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Reed Krakoff's
Well-Designed Life

Italian
Masters

The Power
of Influence

Eileen
Gray

DESIGN
ISSUE

Fashion designer
and collector
Reed Krakoff in his
Upper East Side
town house.

NO NOW + THE TEN



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Celebrating the importance of influence, *Art+Auction* highlights the work of five young designers from around the globe and the masters who have inspired them.

By Abigail R. Esman

KAREN CHEKERDJIAN

A Lebanese native, Chekerdjian was introduced to industrial design when she went to Italy at the age of 27. “It just didn’t exist in the Middle East,” she says. Now 43, Chekerdjian has gone a long way

to remedy that, with regular exhibitions at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan, the New York International Contemporary Furniture Fair, and galleries worldwide. Working with materials locally available in Beirut—glass, wood, metal—and partnering with craftspeople and manufacturers there, she has developed a

signature aesthetic that is at once Minimalist and luxe.

But the pioneering designer also has her fun side, evident even in some of her most elegant work, like a table inspired by cupcake wrappers and formed from a single piece of metal, or Living Space III, a kind of all-in-one design that combines lounge, coffee table, magazine rack, and storage space.

Despite her own interna-

tional success, Chekerdjian says, designers still struggle in Lebanon, which she describes as “a part of the world where design is nothing.” She finds strength—and inspiration—in the example of the groundbreaking Charlotte Perriand. “I designed a table once, thinking I was designing my own table,” she says. “But after doing it, I realized it was inspired by Perriand. And she was a pioneer in her time too.”



Living Space III, 2012. Wood and rattan, 105½ x 19¾ x 27½ in., \$12,650.

2012

1928

CHARLOTTE PERRIAND

Its curved, cool, steel crescent cradling the merest suggestion of a woman’s form has made Perriand’s B306 chaise longue (now marketed by Cassina as the LC4) one of the sexiest furniture designs of the modern age, as contemporary and alluring 85 years after its creation as it was when its designer, then just 25, first envisioned it. Though officially classified a Le Corbusier design, it was Perriand’s own, produced in her first year as an associate in his Paris atelier. But that wasn’t all: The cubic Corbu chair, or what the studio called the LC2, was also Perriand’s work. Such was the plight of women designers in the early 20th century, however talented and avant-garde.

History, however, has had the last laugh: These early uncredited designs are increasingly associated with Perriand’s name, and an early version of the B306 can realize more than \$65,000 at auction. Far more important, however, is the legacy she left as a woman whose designs are not just accepted, but celebrated.

LC4 chair, 1928. Polished chrome-plated steel, calfskin, leather, and canvas, 63 x 33 x 22½ in.



CHARLES AND RAY EAMES

Married in 1941, Charles (1907–78) and Ray (1912–88) Eames spent their lives together championing the new. They drove the taste of postwar American consumers forward through experiments applying new technology to furniture design (theirs was the first plastic chair to be produced industrially) and architecture, and even promoting the modern lifestyle through photography and film.

But it was through their partnership with the Herman Miller Furniture Company in the 1950s that they became a household name, selling hundreds of



thousands of their now-classic DCM chair. Legend has it that Herman Miller moved 2,000 of them per month in 1951. The same process used to shape the plywood for those chairs was used to create a simply elegant screen, marketed in three different sizes.

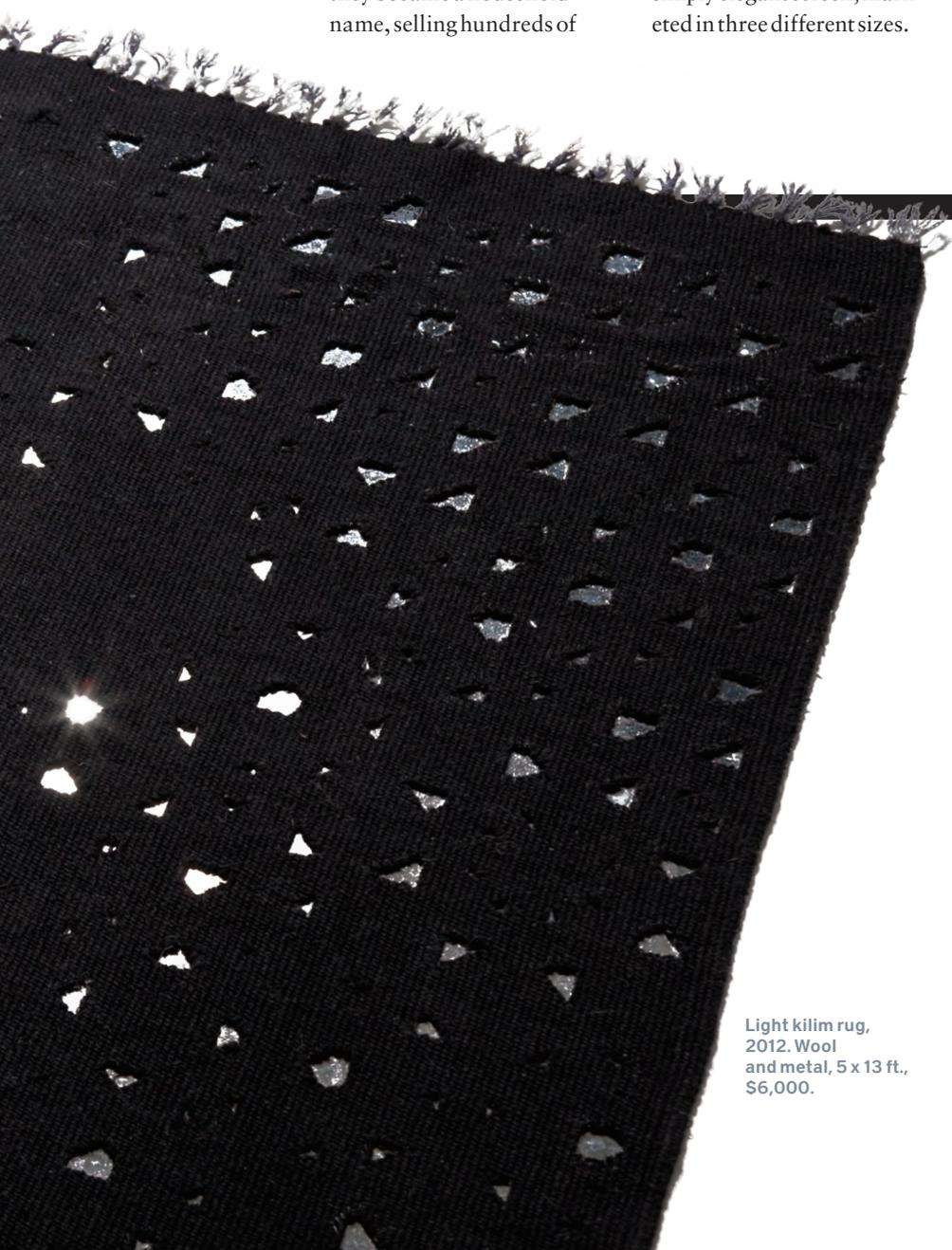
FSW-10 screen, 1946/1950. Ash plywood and canvas, 68 x 100 in.

Even the more sumptuous Eames designs have remained affordable, thanks to mass production. Original lounge chairs with their plush upholstery and matching

ottomans, first designed in 1956, have sold at auction for as much as \$11,500 for rosewood editions; contemporary examples of the modern classic retail for \$4,500 and up.

2012

1946



TAMER NAKISCI

The breadth of the Eames engagement is what most inspires Nakisci, whose own career encompasses interior and event design and urban installations, as well as a nascent line of consumer furnishings. “If you look at their history,” the Turkish designer says of the Eameses, “they’re playing, they’re inventing, they’re doing art, furniture, films—and all of those things, I also do.”

Nakisçi, 30, was in a sense born into the business: His father, a carpenter, owned a woodworking factory next door to their home in Istanbul, and the young Nakisçi grew up watching the production of “just about everything,” he says, “sometimes furniture,

sometimes backgammon sets, sometimes a small yacht.” Yet the field of design as it is understood in, say, Holland was barely emerging in Turkey when he entered university in 2000. Even now, the idea of limited-edition or haute design is just beginning to take off in his native country.

Nakisçi has seized on the opportunity with gusto, part of an eager generation of young Turkish designers. His unique Light and Shade rugs riff on Turkish carpet-making traditions, combining the handiwork of artisans with high-tech, futuristic materials and ideals. For Light, 10 workers sewed 6,000 stitches into nearly 1,000 feet of wool, setting stainless-steel mirrors into the weave.

Light kilim rug, 2012. Wool and metal, 5 x 13 ft., \$6,000.



Aspas chair, 1962. Jacaranda wood and leather, 45 x 42 x 35 in.

SERGIO RODRIGUES

The godfather of Brazilian modernism, Rodrigues believes the spirit of his homeland lives in the furniture and objects he creates from its rich natural resources. Working with contemporaries Oscar Niemeyer, Lucio Costa, and others in the early 1950s, Rodrigues helped define a Brazilian style of informal elegance that persists to this day. His furniture, incorporating Brazilian leathers, jacaranda, and indigenous tropical woods, reveals a playfulness as much as it does a passion for form and comfort.

Over the course of his lengthy career, Rodrigues has received countless awards, particularly for his Mole chair, whose inviting, puffy upholstery seems to have outgrown its simple wood frame. And that success has carried over into his market: Prices for early models of his designs can reach well into five figures, as when a 1958 Mucki bench achieved \$32,400 at a 2007 Important 20th Century Design sale at Sotheby's New York. Showing little interest in resting on his laurels, the octogenarian designer opened a store in New York in 2011.

1962

2011

SERGIO J. MATOS

Brazil's industrial design community today is forging a new aesthetic that is at once indigenous and international. Working with native materials and local artisans, Matos, 35, celebrates the culture, the festive colors, and the traditions of his homeland in such designs as the Carambola series of chairs, which borrow from fishermen's nets and are crafted with hammock ropes. He sees a kindred spirit in

Sergio Rodrigues, who, Matos says, "sees the beauty of the elements that we call the Brazilianness. My work doesn't have the same language, but he inspires me with his ability to translate enthusiasm for Brazil

into beautiful pieces."

Matos's sometimes radical approach presents challenges. In 2010 fabricators in Paraiba, where his studio is based, called his Balão chair "furniture for aliens" and refused to produce

it. To persuade them, Matos created his own model himself and brought it to the factory to demonstrate that it was possible to build—and to use.

His growing legion of fans need not worry that the young designer will run out of ideas. "Brazilian culture is a large set of cultures," Matos says, "and Brazilian design is vibrant, creative, and dynamic. The repertoire that I build from these elements is inexhaustible."



Balão armchair, 2011. Carbon steel and cotton yarn, 30 x 47 x 32 in., \$5,000.

ARNE JACOBSEN

Its name may be off-putting, but Danish designer Jacobsen's Ant chair remains one of the most popular designer chairs of the 20th century. Designed in 1951 and notable for its three-legged base and one-piece, hourglass-shaped seat and back, the Ant was inspired by the Eameses' molded-plywood dining chairs. With its pared-down materials, that embodiment of utilitarianism contrasts with Jacobsen's cocoonlike Egg chair, created for the lobby of Copenhagen's Royal Hotel, but both chairs became icons of modernist design, combining

ergonomics, streamlined form, and state-of-the-art materials.

Jacobsen's talents extended beyond seating to ceramics, textiles, lighting, and architecture, making him one of the most admired and accomplished designers of his era—and also among the most coveted today: Original examples of the Egg chair have brought more than \$50,000 at auction. Yet despite his success, Jacobsen always remained humble. "People buy a chair," he once said. "They don't care who designed it."



Swan sofa, 1958. Aluminum, foam, and upholstery, 31 x 57 x 29 in.

1958

2011



Fruit Bowl settee, 2011. Natural rattan, polyurethane, and textile, 102 x 34 x 27 in., \$5,000.

HIROOMI TAHARA

Tahara was first drawn to his field by a magazine photograph of a lamp designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. He'd never seen a lamp like the Taliesin. And he'd never heard of product design. But he knew he wanted to make a lamp just like it and then come up with his own designs.

Some 15 years later, the Japanese-born designer, now 35, is living in Milan, developing not only lamps but vases, seating elements, and tables, all of them reflecting his intuitive sense of the relationships between material and form. It seems perfectly logical, for instance, that his Fruit Bowl settee would be molded of rattan,

the matching tables topped with colored glass.

In the interim, his repertoire of design influences expanded; he now turns most often to Jacobsen for inspiration. "I love his shapes," says Tahara. "His products are very simple, but iconic and innovative—and still popular, even after more than 50 years. This to me is what is most important." ■