

**SPECTACULAR VERNACULAR**

November 3, 2018 – March 2, 2019

Brooks Stevens Gallery

**Thursday, November 8, 6:00 – 8:00 PM**

Public Reception

**Tuesday, November 27, 7:00 PM**Curators Panel Discussion  
moderated by Monica Obniski  
of the Milwaukee Art Museum

*Spectacular Vernacular* features work by the design studio Parsons & Charlesworth, founded by British husband and wife Tim Parsons and Jessica Charlesworth.

Parsons and Charlesworth examine the variety of ways in which designed objects communicate possibilities for change. Their studio became the grounding place to explore how issues like climate change, personal survival and happiness can be reconsidered through alternative engagement with everyday objects. Their work — ranging from mass-produced objects and unique one-offs to limited editions, writing and printed publications — takes a multifaceted approach to expressing unconventional ideas around the ways we ask questions and engage with the objects in our lives.

Using their backgrounds in three-dimensional design and education, Parsons and Charlesworth question traditional notions of design, such as “designer as servant to industry”. *Spectacular Vernacular* takes the viewer on a journey of research, experimentation and conjecture to discover the rhetorical opportunity and narrative possibility embedded in designed objects.

**WHY DOES THIS EXHIBIT MATTER?**

*Spectacular Vernacular* encourages MIAD students and external audiences to explore the pragmatic and speculative opportunities of designed objects, encouraging a broadening of the conventional definition of the designer’s role.

Using the tools of object design and storytelling to raise questions about the human condition and contemplate alternative futures and ways of being, Parsons and Charlesworth make us reconsider the meaning and possibilities of design and open our eyes to reevaluate what a material world means.

Through the thematic sections of *Observe*, *Experiment*, and *Speculate*, the exhibition makes visible relationships between art, design, and the task of daily living, and provides a singular insight into the inspiration, play, and deliberation that shape the design process.

**PROMPT QUESTIONS**

How do you define the term spectacular vernacular?

Vernacular as “of, relating to, or characteristic of a period, place, or group” is most often used in relation to language. Can you think of an every-day object that is characteristic of your time, location, or cultural identity?

How do you define “usefulness” of an object? Is there a pragmatic “usefulness” versus an “idealistic” usefulness?

How do/can material and production processes influence our subjective experience of objects and their function?

How can design raise awareness for “wider” issues?

How does the past shape the process of the designing for the present? What are possibilities and responsibilities for designers in envisioning and shaping the future?

How have some of the objects in the exhibition changed your perception of their function?

**Gallery Hours**

Monday through Saturday,  
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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open to the public.  
To schedule a tour, contact  
[miad.edu/gallerytours](http://miad.edu/gallerytours).