

"WHAT WE NEED TO QUESTION IS BRICKS, CONCRETE, GLASS. OUR TABLE MANNERS. OUR UTENSILS, OUR TOOLS, THE WAY WE SPEND OUR TIME, OUR RHYTHMS. TO QUESTION THAT WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE CEASED FOREVER TO ASTONISH US. WE LIVE, TRUE, WE BREATHE, TRUE, WE WALK, WE OPEN DOORS, WE GO DOWN STAIRCASES, WE SIT AT A TABLE IN ORDER TO EAT, WE LIE DOWN ON A BED IN ORDER TO SLEEP. HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?" — GEORGES PEREC, 1973



STRANGELY FAMILIAR: DESIGN AND EVERYDAY LIFE

WALKER ART CENTER

MICHAEL ANASTASSIADES

ANTI-SOCIAL LIGHT, 2001

The *Anti-Social Light* and its antithetic sibling *Social Light* are objects designed to be responsive to a user's behavior. Although a light has an obvious function of illumination, the *Anti-Social Light* performs this task only in the presence of silence. Speech, ambient sound, or noise causes it to dim and eventually switch off. Conversely, the *Social Light* requires sound or conversation to activate it. The solitary act of reading and the conviviality of a dinner conversation suggest two distinct contexts for these lights. This unconventional relationship between people and things intentionally complicates the servile

role of products, creating a world in which users cannot simply command an action to occur, but rather one in which their own behavior produces specific effects. The animation of ordinarily inanimate objects introduces an unexpected element of surprise that fundamentally recasts our relationships with products. As Michael Anastassiades explains, "It has very much to do with respect for what the object needs and what it demands, or it won't respond the way you want it to. In an abstract way, it is almost like a companion that behaves a certain way in the house."



