

FLORIDIANA

ALL THINGS VINTAGE

By Steve Dollar



The Circle of *LIGHT*

Kevin Gray was a habitué of the city's myriad museums, while as a student at the Parsons School of Design in Paris. He became fascinated with the work of one artist in particular. "I was always amazed at these Calder sculptures," Gray says, alluding to the American sculptor Alexander Calder. Famous for his colorful mobiles, the graceful lines and fluid motion of Calder's aesthetic inspired a young Gray. He thought, "Oh, yeah. Why couldn't we do lighting?"

This sparked the Orbit Lamp. The design classic features a long sloping arm with a circular metal shade on one end and a round metal ball on the other—a concept rooted in the idea of "orbiting the Earth," says Gray. The lamp was introduced in 1981 and became a hit. "Miami Vice," the defining TV show of the era, stocked up on the lamps to use as props. "They used to order them in turquoise, blue, orange and like crazy colors," Gray recalls. "I said, 'What's going on with my lamps?'"

Decades later, the internationally celebrated interior and lighting designer, who is based in Miami and New York, has put the Orbit back in orbit. A 40th-anniversary edition, manufactured by Lumen Center Italia in Milan, is on the market. "The originals are collectibles," Gray says. "Somebody would send me something on eBay, and the lamps were selling for \$475, which sold originally for \$75."

Besides its minimalist visual elegance, the lamp's magic is its mobility, as it swivels 360

Art deco designer Kevin Gray redefines lighting with the 40th anniversary of the *Orbit Lamp*.



This page from top: Kevin Gray's widely celebrated Orbit Lamp can rotate 360 degrees; purchase a 40th anniversary edition of the iconic light fixture at the Wolfsonian Design Store in Miami Beach.


degrees atop its spine. "It was probably the only lamp that had movement through it, like a sculpture," says Gray, who was also inspired by the work of French designer Serge Mouille, whose pieces in the 1950s articulated peak midcentury modern style.

It appears that the return of the Orbit Lamp is only the beginning. Gray also relaunched the Zandt Lamp, named after his Dutch grandfather Emilio Van Zandt. This limited-edition version will be signed, numbered and available in three sizes. Also on the horizon are some new variations of the Orbit Lamp, including a reading lamp and a chandelier.

"I think the Orbit Lamp, the rebirth of

the new versions, is what's going to take off," Gray says. "To have a floor lamp that pivots 360 degrees ... and I think the chandeliers are what might be really good now, because lighting is becoming really, really big—especially (for) dining rooms, staircases and lobbies."

Design-wise, Gray is going back to the future, and he couldn't be more thrilled.

"I'm taking the lamp that I did 40 years ago, and I'm relating it to today," he says. "That's really going to bring new life to it." 

The Orbit Lamp, priced at \$750, is available from the Wolfsonian Design Store in Miami Beach. wolfsonian.org