

Tuesday, May 08, 2012

San Diego's mod squad

Contemporary designers bringing mid-century aesthetics back to life

By [Kinsee Moran](#)



An Apple Bottle, Trumpet Bottle, Waisted Tube, Small Tube and Round Chalice from Josh Herman's Chartreuse Volcanic Glaze collection

Thanks to the likes of *Mad Men* and IKEA, it isn't just a few obsessed folks with serious design fetishes who are on the hunt for all things mid-century modern. Appreciation of clean lines and organic forms and objects that often display an innate beauty while carefully striking a balance between the natural and manmade world is a mainstream phenomenon these days. And even though the movement lasted from the early 1930s to the mid 1960s, plenty of designers are still giving the look new legs. Meet five locals who've built upon mid-century-modern ideals to come up with something new:

[Josh Herman Ceramics](#)

Josh Herman is accustomed to having people scratch their heads over the bubbly, molten-lava-like texture found on most of his pottery and sculptures. He developed the glaze from scratch and "long story short" figured out a way to turn his materials into something akin to split-pea soup that boils up and lets out gases in the kiln before settling and drying in gorgeously organic patterns. While Herman's pottery often boasts a simple, functional design, his sculpture, where his real passion lies, is vibrant and funky.

[Jason Xavier Lane](#)

A lot of Jason Xavier Lane's design work, especially the furniture he comes up with as part of the design collaborative Bells & Whistles, is fairly serious. When he sat down to design his GollyPods, he tried to think up the simplest, most playful object he could. The lifelike creatures have a fun-loving quality that Lane says would work perfectly as characters on a Saturday-morning cartoon. Their sleek, unique shape also appeals to the design crowd, which, after spotting an early GollyPod design on a blog, has responded by surprising Lane with high demand for the objects well before he was ready to roll them out. After a long, difficult development process, though, Lane says 10 of the GollyPods will be ready and for sale at tendliving.com by the end of the month.



Gollypod by Jason Xavier Lane
Photo by Scott Caliqure

Jeremy Gercke

Jeremy Gercke admits to being obsessed with the ceramic process. Using a mix of a potter's wheel and hand-shaping techniques, he builds forms that span from fully functional to abstract sculptural. Because he allows himself to be somewhat spontaneous during the making of an object and cites everything from water balloons to movie sets as inspiration, he never knows exactly how things will end up. The result has been unique modern pieces that reference the past while looking to the future.



A detail shot of a vase with three trumpet spouts by Jeremy Gercke

Alberto Vieyra Furniture Lab

A mid-century-modern furniture collector / dealer before he became a serious self-taught designer, Alberto Vieyra was embraced by the design world seemingly overnight. After posting one of his chairs on a popular design website, he was swept up by a gallery in Los Angeles and invited to a prestigious design show in Paris, which he ultimately declined because the rapid flood of attention came as such a shock. Vieyra caters to high-end clients attracted to his mid-century-design base, which often veers off into something edgier with a space-age twist.



Origamex Coffee Table by Alberto Vieyra

Aaron Smith Woodworking

What Aaron Smith really likes about modern design is that most of the ornamentation is stripped away to expose the most simplistic, minimalist form necessary. Smith is also a big fan of organic shapes—he often leaves live-edge slabs visible in his otherwise-polished, finely finished work. Alongside the mid-century-modern inspiration, Smith brings in the contemporary idea of using sustainably harvested wood, often from local sources.



"Ambivalence" by Aaron Smith