

# Robb Report

33rd ANNUAL

## BEST OF THE BEST

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LUXURY WITHOUT COMPROMISE



# DESIGN

By Helena Madden



THE BIG IDEA

## A More Livable Nest

**Last year we** learned anew how to live in our homes. We had to: For long periods everywhere else was closed. The extra couch time caused us to rethink our abodes. A residence was no longer just a place to bookend the day, where a sofa was for show rather than sitting, a desk a spot to pay the monthly bills. It became *the* place, where we worked for hours, spent all our leisure time and took many, many Zoom calls.

The home office took priority. “I did a

self-survey of how many hours a week I was in different rooms,” says one tech executive. “I was spending 40 to 60 in the office. So if I’m just looking at where my time is going, it made sense to spend effort on that part of the house.” He tasked Standard Architecture, a Los Angeles firm known for its sunny, open-concept residences, with creating a workspace for his Beverly Hills home that included amenities to mimic those in the corporate setting, such as a conference table, only with more style and personalization.

In lieu of restaurants, some of us fired up the kitchen range for the first time in a while, only to realize the whole room needed a menu of enhancements. Designers were busier than ever, and custom-kitchen experts such as L’Atelier Paris took on three times as many projects as normal last year, according to CEO Ricardo Moraes. Others moved the whole cheffing-and-dining operation outside. Instead of just a grill and a pizza oven, homeowners invested in sinks, refrigerators, dishwashers and just about every other appliance imaginable, as well as sleeker countertops and cabinetry. One of the smartest launches came from Swedish manufacturer Dometic, which debuted a thoughtful mobile bar dubbed MoBar.

“We have some clients who say they spend their lives outside now,” says Margie Lavender, a principal at architecture and interior-design firm Ike Kligerman Barkley. “Screened porches are in every house, and the outside kitchen has gotten much more of a focus.” Furniture brands took notice. A number of them tried their hand at outdoor-furniture design for the first time, such as Ethnicraft and Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, capitalizing on newfound demand.

As we enter the post-pandemic world, where mindsets about working from home have shifted, many may be reluctant to leave their newly updated nests, and the impulse to optimize and refresh the home may be a hard one to shake. “People are committed to living well,” says Jamie Drake, cofounder of interior-design firm Drake/Anderson. “It isn’t so much about redoing but more about new beginnings.”



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The furniture world has been obsessed with reissues lately, with sketches from Arne Jacobsen, Le Corbusier and Gio Ponti all wriggling their way out of various archives and into the new millennium. Few, though, have exploded in popularity like Camaleonda, which was designed by lauded Italian architect Mario Bellini and first produced in 1970. Even then it was one of the most forward-thinking creations available. Instead of the designer telling you how to live—a chair is only a chair, after all—users could decide for themselves, tethering Camaleonda's tufted seats and ottomans together via hooks and loops to create endless seating options.

These days, modular seating is a dime a dozen. And yet Camaleonda does more than endure: It has become an Instagram darling, gracing the feeds of actress Chrissy Teigen, fashion blogger Aimee Song and interior designer Athena Calderone. The appeal has everything to do with the sofa's eccentricities. Instead of the clean, angular shapes that are indicative of still-popular midcentury-modern designs, B&B Italia's couch maintains a squared-off structure but is also a thick, bulbous creation that's incredibly soft and inviting, an aesthetic note in high demand last year as homeowners transformed their spaces into cozy refuges from the tumult of a world in the grip of an epidemic.

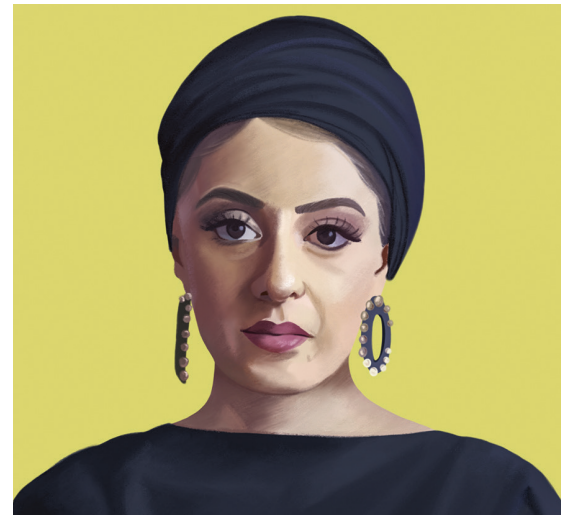
B&B Italia didn't cut any corners when it came to reviving the famous furnishing, either. While the design remains the same, its materiality addresses contemporary concerns, using Forest Stewardship Council-certified beechwood for the legs and recycled plastics in the upholstery. *From \$4,350 for a single module*

# Camaleonda Sofa by B&B Italia

REISSUE







ONE TO WATCH

## Sumayya Vally

Designing the Serpentine Pavilion, a temporary, annual art showcase in London, ranks among architecture's most prestigious commissions. Zaha Hadid built the first one in 2000; since then, other luminaries have followed in her footsteps, including Bjarke Ingels, Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas. This month, Sumayya Vally brings her version of the structure to life. At 30 years old, she's the youngest architect to do so.

The gig comes on the heels of years of interdisciplinary work at her Johannesburg-based firm, Counterspace, where Vally uses architecture as a catalyst for larger social change. Recent projects include building an arts-and-after-school center with flexible spaces for co-learning and converting a former Dutch church into a mosque with a minaret of light that appears five times a day.

Architecture can seem static, but Vally's work is anything but. Her dynamic take on the Serpentine, then, emerges as more than just one big, unmoving structure. The open-air circular pavilion hints at a Grecian agora and yet is utterly modern in its layered, blocky seating and interlocking sections, each with a distinct shape and texture. This architectural mosaic represents London's many migrant communities—such as the Afro-Caribbean population in Brixton and Whitechapel's Bangladeshis—and the craft techniques practiced there. Since parts of the pavilion are removable, they can later be installed for local celebrations in the respective neighborhoods that inspired them. It's thoughtful not just in its look and concept but in its materials: The pavilion is comprised of cork as well as bricks made of recycled construction waste.

ILLUSTRATION BY PAOLA WICIAK



# Daiki by Minotti

CHAIR

**At this point**, it's fair to say midcentury-modern design has experienced a renaissance far beyond its supposed 1960s-era expiration date. The movement's unfussy, function-first mantra came back into style in the late '90s and early 2000s, when brands like Knoll and Herman Miller exploded in popularity; designers and homeowners still clamor for Marcel Breuer and Hans Wegner originals in 2021. There's not much room, then, to create something midcentury-adjacent that's both fresh and interesting. And yet Daiki, designed by renowned Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan, manages to bring something new to the table—or, rather, the chair.

The twist to the midcentury formula comes courtesy of Kogan's many trips to Japan. Daiki is a tribute to the country's design tradition, marrying subtle elegance with the bold, overt lines of American modernism. Because of its similar-but-different take on a beloved aesthetic, it can be paired with virtually any other piece: doubly so because the cushions come in fabric or leather and the wooden shell in beech plywood with a flamed ash veneer or palisander santos with a matte lacquer finish. Add armrests, if you like, or go for Daiki's outdoor version (shown here). But like any good midcentury seat, function comes first, and Kogan's design has a deep, low-slung base that's a real pleasure to sit back and relax in. *Armchair with armrests, from \$7,985; without armrests, from \$6,490*





## NVL BY MDF ITALIA

### TABLE

**Architects have a** long history of designing not just spectacular buildings but intricate, carefully considered furniture as well. Zaha Hadid made many dynamic, twisting seats during her lifetime, and years ago Rem Koolhaas crafted a futuristic series of chairs, tables and more for Knoll. Jean Nouvel is another Pritzker winner who has worked on both edifices and furnishings. One of his latest, the NVL table, brings the very best elements of his architecture to the living room.

NVL, a moniker derived from the consonants of its designer's last name, is characterized by clean geometries and a pared-back, almost minimalist sensibility, and yet it also manages to look bold and unconventional. That aesthetic marriage has much to do with its shape, which references a trilithon, a structure with two large stones supporting a third stone, a la Stonehenge. The influence gives the table an almost monolithic look, similar to many of Nouvel's most famous projects, like the Louvre Abu Dhabi or the Torre Glòries skyscraper in Barcelona. But Nouvel keeps it elegant with a thin top slab. For those who really want to lean into the architectural theme, the piece can be finished in a variety of marbles and reconstructed stone, in addition to colorful lacquers. *From \$8,775*



## MIA BY SCAVOLINI

### KITCHEN

**There's nothing like** watching a Michelin-starred chef work in easy synchronicity born of convenience and exacting design around a kitchen. That seamless choreography inspired Italian manufacturer Scavolini to tap Carlo Cracco, former chef at Michelin-starred Enoteca Pinchiorri in Florence, to help create Mia, a kitchen system that smartly gets maximal use out of all its various cabinets, countertops, nooks and niches. The hood above the stove, for instance, doubles as a shelf, and you can affix herb gardens, shelving units or wine storage to the backsplash. A cutting board can be tucked away like a drawer when it's not in use, and a meal-prep station can be easily opened and shut; when closed, it's just another part of the sleek countertop.

Cracco and Scavolini's concept was particularly welcome this year, with all the home cheffing happening. Both veteran and newbie cooks can benefit from tools like the food-warming lamp, which keeps one course or meal warm while you're prepping another, and the mobile counter, which can be wheeled from the kitchen to the dining room for serving. Of course, the culinary feats that Mia can help you accomplish are important, but so is its materiality. Thankfully, the duo thought of that, too: All of its systems and components are available in wood veneers, steel, lacquer, clay and more. *Price upon request*