

Cultured
Magazine
Circulation - 30,000
Spring 2013
Page 1 of 3

FITZ & CO

CULTURED

SPRING 2013

DESIGN | ART | FASHION



"I enjoy simple, beautiful things."
—Eva Chase

\$10 U.S.

Fishy Business

Frank Gehry revisits one of his favorite forms in a new exhibition at Gagosian Gallery.

BY BRENT LEWIS

From the standpoint of a builder, the fish is the perfect symbiosis between skin and structure. Where there is movement there is stability. Where there is flexibility there is strength. Indeed, the dynamic shapes of Frank Gehry's buildings have often been related to fish—several of his buildings have literally been fish.

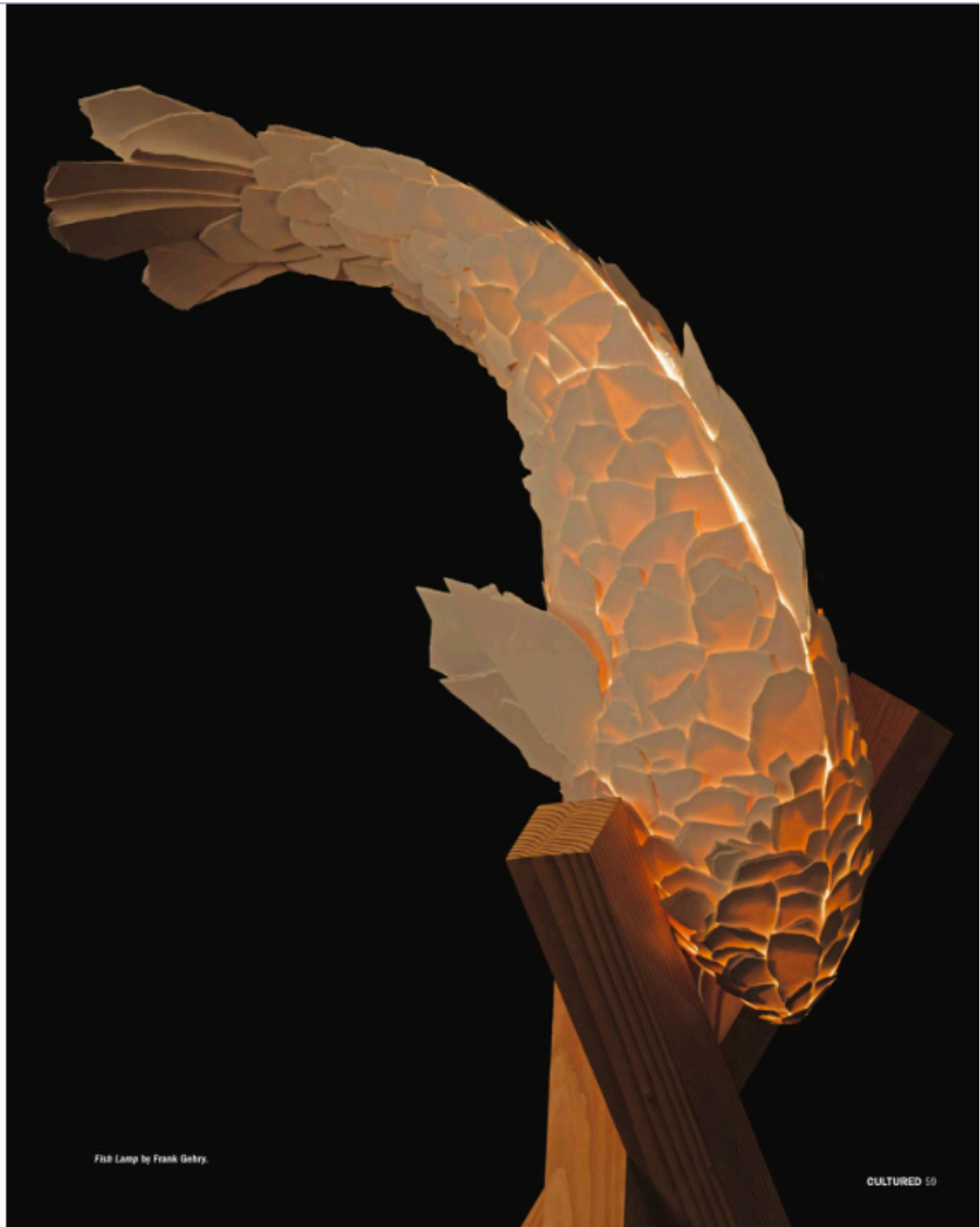
From the artist's perspective, the fish is critical interpretation. It is Gehry's way of taking Neoclassicism to the extreme, as he explained in *Frank O. Gehry: The Complete Works*. "Architecture always has to do with history in some way or another," says Gehry, "but when they started exaggerating it, the fish was kind of a joke over all these reference to the past. Everyone was quoting these old classical buildings, so I decided to quote something five hundred million years older than mankind."

What fewer may know is that the fish form is also personal for Gehry. As a young boy in Toronto, his grandmother would buy a live, large black carp every Thursday, to be made into gefilte fish for the Sabbath. The fish would be kept alive in a filled bathtub overnight and Gehry would play with it, watching it twist and turn, until the next day when it became part of his family's sacred meal.

Frank Gehry created his first legendary *Fish Lamp* for the exhibition, "Surface & Ornament," organized by the Formica Corporation to promote their new product ColorCore and exhibited at NeoCon, the design trade exposition at Chicago's Merchandise Mart in 1983. Through 1986 he went on to produce some three-dozen lamps of various forms, some of which were exhibited at the former Robertson Boulevard location of Gagosian Los Angeles in 1984. The lamps have come full circle with an exhibition that ran through February 14 at the Los Angeles gallery, and that is still on view at the Paris location through March 9.

Thirty years later, Gehry's new *Fish Lamps* are still surprising and wonderful—"a perfect form," he says. The ColorCore 'scales' are larger, coarser and more rugged, which allows for brighter light and darker shadows. Placed on the ceiling, the walls and raised from the floor, they are beautiful and transfixing. And most interestingly, the bases, previously lecterns and plinths, are now angular constructions of posts and beams, an evocation of the elementary construction materials of traditional building methods of days gone by. For Gehry, the fish is the future of architecture, continually held up by the past.

"Everyone was quoting these old classical buildings, so I decided to quote something five hundred million years older than mankind."
—Frank Gehry



Fish Lamp by Frank Gehry.

CULTURED 59