Fast Forward: The Architecture of William F. Cody.* Lauria is currently on the faculty of Otis College of Art and Design as a mentor teacher and academic mentor for Product Design.

Maile Pingel is a design historian with an MPhil in the Decorative Arts from the University of Glasgow. She is currently a contributor to *Angeleno, C* and *Luxe* magazines, among others, and has contributed to exhibition catalogues including the Museum of Art & Design's *Crafting Modernism: Midcentury American Art and Design* and *Craft in America.* She began her career as a researcher in the Decorative Arts Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), later joining *Architectural Digest*, where she was an editor for many years. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, dog and cat.

Peter J. Wolf holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and master's degree in industrial design. As a lecturer in The Design School at Arizona State University (2004–2013), Wolf taught courses in product design, visual communication design, and qualitative research methods. His various writing projects include a number of design-related articles for *Modernism* and *Desert Living* magazines, among others. Wolf has written several articles about the work of Charles Hollis Jones, as well as a chapter for *Modern Americana: Studio Furniture From High Craft to High Glam* (Rizzoli Publishers, 2008). He now works as a research analyst for Best Friends Animal Society, one of the nation's largest animal welfare organizations, where his focus is on science and public policy related to "feral" cat issues.