UNFILTERED

ART-LOVING
DEVELOPER
IAN GILLESPIE:
**NO TIME FOR
HATERS**

–IN CONVERSATION WITH–

James Geiger

*South Carolina–based shading systems company J Geiger is known for its high-tech,
minimalist window coverings that have no visible wires or screws. The product was hatched
in 2011 when James Geiger sought out a clean, modern shading system—and couldn't find one. GRAY's
Tamar Leveson spoke with Geiger, the company's founder and president, about problem-solving,
ideation, and finding inspiration in unlikely places.*

J Geiger is known for its pared-down shading systems. How did you come up with the design?
People tend to do the same thing over and over, and don't realize there's a better solution until someone presents it. I was part of that group, and never noticed [unsightly shading systems] were a problem. I was on a project doing ceiling pockets, and was looking for a modern, clean-looking shading system. I Googled and Googled, but there was absolutely nothing on the market. People say they don't want to see the shades. But when you make pretty shades, they can look like they're part of the building and something people want to see. Back then I had an audio/video company that made custom products, so I didn't really think about it—I just made [the shading system] and put it out there. That was in 2011.

Right, when you were developing this new shade technology, you were a media system designer. When did you realize this was your calling?
Pretty quick. My previous role involved a lot of large jobs located throughout the country. I was traveling all the time and felt like I was away from my family [too often]. Shading systems are much easier than a complex A/V installation. Plus, they are repeatable—before, I was designing creative things that I only made once. It speaks to the system's flexibility that you can go into basically any home and apply it.

Tell us about how you ideate a new product.
It usually starts with a problem, or something I don't like that I want to make better. Then I [map out the idea in] a sketch. A lot of times I'm solving a problem that already exists, so I can make a prototype for my [solution], even if it's rudimentary: We use 3D printers often, and have access to milling machines to make one-off products. If the product is successful, we add it to our product line.

Currently, you offer three different systems: the R and D Series, which have exposed brackets, and the P Series, which is pocketed; you also offer a commerical line. How do these systems reflect your company's core values?
Between R and D, it's basically a price difference. The P Series came about, as we discussed earlier, as a reaction to ceiling pockets. Traditionally, when you add a ceiling pocket, you have a line where the aluminum of the pocket meets the sheet rock of the ceiling, and that line is never pretty; there's always a crack. The P Series represents my attempt to make that crack as pretty as possible.

What new projects are you working on now?
The gap between the panels of the pocket model will be turned into a drapery track in the future. And we're making a bigger push for [incorporating] battery motors [in lieu of wired motors] in our commercial work. The battery technology is changing all the time, and allows shades to be installed without wiring in their location. Voice control also works with battery motors, and the technology only keeps getting better and better. ✳