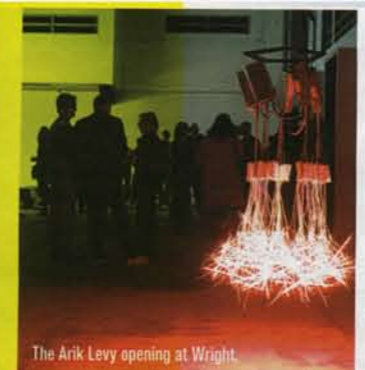


Richard Wright

Considering that Richard Wright pretty much invented the global marketplace for 20th century furniture, the 45-year-old design prophet is surprisingly uncomfortable with the word *auction*. "I know we call ourselves Wright Auction," he says, "but personally, I find *auction* too restrictive." And while his primary focus continues to involve curating intelligent sales of designers like George Nakashima, Eero Saarinen, George Nelson, Alvar Aalto, Harry Bertoia—you get the picture—these days, Wright also maintains an online store and gallery, and he's begun using his cavernous West Hubbard Street space to champion newer artist/designers like Ron Gilad. "Ron's work is right at the line where design becomes art," says Wright of the Israeli artist, whose work includes pieces like coffee tables resembling three-dimensional line drawings of houses. "Design is better served when it has a real function. I look for things with a lack of pretension, a sense of honesty." That solid Midwest-tinged philosophy has served Wright well. Back in 2000, when he launched the business alongside his late wife, Julie (the original mastermind behind the firm's groundbreaking glossy catalogs), their first sale grossed \$400,000. By 2008, that metric had surged to \$15 million. In pre-Wright days, the doyens of the antiques autocracy would have had you believe anything truly brave and groundbreaking began life in some rarefied East or West Coast hothouse. Richard Wright has proved them wrong. He's all ours.

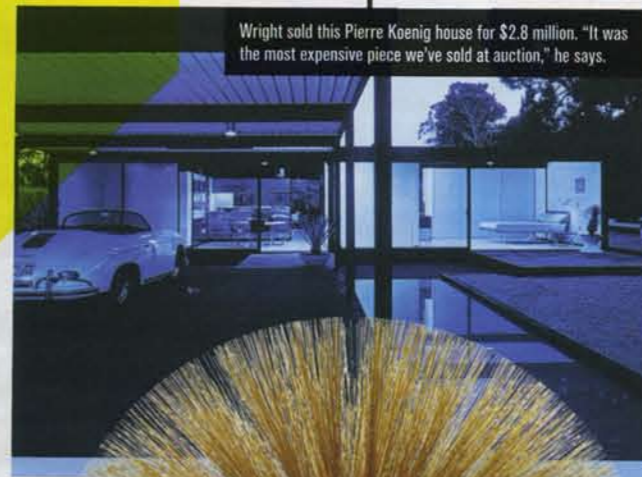


Richard Wright at his auction house with Ron Gilad's *Butler No. 1*.



The Arik Levy opening at Wright.

Furniture designer Arik Levy's *Absent Nature* exhibit, at Wright in April 2008, marked the debut of Wright's commissions program supporting contemporary artists and designers. "Levy transformed the space, and his installation was monumental," says Wright.



Wright sold this Pierre Koenig house for \$2.8 million. "It was the most expensive piece we've sold at auction," he says.



1. Tejo Remy's *You Can't Lay Down Your Memories* chest of drawers: "This is a defining work of the 1990s."
2. Wright's personal Charles and Ray Eames rocker: "Eames is where my career began, and I will always live with their work," he says.
3. Isamu Noguchi's coffee table sold for a record price in 2005: \$630,000. "It eclipsed my first auction total."
4. Julie Wright (Richard's wife) convinced him to keep this George Nelson jewelry cabinet in their collection. "It reaches perfection."



COVER SHOT This untitled Ray Eames sculpture graced the catalog cover for Wright's first auction in 1999. "It was a success, and gave me the courage to open my own auction house," he says.

Wright has helped reinvigorate the career of designer and sculptor Harry Bertoia, whose gilt stainless-steel *Dandelion* is shown at left.

An installation shot of the Wright gallery in preparation for the Ron Gilad exhibition *Spaces Etc./An Exercise in Utility*.

