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THE TRADITIONAL TAKE



THE SMELL OF FRESH PINE in the living room, the tingle of hearing the first few strings of Nat King Cole's "Christmas Song" and, yes, even brown paper packages tied up with string. These are a few of my untouchable Christmas moments—we all have them—if we didn't get to experience them during the holidays, we'd feel robbed.

It's a funny conundrum being a shelter magazine editor this time of year: usually our jobs are to push the envelope, pull the curtain back on new ideas, change things up and highlight creative innovation in the world of architecture and design, and yet during Christmas, I never want to. This is when I truly feel that if everything is just as before, all is right in the world.

So in this issue, we really celebrated the classics and the people bringing their homes and their crafts back to their roots. Homeowners, architects, designers and tradespeople who work hard to preserve tradition, while also honoring their own point of view.

We note the pioneers of yesterday and today—people who take risks to do things the right way. They take a chance to preserve the treasures of the mid mod era properly and with passion hoping to inspire others to do the same.

You'll see how whether it's snow falling on cedars or raindrops falling on roses, you can create cozy authentic personal style this season no matter where you live.

Jackie Torres

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COZY MOD

How to warm up your interiors for the season

By Jackie Torres • Photo by Michael Kaskel

WHILE MOST MID CENTURY INTERIORS are imbued with warmth from iconic materials like walnut wood, natural stone and beautiful brick, it's minimalistic aesthetic can be prone to feeling cold and stark—especially in the winter months. Here, interior designers who've mastered the modern interior share their advice for creating a comfy and inviting space for the season.



This house was designed/built-in 1964 by William & Elaine Eisner, a prolific 20th-century designer, and advertising entrepreneur. The Refined Renovations team took care to preserve original architectural elements and uncovered new opportunities to connect the spirit of the home with the next generation.

“THE USE OF TEXTILES helps add texture and sound absorption to any room. I find wall hangings in fabrics, yarns and macrame to not only add a striking visual element, but also create a warm, inviting environment. Area rugs add not only a soft place to land your feet, but also a way to define a space and create a ‘room within a room’. Throw pillows on a couch or lounge chair not only add color, pattern or texture, but also invite you sit down and relax.”

Elin Walters
Exactly Designs
Ann Arbor, Michigan

MID-CENTURY MODERN INTERIORS are celebrated for their clean lines and architectural clarity, but those very qualities can sometimes feel cool. The secret to softening the look is in the layers. Add textures like a loopy rug, nubby fabrics and woven throws in warm tones. Timeless MCM elements like brick and rattan help to add dimension and warmth. Ground the palette in soft, natural hues so seasonal accents and decor can change on a whim.

Lisa Schmitz
Lisa Schmitz Interior Design
Kansas City, Missouri

BRING OUT THE BLANKETS and beef up the throw pillows. Colors like deep reds, burnt orange, and mustard yellow are very mod and very seasonal. Think cozy hygge, and lean into Scandinavian influences. Layering textures like shearling and wool with woods like walnut and teak can promote visual warmth and comfort. Brass accessories to accent will help round things out and create interest. Changing the bulbs in your table and floor lamps to a soft warm (about 2700K) will allow you to better set mood, especially at night. And, if you have a fireplace, I hope you're using it!

Alexa Glade DeTogne
Lexa Glade Design
Chicago, Illinois

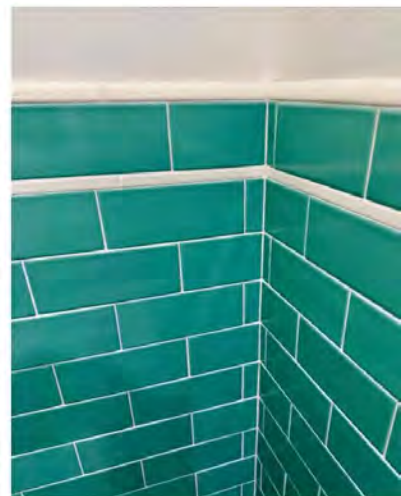
WE'RE LUCKY TO have so many midcentury modern homes that our clients want to preserve while making them truly their own. Lighting plays a big role in adding warmth. Instead of harsh recessed cans, we favor ambient and task lighting that enhances both form and function—think sculptural floor and table lamps, integrated cabinetry lighting, and period-inspired sconces.

Sofie Knouse and Haley Ross
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DECK THE HAUS

These mod holiday finds add the perfect cool vibe to your yule.

By Jackie Torres

1. Modern patchwork embroidered holiday stocking, \$62. Visit allmodern.com.
2. Santa Claus monkey with hat by Kay Bojesen, \$160. Visit stardustmodern.com.
3. Geometirc ornaments, set of 4, \$39.34. Visit orientaltrading.com.
4. Mod city gal mixing glass, \$30. Visit midcenturymoderngal.com.
5. Painted ceramic lodges, \$35-39. Visit westelm.com.
6. Evergreen large lit tree figurine by Kate Spade, \$75. Visit lenox.com.





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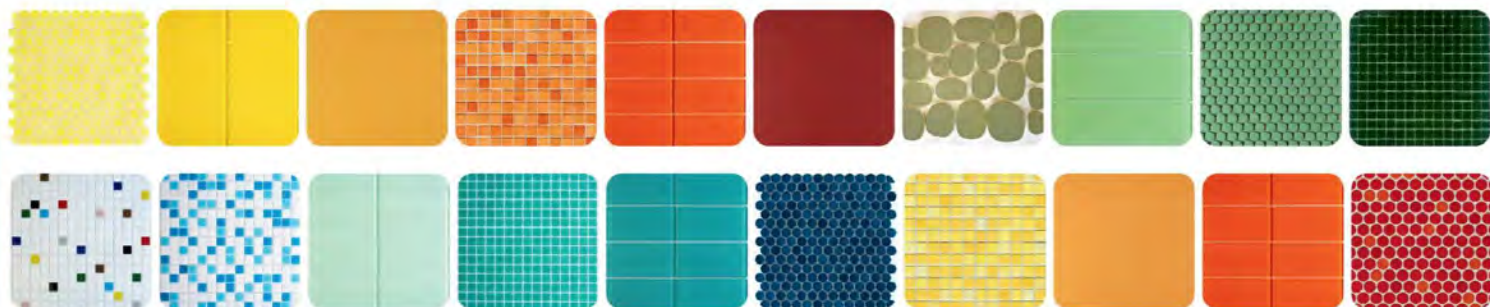
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CHEF'S KISS

These kitchen finds put form and function on full display. By Jackie Torres

1



2



- 1. Blue cornflower Corningware-inspired glass cutting board, \$50. Visit [midcenturymoderngal.com](https://www.midcenturymoderngal.com).
- 2. Alessi Plisse electric kettle, \$99. [Shop.uncrate.com](https://shop.uncrate.com).
- 3. Melia brass platter, \$595. Visit dumae.com.
- 4. Bella air fryer toaster oven, \$129.99. Visit target.com.
- 5. Nadine vessels set of 2, \$250. Visit dumae.com.

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BOXCO

See how this East-Coast company is making custom cabinetry that's an architect favorite.

By Jackie Torres



PHOTO BY FREEBIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

CUSTOM DESIGNED CABINETS, created to your exact specifications and shipped ready to install? Boxco Studio, a boutique cabinet maker based in Greenfield, Massachusetts has somehow managed to be the golden unicorn in the cabinetry industry and if that doesn't make you clutch your pearls in disbelief, they also do it with premium quality materials.

"When David [Erickson] and I started Boxco in 2020, we were filling a gap we'd encountered repeatedly in our design-build work," says President and Lead Designer Gallagher Hannan. "Clients kept asking for flat-front plywood cabinetry, but East Coast custom shops were hesitant to work with the specialty materials required.

We saw an opportunity to specialize in this aesthetic while staying true to our values: remain small, create high-quality products, and build good jobs that let us enjoy living in Western Massachusetts—which is a place that we love, with a vibrant community centered around creativity, craft, farming and the outdoors."

It's this same high standard for quality, care and thoughtfulness with which they create their product. "We carefully research the materials we use and like to keep our material palette really pared down and simple," Gallagher says. "One of our favorite products, Garnica plywood, is made in France and Spain using renewable energy and really intentional tree farming practices.

above: Boxco's signature hand-applied natural wood wax finishes are a huge part of company's distinctive style.

below: Gallagher Hannan and David Erickson founded Boxco in 2020.





left and above: “Our process combines computer-aided design with meticulous hand finishing that is really apparent in the design as well,” Gallagher says. “Our cabinetry has a high level of precision, but you can still feel the handwork in every sanded edge and chamfered detail.”

above, right: “The Pioneer Valley’s vibrant arts and queer communities have brought us incredible artisans and craftspeople of all backgrounds and orientations,” Gallagher says. “We prioritize care in everything we do because we want this to be a place people are genuinely excited to come to work every day.”

PHOTO BY FREEBIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

We’ve tried to lean into products like that one that feel good to use.”

The design muse behind Boxco is rooted in Mid Century Modern and Scandinavian design, with inspiration drawn from European cabinetry traditions. “Our color palette is developed through proprietary, hand-applied color wood wax finishes—plant-based, richly pigmented, and free from petroleum-based paints—creating what I’d call an organic modern aesthetic: simple, clean lines with high-quality natural materials and joyful color,” she says. “But the best part is seeing how clients and designers take our work in directions we never imagined. There’s a lot of collaboration in that part of our creative process.”

This collaborative process is what many in the design and architecture industry have loved about working with Boxco and homeowners are taking note. “All our kitchens are fully customizable. Creating a simple product line and fabrication process has allowed us to work directly with customers to create a high-quality custom product and keep our production local, while also keeping our prices competitive,” Gallagher explains. “Kitchens are high

functioning parts of the home and especially here in the Northeast we are often trying to fit modern kitchens into old homes. Being fully customizable allows us to work in strange or tight spaces, and to make sure that the product functions as beautifully as it looks.”

The kicker is that the cabinets are delivered fully assembled, and the Boxco team work hard to make them as easy to install as possible for experienced cabinet installers—they don’t recommend that their cabinets are installed by homeowners.

What to expect when working with them? You’ll start with a complementary consultation, and you’ll get an estimate and 3D views of the initial configuration. For a \$500 design fee you get up to three customization meetings to dial in the design and you get finish samples to ensure it works within your space. Once finalized, it’s a 50% downpayment to start production and the build time is 8-12 weeks. Boxco will coordinate with your installer throughout and provide installation support after delivery.

Why do they think builders and architects love working with them? “We hit that sweet spot of being small

enough to work directly and collaboratively with builders and architects, but established enough to be reliable partners,” Gallagher says. “Our streamlined process means clear communication and predictable timelines. Plus, our cabinets arrive fully assembled and ready to install. We can run the design process alongside their work or take the lead, whatever serves the project best.” 🌱



“As a queer, woman co-owned business, creating an inclusive workplace isn’t just values—it’s personal,” Gallagher says. “The trades have traditionally excluded so many talented people, and we’re intentionally changing that.”

MERRY, MOD & BRIGHT!

Meet the winner of our first annual holiday décor contest.

By Jackie Torres • Photo by Rebecca Lehde



LAST WINTER we asked our Atomic Ranch community to submit photos of their holiday décor. Tina Beasley Baggot aka @midcenturysouthern on Instagram took the crown and it's no surprise. Her vibrant décor is a mix of nostalgic vintage finds and happy color.

Her South Carolina home, built in 1967 Richard B. Pollman (Designer) and Irving E. Palmquist (Architect) is actually the only mid mod in her neighborhood.

"From the rich California Redwood paneling in the den to the exterior bricks that were sourced from an old icehouse, every detail of the home was thoughtfully planned and executed," Tina says of the custom build. "We worked with a local designer to remodel the kitchen in 2022 as it was in very poor shape, but the majority of the house is in original condition. We are fortunate to still have the original architectural plans and refer to them often as we refresh various spaces."



above: "Slowly over the course of 15 years, my collection has grown to include more than 250 pieces of LE Smith and Viking glass in every color under the rainbow," Tina says. "That glass makes a big impression when you walk up to our front door and see the glass rainbow sparkling through the front windows."

opposite: From my treasured Broyhill Brasília room divider to the two original Jerry Johnson sling chairs that we found by a stroke of luck through Facebook Marketplace, each piece of furniture that we bring into the house adds to the character and charm of the space," Tina says.



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"Fundamentally, I would say my style is a mix of things that bring our family joy through nostalgia, sentimentality, and playfulness," Tina says.

AR: What's your decorating philosophy for the holidays?

Tina: My home décor is a curated collection of unique pieces that each have a story and meaning. I also center much of my home design around original artwork that then serves as inspiration for the rest of the space. That same philosophy extends to my holiday decor. Our primary Christmas tree, has ornaments that represent road trips and vacations that our family has taken together over the years. It brings me a joy to pull each ornament out each year and relive those moments. There are pieces that we've inherited that simply mean a lot to our family like the priceless hand carved wooden nativity commissioned by my husband's mother in the early 1980s by her mentor, John C. Campbell Folk School master woodcarver, Jack Hall. There are also a few pieces that my mother-in-law carved herself. We feel so fortunate to be able to keep the tradition alive for our children by giving it a modern twist in our home.

AR: You obviously collect swung glass can you tell me more about it?

Tina: As a little girl growing up, I remember going to my grandma's house and seeing this beautiful tall orange vase that sat on the floor next to her piano. She



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would toss coins in it at the end of day. It sat in the same spot for as long as I could remember. When she passed away, my dad asked me what I might like to have of hers and the only thing that came to mind was that orange vase. I didn't know anything about it, just that I liked it and it reminded me of her. Well, that LE Smith ribbed vase started my collection of mid-century modern swung glass vases and after that I started looking for them when we were antiquing or traveling.

AR: Any other mod holiday collectibles specifically?

Tina: I have a couple of fun silver tinsel trees that really showcase my ornaments nicely. I also have a number of vintage shiny bright ornaments and am working to grow that collection. We also have a fun vintage handpainted santa from @crackerjackjunkcompany that sits over the fireplace reminding us that he knows if we've been naughty or nice!

AR: How did it feel to win the contest and know your holiday home and style are loved by so many?

Tina: I am so grateful to be able to share our happy place with so many others who also appreciate mid-century modern design and decor. This home has brought us so much joy, especially at the holidays, and if we can share a little of that joy with others, then we've done well. 🌸



"Since purchasing the home in 2014, we have taken great pride in sourcing original MCM furniture and decor pieces that fit seamlessly into the design of the home," Tina says.



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AN ERAS TOUR

Brooklyn Transplants to Denver Create a Mid Mod Meets 80's Glam Inspired Kitchen

By Michelle Mastro • Photography by Kylie Fitts



ATOMIC ERA-INSPIRED KITCHENS are timeless for a reason. Clean lines, rich wood cabinetry, sculptural lighting, and brilliant retro color palettes add personality to today's contemporary homes. But what can be done if you want an MCM style kitchen that leans into other eras? That's what the homeowners of this recently renovated kitchen wanted: a kitchen that embraces Mid Mod style but is still eclectic with a mash of different aesthetics, including an 80s inspired feel.

A speckled terrazzo backsplash under the range hood acts as an accent detail but at the same time pulls together all the various colors in the kitchen.



A curated mix of classic and contemporary materials, from laminate and walnut wood to concrete and marble, add texture and visual interest to the kitchen. Meanwhile, bold modern light fixtures serve as both functional elements and statement pieces.

THIS OLD HOUSE

Set in the heart of Denver, this kitchen renovation completed by Katie Schroder, owner and principal designer at Atelier Interior Design, is a thoughtful renovation of a historic home built in the early 1900's that artfully blends the charm of its original architecture with the vibrancy of a modern young family that likes bold color and style choices.

The family hails from Brooklyn, New York, and the couple reached out to Katie because they admired her ability to mix bold colors and styles. They brought an impressive array of eclectic art and décor with them to Denver, and they needed help expertly weaving together their wide-ranging mix of possessions and wish-list items into the 100-year-old home:

think mid-century furniture pieces, contemporary light fixtures, plus a curated mix of classic and contemporary tiles. Combining the aesthetic choices of such an old home with the mix of styles the couple brought offered its own set of challenges.

'80S FABULOUS

However, the home's kitchen, especially, posed problems. While the rest of the home felt true to the early 1900s, the kitchen had been renovated sometime in the 1980s, complete with bodacious 80s patterns and a not-so-great color palette from that era—lots of drab browns and burgundy shades. "The kitchen looked like an '80s Home Depot do-it-yourself reno gone wrong," Katie explains.

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opposite: To further achieve a balance between Mid Mod and 80s styles, the kitchen design incorporated mid-century furniture pieces—like those in the kitchen’s breakfast nook—celebrated for their timeless appeal.

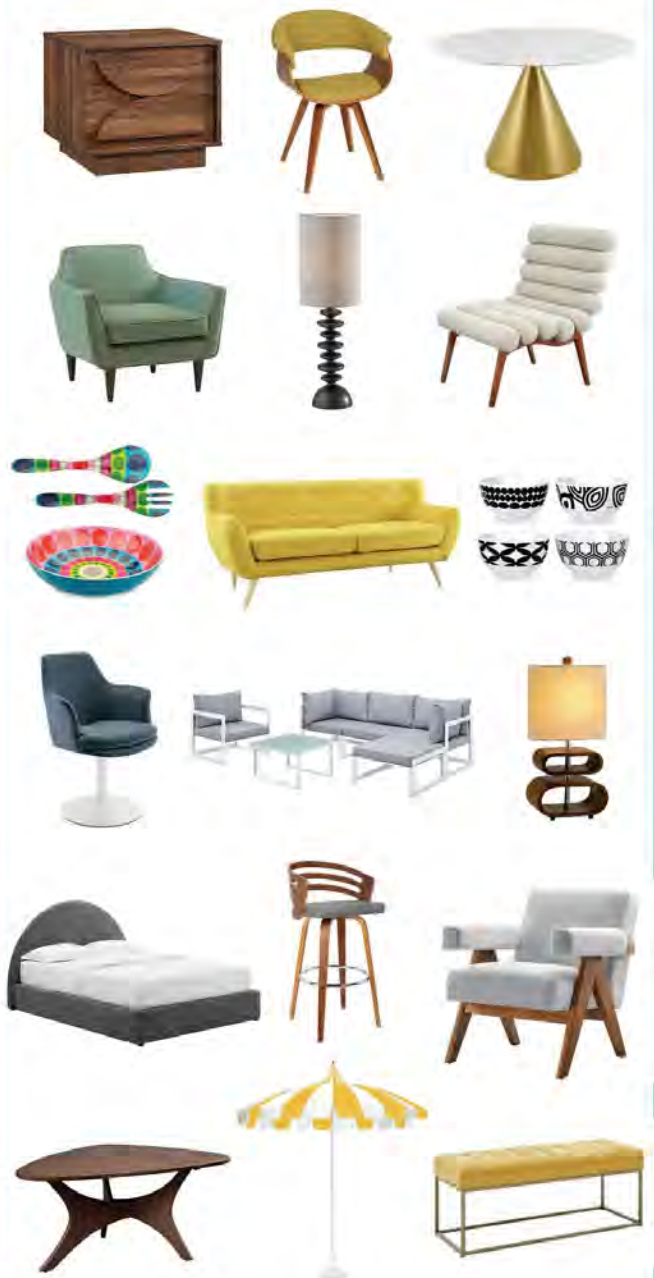
But the family didn’t want to discard the 80s vibes altogether. Somber brown cabinetry was replaced with green laminate upper cabinets, offset by rose pink marble backsplash, a color pairing often utilized in the late 80s and early 90s. The walnut lower cabinets with integrated handles, meanwhile gesture stridently to the midcentury. As does the statement pop of terrazzo backsplash under the oven hood, penny tile concrete floor, and diagonal slit windows.

COLOR POP

The color palette is anything but ordinary. Katie improved the once grim 80s color tones to feature instead a harmonious blend of coral, pink, sage, cobalt, and mustard. These hues not only infused the kitchen and nearby breakfast nook with warmth and energy but also helped to tie together the family’s diverse collection of art and decor. The palette became the cornerstone of a cohesive design scheme that felt simultaneously daring and inviting, classic but hip and modern.

The pop of terrazzo backsplash, looking like a speckled piece of art from *Saved by the Bell*, helped tie in all the colors. “They really liked the idea of this material, and at first thought about using it everywhere, but in the end, we didn’t want it to overpower the space, as it would if it became the entire backsplash,” Katie explains. “So, we just used it as an accent detail, uniting all the room’s distinctive shades together.”

The resulting kitchen feels entirely refreshed yet deeply personal to the eclectic style of the family. “The final space is a true reflection of them: bold, funky, and full of character, perfectly balancing modern sophistication with playful individuality,” says Katie. ✨



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NEW ERA

Tips for Blending Different Style Periods
in a Mid Mod Kitchen

- **Pull Colors from Nature.** Mid Mod color palettes don't have to always include kitschy lime green or neon orange hues, says Katie. "A lot of MCM leans into bold primary colors, but muted shades pulled from nature can offer a softer Mid Mod feel." She used a pale green laminate cabinet and a rosy pink marble backsplash—colors found in Colorado lakes and lakeshores—to herald the outdoors inside, in true MCM fashion.
- **Mix in Patterns.** To honor the 80s style of the kitchen, funkier elements came into play while still maintaining a retro MCM feel. The rich walnut wood of the lower cabinets was a smart choice for adhering to a midcentury modern palette and material choice, says Katie. "But what really ties the space together is the speckled terrazzo backsplash and the encaustic concrete penny tile floor creating hexagon shapes," Katie says. "They feel simultaneously modern and Old World."

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DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Witness the transformation of a 1960 Denver home that was buried under layers of junk.

By **Jolene Nolte** • Photography by **Atom Stevens** • Staging by **Anne-Kathrin Cao and Michael Harris**



Kimber says she is most proud of “how good the house feels now, and saving a hoarder house from becoming a box.” The upgraded windows are also important to how the house feels given the capricious Colorado climate, including the possibility for blizzards and subzero temperatures.

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HOW DO YOU TURN a hoarder house into a retrofitted MCM sanctuary? Kimber Dempsey, a Mid Century Modern realtor and homeowner in Denver, together with her business partner Diana Buch, took on just such a challenge in the historic Arapaho Hills neighborhood.

FINDING THE GEM

Kimber and Diana wanted to buy and renovate an MCM home as an investment project and were on the lookout for two years. Arapaho Hills was high on their wish list. So when they heard about

an estate sale at a notorious hoarder house in the area, they didn't waste any time. The previous owner believed the home to have had bed bugs, so Kimber and Diana went in with gas masks. Thankfully they didn't find an infestation and even more thankfully they discovered that the home's mid-century bones were still intact. The 1960 home in the historic neighborhood was designed by architect Bruce Sutherland and built by Mannon and Associates. Kimber and Diana went all in and bought the home with an investor loan in October 2023. Thus began fourteen months of renovation.

DENVER DEEP DIVE

It's Kimber's business to know the Denver MCM market like the back of her hand. Much of the newer development looks, well, boring, but there are a large number of MCM gems in older parts of the city.

Kimber explains that in the mid century, Lockheed Martin and other companies that required engineering were hiring in Denver, and the city grew faster than most. This brought many forward-thinking professionals into town who wanted modern homes, and so Denver boasts 7,000 Mid Century Modern homes. The cap on growth, however, was that financing for these homes was difficult. At the time, their future value was projected to be low because they were deemed too edgy.

Fortunately, though, many of these homes live on today, tucked away in Denver itself and nearby suburbs Arvada and Littleton. To learn more about Arapaho Hills, the all MCM neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places where this particular home is situated, read more at atomic-ranch.com.

The flagstone outside echoes the restored flagstone in the home's basement. A covered walkway with skylight offers a hospitable shelter from the elements before you even step through the front door.



Kimber loves the cork flooring. "It feels good under your feet and is a little softer than hardwood while still being durable." Fortunately, the ceiling was undisturbed by the home's past as a hoarder house. The Douglas fir ceiling is among Kimber's favorite features of the house.







The way Kimber (pictured top left) and Diana (pictured on the right) approached their renovation process is much like they approach their real estate business. Kimber says, "I love what I do, not only because I get to see wonderful homes and meet interesting people, but I also get to match homes with the right people. Historic homes need stewards to take care of them the way they deserve. Every home new or old needs the right homeowner, and I love playing matchmaker."

While the color scheme is predominantly determined by natural materials (walnut, terrazzo, cork), the house doesn't take itself too seriously. Pops of color from kitchen objects as well as the paintings sprinkled throughout the home warm up the aesthetic and offer a touch of vintage-inspired playfulness. A built-in bar is a fun, mid-century touch with more gorgeous walnut. Counter seating offers versatility of options for serving and dining, adding to the home's hospitable atmosphere.







top: What handsome cabinets! Custom made and installed by Brett Anderson at Cream Modern, the cabinets' texture adds warmth in contrast to the cool terrazzo floor.

above: Another opportunity that retro renovations offer is to upgrade appliances and kitchen layouts to take advantage of handy modern options such as double wall ovens and sleek panel refrigerators. Thanks to the retro colors and surrounding walnut cabinetry, the contemporary appliances still feel at home in the MCM aesthetic.



The custom built walnut cabinetry feels like it's always been part of the house. Exposed shelving allows for easy access to pitchers and retro Pyrex dishes as well as letting them shine on their own as objects d'art.



That commitment to stewardship came through in their design decisions, all made with eligibility for historic house credit—not just for the credit but also for the principle of staying true to the home's provenance.

RETRO RECONSTRUCTION

Bit by bit, Kimber and Diana cleared out the junk and pulled up faded carpet littered with mouse dropping and years of dirt and gunk to discover that the original cork flooring was still there on the main level. Among the junk, Kimber found the original architectural plans. (The story goes that the draftsman rescued the blueprints during a 1965 Denver flood—swimming into the office and retrieving all that he could.)

The ground clearing extended to the lot itself. The house is situated on a hill, and they regraded and redid the drainage. They also adjusted oddly placed gutters, such as one directly in front of a sliding glass door.

Kimber and Diana's renovation business is called Retro-

ventions LLC. The name captures the vision for this home. Kimber describes it well: "Let the house speak to you and see what the house wants, talk to neighbors" to learn what you can about what the house was like before. For instance, they learned that the home's front door used to be a rusty orange. After researching and sanding down the new paint, the final result was nearly identical to what it was originally.

The original architectural blueprints also specified walnut, and so all the wood they chose for the home was walnut, including custom cabinetry throughout the home. When the neighborhood was originally built, each home had custom cabinetry, so part of paying homage to the home's history was to once again commission custom cabinetry for the home. (The originals were unsalvageable.) Brett Anderson at Cream Modern constructed and installed all the cabinetry and wood paneling. "After 60 years, nothing is perfectly level, so Brett had to adjust a lot when he was installing the cabinetry," Kimber says.



CONTEMPORARY IMPROVEMENTS

Of course, not all the changes were restorations to the original. There's also room for contemporary upgrades and creative liberty. They replaced all the windows with double pane aluminum windows that have double the insulation of the originals but look nearly identical. They added a primary bathroom with radiant floor heating and a soaking tub.

While the home is well situated on a hill and protected from direct sunlight with a south curtain wall, they also added AC to address contemporary comfort levels. Even previous to installing AC, Kimber says the house didn't get hotter than 80 degrees on hot days. "That's one of the great things about mid-century homes," Kimber says. "When they're situated well, they regulate really well."



This home embodies indoor-outdoor living with floor-to-ceiling windows and a sliding glass door leading to the backyard deck.





A sliding glass door to a second story deck contributes to the home's easy indoor-outdoor living. The green siding also provides a contrasting frame to the bedroom's orange accents for a lively view inside as well as outside.

Aggregate terrazzo weaves its way throughout the renovated home from the fireplace surround to the outdoor bar, kitchen, laundry room and two of the bathrooms. The material adds a sense of mid mod luxury and sparkle.

With the dust settled on the renovation, Kimber says that she's happy that they "saved it like a fine piece of art instead of gutting it." 🌸

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below, left: The double bathroom vanity was also custom and designed to match the kitchen cabinetry.

below, right: The new primary bathroom exudes an MCM feel with touches of contemporary luxury such as the terrazzo flooring with radiant heating.

bottom: While the bedroom has strong mid century bones like the Douglas fir ceiling, clerestory windows and cork flooring, the room's pizzazz comes from the Marimekko bedspread, abstract art of a mountainous tunnel and a wall sculpture of a sunrise with flying birds.



For more on Kimber's Denver MCM expertise, visit her site theretrorealator.com. You can also tune into Atomic Ranch's Instagram to catch her regular appearances on our Instagram Live conversations.



EAST MEETS WEST

A neglected 1973 Ray Kappe home enjoys a refresh that weaves together indoors and out as well as Japanese influences.

By **Jolene Nolte** • Photography by **Pablo Viega**

Sliding glass doors opening onto the patio and backyard encourage the harmonious indoor-outdoor connection that Amanda and Joel responded to when they first saw the 1973 home.



With the newly replaced floor-to-ceiling windows, the living room offers a verdant view and creates the feeling of sitting among the treetops. The furnishings and Tambo travertine create a light touch that doesn't detract from the view.





top: As you approach the home, the preserved original doors make an unmistakable impression. The tiles are also original, but the rock garden, Japanese tsukubai and hand-chiseled cobblestones are new. "It was important to us that our material palette complemented the surrounding nature rather than competing with it," Amanda says.

right: Here, the lines between indoors and out are blurred with a transparent roof, floor-to-ceiling windows and koi pond.

THE JAPANESE RYOKAN IS a traditional inn designed to be a sanctuary, a refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city with minimal furnishings and decor and an emphasis on relaxation. When Joel Wong and Amanda Gunawan, designers and principals of Only Way Is Up (OWIU) Design, a full-service architecture and design office, found a neglected 1973 home in the Los Angeles hills, they wondered, why not bring the serenity of a ryokan into daily life?







FINDING THE 1973 HOME

Despite being neglected for decades, the home had plenty to draw in Amanda and Joel. First was a shared connection to their alma mater—the architect of the home, Ray Kappe, was also the founder of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), and had “a distinctly modernist orientation,” Amanda says. What’s more, Amanda says, there was “an almost spiritual pull to the relationship between the house and its surroundings [...] the landscape and the architecture had grown together over the years in a harmonious way.”

left: Amanda explains, “To bring a natural element from Japan, we enlisted the help of our friends at Kuboki Tatami, a family-owned Tatami specialist working from Fukushima Prefecture since 1740. We wanted to represent this traditional craft in a modern application in their home by adding it to unexpected elements of the design, lining the sunken pit living room in tatami, naturally adding warmth to the space as well as additional seating, as many Asian cultures sit on the floor for casual socializing.”

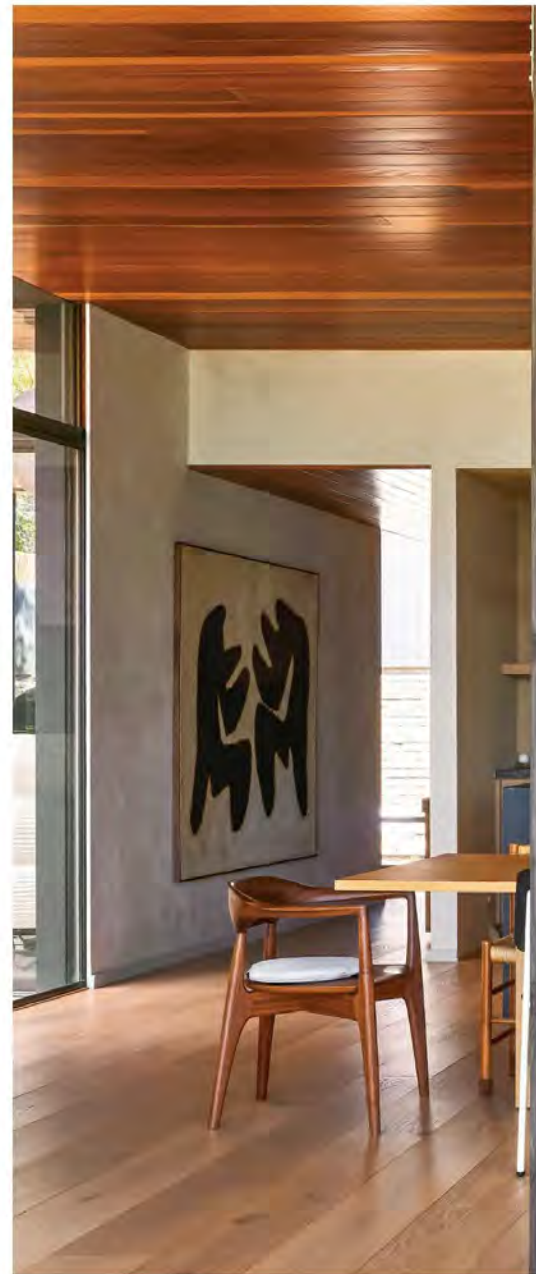
below: The ink on paper octopus art by Dwight Hwang beautifully ties together the space.





above: “The double-height ceiling and windows are original to the architecture of the home, but everything else we designed for the space. Most of which was custom fabricated by our sister build company, Inflexion Builds,” Amanda says of the kitchen.

above, right: The redwood ceilings are original, and an important addition from Joel and Amanda is the tea bar, which, they describe as “conceived as a modern space for hosting informal tea ceremonies, framed by textured marble stone.”



There were certainly signs of neglect and age that would need repair, but Amanda and Joel recognized that the home had solid bones. Joel elaborates, “The original redwood ceilings and the beautiful clerestory windows that brought in soft, natural light throughout the space. The overall layout, or program, of the home was nearly ideal—well-proportioned, functional, and thoughtfully organized. However, many of the finishes and systems were significantly outdated and in need of attention. It was clear the house needed care and vision to bring it back to life, but the potential was undeniable.”

RENOVATING WITH EAST AND WEST IN MIND

Joel and Amanda renovated and designed this home for themselves, bringing all their professional and personal background to bear on the project. Amanda explains, “Both of us were raised in Singapore but moved through Asia fluidly. We studied at [the Southern California Institute of Architecture] SCI-Arc together and have been splitting time between Los Angeles and Asia ever since. Our diverse Asian perspective is set against a Californian education, creating a design perspective that finds balance in both the Western and Eastern elements, which is how we approach all renovations.”



Joel elaborates, “During our time in Japan, we were deeply influenced by the way ryokans create a sense of sanctuary, allowing people to recharge and reconnect away from the demands of city life. It made us wonder: why couldn’t this kind of rejuvenation be part of everyday living? That question became a guiding principle in the design of this home.”

FOSTERING INDOOR-OUTDOOR CONNECTION

When it came to the structural renovation, they didn’t add much—a window in the bedroom, a powder room, an outdoor pergola. The bulk of the renovation time went to getting the house back to its original bones. Amanda explains, “Since our firm does all of the work ourselves, including renovations and building, we were able to stay ahead of any surprises and address them quickly. Additionally, the home itself was meticulously designed and built originally, which made for a more seamless renovation than most.”

Most of the substantive changes—and challenges—were with regard to the landscape. “Because the house features so much glass, every view outward needed to feel deliberate—almost like a living piece of art. We planted new trees and hand-selected boulders and rocks from quarries, placing them as if we were composing a painting. It became a deeply personal process—shaping the landscape with the same level of artistry and attention as we did the architecture,” Joel says.





above, right: The Japanese screens were actually original to the house—proof that MCM has deep roots in Eastern influence. Amanda and Joel chose to make this room the library.

right: The custom-built bookshelf takes its cues from the Japanese screen.

In addition to deliberately and thoughtfully designing the landscape and view from each window, Amanda and Joel also brought the indoors in with water features: an indoor koi pond with a in the interior of the home. There is another outdoor water feature with fountains and a walkway. Another prominent outdoor water feature, the pool, was also redone to blend more naturally with its surroundings. Amanda explains, “The once-curved pool was remade to be more seamless with the landscape so one can see the tree-lined hills from the luxury of the water.





above: While the room itself and redwood ceilings are original, Amanda and Joel added a touch of warmth with plastered walls and more modern visual appeal with the grid-like bookshelf and the mobile-esque Phase 03 Chandelier.

right: The real star of the tea bar is the opalescent, textured ceramic tile by Hashimoto Tomonari, a Japanese ceramic artist working in Shigaraki.

From every window of the house, one can overlook water, trees, or hills—the existing nature is as elemental to the design of the home as any other element.”

MODERN MEETS CONTEMPORARY

Using nature as their guiding star for the interior design, Joel and Amanda chose neutrals for the interior to complement the lush views. This fits in well with the traditional ryokan-inspired design as well as creating an ambience that feels timeless. It’s both at home with the modern architecture and with the present moment. “It still feels timeless, but not stuck in the past,” Joel says.

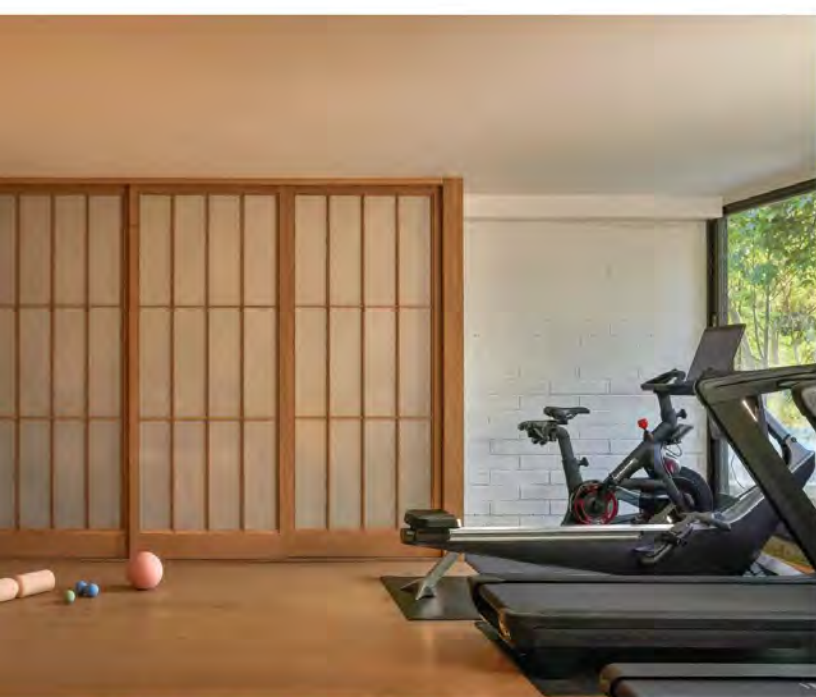
Many details are personal or custom. “Every detail of the house sparks a memory, a story, a reason—all giving the house an inherent lived-in warmth despite it being new. Characteristic of us as a couple, the decorative elements are a mix of travel finds, gifts from friends, special artisan pieces, as well as objects that simply bring joy and sentiment,” Amanda says.





above: “This room has the only new window that we added to the structure of the home,” Joel explains. “We wanted a picture window to highlight the space and allow you to wake up to the beautiful view beyond. It makes it feel like you are sitting in the treetops.”

below: Amanda elaborates on this dreamy gym: “We drew inspiration from the original Japanese screens and continued their use here to maintain a sense of continuity. We made the large window the focal point of the room so that while you are working out, you feel like you are doing so outside, in the comfort of the air conditioning.”



“Most fixtures are custom-built by OWIU Design’s sister construction company, Inflexion Builds, built with careful attention to mold organically with the natural lines of the structure. A signature of our firm has become kitchens and countertops, making functional work and entertaining spaces,” Joel explains. When you look at the countertop surfaces in the kitchen and dining room and even powder room of this home, it’s easy to see why they are known for their countertops. Combined with a neutral background, the movement in the countertops echoes the serenity of the flowing water and flow of light into the space.

After a year of renovations, Amanda and Joel succeeded in bringing a ryokan-inspired sanctuary to their home in the LA hills with a sense of harmony between the home and its surroundings. 🌿



top, left: Clerestory windows and the ceiling are original to the house while the plaster on the walls are Joel and Amanda's touch to warm up the texture in the guest bedroom.

right: While the ceiling is original in the primary bath, everything else—including the spacious soaking tub—was custom built by Inflexion Builds.



top: Amanda and Joel completely redid the pre-existing pool. Joel says, “We wanted it to fit more seamlessly into the landscape of the side of the hill, rather than taking away from the view. We used a sand finish on the concrete and a PebbleTec finish in the pool to create a more natural look, almost like it just came out of the earth.”

MORE ABOUT ARCHITECT RAY KAPPE

Ray Kappe designed over 100 custom homes as well as multi-family, educational, commercial and public buildings. His work won many awards, and he taught at several universities—USC, Cal Poly Pomona, where he founded and chaired the architecture department—before founding his own school, the Southern California Institute of Architecture. His work is an important exemplar of modernism, and many of his later projects were LEED-certified.

The Minneapolis-born Ray Kappe moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1940 at the age of 13. He attended Emerson Junior High School, designed by Richard Neutra. He graduated from UC Berkley with a degree in architecture in 1951. His first professional project, the National Boulevard Apartments in West Los Angeles won an AIA Design Award.

One of his most famous works is the home he designed for himself and his family in Pacific Palisades. The Los Angeles Conservancy describes the home’s significance: “The Kappe House is a tremendous blending of the natural materials favored by the Arts and Crafts movement and the strong, simple innovations introduced by Los Angeles’ modernists. As such, it may be one of the purest examples of regional architecture in Los Angeles.”



1: Here a bit of the indoors comes outside to encourage lingering in the fresh air.

2: The water feature with a walkway and bench contributes to the ryokan-inspired serenity that Amanda and Joel emulated here in LA. It also provides a peaceful view from inside, contributing to the home's stellar and thoughtful indoor-outdoor connection.

3: The outdoor kitchen and barbecue area is new, and the structure was designed to mimic the home's roofline.

4: A tree-lined walkway around the perimeter of the house encourages meditative movement from one space to the other.

WISE UPGRADES

A designer renovates her home to build on the original architect's signature style.

By Meryl Schoenbaum • Photography by Archetype Photo

A major and important part of the renovation involved widening the deck. "Not having a yard, we wanted to at least have a deck area so the kids could ride their bikes and run around," Justin explains.





above: A glass door and a Louis Poulsen sconce create a warm and inviting side entrance. **Right:** The sunken living room is anchored by a large fireplace made of Pennsylvania fieldstone.

WHEN WE GET THE OPPORTUNITY to spotlight a mid-century home that belongs to the owner of an architectural and design firm, it's a special treat. And when the home's original architect is as prominent and prolific as Charles Frederick Wise, the details of its renovation become even more significant.

This Mid Century Modern home in Penn Valley, Pennsylvania, was designed by Wise in 1959. The house on the hill is owned by Lauren Thomsen, principal at architectural and design firm Lauren Thomsen Design, who resides there with her husband and children.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The property surrounding the home is the perfect setting for it to shine in every season. "The home is on a very unique and private property just outside Philadelphia," Lauren says. "The private lot allows for expanses of windows without concerns for privacy.







above: Terraced stone retaining walls lead down to the pool area. Two sections of the home's architecture were built perpendicular to the main living space. On the left side is the primary bedroom; on the right side is the kitchen. Both extend beyond the main living space of the home to frame the patio.

below: The front entry of the home is framed by a solid overhang and pergola looking into the sunken living room.



It has a wall of glass facing a beautiful view. This, in turn, provides a unique and arresting feeling of experiencing the natural scene beyond from the interior. When the seasons change, the experience inside changes as well. The lot is heavily wooded on a hillside facing a 100-acre park and green space to the west. In the summer, leaves of deciduous trees, mainly beech and oak, fill in and obscure views to the park beyond. This creates a very private atmosphere on the property, which is nice when spending time outside and in the pool down the hill. In the winter, when the leaves fall, the view of the park is revealed and you can see quite a distance facing west; sunsets are more expansive, even from the interior. The marked seasonal differences make you appreciate how the experience of the outdoors from inside the house is heightened due to the extent of glazing."



This view of the living room shows how material continuity and the expanse of windows dissolves the boundary between interior and exterior. The terrazzo floor wraps the room and becomes the fireplace hearth.

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This angle of the living room looking into the kitchen dramatically illustrates how removing the bearing wall between the kitchen and dining room created an open floor plan.

RENOVATION GOALS

The four-bedroom, four-bath structure was built on one level and includes a sunken living room and a small, finished basement. As an architecture and design professional, Lauren had a clear vision of her desired outcome for the renovation. "We wanted a modern, functional and high-performing renovation that did not deviate from the original design intent but modernized and extended the functional life of the home," Lauren explains. "Aside from the exterior improvements, the most specific and significant improvement we wanted to make was to open the kitchen to the main living and dining space. Previously, a bearing wall separated the spaces. This barrier not only isolated the kitchen from the living and entertaining areas but also cut off all the southern sunlight from the kitchen and, thus, the living and dining room felt dark. Removing the bearing wall between the kitchen and dining room was a large span and, therefore, a challenge to recess the beam in the cavity of the ceiling to avoid the bottom of the beam dropping below the kitchen's ceiling plane. This was a challenging install!"

SHOWCASING THE STRUCTURE

It was important to Lauren that the renovations were in keeping with Wise's original architectural elements while achieving her visions for accommodating her family's lifestyle.







"We love to showcase structure and use natural materials to clad walls and ceilings," she explains. "We loved the look of the existing exposed wood beams in the main living space, but the ceiling between them was painted white drywall and though it brightened the space I felt that the contrast between the beams and the drywall was too stark. To soften the high ceiling plane, we added clear cedar tongue-and-groove cladding between the beams on both the interior and exterior. It provides material depth that makes the space feel much cozier and warmer. It continues into the den as well."

Lauren's eye for architectural design is evident as soon as you walk through the front door. "There isn't really a defined entryway or foyer because the front entry opens to the main living space and to the expansive view beyond," she says. "The space differentiates itself as it has a lower ceiling than the adjacent living space, creating a feeling of compression and release. We maintained the existing dark-stained millwork storage and closet in that space."

left: In the kitchen, the natural marble countertop and backsplash were paired with minimal white-oak cabinetry.

below: Lauren designed a small home office accessed from the dining room, adjacent to the basement stair. The original guardrail, a series of columns detailed in the same way as the structural columns, was maintained.





A large island anchors the sky-lit minimalist kitchen.

The living and dining areas are unified by an 11-foot-high ceiling. The floor level of the living space is sunken by 18 inches. “It is grounded on one end by the kitchen and the other by an original large fireplace constructed of Pennsylvania fieldstone,” she says. “We use it almost daily in the winter.”

The kitchen’s new white oak millwork is warm yet modern with marble counters. “We spend a lot of time cooking as a family and like to entertain, so we wanted a kitchen that was functional and fostered that, but also given that the space is now part of the main living space we wanted it to be minimal and nice looking,” Lauren explains. “We built a wall of cabinetry and integrated the fridge, pantry and an appliance garage into that. An 11-foot island anchors the kitchen that seats five, so

while preparing food you face the main living space. We used the same 2cm Crema Delicato marble for the island top and backsplash and white oak for the cabinetry with minimal edge pulls by Emtex.”

In the den, new millwork accommodates the library and a fireplace adds to the coziness of the space. An original bar was maintained, Lauren says.

The home office sports Lauren’s creative plans. “In our renovation, we created a dedicated small home office accessed through a pocket door adjacent to the basement stair. The space was previously part of an oversized laundry area which was originally a small maid’s room off the kitchen,” she says.



top: The den is located on the other side of the living room. New white-oak millwork shelving and the cedar-clad ceiling create a cozy ambience for the library.

below: This corner of the primary bedroom features the original brick and concrete hearth. "The bedroom feels perched up in the trees," Lauren says. "We added sheer linen curtains that soften the space." The mid-century style Cuba chair was designed by Carl Hansen.



The primary bedroom offers expansive views and is a secluded refuge. The color palette is minimal: all white aside from a brick fireplace. "It is my favorite room in the house, a true respite," Lauren says. "It has large windows that face the hillside. We added an eastern-facing window for better airflow and so we could have morning light. We have a Jenni Kayne Pacific bed in Ivory Linen and Eero Saarinen Tulip tables with walnut tops as nightstands. We have a Hay Peas rug in cream and white linen curtains from The Shade Store, so the room is very light, warm and serene: a minimal palette with lots of texture. An original painting by my aunt, who is a painter, and a handmade quilt by my husband's sister, who is a graphic designer, are on the wall. We have Zonix fans in all the bedrooms."

Lauren found whimsical ways to incorporate Mid Century Modern style in the children's rooms. "Fun wallpaper and cement tile conjure playful MCM patterns," she says. "The bathroom is windowless, but it has a skylight. We used black cement tile and black Hygge & West Alpine Garden wallpaper in Ebony. It felt playful enough to be a modern homage to the patterns often found in mid-century design."

Custom white-oak shelving was selected for the library. Lauren designed cabinets for closed storage to keep the room looking clean.





WHO IS CHARLES WISE?

Charles Frederick Wise, the original architect of this Penn Valley, Pennsylvania, home, designed modern architecture in the mid-20th century. He was a contemporary of Oscar Stonorov and Louis Kahn, a preeminent modernist from Philadelphia who practiced worldwide. Wise was well-known for many buildings and residences in Philadelphia and on the Main Line, where Penn Valley is located.

The original drawings of the building reveal the careful attention to rhythm and proportion in the design and the sensitive response to the landscape. They also show the honest materiality, exposed structure and blurred lines between interior and exterior common to his work and to other modernist work in Philadelphia at the time.

Among Lauren's favorite Wise architectural elements featured in her home are the beautifully detailed wood-clad steel columns supporting the beams in the living room. The same detailing was used as a floor-to-ceiling guardrail for the basement stairs and in the den's bar.

A view of the home's main thoroughfare that provides access to other rooms. "Original columns and the basement stair on the left create a beautiful rhythm of light," Lauren says. At the end of the hallway is the kitchen with a view of its elegant marble backsplash.



top, right: A large awning window was placed for fresh air and emulates a hot tub. The Duravit Luv Tub was a coveted addition for Lauren in the primary bath, she says. An exterior cedar screen wall affords the ability to have a large window in the room.

top left: The primary bath was gutted to incorporate a new freestanding tub. Lauren designed a wall-mount custom vanity and open shower make the small space feel larger. Terrazzo tiles adorning the walls and vanity are a nod to the original terrazzo in the living room.

right: Lauren wanted a whimsical but elegant wallpaper pattern in the guest bath as a nod to whimsical mid-century design. This floral wallpaper design brings the room to life. Lauren selected cement tile for the flooring.

SUBTLE COLOR SCHEME

"The home's palette is generally neutral, aside from natural materials. As in many modern designs, furniture and art add pops of color and design interest."

Lauren enthusiastically reveals her favorite aspects of her home's renovation. "The millwork! The cedar clad ceiling! The play between crisp white and wood," she says. "Most of all, the wonderful and ever-changing daylight in the home." 🌿

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DESIGNING WOMEN

These pioneering ladies made waves in the Mid Century Era for their daring interior designs.

By Jackie Torres

INDEED, it was a woman that turned the talent of designing interiors into a bonafide profession. Elise de Wolfe, in 1921 daringly stood before a New York courtroom to sue for unpaid services for work expertly beautifying- and with an artful method—her client's home. And yet in by the Mid Century era, with the Modernist Movement barreling forward with revolutionary work, the field was dominated by men.

In Phaidon's new tome, *Making Space: Interior Design by Women*, author and architectural historian Dr. Jane Hall, a founding member of the Turner Prize-winning architecture collective known as Assemble, brings together a landmark volume that catalogues 250 of the most creative women practicing interior design from the beginning of the 20th century to today.

In the massive endeavor she spotlights some of the era's most well-known female designers (Eileen Gray, Lina Bo Bardi, Ray Eames and Greta Grossman to name a few) but more illuminatingly, she also highlights names that to many may have slipped through the minimalist cracks. The book is a worthy addition to any library. Here are a few entries that are guaranteed to re-inspire the design-philes among us.

CLARA PORSET

MATANZAS, CUBA

Renowned as a modern furniture designer in Mexico, among Clara's many achievements was her position as the director for the Technical School for Women in Cuba, as a teacher for the School of Industrial Design at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, her collaborations with Mario Pani and Luis Barragán and as the furniture designer for the executive suites of the Chrysler Building in New York. Her legacy though, is in her passion for educating the public about industrial design—specifically integrating modern technology into functional vernacular mass-produced furniture. We also have her to thank for changing the terminology from interior decorator to interior designer and promoting the value of the designer's skill amid the rapid growth of industrialized technology.



Clara's home, Chimalistac, Mexico City, Mexico, c.1950s. Photo courtesy of Side Gallery



Florence Knoll, Cowles Publications Office, New
York, NY, USA, 1962.
Photo Courtesy of Knoll Archives.

FLORENCE KNOLL

SAGINAW, MICHIGAN

While she needs no introduction, no book about the great contributions of women in the field of design would be complete without Florence Knoll. Furthermore, no discussion about the Mid Century Modern movement could take place without mention of her name and her massive industry-redefining work. What began as a career of multiplicity designing furniture for offices and lobbies soon became a genre defying signature that brought clean lines to interiors both commercial and residential.



Luisa Parisi, Apartment Nessi, Bergamo, Italy, 1955.
Picture credit: Courtesy Archivio Design Ico Parisi, Como

LUISA PARISI

CANTU, ITALY

She studied under Gio Ponti in Milan and built a signature style by infusing fine art paintings and sculptures into her designs yet she is almost always mentioned as working alongside her famous husband Ico Parisi rather than recognized on her own for her work in the partnership, in charge of the business, styling the interiors and adding textiles. In truth they were an iconic duo responsible for the unmistakable Italian side of modernism and she was the other half of the design mind behind more than 150 interiors.

SHAPING INTERIORS HAS LONG BEEN A POWERFUL
EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY, AND ONGOING EFFORTS
TO INCREASE DIVERSITY WITHIN THE PROFESSION
CONTINUE TO RESHAPE THE INDUSTRY.



Making Space: Interior Design
BY Women, by Jane Hall,
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Custom HOME PORTRAITS

CHRISTIAN MUSSELMAN
Illustration



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WHEN THE FUTURE WAS BRIGHT

Modeline of California broke the lighting mold in an era where everything about home was modernizing except for the lamps that illuminated them.

By Jackie Torres • Photography courtesy of Schiffer Publishing



THEY ARE unmistakable. Modeline lamps with their often massive size, their amorphous shapes and made from glowing curved wood can be spotted a mile away even in the most dense vintage market, shop or gallery. And that's exactly how they were designed to be. Bernie and Esther Roberts, saw that while the American interior was propelling forward into the kind of futuristic and streamlined modernism that this whole magazine is about, yet the everyday lamp and lighting fixture had failed to keep pace. So they launched Modeline, aiming to create fresh new lighting styles that would match the furniture being designed but also be artful expressions of it's owner's personality and tastes.

In his new book *Modeline of California*, author Nick Ferrell took a deep dive—the first of its kind—into this enigmatic company. Ferrell, himself a vintage dealer and restorer behind the company Esthetic Vintage, fell for Modeline quick and hard. “The first Modeline lamp I bought left an indelible mark on me,” he writes in the book. “I fell under the seductive effects of this lamp. The design, pulling inspiration from elements in nature, was perfectly tasteful and elegant. The construction of finely sculpted wood carved into impossibly delicate forms was superior to the capabilities of any other lamp manufacturer at the time and most still to this day. Even the act of turning the lamp on was special—activated by the pressing of a saucer-shaped wooden detail. Modeline was in a class of its own.”



Nick writes, “Early in my dealing of these lamps, I witnessed two women at an estate sale in southern Michigan engage in a physical altercation while both were attempting to purchase the same Modeline lamp...Customers of mine have offered vehicles, Rolex watches, and other fine jewelry in exchange for these lamps. I have sold these lamps to clients in Australia, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates only to have them spend additional thousands of dollars to have the lamps delivered to them.”



After an endorsement of the product by Pierre Koenig, that brought a wave of inquiries and orders for Modeline, Bernie soon sought other public-relations jackpots that would give him "free advertising". He reconnected with his old television industry cronies and met with set designers offering free lamps to be used at their discretion. Soon Modeline lamps could be found in some of the most popular tv shows of the time.



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MINNETT - CALIFORNIA HOME FURNITURE

The book reads like the narrative of a soap opera in the best most addicting way possible. It's a testament both to the wildly interesting path of the company's formation and growth but also in Ferrell's recounting of his experiences, dealing and learning about Modeline but also the passion with which he researched the facts for his book, forged connections to past employees and dug for more. This combination of openness, eagerness and passion make not only for an illuminating historic read, but also a genuinely entertaining one.

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Ferrell writes in comprehensive depth about the details he uncovered on Modeline from newspaper clippings, ads and personal stories of people connected to the business. Filled with intriguing original ads, spec renderings and new beautifully photographed assemblages of a wide range of Modeline lamps. Readers are also treated to some beautiful room photos that enviously bear a variety of Modeline lighting in situ. Nick also assembled a plethora of historic photos, some newspaper images of newsworthy events that have a unexpected connection to the company, to celebrity glamour stills that show how Modeline had become a who's who of lighting options in its day.

Modeline of California is a wonderful read and a must-have for anyone obsessed with not only Modeline as a collectible and an art piece, but for those who love to get immersed in mid-century history and lore. ✨



Modeline of California by Nick Ferrell, published by Schiffer Books (c) 2025; schifferbooks.com.



Esther Roberts was the one that gave the company its name: "Since this company would design sculptural-wood lighting to coordinate with modern furniture," Ferrell writes. "Esther suggested that they use some variation of the name of a sculpting clay that she had used as a child also called Modeline. This name evoked feelings of nostalgia and creativity, and thoughts of sculptural forms in the minds of all who heard it."

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HOLLY JOLLY

Inspiring spaces and simple decorating ideas to help you get your home fun and festive.

By Jackie Torres



Your holiday decorating doesn't have to be a departure from your year-round style. Robert Maurer embraced his tropical side for the Christmas décor in his Streng Brother's home in northern California. "I like to keep holiday decorating fresh and innovative each year by introducing a new theme or creating a few additions. This year, the motif is "refined island style" through the use of lush palm fronds, air plants, monstera leaves, natural fibers, wood and stone ornaments, and colorful glass fishing floats." Robert says.

Photo by Robert Maurer



Embrace retro color! When the holidays roll around, Jessica Luque and her husband Sam love to pull out their vintage ornaments and décor, sourced from antique shops, yard sales, and friends and family (including a whole set of pink glass globe ornaments from Sam's grandmother that he inherited after she passed away). In addition to having a real tree each year, "the pink-and-silver tinsel tree, as well as the aluminum trees, always come out. They feel very fitting to the 1950s vibe of the home," Jessica notes. Photo by Allison Corona

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Embellish what you have. Robert Mauer clipped a few Mugo pine sprigs from his backyard to turn his vintage oblong vessel into a cool festive holiday centerpiece.
Photo by Robert Maurer

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At Jessica Luque's Boise home, everyone in the family gets one of her handmade stockings. The embellished crochet stars and pastel felt colors add a bit of retro style. The sandstone fireplace is original to the home as is the checkerboard mahogany wall paneling, built-in brass clock and directional copper cans.

Photo by Allison Corona

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Collecting

POP, FIZZ, SPARKLE

Shiny Brites and the Mid-Century Tree Written and photographed by Jackie Torres



THE FUTURE WAS SHINY IN THE

1950s, Shiny Brite. These vividly colored glass baubles, with their bold hues and reflective finishes, are more than just Christmas tree trimmings—they're nostalgic symbols of postwar optimism and highly sought-after collectibles today.

Shiny Brite was born in the 1930s, the brainchild of German immigrant Max Eckardt. Originally, Eckardt imported glass ornaments from Germany, but with the looming threat of war, he shifted production to the United States. Partnering with the Corning Glass Company, he introduced a domestically made ornament that could be mass-produced using existing lightbulb manufacturing equipment. By the 1940s and 1950s, Shiny Brite was producing millions of ornaments annually, filling American homes with gleaming spheres, indents, and striped wonders that reflected the prosperity and modernity of the era.

Their designs mirrored the cultural mood: vibrant pinks, turquoises, and metallics resonated with the era's fascination for space-age design and atomic style. Hand-painted details, flocking, stenciling, and glittering accents gave each ornament a festive individuality.

Today, collectors prize Shiny Brite ornaments not only for their beauty but also for the history they represent. Authentic vintage examples, especially those in pristine condition with original boxes, are increasingly rare. Indented ornaments, with their jewel-toned concave centers, and striped or stenciled variations are particularly desirable. A full set in its original packaging can command significant prices, while single ornaments still carry nostalgic charm for those recreating a mid-century holiday look. ❄️



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1. INSPIRATION GALLERY: MID CENTURY MODERN FIREPLACES

Check out this collection of mod hearths that will deliver cozy vibes and decorating ideas to warm up your home for the season. Photo by Jim Brown

2. MCM BEDS ON A BUDGET

Giving your bedroom a Mid Century Modern makeover shouldn't cost the same as a small car. Rather, spend your money on something that will make the most impact—like a mid century bed frame!

3. ALL ABOUT ALUMINUM CHRISTMAS TREES

Aluminum Christmas trees had a short, but dazzling, run when it initially debuted in 1959. But their retro nostalgic appeal lives on. Photo by Bret Gum

4. GIVE YOUR HOME OFFICE A REFRESH

These retro inspired products will keep your MCM home office comfortable, stylish and fun. Photo by Jim Brown

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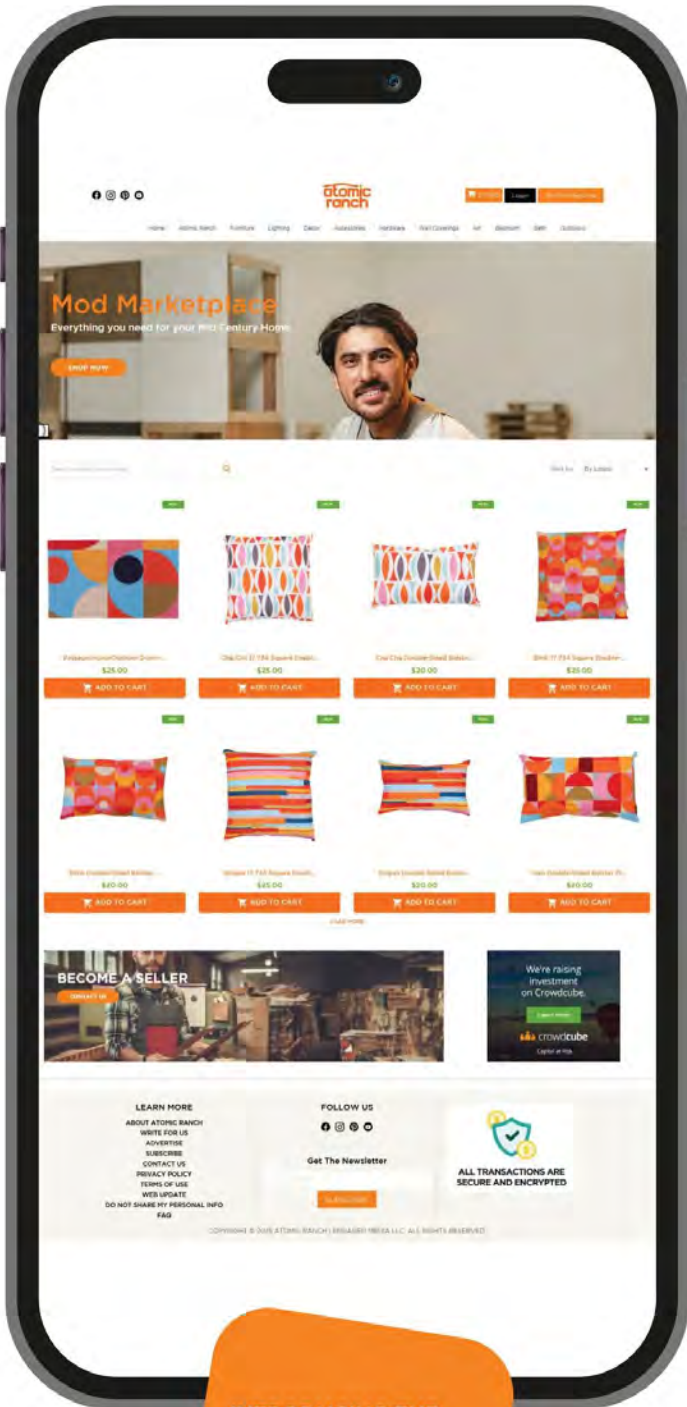


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resources

Atomic Kitchens

Page 20

Cabinetry: VOGO Cabinets, vogocabinets.com
Sink, faucet, range hood, cooktop, wall oven, island pendant lights: Ferguson, ferguson.com

Range accent backsplash tile, pink backsplash tile, floor tiles: Decorative Materials, decorativematerials.com

Cabinet door hardware: Lo & Co., loandcointeriors.com.au

Countertop: Pental Quartz, arcsurfaces.com

Diamond in the Rough

Page 28

Kimber Dempsey: TheRetroRealtor.com, Retrovations LLC, instagram.com/retrovationsllc

Terrazzo: Wausau Tile, wausautile.com

Fixtures: Kohler, kohler.com

Bespoke Appliances: Samsung, samsung.com

Cork Plank: Floor and Decor, flooranddecor.com

Custom Cabinetry: Cream Modern, creammodernco.com

Windows: Santa Fe Glass, santafe-glass.com

East Meets West

Page 42

Interior design by Only Way Is Up Design, owiu-design.com

Artwork & Paintings

Japanese ink on canvas: Naka Tomoka, instagram.com/naka.tomoka

Ink on paper: by Dwight Hwang, dwiththwang.com

Red and white artwork: by Fong Min Liao, instagram.com/fongminliao

Furniture

Console table: ENZO Console Table, Sixpenny, sixpenny.com

Sofa: Ligne Roset, leather, ligne-roset.com

Bookshelf: Boffi, boffi.com

Accent chair: Roly-Poly Chair in Chestnut, Toogood, t-o-o-g-o-o-d.com

Dining table: Androgyne Dining Table, rectangular, Audo, audo.com

Dining chairs: Eames Molded Plywood Dining Chair Wood Base (DCW), Non-Upholstered and Null Chair, dwr.com

Dining stools: Artek Aalto Stool 60, dwr.com

Charlotte Perriand chairs: Vintage Eames Lounge Chair: Eames LCW, hermanmiller.com

Wassily Chair and Barcelona Day Bed, knoll.com

Long bench: tie chair 2020, Japanese artisans from Koma Furniture, walnut, koma.tokyo

All kitchen cabinetry, shelving unit and island structure, custom bed and desk with Tatami top, custom tiled bathtub, custom carpentry works in kiln-dried Douglas fir, ceiling with frosted acrylic panels and floating shelves: Inflexion Builds, inflexion-builds.com

Lighting

Luce Orizzontale Suspension Light, Flos Almendra Organic Light Pendant, Flos IC Floor Lamp, Hashira Table Lamp, Phase 03 LED Chandelier: Lumens, lumens.com

Pendant light: Boffi / Time & Style, boffi.com

Outdoor Furniture

Jack Outdoor lounge and Quatro outdoor table: Ethnicraft, ethnicraft.com

Atlantis Umbrella and Capri Umbrella Foot: Fritz Hansen, fritzhanzen.com

Ceramics & Decorative Items

Ceramic panels: Tomonari Hashimoto, tomonarihashimoto.com

Flower vase: Ontayaki from Japan

Bath & Kitchen Fixtures

Faucet: Quadro Design Ceiling-Mounted Basin Mixer, tattahome.com

Shower panel: Signature Hardware Novi Thermostatic Shower Panel, signaturehardware.com

Other Materials & Features

Shoji screen: Original to the home

Custom Tatami Mat: Kuboki Tatami, kuboki-tatami.com

Wise Upgrades

Page 56

To contact Lauren Thomsen, principal at Lauren Thomsen Design, visit her website at laurenthomsendesign.com or on social media at [@_jtdesign_](https://www.instagram.com/_jtdesign_)

Entryway

Planter: Norm Architects for Audo Copenhagen Wire Series planter, audocph.com

Day bed, oak-framed mirror: vintage MCM

Terrazzo: original

Living room

Couches: Gentry by Moroso, moroso.it

Stools: Classic Herman Miller Eames Turned Stools, shapes A and B in walnut, hermanmiller.com

Floor lamp: Serge Mouille, sergemouilleusa.com

Planter: Case Study planter, roomandboard.com

Fireplace accessories: West Elm, westelm.com

Coffee table: vintage MCM

Pillows: Lemieux & Cie Marais Pillows for Anthropologie, anthropologie.com

Rug: Lulu & Georgia, luluandgeorgia.com

Living room (facing kitchen)
Chair: Pot Lounge Chair by Arne Jacobsen for Fritz Hansen in pink upholstery, fritzhanzen.com

Dining room

Chandelier: Brendan Ravenhill long-cord chandelier, ravenhillstudio.com

Armchairs: Muuto Cover armchairs, muuto.com

Side chair: Knoll MR side chair, knoll.com

Dining table: Ethnicraft Bok dining table, ethnicraft.com

Columns: Original dark-stained columns

Den

Oriental rug: vintage

Couch: West Elm, westelm.com

White oak millwork: custom

Side tables: Blu Dot Turn Tall and Low side

tables, bludot.com

Pillows: Lemieux & Cie La Balance Pillows for Anthropologie, anthropologie.com

Kitchen

White oak cabinetry and millwork: custom

Appliances: Fisher & Paykel, fisherpaykel.com

Vent hood: XO Appliance, xoappliance.com

Pendants: Foscarini Aplomb, foscarini.us

Bar stools: &Tradition Pavilion AV7 by Anderssen & Voll in black, andtradition.com

Fruit bowl: Alessi, us.alessi.com

Cabinet pulls: Emtek, emtek.com

Sink: Kohler workstation sink and integrated cutting board, kohler.com

Bedroom

Chair: Carl Hansen & Son Cuba chair, carlhansen.com

Rug: Hay Peas rug, hay.com

Curtains: White linen curtains, The Shade Store, theshadestore.com

Side tables: Tulip side tables, available at various retailers

Bed: Jenni Kayne Home Pacific bed, jennikayne.com

Primary bath

Wall-mounted light: Nuura Liila wall-mount light, nuura.com

Mirror: Crate and Barrel, crateandbarrel.com

Plumbing fixtures: Flusso (previously Isenberg), flusso.lighting

Bathtub: Duravit Luv freestanding bathtub, duravit.us

Sills: Carrara Marble sills, available at various retailers

Wall tile: Ann Sacks Terrazzo Renata wall tile (24" x 24"), annsacks.kohler.com

Wall accent tile (fluted): Ann Sacks Terrazzo Renata wall accent tile (fluted), annsacks.kohler.com

Floor tile: Nemo Tile Verve floor tile (24" x 48"), nemotile.com/verve

Sink: Kohler Verticyl sink, kohler.com

Countertop: Iconic White quartz countertop, available at various retailers

White oak vanity: custom

Guest bath

Sconces: Flos Mini Glo-Ball sconces, flos.com

Wallpaper: Hygge & West Alpine Garden wallpaper, hyggeandwest.com

Mirror: Rejuvenation Bentwood Rounded Rectangle mirror with walnut frame, rejuvenation.com

Vanity: Ikea, ikea.com

Planter: Hasami porcelain planter, available at various retailers

Exterior

Windows, door: Kolbe Windows & Doors, kolbewindows.com

Sconce: Louis Poulsen PH-3 wall sconce, louispoulsen.com

Front door: Original custom MCM door and hardware

Armchair, ottoman: Fermob Luxembourg low armchair and ottoman, fermobusa.com

Light: Macadam Semi Flush Light, rejuvenation.com

Back lighting: Bega ceiling-mount lighting, bega.com

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CHRISTMAS: CHARGE!

The First Credit Card: A Mid-Century Modern Innovation in Finance

By Jackie Torres • Photos by Harold M. Lambert/Getty Images



Circa 1955: A young boy smiles mischievously as a young girl points to a doll she wants in the window display of a toy store, around Christmas, 1950s. They wear winter coats and hats. Other toys displayed are a Playskool mailbox, alphabet blocks, roller-skates, a toy train and a toy pistol.

IN THE SLEEK, optimistic glow of the mid-century modern era, American life was rapidly transforming—design, technology, and culture converged in bold, futuristic ways. Amid the clean lines of Eames chairs and the rise of suburbia, one quiet yet revolutionary invention reshaped consumer culture forever: the credit card.

The first widely recognized credit card, the Diners Club card, debuted in 1950. Created by Frank McNamara, Ralph Schneider, and Matty Simmons, the card was born from a simple inconvenience—McNamara had forgotten his wallet while dining out. What emerged from that moment was a charge card usable at multiple restaurants, a novel concept at the time. Unlike store-specific credit accounts that had existed prior, the Diners Club card was the first to break boundaries, allowing members to charge purchases across various businesses.

Its launch mirrored the postwar American ethos: convenience, mobility, and a growing appetite for luxury. As families moved into modernist homes and drove chrome-laden cars, the Diners Club card became a status symbol—often tucked into wallets next to punchy geometric business cards and receipts from Googie diners.

By 1958, around the same time Arne Jacobsen was putting the finishing touches on the Egg Chair, both American Express and Bank of America (BankAmericard) released consumer credit cards that could be used anywhere unlocking new ways to travel, dine, and furnish their ranch homes.

Much like the era's design icons—streamlined, functional, and forward-thinking—the credit card reflected the spirit of innovation that defined the 1950s. What started as a solution to a forgotten wallet became a powerful symbol of American modernity and consumption, shaping the economic rhythms of the 20th century and beyond. 🌀



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