

Eames Words

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WRITTEN BY: [ERIKA HEET](#) OCTOBER 12, 2011



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"This is from a group of photos that shows Charles and Ray just playing around with whoever's taking the picture," says Eames Demetrios, the couple's grandson, who consulted on the exhibition. "They always loved rubber stamps. It's tactile, and it's a repeatable experience, which is one of the things they were very interested in, such as the films, the exhibitions, the chairs—all repeatable experiences." Remembers Sussman: "Ray used to cut hearts out of pink or red paper, and when she would greet you, she would put that paper heart in your hand. She gave me many paper hearts. Since she loved rubber stamps so much, we took an outline of one of her paper hearts and created a stamp with her signature, so when people come in to the exhibition, they can get a heart like Ray gave guests."

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The giant capital E, which helps make up an oversize EAMES, holds objects related to the words. "When I was working on the history wall in the "Mathematica" exhibition in 1961, I was setting the biographies of all the mathematicians for the timeline, which had a tremendous amount of type," says Sussman. "Charles insisted that the type be set in all capital letters because they were bigger. There was no arguing such a thing as, 'Books have been printed in lower case for centuries for a reason.' Charles said to me, 'Oh, that's just something they taught you in school.'"

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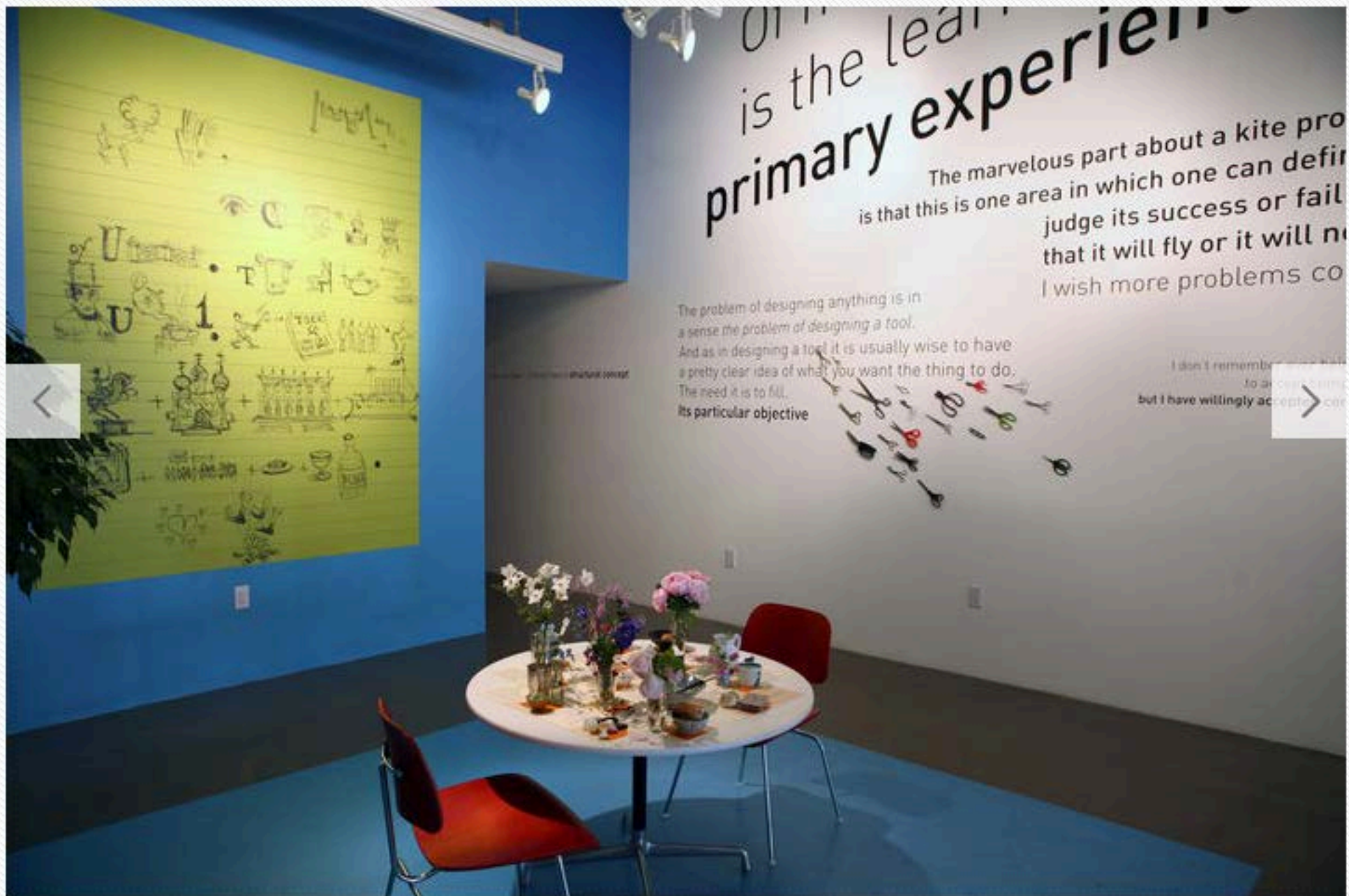
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"This exhibition is a glimpse into Charles and Ray's daily lives," says Sussman. "They were changing the world, and the way that is expressed in this exhibit is a part of how they changed the world that is not known to everybody." The quotes interact with everyday objects such as scissors, a rebus drawn by Charles and a re-creation of Ray's table, flanked by new Eames LCM chairs. "There's no vintage furniture in the exhibition," notes Demetrios. "Charles and Ray were continually designing for tomorrow."

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"Toys are not really as innocent as they look. Toys and games are the prelude to serious ideas," Charles once said. Random toys accompany the sentiment. "Their love of toys was completely real," says Demetrios. "My brother once brought a Super Ball up to the house, and he promptly broke a third-story window with it—Charles thought this was an excellent proof of concept. He said, 'This toy is gonna work.'"

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Charles's quote, "You can tell more about a country from its bread and its soup than you can from its museums and concert halls," joins breads from around the world, including the Eameses' much-admired challah (they once made a film titled "Bread"). "This informal assemblage shows the world of Charles and Ray—a world that enchanted everyone lucky enough to know them," says Sussman. "People know mostly about the furniture, they know about the films, they know about exhibits, but they don't know about this."

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Charles created this rebus for his daughter, Lucia, when she was a child. "Some people want a key for it; some don't," says Sussman. Ray's table was curated by artist Tina Beebe, who worked closely with Ray in the Eames Office and decorated the surface with the flowers and objects Ray favored.

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After many years working together, Sussman accompanied Charles and Ray to an Aspen Design Conference, where Ray saw a Jeep on the street and turned to her and said, "The Jeep, now, that's an automobile America can be proud of." Early on, as a summer intern, Sussman worked with the couple on everything from films and exhibitions to ads and toys and quickly became an integral member of the Office team. "When fall came around, I said, 'Charles, I'm gonna have to say goodbye,'" says Sussman. "I said, 'I have one semester to get my degree,' but Charles said, 'Why? I don't have a degree, besides, Ray and I are going to Europe, why don't you stay at the house while we're away.'" Sussman stayed.

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To the left of the big E is the museum's reception area, which has been labeled "Host," with a double meaning: One, the obvious, and the other, a reference to Charles and Ray's preoccupation with the Guest/Host relationship, in which the experience of the guest—such as the sitter in one of their chairs—retains as much importance as the host, or designer. "Charles and Ray had some really deep things to say about how the world works, how design works and what this world can and should be," says Demetrios. "Those words are themselves of value, and therefore by doing this exhibition we cast light on them."

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*Beyond the age of information
is the age of choices*

*The preoccupation with self-expression
is no more appropriate to the world of art
than it is to the world of surgery ...*

*That does not mean I would reduce self expression to zero:
I am sure that the really great surgeons operate on the edge of intuition,
and that the rigorous constraints in surgery - those are important in any art*

What works is better
than what looks good.
The looks good can change,
but what works,
works

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"Beyond the age of information is the age of choices." Says Demetrios of this quote, "Charles said this at the Aspen Design Conference in 1971, and that is exactly where we are today. When you think about it, the problem is not information, the problem is analyzing it, figuring out how to make sense of it and doing the appropriate thing with it. That's the thinking that to me is so powerful."

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"The uncommon beauty of common things,' this is most descriptive quote of the project," says Sussman. "They had this deep respect for common things," adds Demetrios. "It's an attitude toward the world and something the world really needs right now. As beautiful as the furniture, films and exhibitions were, the ideas behind them are even more beautiful—these are gifts that we can share with people." ***Don't miss a word of Dwell! Download our FREE app from iTunes, friend us on Facebook, or follow us on Twitter!***