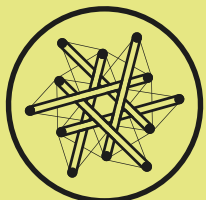


**I leave the windows
and the doors of my mind
open, and sometimes
an epiphany visits.**

Theodore H. Waddell,
Architect



Participation
Designs™

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About Participation Designs

Participation Designs is a design company dedicated to the re-edition and relaunch of a carefully curated selection of original projects by architect Theodore H. Waddell, a visionary figure of late twentieth-century design. The project was conceived with the aim of bringing back to light a body of work of extraordinary coherence and contemporary relevance, reintroducing it to the present through a production approach that combines conceptual rigor, cultural sensitivity, and a deep attention to materiality.

Theodore H. Waddell was an American architect and designer who worked in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s, a pivotal period in the formation of contemporary Italian design. During those years, he came into contact and collaborated with some of the great masters of the time—such as Ricci, Castiglioni, and Magistretti—while also designing for iconic companies including Cassina. Several of his works are now part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, bearing witness to the enduring international value of his research.

Raised near New York, Waddell initially pursued a path far removed from the world of design, eventually leaving Wall Street to follow a deeper vocation. His decision to study architecture was not driven by a predefined aesthetic, but by a genuine curiosity toward systems, structures, and the relationships between form and function. From his earliest experiments in 1956 on tables with extremely lightweight load-bearing structures—conceived according to principles of tension and compression—Waddell developed a profound interest in unconventional structural systems. In the mid-1960s, this research led him to encounter the thinking of Richard Buckminster Fuller and to explore the concept of the tensegrity structure: a structural system based on the equilibrium between tensile and compressive forces, without flexural elements.

Through a long experimental process involving prototypes, hands-on testing, and empirical verification, Waddell defined original structural solutions capable of shaping objects that appear to defy gravity while maintaining perfect internal balance.

His encounter with Italy represented a fundamental turning point. Here, Waddell found a context able to welcome and nurture his experimental approach, rooted in a balance between theoretical thinking, material culture, and manufacturing capability.

Although American by birth, Waddell developed a design approach deeply aligned with the Italian tradition—characterized by rigor, restraint, and meticulous attention to detail. His work occupies a unique space where American creativity meets Italian craftsmanship, giving rise to objects that are essential yet never banal, capable of surprising without resorting to decoration.

For Theodore H. Waddell, design was never a matter of style, let alone of trends. Rather, it was an open-ended process guided by curiosity and a desire to explore new connections. He believed fashion to be inherently transient, while true design should endure as long as the idea that sustains it remains valid. The stronger the bond between form and concept, the longer an object can live—becoming timeless rather than merely contemporary. Unlike art or pure craftsmanship, industrial design—according to Waddell—has the ability to generate identical objects that retain harmony, clarity, and meaning even through repetition. His body of work, developed between 1955 and 2006, reflects this vision with remarkable coherence, balance, and depth. Participation Designs was created to preserve and renew this design heritage.

Founded by Theodore's son, Brewster, together with his wife Deanna, the company positions itself as a cultural project as much as a manufacturing one. Its goal is not simply to put historic objects back into production, but to reactivate them—making them part of the present through a conscious dialogue between past and contemporaneity.

Each re-edition is the result of careful research, interpretation, and adaptation, with the original project remaining the core around which materials, finishes, and production processes are developed. Participation Designs collaborates with highly specialized artisans and manufacturers, selected for their technical expertise and cultural sensitivity, resulting in a production that is entirely Made in Italy. Marble, wood, and metal are chosen and used according to their physical, mechanical, and geometric properties, allowing each material to fully express its nature. Matter is never secondary, but an integral part of the design language.

Each product is conceived as a functional and participatory object, designed to establish a direct relationship with its user. These are not objects to be passively observed, but elements that invite interaction and become part of everyday life. This principle of active participation—physical, mental, and perceptual—lies at the heart of the brand's identity and fully reflects Theodore H. Waddell's thinking.

Through Participation Designs, Theodore H. Waddell's creations find a new voice today: faithful to their origins, yet capable of engaging with the present. A project that reaffirms the value of idea-driven design, rooted in materiality and destined to endure over time.

FURNITURE

More than a simple coffee table, this object is a statement of intent: a reflection on the relationship between form and function, weight and lightness, visibility and silent operation.

TW 7401 Coffee Table

Designed by

Theodore H. Waddell, Architect



TW 7401



More than just a table, this is a challenge to gravity. The TW 7401 Coffee Table is born from the desire to make the invisible visible: an exercise in tension where the structure seems to disappear, leaving room for pure wonder.

**Creating an illusion of
instructural improbability.
In this project, structure is
never what it seems: what
supports does not touch,
and what touches does not
support.**

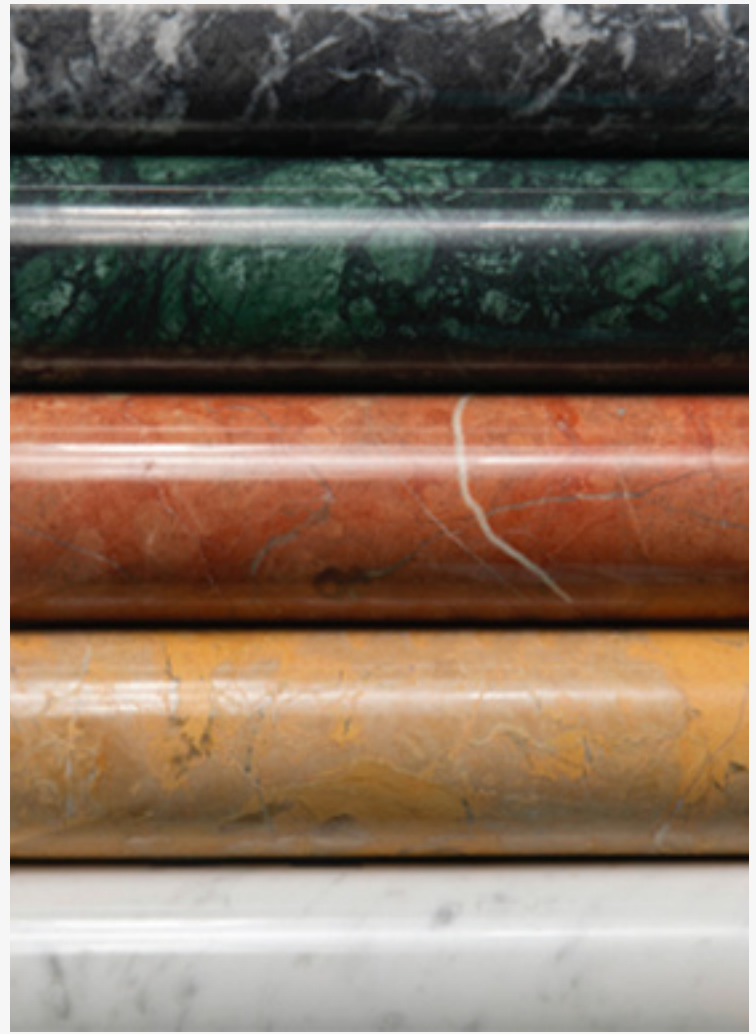


Drawing inspiration from the principles of tensegrity and the research of Theodore Waddell, the design relies on the cantilevered interlocking system. The result is a suspended grid where forces naturally cancel out and support one another: the legs that support the glass do not touch the floor, while those resting on the floor do not reach the top.

Brought back to light by Participation Designs, this historic piece from 1974 (featured in Ottogono magazine) is now living a new season.

Offered also in unique or limited editions and crafted from noble materials such as rare woods and marbles, the TW 7401 Coffee Table transforms function into sculpture, telling a timeless story of intuition, rationality, and poetry.

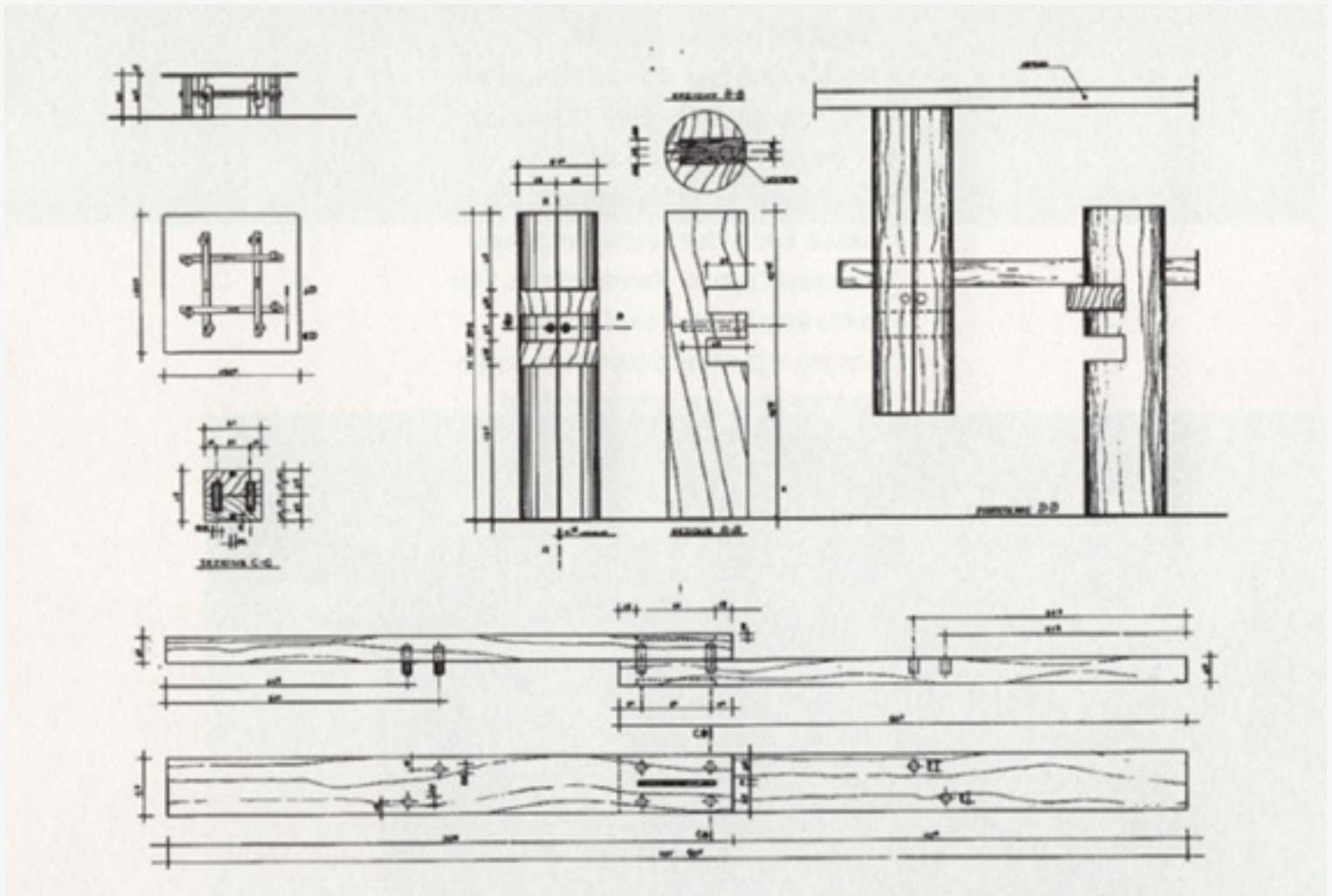


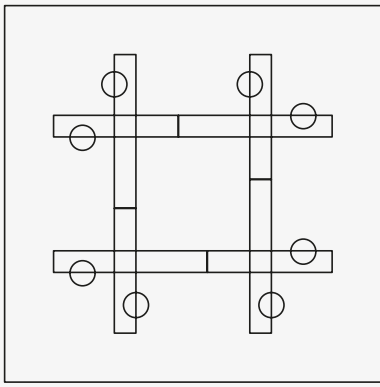


The legs which carry the glass do not touch the floor and the legs which rest on the floor do not carry the glass.

Backstory

The idea for the TW 7401 Coffee Table came from an old bar trick. You are given three knives and four glasses. Three of the glasses are placed farther apart the length of a knife. How do you suspend the fourth glass over the three? The tip of one knife is placed over the tip of another, and the tip of the third knife is placed over the second and under the first. This array is large enough to reach the glasses, and the fourth glass can be set on top of it, in the middle. The cantilevered crossbars of this table does the same thing.



**Structure**

Self-supporting cantilever grid.

Shape

Square or rectangular.

Adjustability

Height adjustable to 3 different levels via specific incisions in the legs.

Finishes

Selected woods and marbles with glass top.

Variants

Available in wood & marble and some limited edition versions in total marble.



FURNITURE

This coffee table was conceived as an exercise in essentiality and production rationality, with the goal of creating an elegant and refined object designed for everyday use.

TW 7601 Coffee Table

Designed by

**Theodore H. Waddell,
Architect**



TW 7601



An object that expresses balance, restraint, and precision, where every formal choice is guided by function and material.



Less is more here.
The simplicity of design is compensated by the richness of the stone.

Drawing inspiration from the principles of tensegrity and the research of Theodore Waddell, the design relies on the cantilevered interlocking system. The result is a suspended grid where forces naturally cancel out and support one another: the legs that support the glass do not touch the floor, while those resting on the floor do not reach the top.

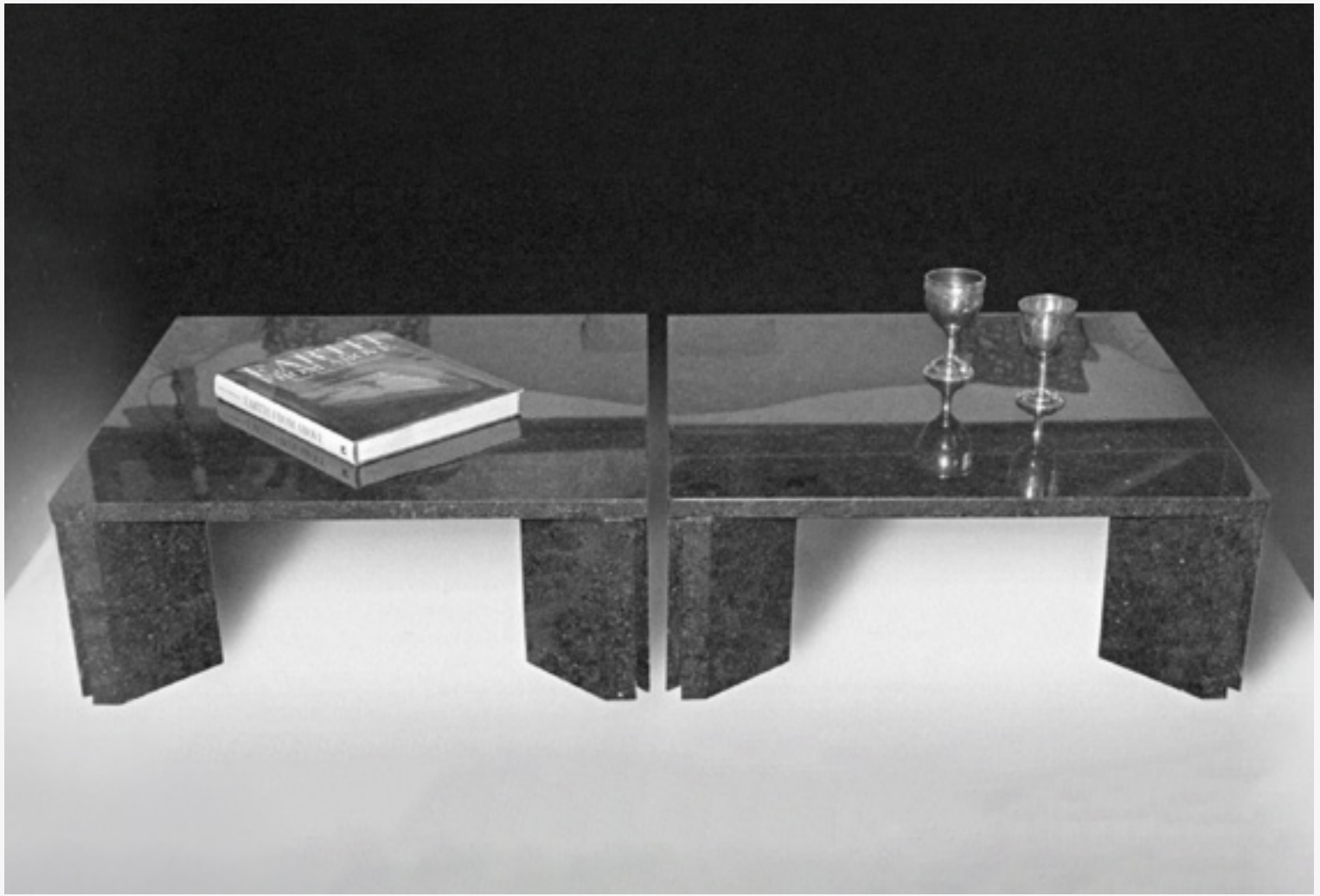
In the contemporary re-edition, the project has been carefully revised in its proportions, adapting the dimensions to the needs of today's living spaces without altering the balance or language of the original. The intervention is never invasive, but calibrated: a silent reinterpretation that makes the table more current while preserving the clarity of the original design.

A new interpretation has been introduced, featuring wooden legs paired with a marble top, adding an additional layer of warmth and contemporaneity. The dialogue between the solidity of stone and the natural quality of wood reinforces the architectural character of the table, making it particularly suited to contemporary interiors without betraying the original design logic.





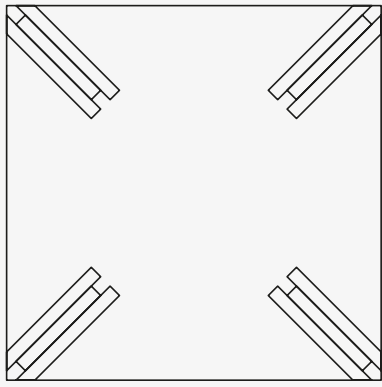
The TW 7601 does not seek effect, but builds its presence through measured proportions and a quiet beauty capable of enduring over time.



Backstory

The original design envisioned a table made entirely of granite or marble, using a single slab of constant thickness. The top and legs share the same section, resulting in a coherent and rigorous structure in which each element logically derives from the others.

From the outset, the project addresses industrial production with great clarity: minimizing machining time, simplifying the construction process, and allowing the material itself to define the object's character.

**Structure**

The structure consists of three-element legs and a top that simply rests on them, stabilized by positioning pins.

Shape

Square.

Finishes

Selected woods and marbles.

Variants

Available in wood & marble.



LIGHTS

Light is not something that simply happens, but something that is created. It is human, tangible, and accessible. There is no switch to turn it on: the sticks are picked up by hand and placed randomly inside the cylinder. The gesture itself generates the light.

B7 | C5

Light Sticks

Designed by

Theodore H. Waddell, Architect



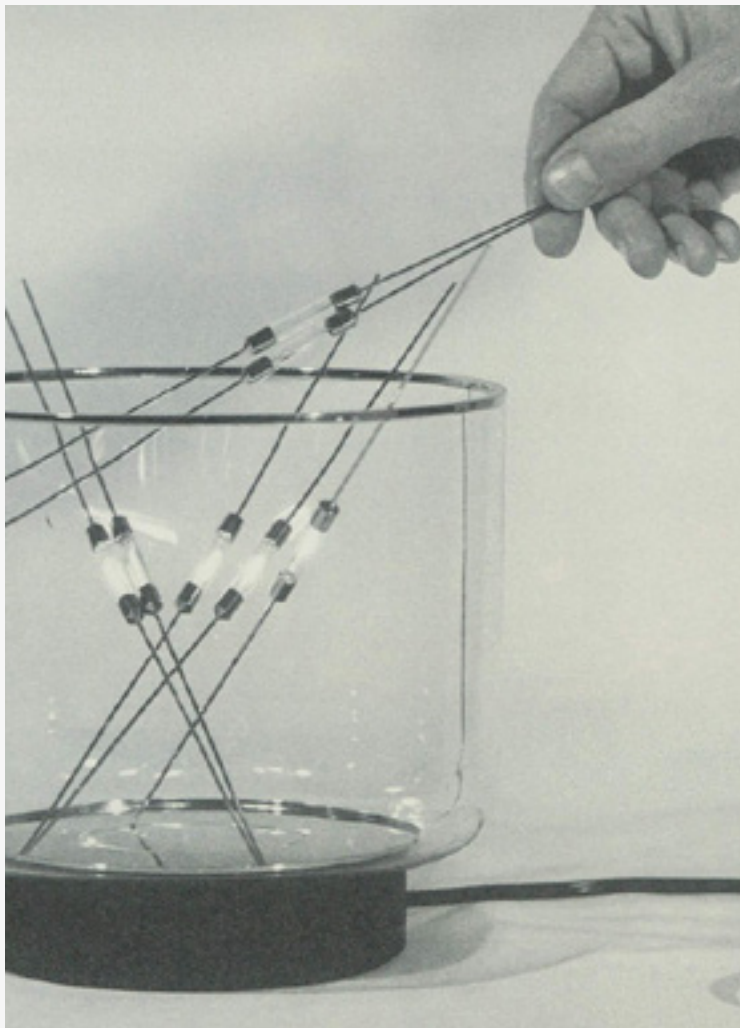
B7 | C5



These lamps fully embody the concept of participation, which lies at the core of Waddell's thinking: light is not something that simply happens, but something that is created. It is human, tangible, and accessible. It belongs to those who use it.

In this sense, B7 and C5 are not merely lighting objects, but a true experience, one that re-establishes a direct connection between body, gesture, and light.

A radical reflection on the act of creating light. No buttons, no switches. Just a glass bowl and an handful of light.



Originally, the act of creating light held something magical and physical; with the advent of electricity, however, it has gradually been reduced to a mechanical and impersonal gesture, the pressing of an anonymous switch. In this project, Theodore Waddell overturns this convention, placing light back into the hands of the user and restoring its human, intuitive, and participatory dimension.

The model allows users to choose how many light sticks to insert, enabling them to freely modulate both light intensity and atmosphere. A few elements create a softer, more intimate glow; a fuller composition produces a brighter, more scenographic illumination. In every configuration, light is never imposed, it is constructed by the user.



From a construction standpoint, Light Sticks is the result of a precise balance between function, technology, and poetry. The glass cylinder is finished with an electrified chrome rim, while at the bottom there is an electrified plate with a slightly raised edge and a subtle groove, just enough to hold the ends of the light sticks in place. A transformer is integrated into the base, reducing the current to low voltage and making interaction with the object completely safe. While essential to its operation, the technology remains discreet and invisible: what emerges is the experience, not the device.

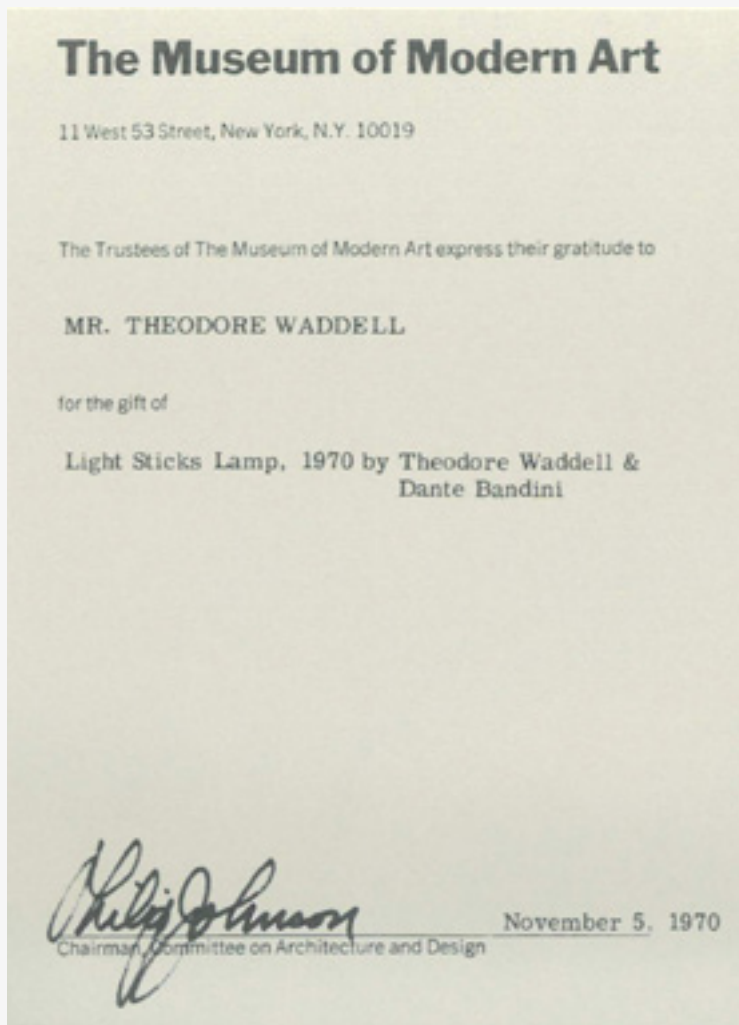
In the contemporary re-edition curated by Participation Designs, the lamp has been technically updated to meet current standards without altering the original spirit of the project.

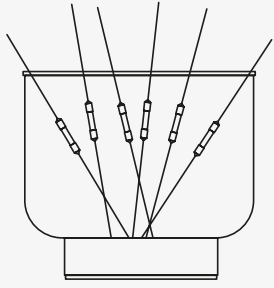


Even today, this lamp retains a remarkable strength: a project that transcends time, reaffirming the idea that light, before being technology, is gesture, relationship, and presence.

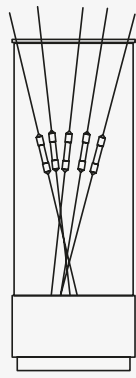
Heritage

The lamp has received wide international recognition, with features in publications such as Domus, Architectural Review, and Playboy, and that it entered the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York as early as 1970. Exhibited in institutions such as the Louvre and the Centre de Création Industrielle, it represents one of the highest points of Waddell's research in the field of lighting.





B7



C5

Structure

Wide-mouthed glass bowl or glass cylinder with an electrified chrome rim and base plate.

Operation

Activation via physical contact of the light sticks. No mechanical switches.

Safety

Integrated transformer reducing current to low voltage for completely safe interaction.

Configuration

The model allows users to choose how many light sticks to insert, enabling them to freely modulate both light intensity and atmosphere.

Finishes

Glass, chrome and luminous elements.



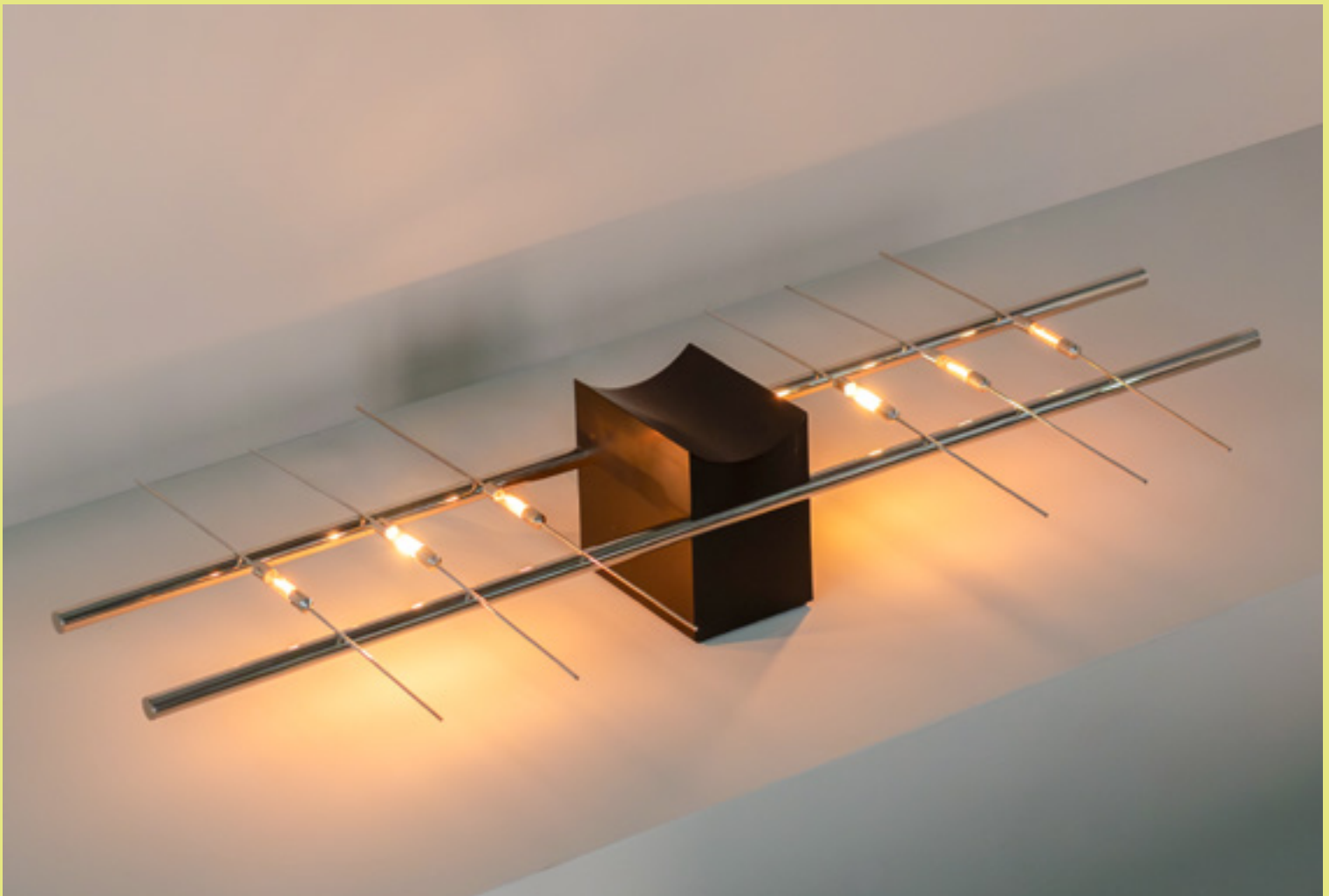
LIGHTS

What appears as a simple arrangement of elements reveals a deeper intention: transforming illumination into an intuitive, almost instinctive action.

H10 Light Sticks

Designed by

**Theodore H. Waddell,
Architect**



H10



Light Sticks H10 continues Theodore H. Waddell's exploration of participation, where the act of composing light is left to the user.

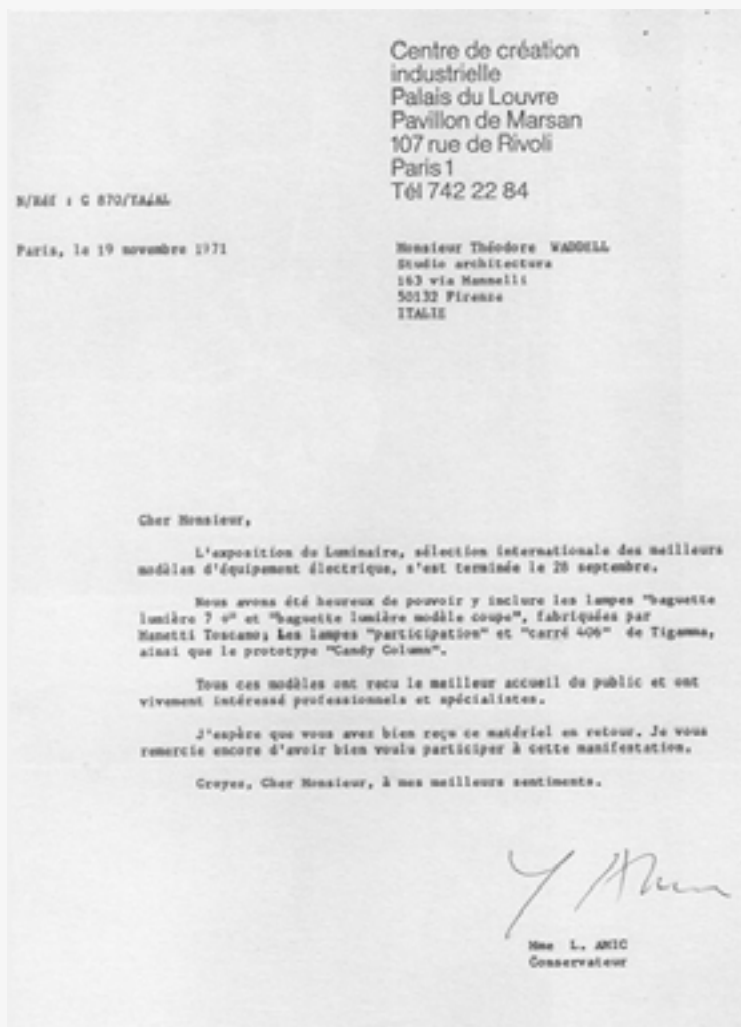
**A physical expression of light
as matter, something to be
held, moved, and composed.
A handful of light, shaped by
gesture.**

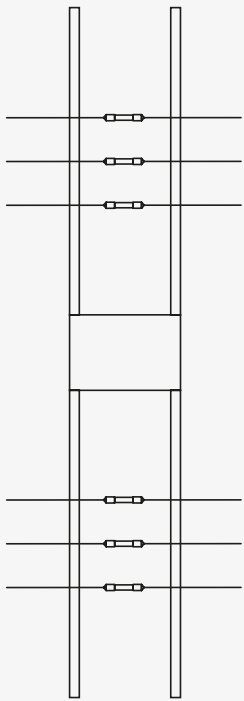
The lamp is composed of slender tubular light sources, each extended by chromed rods that act as both structure and conductor. Resting on the central base, the sticks remain inactive until they are placed across the parallel metal rails. Only when both ends make contact, the circuit closes—and light emerges. There is no fixed composition. The elements can be arranged, scattered, or casually dropped, creating ever-changing configurations of light. Each interaction generates a new balance, a new rhythm.

Brought back by Participation Designs, the Light Sticks H10 is technically updated to meet current safety standards without altering its original spirit. It allows users to choose the perfect amount of light by choosing 4, 8, or 10 light sticks, enabling free modulation of intensity.

Heritage

The Light Sticks H10 is the most published light stick lamp. It's been featured in the Centre de Création Industrielle, the New York Times, Museum of Modern Art, and the Louvre.





Structure

A bar lamp with an electrified chrome straws and base plate.

Operation

Activation via physical contact of the light sticks. No mechanical switches.

Safety

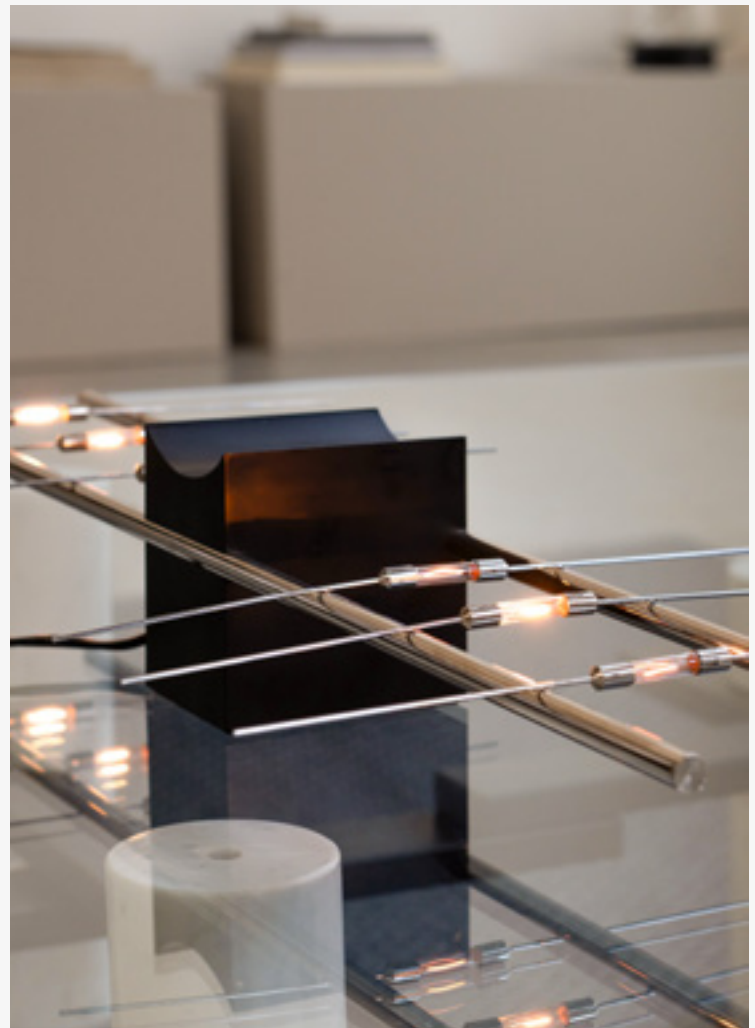
Integrated transformer reducing current to low voltage for completely safe interaction.

Configuration

The model allows users to choose how many light sticks to insert, enabling them to freely modulate both light intensity and atmosphere.

Finishes

Chrome straws and luminous elements.



LIGHTS

In this piece, the logic of a aluminum switch is translated into a physical and participatory gesture.

TW 7001 Lamp

Designed by

Theodore H. Waddell, Architect



TW 7001



TW 7001 is a participation lamp where the user is the switch. By rotating the frame, aluminium filings move inside the tube, making, or breaking, the electrical contact.

Light is not simply activated. It is set in motion.

A chrome-plated steel frame holds two parallel glass tubes arranged along a diagonal axis. One contains the light source; the other, a set of electrical contacts and aluminium filings that act as a conductive element.

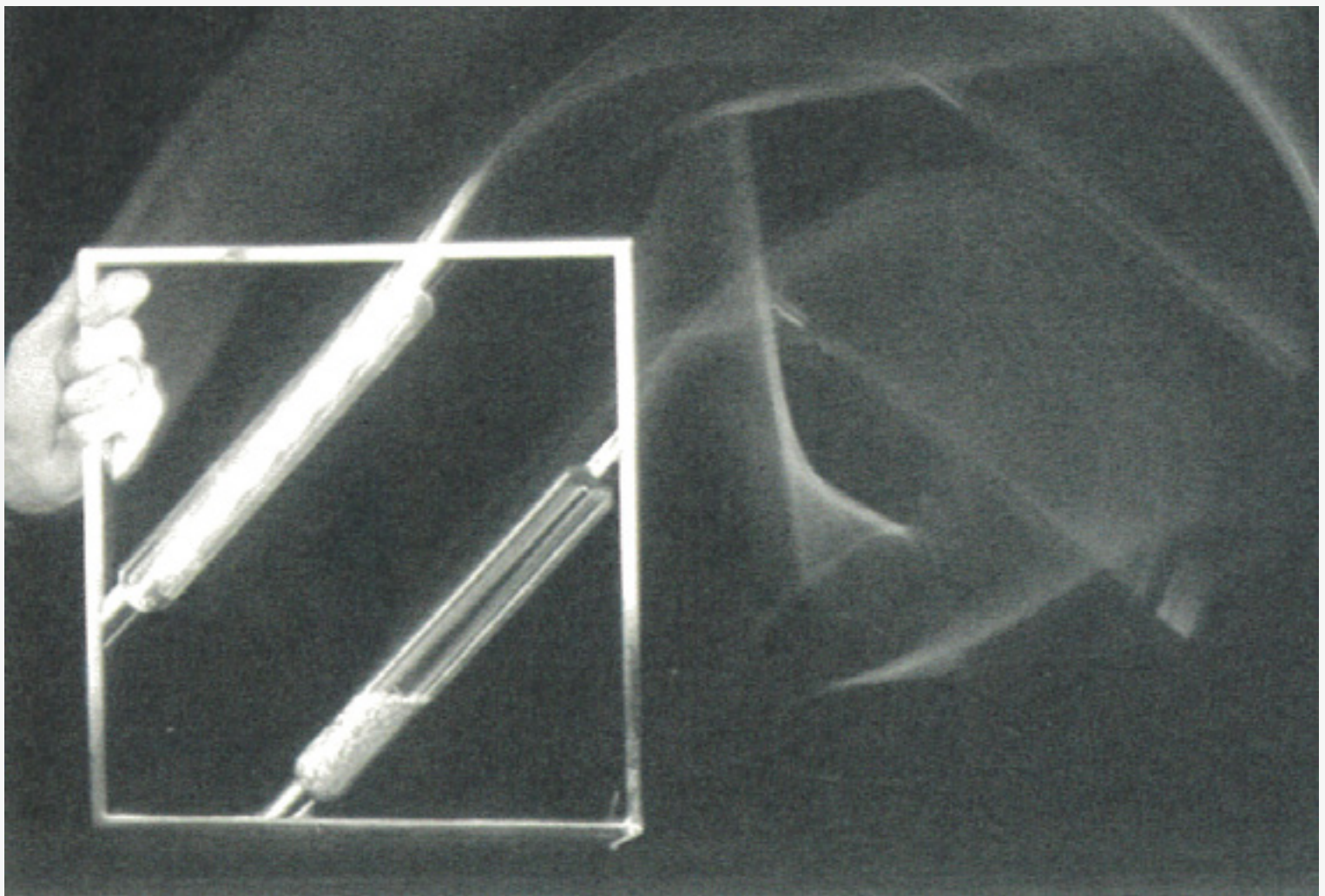
As the lamp is rotated, the filings shift within the tube. When they reach the contacts, the circuit closes and the light turns on. When they move away, the light disappears.

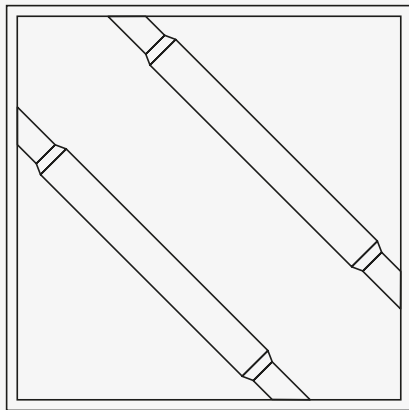
The lamp exists in two stable states—on and off—but the transition between them is entirely manual. There is no button, no hidden switch. The act of switching becomes a deliberate movement: lifting, rotating, placing.

Backstory

The idea was to design a light based on the principle of a mercury switch, commonly found in ordinary thermostats: mercury in a glass tube makes electrical contact when the tube is tilted and the liquid flows from the 'off' position to the 'on' position.

In a Participation Light, the tilting of the tube would be accomplished by the user.





Structure

A chrome-plated frame 35 x 35 cm, made of tubular steel of rectangular cross-section 10 x 25 cm, holds two parallel glass tubes, integrating the light source and a gravity-based conductive circuit.

Operation

Manual activation via rotation; the circuit is closed by the displacement of internal aluminium filings. No mechanical switches.

Safety

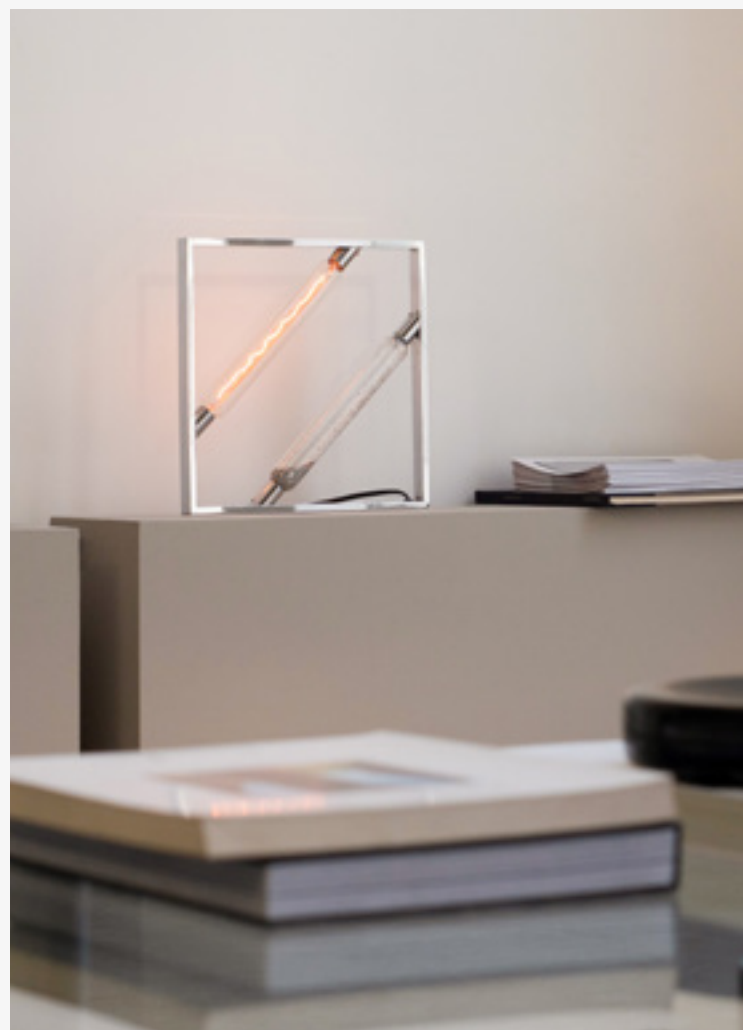
Integrated gravity switch with positive and negative contacts, operating at low voltage for completely safe interaction.

Configuration

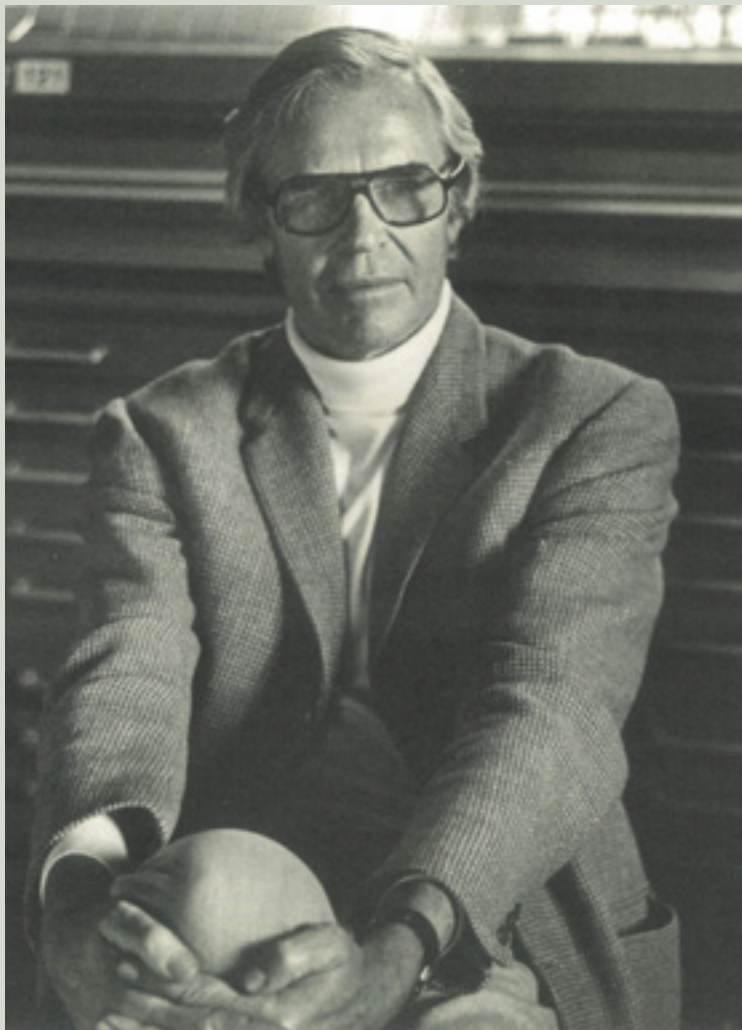
40 W clear tubular incandescent lamp, diagonally mounted.

Finishes

Chrome-plated frame and tubular glass.



Theodore H. Waddell



**Theodore H. Waddell
was a visionary designer
whose creations continue
to inspire and remain timeless.**

Theodore H. Waddell was an American architect and designer, a visionary figure whose work moves fluidly across disciplines, combining intellectual rigor with a deeply intuitive approach to form. Over a career spanning more than fifty years, he developed a body of work that includes architecture, lighting, furniture, and experimental objects, each driven by a continuous search for clarity, purpose, and lasting relevance.

His work represents a unique intersection between American creativity and Italian design culture. Raised near New York, after an early career in finance, Waddell chose to leave Wall Street to pursue architecture, finding in Italy the ideal context to develop his design language. There, he engaged with some of the leading figures of Italian design, including Ricci, Castiglioni, and Magistretti, during a period of extraordinary creative energy that would profoundly shape his approach.

Rather than adhering to a fixed design philosophy, Waddell was guided by curiosity. He believed that design should not follow trends, but emerge from the essence of an idea. For him, form and concept were inseparable: the more direct their relationship, the more enduring the object. In contrast to the transient nature of fashion, he saw design as a synthesis capable of lasting over time, remaining valid as long as the underlying idea endures.

His work reflects a continuous exploration of new relationships between ordinary elements, often transforming simple components into unexpected systems. This approach is exemplified in one of his most iconic projects, the Light Sticks, developed in the late 1960s: a modular lighting system in which interchangeable light elements interact with different bases, creating a dynamic relationship between object, user, and space. Patented in 1970 and produced by Knoll International, the project was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where it remains part of the permanent collection, and was also exhibited at the Musée du Louvre in Paris.

Waddell's education reflects the same interdisciplinary nature of his work. After studying Chemistry and Business at Cornell University, he turned to architecture, earning a Master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and later a Doctorate in Architecture, *summa cum laude*, from the University of Florence. His years in Italy proved transformative: immersed in an open, collaborative, and experimental environment, he developed a design vision free from rigid frameworks. Although American by birth, he often described himself as "Italian in design." Alongside his professional practice, Waddell maintained a strong commitment to teaching and research, holding academic positions in the United States and fostering a cross-disciplinary approach to design thinking. Photography was another essential dimension of his work: a parallel practice through which he explored perception, composition, and meaning. His photographic works were exhibited internationally, further expanding the scope of his creative investigation.

In his approach to industrial design, Waddell recognized a specific challenge: creating objects intended for mass production that could retain authenticity and a sense of natural presence even in repetition. His work, developed between 1955 and 2006, is distinguished by clarity, coherence, and formal integrity.

Today, Theodore H. Waddell's work is held in major institutional and private collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. His legacy continues through Participation Designs, which re-edits and reinterprets his original works, where contemporary technologies meet the integrity of his vision, allowing his ideas to remain active, relevant, and open to new generations.

Participation Designs™

