

# ELEDECOR<sup>®</sup>

**SPECIAL  
ISSUE!**

## WHAT'S MODERN NOW?

**FRESH THINKING  
A BOLD MIX  
OF OLD & NEW**



**PLUS:  
KELLY WEARSTLER'S  
GLAM NEW FURNITURE**



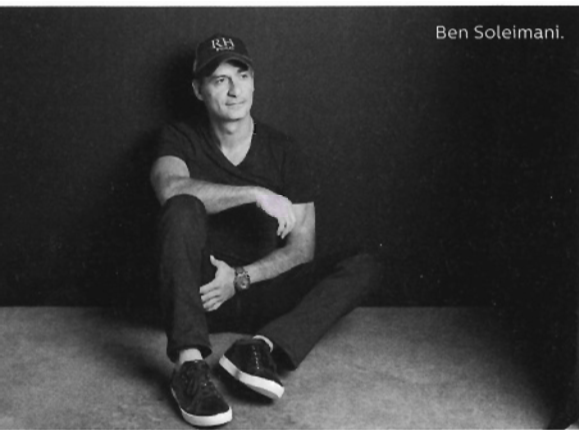
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GREAT  
STYLE AT  
GREAT PRICES

Why shouldn't the spread of democracy extend to design? Thanks to these three innovators, top quality and high style are more affordable than ever



Ben Soleimani.

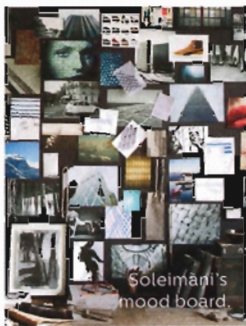
Medallione rug in cream.



Pluma rug in cream.



Marca rug in blue.



Soleimani's mood board.



A dyed vintage rug.

TOP OF THE PILE

It's a familiar lament: Things aren't what they used to be. But when it comes to shopping for rugs, change has been good. And Ben Soleimani can take much of the credit. Only 20 years ago, the rug market was in a dark age. For the extremely wealthy, there were elite dealers who procured rare and antique rugs. For everyone else, there were individual retailers dealing floorcoverings of mixed quality; in those days, every shop seemed to have a "Going out of business!" sign on permanent display. The designs were stuck in the past. "Nobody was creating anything new," says Soleimani, who was born in Iran to a family of rug dealers. "An Indian rug looked like an Indian rug, a Persian rug looked Persian, and that was that." Soleimani set out to amend this. "I believed that rugs were an art, and that they deserved respect." By the time he turned 21, he had overseen construction of a Los Angeles showroom for his family's business, Mansour. He spent the next few years traveling the world, strengthening his family's relationships with artisans and discovering new

talents. His interest in design led him to his next goal. "I wanted to create my own rugs," he says. With the launch of Mansour Modern in 2005, he introduced couture-quality rugs in decidedly untraditional designs. The ever-restless entrepreneur sold his share in the family business in 2013 and is reshaping the industry once again. Now, anyone looking for a quality rug at a reasonable price can find one at Restoration Hardware, with which Soleimani has partnered since 2011. Initially he offered 400 designs; today his array includes more than 5,000, in styles from Morocco-inspired flatweaves to contemporary designs in cowhide. Perhaps most remarkable is the selection of vintage rugs he has curated for RH. A shopper can browse through more than 1,000 one-of-a-kind rugs—primarily mid-century pieces from Turkey, personally selected by Soleimani—from the comfort of his or her laptop. "To buy vintage rugs online is revolutionary," says Soleimani. And it's a long way from the clearance sales of yore. CATHERINE HONG



Andy Singer at home in Houston.

GUIDING LIGHT

A naked bulb can illuminate a room, but it can't create an alluring ambience. For that, you need top-tier talents like Michael S. Smith, Kelly Wearstler, Suzanne Kasler, and Barbara Barry to design high-quality, well-priced lighting that can transform a drab entrance hall into a dazzling space, or a vast master suite into a cozy retreat. "People underestimate the effect a gorgeous light fixture can have in a room," says Andy Singer, president of Visual Comfort & Co., a Houston-based lighting company with a prodigious assortment of indoor and outdoor lighting made in collaboration with Ralph Lauren, Thomas O'Brien, Alexa Hampton, and Aerin Lauder, among others. Singer, a former lighting-company sales representative, started the company in 1987 with a small line of pharmacy lamps. Seven years later, he collaborated with Bill Blass, beginning a series of design partnerships that has made the company a premiere resource for decorators. In addition, E.F. Sandy Chapman, Visual Comfort's chief designer, creates classically inspired pieces that are among the company's best sellers. Styles range from industrial chic to Paris flea market. Every design is made of natural materials, including bronze, brass, and forged iron, with hand-rubbed finishes and quality hardware. The pieces may look custom made, like Lauder's pebbled aquamarine porcelain Culloden table lamp, but they are manufactured in Asia. Singer credits efficient, cost-effective production, distribution, and sales operations for making products affordable to style-seekers on a budget. O'Brien's antique nickel Bryant wall



Quatrefoil floor lamp by Suzanne Kasler.



Elderly hanging lamp by Aerin Lauder.



Culloden lamp by Lauder.



Tripod floor lamp by E.F. Chapman.

sconce is \$200; Hampton's striking Sophia flush mounts range from about \$500 to \$800. "It's wonderful to work with designers who create magnificent pieces that look as good as anything that costs ten times the money," says Singer. "I can't tell you how many times someone has said to us, 'Wow, this chandelier is perfect, but how am I going to tell my client that it's only \$4,000 when my budget is \$50,000?'" JILL GERSTON



Sophia flush mount lamp by Alexa Hampton.

THINKING AHEAD



Palazzo Abatellis's courtyard.

**SUZANNE RHEINSTEIN**  
"What is modern? Carlo Scarpa's renovation of Palermo's Palazzo Abatellis. Fondazione Prada, where Rem Koolhaas gilded an old building next to a new one clad in aluminum."

**MARIA CORNEJO**  
"Modern isn't sticking to one form of design. It's how you make it personal. Things that are not only well-designed but have heart, feeling, and texture, and enhance one's life. That's modern to me."

**NATE BERKUS**  
"Handwoven textiles from Peru, ceramics and crafts from Mexico: These things represent tradition and culture. Mix them with vintage furniture and the effect is both storied and modern."

**JEAN-LOUIS DENIOT**  
"Art Nouveau is about to have a second life. Works by Mackintosh, Hoffmann, and Loos and the Wiener Werkstätte will become the reference points."

**MA YANSONG**  
"We should delineate a new ideal for the city of the future. We need to construct an environment that embodies both the convenience of a modern city and the ancient Eastern affinity for nature." >

Art Nouveau trestle table.



THINKING AHEAD

**CHAMPEAU & WILDE**  
"We can now use our phones to control both our music and the temperature of our floors. Integrating new technologies with grace is the next challenge in interior design."

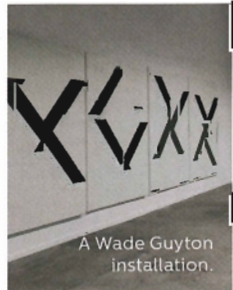
**PAUL FORTUNE**  
"Sustainable and green are the most modern attributes for design going forward. Studio Swine works with human hair and bioresin—it's amazing and modern; a renewable resource used in a new way."



Studio Swine's hair-and-resin combs.

**MARIO BUATTA**  
"I think the pendulum is taking a swing back to romanticism. In fashion we are seeing more colors, florals, and prints. People are responding to happier moments in what they are wearing."

**MARK CUNNINGHAM**  
"Artist Wade Guyton's work is ahead of its time—powerful and subtle shapes executed with inventive printing techniques. He challenges the past to create an emerging future." >



A Wade Guyton installation.