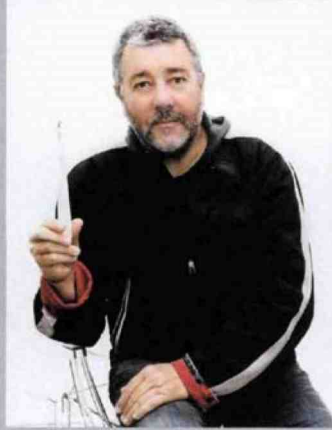




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# PHILIPPE STARCK

Written by JENNIFER MCCULLUM

**IN A 2007 TED TALK, RENOWNED CREATOR, DESIGNER, AND ARCHITECT PHILIPPE STARCK, WHEN DISCUSSING DESIGN AND DESTINY, OBSERVED THAT "NOBODY IS OBLIGED TO BE A GENIUS, BUT EVERYBODY IS OBLIGED TO PARTICIPATE."**

There could be no better philosophy—and none articulated by any greater master—to inform the enthusiastic and egalitarian approach GRAY took as we launched our inaugural annual design awards. Conceived as a platform to honor the authentic creative work that defines our region, the 2017 GRAY Awards were an initiative in which every Pacific Northwest designer could participate, their work evaluated by an expert panel of their international peers, including Starck.

With a global career that has yielded

over 10,000 projects, ranging from everyday kitchen tools to luxury hotels, Starck's body of work alone warrants the visionary status synonymous with his name. But it is his democratic approach to design, paired with his personal code of ethics, that has established the French designer as an icon of 21st-century innovation. "When you are born, you sign a contract with your civilization," Starck says. "Your only job is to be part of the evolution, to become better than your parents, and to make children who will be better than you. It's a full-time job to observe, to understand, and to create something that goes toward evolution."

Starck's creations have included the world's first polycarbonate chair, for Kartell in 1996; his optical mouse, for Microsoft in 2002; and even a reimagining of the toothbrush (his

1987 design for Fluocaril). But equally remarkable are the projects he will not make. For more than 30 years, the designer has refused any projects with organizations ranging from Big Tobacco to the arms industry, saying that humane profit is the only bottom line he cares about. "We refuse 95 percent of the proposals shown to us. We accept only when there is a process, from the beginning to the end, of trust, of elegance in the relationship, and of respect for people."

While Starck prefers to design alone, often noting that he lives "in the middle of nowhere" in his commitment to work free of external creative influences, his relationship with the world is driven by a very specific vision. "I am a bottle opener," he has said, the analogy meaning that he views every person as a bottle of sparkling water, in which the bubbles—that is, the individual's energy—become visible only once the bottle is opened. Through his designs, he hopes to uncork people's passions and inspirations.

With Starck's discerning eye focused on designs arising in the still, deep waters of this region, we raise a glass to the designers selected by Starck and his colleagues on the 2017 GRAY awards panel. Consider the bottles popped. ✚



*“The only important things are your family, your tribe, your society, your civilization. You always need to try to think how you can help. That’s all. There is nothing to do other than help your community.”*

—PHILIPPE STARCK, CREATOR, DESIGNER, AND ARCHITECT



The glass-and-molded-plastic Sir Gio table, designed for Kartell. **OPPOSITE FROM LEFT:** Paris-based designer and architect Philippe Starck; the WOW sofa, designed for Driade.

THIS PAGE: DRIADE; STARCK; NETWORK; CHIFFONTE; FROM LEFT: STARCK; NETWORK; KARTELL; STARCK; BE; WOW