

THE TASTE MAKER

PEDDADA

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FROM SILVER SAUCERS TO RETRO RUGS, RAJU PEDDADA HAS AN APPETITE FOR FINE DESIGN

If the word conspicuous means "marked by a noticeable violation of good taste," then it should come as no surprise that Raju Peddada tags his eponymous design brand as "Conspicuously Progressive."

Working from Chicago, Peddada has meddled and woven quite a massive collection of retro-futuristic home accents ranging from lamps and strange silver structures that resemble warheads, to mind-boggling rugs that mimic nature. In short, the designer is on a mission to change two things: mass consumer culture and any given expectations you might have for the functionality of an object. And he does both by toying with notions of taste.

"As a highly specialized creator I only work in extremely low numbers of product," says Peddada of his silver designs that are painstakingly detailed and handcrafted in Italy. "I try to dig up ancient forms that have been lost in time and give them

a contemporary usage," he says. "Most of our products are built on paradox."

Of the more than 35 silver collections Peddada has under his belt, not a single one is singular in its function. "Many forms throughout cultures are kept in a mental sedentariness of images. Memorable images sink into your psyche, stay there and become memory cues," he says. "We work to subvert those cues and give them a new meaning or purpose."

For instance, Peddada's "visual archeology" leads him to ponder the life and image of a mangrove tree. Fascinated by its nature, he designed a silver piece built upon a series of roots. Standing on one face, "Mangrove" can be a vase or candle holder. Flip it over, and it's a candy dish. Among his other pieces is "Shortwave," a pitcher that looks like a dated radio and "Leonardo," a bowl-cum-controversial centerpiece based on a Roman tripod.

As for Peddada's rugs, he describes the patterns as "an abstraction of a process or reality." For example, the image of "Internet" is a series of webs with dew on them. "For the audience, the experience is more psychological. I reduce the reality of images until they are easily transferable."

As though flipping visual meaning through post-modern minimalist artistry isn't enough for the prankster designer, he's not only planning his future furniture line, but is also penning a book about the nature of aesthetics. Under a working title of *Acquired Taste: A Guide to Our Inner Senses*, the book aims to educate its readers on the history and culture of tastes, while combating the diminished sense of taste that permeates American aesthetics. After all, claims Peddada, "You cannot have good taste without knowing what came before you."

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