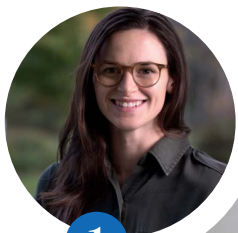


6 modern makers you need to know now

BY MEL STUDACH

AN EMPHASIS ON FUNCTIONALITY, CRAFTSMANSHIP AND NATURAL materials was a mainstay of the 20th century's American Arts and Crafts movement, an ethos upheld by the likes of Sam Maloof, Wharton Esherick, and George Nakashima. The movement's core tenets prevail, but leading designers' points of view have shifted. What's the state of American craft today? We'll let her tell you.



1

"In other countries, there seems to be a pressure to stay

within a particular design tradition. So much of American culture is a melting pot, so there's less pressure to stay within one tradition. I'm always thinking about how we define art, design, and craft, and I see the mediums beginning to overlap. One truth

Michaela

Crie Stone

I've come up against over and over again is that people often devalue something when it's functional, even though it's often harder to make. You'd think you'd want to invest more in those objects. We're oversaturated with products in this country, and my work comes from an inherent drive to make things well and to make things that will last, to combat consumerism." michaelacstone.com



"Craft, to me, is the creative process of using my hands and found objects to create the textures that I love. I usually work in porcelain or stoneware, and I go in using different tools or found objects—pieces of metal, a vintage baker's paddle, textured rocks

2

Denise

McKenzie-Lee

brought back from Tulum—and use it to create something interesting. I think back to having art class in school: Macramé, papier-mâché, all the things I got to involve my hands



in. It would get to the point that they'd have to stop me from using up all the materials. I just wanted to make. That has informed me to this day, that I don't have to specialize in just one thing." enkeceramics.com



3

Mira
Nakashima

"To my father [George Nakashima], the term *craft* meant making something that was useful, carefully by hand. Dad was fond

of Shaker design because it was basic and simple and

utilitarian. It wasn't an expression of ego. It was built out of necessity and a sense of belonging to the world of nature. We're getting further away from making things by hand unless it's useless stuff. I feel that it's important for people to be involved in making things solid rather than just on the computer." nakashimawoodworkers.com





4

Bec Brittain

“My father was a furniture maker and carpenter, and my mother is a painter.

For me, it is less about American as an abstract concept and more about local community, about doing my part to maintain the network and learned knowledge of the maker’s tradition. We assemble everything at the studio, and all of

our metalwork and finishing is done locally. We are part of a much wider global network than ever before, but there is still something important about local community and shared resources. While I don’t think of my work as being

American per se, I know that I am affected by my surroundings and friendships, and the work is an extension of that.” *becbrittain.com*

“We started off as architecture students and then fell in love with the woodshop and the process of making. To us, the act of making and the act of designing are one and the same; they are in conversation with one another. When you understand the provenance, and the labor and quality of materials in it, there’s a greater relationship one can have with that object. A lot of

people have lost an understanding of what it means to buy furniture of value, what it means to make an investment in furniture. Having grown up amid the disposability and mass consumerism of the ‘80s and ‘90s, we think about the

production of our products in the most thoughtfully local and highly crafted manner possible. It’s a reactionary pursuit

to bring back the knowledge base of craft in America and to make products that will be long-lasting.” *eggcollective.com*



Egg Collective

5



6

Elyse Graham

“A few years back, we designed a mirror made of meta-material, a composite resin that we’ve created. The frame was composed completely of recast cutoffs from our earlier work—so I could look at the mirror and see parts from past projects. It’s a fun way of storytelling and also being able to reduce our waste; there’s a patchwork-quilt aspect to the work in that



way. Curiosity has pushed us down this path. For years, there was a barrier between art and design, a stigma on anyone who made something functional as an artist. What’s

happening in American design right now is that the rules are being put aside, and the doors are open to nontraditional designers designing.” *elysegraham.com*