

# WEST HOLLYWOOD DESIGN DISTRICT

**"Decades of Design"** Retrospective Press Book  
October 2014 through January 2015



"Never has there been a city whose business and cultural history is so closely interwoven with the design trade like the City of West Hollywood. This first-ever exhibit takes you on a journey spanning 65 years from 1948 to the present on the three intersecting streets of Beverly Boulevard, Robertson Boulevard, and Melrose Avenue with an insiders' look at how the businesses located there have influenced and transformed the design world at large. Drawing upon both corporate and private archives, the wide range of historical images in this exhibition offer a glimpse into how the West Hollywood Design District once looked through the eyes of the pioneering businesses who paved the way for those who now carry these legacies forward into the realms of style, art, fashion and cuisine. You'll also see how today's trend setters and style makers are creating new and exciting ways of expressing themselves that will continue to inspire others. It's quite a history, for sure... and one worth celebrating now and for decades to come." --Gregory Firlotte, Curator

## West Hollywood Design District's Retrospective Celebrating 6 Decades of History



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## West Hollywood Design District's Retrospective Celebrating 6 Decades of History



*Cecconi's restaurant on Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood with indoor and outdoor spaces designed by London-based interior designer Martin Brudnizki.*

*Photo Courtesy: Soho House Group*



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# West Hollywood Design District's Retrospective Celebrating 6 Decades of History



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Cecconi's restaurant on Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood with indoor and outdoor spaces designed by London-based interior designer Martin Brudnizki. Photo Courtesy: Soho House Group



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# West Hollywood Design District Hosts Retrospective Exhibit

## DESIGN NEWS



West Hollywood has a rich design history, and it's getting its own retrospective. Decades of Design, the first ever exhibit celebrating the mecca of style, will showcase work from 1948 to the present. The exhibit will run from November 19 through February

2015.

• [Decades of Design](#) | West Hollywood Design District

(Image credits: Charles Eames, courtesy of Herman Miller Inc.)

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## MAXWELL'S DAILY FIND

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Beth Feinstein-Bart 29 Oct 2014 Insights 0

## West Hollywood's Decades of Design

Ever wonder why the West Hollywood Design District remains a thriving hot spot of creativity whose cultural impact has global implications? An exhibit, "Decades of Design," answers the question with a retrospective uncovering, examining, and celebrating six decades of rich design history in this vibrant high-caliber destination with the unabashedly defining motto "trends start here."



From Nov. 19 through Feb., 2015, the curated gallery inside the West Hollywood Library will showcase design pioneers and present tastemakers through bold graphics, photographs, and original product.

"There is so much design history found on Melrose Avenue, Robertson Boulevard, and Beverly Boulevard alone that deserves to be recognized," says show curator Gregory Firlotte, a 33-year veteran of the West Hollywood Design District scene. "How many people know that one of the few surviving buildings designed by the internationally acclaimed furniture design team Charles and Ray Eames was the Herman Miller Showroom that can still be found on Beverly Boulevard 65 years later?"

An online component complements the visual displays with more information on the people and companies found within the district, both past and present. Visitors can learn more about the large, colorful images displayed on five interconnecting walls in the library's main reading room.

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NOV  
Nº1



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A plunge in the ratings  
could spell trouble for  
top cable programmers

By Cynthia Littleton p.40

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**FINE FOR DESIGN**

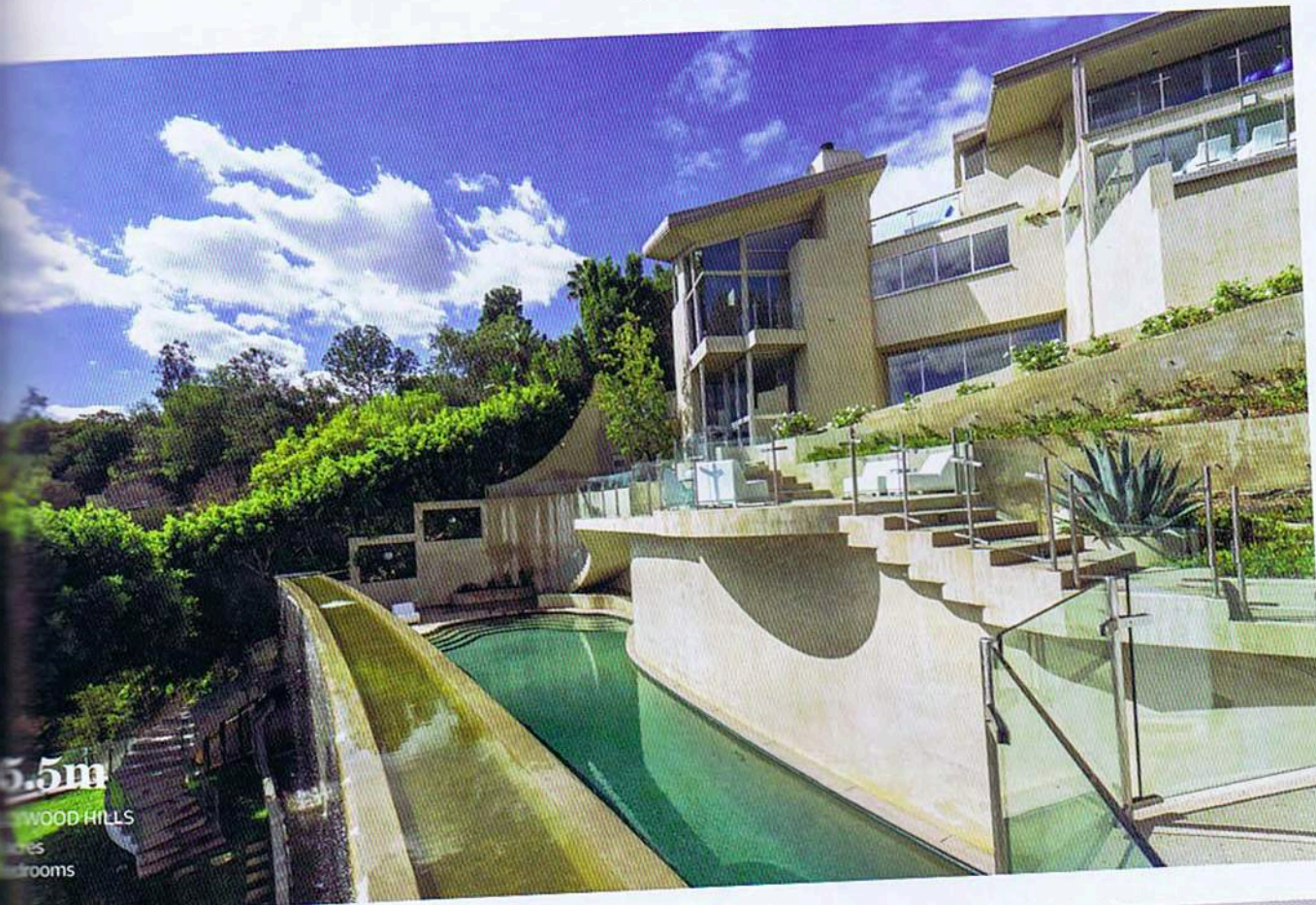
The **Pacific Design Center**, aka the **Blue Whale**, has always loomed as West Hollywood's beacon of architectural and interior design. But the upcoming exhibit **Decades of Design 1948-2014** should go far to demonstrate the rich design history of the city, which officially split from L.A. in 1984. The exhibition, which **kicks off Nov. 19** at the **West Hollywood Library**, is being billed as the "first-ever" retrospective



dedicated to the architectural history of a burg known for its progressive politics and thriving gay culture. Show curator **Greg Firlotte**, a 33-year vet of the **West Hollywood Design District** scene, points out that few people know that the **Herman Miller Showroom** on Beverly Blvd. is one of the few surviving buildings conceived by legendary furniture designers **Charles and Ray Eames**.

But organizers say the exhibit is not only a nod to the past, but a celebration of the talents who excel today as interior designers, architects and fashion designers. As **Martyn Lawrence**, star of Bravo's "**Million Dollar Decorators**," states, the city's "positive energy, artistic atmosphere and colorful characters make my creative juices flow."

— Steve Chagollan



**\$5.5m**  
WOOD HILLS  
5,725 sq. ft.  
4 bedrooms  
5.5 bathrooms

film and television producer ("**The Lego Movie**," "**Bates Motel**"), who recently paired up with **Casey Affleck** to produce unspecified film and television projects, purchased the sleek, multilevel residence for **\$4.75 million**, about 2½ years ago, per property records.

The **5,725-square-foot** house sits high on a precipitously down-sloped, **.7-acre** parcel above **Nichols Canyon**, and features extra-high ceilings, immense walls of glass, and sharply angled rooflines that allow for oversized clerestory windows. There are **four en suite bedrooms** including a massive master suite, plus an airy, self-contained **guest apartment** with double-height living room, full kitchen, bathroom and lofted bedroom area.

A downright operatic **circular staircase** in a **glass-roofed turret** links the various levels of the house. The main living area consists of a lofty combination living-dining room, a colossal kitchen with window-lined dining area, and a penthouse-level office suite under a butterfly roof that opens to a roof terrace. A positively cavernous, **hotel-lobby-sized family room** with double-height ceiling has a media lounge and games area with full kitchen, plus a **billiards alcove** that spills out to a flat patch of grass through a towering wall of windows. A series of circular terraces connected by a web of ramps and stairways meanders and switches back down the hillside to a **free-form swimming pool** bordered by an **elevated water channel** that pours over the edge to a **reflecting pool** far below.



**\$3.5m**  
BEVERLY HILLS  
3,013 sq. ft.  
3 bedrooms  
3 bathrooms

**TRACEY TAKES ON SELLING BRENTWOOD RESIDENCE**

Less than a year after the death of her hairdresser-turned-producer husband **Allan McKeeown**, shape-shifting English-born comedienne **Tracey Ullman** has put her contemporary house in L.A.'s **Brentwood** 'hood up for sale with an asking price of **\$3.5 million**. Property records show the couple purchased the mid-'60s residence in February 2013 for **\$2.6 million**.

The house, perched on a steep hillside about as deep and high in the mountains above Brentwood as there are houses, has a bit of an interesting pedigree. In 1996, former **Ronald Reagan** chief of staff **Fred Ryan Jr.** sold the property for an unknown amount to A-list decorator **Michael Smith**. Mister Smith, who did up the Oval Office for **President Obama**, renovated the house as his personal residence, and sold it in 2002 for **\$1.8 million** to movie industry exec **Jeff Robinov** who, in turn, sold it in June 2006 for **\$2.8 million**.

Current listing details show the **3,013-square-foot** house sits on nearly **half an acre** of mostly sloped property, and has **three bedrooms** and **three bathrooms** including a master suite and bathroom with huge windows that look onto a tiny private courtyard. A walled, gated and olive-tree-shaded entry courtyard has water and sculptural features. Mexican pavers run throughout the cleverly integrated multi-level living spaces that include a double-height living room with two towering walls of windows.

Previous to owning the Brentwood home that's now for sale, Miz Ullman and her late husband owned a Spanish style mini-mansion in the quietly ritzy Riviera area of **Pacific Palisades** that they purchased in the late 1990s for **\$1.8 million**, and sold in April 2013 for **\$4.55 million** to a high-end house-flipping investment concern that gave the place a quick spiff, and sold it in May for **\$7.8 million**.



**\$3.5m**

**BRENTWOOD**  
• 3,013 sq. ft.  
• 3 bedrooms  
• 3 bathrooms





# Toasting Six Decades of West Hollywood Design District

Tuesday, November 4, 2014, by Natalie Alcalá

7

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South Robertson Boulevard in the mid-1950s. Photo courtesy Ronald S. Kates.

Besides being a go-to for cult-favorite retailers like [Moschino](#) and [Helmut Lang](#), the **West Hollywood Design District** is also backed by a rich history that spans across six decades. In honor of the inspiring stretch's upcoming anniversary, on **November 19th** they're hosting a retrospective exhibit called "**Decades of Design**" at the **West Hollywood Library**.

Taking place through February 2015, the gallery will feature a glimpse at WHDD's super-cool past (did you know that legendary furniture design team **Charles and Ray Eames** designed the Herman Miller Showroom on Beverly Boulevard?) while shining a light on the district's interior designers, architects, stylists, and fashion designers, like **John Varvatos** who had this to say about the milestone: "The West Hollywood Design District is the center of culture and fashion in California. There was no other place where we wanted to open our first store on the West Coast."

Take an exclusive peek at some of West Hollywood Design District's best memories below, and be sure to hit up the retrospective November 19th through February 2015. Learn more [here](#).



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## NEWS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

LA

- Angeles National Forest
- Atwater Village
- Bel Air
- Beverly Crest

Artist Christof Zwiener took possession of an East German Guardhouse that was once located at the parking lot entrance of the headquarters of the General German News Service in the DDR. As part of Zweiner's exploration of "state surveillance and the use of public spaces in Berlin following the reunification of Germany in 1989," the guardhouse will be at ESMoA until it is transferred to its permanent home at the [Wende Museum](#) of Cold War artifacts.

**When:** On view until November 23, 2014

**Where:** ESMoA; 208 Main St, El Segundo

**Tickets:** Free and open to the public.

[Click here for more information.](#)



#### 4. Decades of Design 1948-2014

Before West Hollywood was officially a city, it was a community — of designers, working in interiors, furniture and production design. Now the [West Hollywood Design District](#) presents *Decades of Design*, the first exhibition to explore design in the area from 1948-2014, kicking off this Wednesday at West Hollywood Public Library. The exhibition was curated by Gregory Firlotte, who says this district is worth showcasing for many reasons including the fact that "one of the few surviving buildings designed by the internationally-acclaimed furniture design team Charles and Ray Eames was the Herman Miller Showroom that can still be found on Beverly Boulevard 65 years later."

Featuring the work of design "pioneers" as well as designers and tastemakers now contributing to West Hollywood's unique aesthetic, the exhibit will include bold graphics, photographs and original products.

**When:** On view from November 19-February 2015

**Where:** West Hollywood Library; 625 N San Vicente Blvd, West Hollywood

**Tickets:** Free and open to the public.

[Click here for more information.](#)



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- > [Danielle Rago](#) (5)

### Tweets

**Frances Anderton** @FrancesAnderton 54m  
@machikoyasuda @FrancesAnderton Thanks so much Machiko, wouldn't we love to know what Ray Bradbury would have thought of it all.

**Machiko Yasuda** @machikoyasuda 5h  
@FrancesAnderton loved your story yesterday. i feel so conflicted but especially loved the Ray Bradbury quote at the end.

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## Design Aficionados Gather for WeHo's Annual DIEM Event

Thu, Nov 13, 2014 By Staff 1 Comment

Designers and architects from across the country will convene in West Hollywood Friday for the the third annual DIEM: Design Intersects Everything Made conference. DIEM, staged by the West Hollywood Design District, brings together designers, architects and art lovers for a day of design conversations, panels and speeches featuring leaders in their fields.



The 2014 DIEM symposium will take place on in West Hollywood's Design District showrooms along Melrose Avenue and along Robertson and Beverly boulevards. It is free and open to the public. The symposium is curated by design writer Mallery Roberts Morgan and by Frances Anderton, host of the KCRW radio program "DnA, Design and Architecture."

In conjunction with the symposium, the West Hollywood Design District will present, for the first time, a retrospective exhibit to examine and celebrate six decades of West Hollywood's rich design history. The retrospective "Decades of Design: 1948-2014," curated by Gregory Firlotte and co-sponsored by the City of West Hollywood will feature graphics, photographs and original products. It will open on Nov. 19 and run through February at the West Hollywood Library, 625 N. San Vicente Blvd. south of Santa Monica.

The West Hollywood Design District, officially organized in 1996, encompasses businesses along Melrose Avenue west of La Cienega and on Robertson and Beverly boulevards, most of them focused on interior design, home furnishings, apparel and art.

Additional information about DIEM is available [online](#).

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Art

## Decades of Design



That chair you're sitting in at your favorite WeHo bistro? It might be a masterpiece. The West Hollywood Design District presents an exhibition that chronicles the design history of the area. The show includes graphics, photographs, and original products from modern designers and tastemakers. [Check website for times.](#)

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Eddie Lin



**The Short Stack: The Los Angeles Week in Review, 1/19/2015 – 1/23/2015**

Shayna Rose Arnold



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Mark Sitko

EVENT SPOTLIGHT



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Category: Industry Association Event

**FEATURED JOB**

Junior Interior Designer

Location: GEORGIA  
Company: Peace Design  
Category: Interior Design

**TOP STORY**



**NYSID exhibition puts the spotlight on interior landmarks**

Rescued, Restored, Reimagined: New York's Landmark Interiors, an exhibition set to open at the New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) on March 6, will explore some of the i ...

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**Exhibition chronicles design history of West Hollywood**

Posted on Monday, December 08, 2014.

The **West Hollywood Design District** has lifted the veil on "Decades of Design," the first-ever retrospective exhibition uncovering, examining and celebrating six decades of design history in West Hollywood. The gallery showcases work by design pioneers and present tastemakers through bold graphics, photographs and original product, and is on display through February.

"There is so much design history found on Melrose Avenue, Robertson Boulevard and Beverly Boulevard alone that deserves to be recognized," said show curator **Gregory Firlotte**, a 33-year veteran of the West Hollywood Design District scene. "How many people know that one of the few surviving buildings designed by the internationally-acclaimed furniture design team **Charles and Ray Eames** was the **Herman Miller** Showroom that can still be found on Beverly Boulevard 65 years later?"



Exhibition space

The "Decades of Design" exhibition celebrates not only the remarkable businesses and designers of the past, but also those who carry that legacy forward to a new and global audience.



**DESIGN INDUSTRY EVENT COVERAGE**



The new year begins with a bang with products debuts and trend alerts at Americasmart, Part I (Atlanta, GA, January 2014)  
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## Obamacare Continues to Greatly Benefit LGBTs

**T**he Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, is proving to be hugely beneficial to low- and middle-income LGBT people, according to a new study by the Center for American Progress.

That organization's research conducted in 2013 showed that one-third of LGBT people with incomes less than 400% of the federal poverty level lacked health insurance. Updated 2014 research findings were, in CAP's words, "astounding." Over the course of the one year since open ACA enrollment began, the uninsured rate among LGBT people fell from 34% to 26%, better than the decrease in the general population, where the uninsured rate dropped from 27% to 20%. Despite that 24% decline, however, 35% of transgender individuals still lack coverage.



The ACA's requirement that insurers not discriminate on the basis of pre-existing conditions is a literal lifesaver for some living with HIV, as anti-retroviral medications can cost patients up to \$3,000 per month if not covered by insurance.

Nonetheless, barriers still exist for LGBT people seeking health insurance. The CAP identifies discrimination as a significant problem, citing the absence of any federal legal protection in the workplace, which tends to channel some LGBTs into low-paying jobs that typically offer no insurance. The persistence of marriage inequality in many states also exacerbates the problem. Only 38% of LGBT people in the studied population were insured by a partner benefit, as compared to 58% of the general population.

Some relief, however, is on the way Jan. 1, when new ACA provisions will require insurers to provide spousal family coverage to same-sex and opposite-sex couples on an equal basis. Additionally, at the state level, more and more insurance commissioners are issuing directives requiring insurers not to exclude transgender people from their plans.

The first year of the ACA "shows great promise, but much work remains to be done to ensure that the benefits of the health reform efforts reach all who need them, including LGBT people and their families," the report concludes.

Covered California open enrollment is currently underway. "Anyone who is currently enrolled, if they are happy with their current plan, need do nothing but pay the January premium," says out certified insurance specialist **Sam Smith** of Genesis Financial & Insurance Services. "However, it is very important that anyone who has a change in income report it to make sure they are getting the correct subsidy amount. If an individual wants to change plans, they can do so at anytime during open enrollment, which ends Feb. 15." ■

Look out for *Frontiers'* upcoming Dec. 11 issue, in which we will be producing a comprehensive gay health care guide, with resources for finding local LGBT doctors, dentists and other important services.



**LEGACY AWARDS, Vibiana, Nov. 12**—Emmy Award nominee Natasha Lyonne hosted the 10th annual awards, benefiting the Outfest UCLA Legacy Project, the largest archive of LGBT moving images in the world. **From left:** Armistead Maupin, Aubrey Plaza with Lyonne, Johnny Chailot with Greg Louganis, Alec Mapa, Robbie Rogers, Hilary Swank



**DECADES OF DESIGN OPENING NIGHT, West Hollywood Library, Nov. 19**—The first-ever exhibit by the West Hollywood Design District explores six decades of WeHo history as a design and style mecca. The retrospective will be on display in the library through February 2015. **From left:** Eileen Samet, Martyn Lawrence Bullard, Peter Gurski, Thomas Lavin, Greg Firlotte, West Hollywood Mayor John D'Amico, Ahmad Ahmadi, Carol Soucek King, Francesca Garcia Marques



**PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA L.A. GALA, Paley Center, Nov. 12**—The annual gala celebrated the critical role television has played in the issue of LGBT equality over six decades, marking the launch of an expanded LGBT media collection, and chronicling the history of LGBT images in the medium. **From left:** Paley Center for Media President and CEO Maureen J. Reidy with Jason Collins, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Peter Paige, Alyssa Edwards, Carson Kressley, Ryan Murphy, Gale Harold, Josh Flagg, Portia de Rossi

LEGACY: MATT ROSE; PALEY: THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA



## Decades of Design

admin   December 11, 2014   NOW, West Hollywood

### "Decades of Design"

Now through February 2015, the West Hollywood Design District Presents "Decades of Design" at the West Hollywood Library (625 N. San Vicente Blvd West Hollywood, CA.)

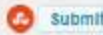
As a companion event to DIEM 2014, the West Hollywood Design District has organized this retrospective exhibit examining West Hollywood's long history of artistic innovation. Photographs and artifacts from West Hollywood's past will illustrate the city's development into a leading city in art, architecture and design. Find more information about this event at [www.decadesofdesignweho.com](http://www.decadesofdesignweho.com).

Decades of Design

Gay Weho

Gay West Hollywood

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**MUSIC: A Winged Victory for the Sullen**

Adam Wiltzie and Dustin O'Halloran explore the boundaries of ambient music with their oddball melodies. Fans can anticipate songs from their newly released album, *Atomos*. [More information](#) (December 14; Masonic Lodge at Hollywood Forever Cemetery)

**DANCE: Long Beach Ballet/The Nutcracker**

This year Long Beach Ballet celebrates its 32nd anniversary of The Nutcracker, with elaborate sets, a full orchestra, pyrotechnics, magic effects, and even a white Arabian horse. Of course there's some beautiful dancing, too. [More information](#) (Through December 21; Long Beach Convention Center)

**CELEBRATE: Hanukkah Family Festival: Luz y Libertad**

Drop in on musical performances, peruse the museum's collection of menorahs, and work on kid-friendly crafts at the Skirball's annual Festival of Lights. [More information](#) (December 14; Skirball Cultural Center)

**SHOP: Los Angeles Holiday Market**

Renegade Craft Fair hosts an outdoor market featuring a selection of modern craftmakers along with workshops, food trucks, music, and more. [More information](#) (December 13-14; Grand Park)

**MUSIC: Ukulele Christmas Orchestra**

Mele Kalikimaka! The Music Center invites beginner and intermediate adult musicians to play and sing along to the songs of the Christmas season. Bring your own ukulele, music stand, and sleigh bells if you plan to participate. [More information](#) (December 12; The Music Center)

**THEATER: Blithe Spirit**

All his exes live in hexes. Angela Lansbury (you may know her as Jessica Fletcher) plays the clairvoyant Madame Arcati in a comedy about a novelist and his spouse who are haunted by the ghost of his former wife. [More information](#) (Through January 18; Ahmanson Theatre)

**SEE: Decades of Design**

That chair you're sitting in at your favorite WeHo bistro? It might be a masterpiece. The West Hollywood Design District presents an exhibition that chronicles the design history of the area. The show includes graphics, photographs, and original products from modern designers and tastemakers. [More information](#) (Through February 28; The West Hollywood Library)

**SHOP: Barnsdall Art Center Holiday Sale + Fundraiser**

Enjoy an afternoon of original art, food, and beverages at this year's holiday sale and fundraiser. Proceeds will go toward providing scholarships, programming, and supplies for children and adults at the Barnsdall Art Center. [More information](#) (December 13; Barnsdall Art Center)

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# WEST HOLLYWOOD

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Curator Gregory Firlotte

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#### MAGAZINE

## Decades of Design Celebrates 60 Years

By West Hollywood Lifestyle

The city of West Hollywood may have just turned 30, but a new exhibit at the refurbished local library highlights six decades of the design district spanning 1948 to 2014, which is chronicled as part of an outstanding exhibit that is currently open to the public.

"There is so much design history found on Melrose Avenue, Robertson Boulevard and Beverly Boulevard alone that deserves to be recognized," says show curator Gregory Firlotte, a 33-year veteran of the West Hollywood Design District scene...

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# WEST HOLLYWOOD



magazine

## Defying Gravity

Dancers  
Fly High  
Over  
Sunset

### DECADES OF DESIGN

The Forties Forward  
in West Hollywood

### THE POPULIST

Martin Gantman  
Finds Equity in Art

### GOOGIE IT

The Search for  
Lost Architecture

WINTER 2014



PHOTOS COURTESY/ROBERT S. KATES

## DECADES OF DESIGN

By Gregory Firlotte

Never has there been a city whose history is so closely interwoven with the design trade as is that of West Hollywood. That history is the subject of an exhibit that opened in November at the West Hollywood Library curated by Gregory Firlotte for the West Hollywood Design District. Firlotte, who has been part of West Hollywood's design community for 23 years is that unusual curator who actually knows most of the subjects of the exhibit he put together.

Open through February, the exhibit takes viewers on a journey spanning more than sixty-five years—from 1948 to the present—on the intersecting streets of Beverly Boulevard, Robertson Boulevard and Melrose Avenue.

In the profiles that follow, Firlotte tells the stories of some of that area's design pioneers, who have influenced design worldwide.



### LEADER OF THE PACK: HERMAN MILLER, INC.

The reason why 8806 Beverly Boulevard was selected in 1949 to be Herman Miller's first West Coast showroom is unknown. What is clear is that its location at the intersection of Beverly and Robertson Boulevards made it the cornerstone of what was to become the West Hollywood Design District. By the late 1940s, the Zeeland, Michigan-based company was a powerhouse in the world of modern furniture manufacturing. Given the firm's historic pedigree, its new West Hollywood locale became the most popular in the design district.

the 40's

The architecture and interiors were created by the husband and wife design team of Charles and Ray Eames, whose names would be forever synonymous with American Mid-Century furniture design. Herman Miller was collaborating with the Eameses in the late 1940s on the production of molded plywood chairs and the now-icomic Eames' Lounge Chair, which is part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. With their design studio located in Santa Monica, the Eameses were familiar with the layout of Beverly Boulevard and were likely regular visitors to the nearby Jules Seltzer Associates showroom, which also sold Herman Miller products.

The 8806 showroom was designed in classic Eames' style, with industrial steel framing, patterned glass, opaque glass panels, standardized fixture components and an interior floor plan that was both open and flexible in how it could be used for furniture displays. The facade is still solid glass in Mondrian-like grids, which originally could be moved to change the exterior's appearance. Known primarily for their furniture design, Charles and Ray Eames designed only a handful of buildings, and this showroom represents the only fully-realized commercial structure designed by them that still exists today.



PHOTOS COURTESY/HERMAN MILLER INC.



8806 BEVERLY BOULEVARD

## RECREATING HISTORY: DENNIS AND LEEN

It was 1959 when Leo Dennis and Jerry Leen opened their first shop at 468 North Robertson Boulevard. Their love for travel and fine antiques was what brought them together, and over the course of three decades, they journeyed across Europe in search of just the right items to display. In the beginning, they simply bought things they liked in the hope that their clients would like them too. It was a time of exploration and fascination with pieces from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. For Dennis and Leen, to be able to find such treasures and bring them back to West Hollywood made their painstaking scouring of European countries worthwhile.

At first, Dennis and Leen sold only original items. But after a while they found that they often had more than one prospective buyer for each, so they began to reproduce pieces, six at a time. Then the number of copies grew to upward of sixty pieces. Their company found itself creating more and more reproductions that found even more buyers than did their one-of-a-kinds. As business increased, the two men expanded their roles to become interior designers, conjuring up interiors for valued clients to complement their furniture. When the number of antiques that Dennis



COURTESY DENNIS AND LEEN

and Leen could find in London and Paris began to dwindle, they found themselves buying fragments of these pieces instead, such as the crystal baubles from grand old chandeliers that Dennis would use to create his own chandelier designs. Over the years, the collection of reproductions would grow to include a wide range of tables, seating, lighting, mantels, accessories and art. In the 1980s, the showroom was purchased by designers Barbara Wiseley, Daniel Cuevas and Richard Hallberg. In 1990, it moved to its current location at 8720 Melrose Avenue.



PHYLIS MORRIS

PHOTOS COURTESY PHYLIS MORRIS

the 50's

## ONE OF A KIND: PHYLIS MORRIS

When 28-year-old Phyllis Morris made her first pink poodle lamp for a Los Angeles department store in 1953, little did this woman, who hailed from Chicago, know that she was making history in the interior design world by breaking into what, at that time, was a man's world.

From her small shop on Melrose Place in 1953, Morris charted her own course and carved out her own space in this male-dominated realm of furniture design. Outspoken and determined, she did that by marketing herself as well as her lamps in ways that made local newspaper headlines. However, her vision was bigger than making lamps, which prompted her move from Melrose Place to 8770 Beverly Boulevard in the early 1960s, giving her more space to display her own line of lighting, tables and furniture. In 1964, she bought the former Knapp and Tubb showroom next door at 8772 Beverly Boulevard, which would be the headquarters of Phyllis Morris Originals until the company moved to 655 North Robertson Boulevard in 2004. Almost from the beginning, Morris cultivated a celebrity clientele and circle of friends that included the "who's who" of Old Hollywood: Joan Crawford, Lucille Ball, Liberace, Rock Hudson and Joan Collins among them. Morris became known for her big, over-the-top beds, her bold and colorful advertisements, her celebrity-filled parties, her charity fundraisers and her never-ending promotion to the trade of the Beverly-Robertson design district—not to mention her support for West Hollywood cityhood long before it happened in 1984.



Morris's mix of Asian, African and Pop Art furnishings and modern and traditional furniture in lacquer and exotic finishes created a new look in home decor back in the early 1960s. In 1970, the furnishings she created for the Imperial Suite in Las Vegas for mega-developer Kirk Kerkorian were so large that they had to be air lifted by helicopters into the International Hotel's penthouse (which was created for use by the likes of Frank Sinatra and Jackie and Aristotle Onassis). Morris passed away in 1988, and the company is headed by her daughter, Jamie Adler, who continues her mother's colorful design legacy.

## FORWARD THINKING: DECORATIVE CARPETS INC.

"I have taken a big step forward," wrote Louis "Lou" Sugarman in a 1955 letter to "Betty" about the opening of his first carpet showroom at 144 North Robertson Boulevard. "Going into business for myself has been very exciting," he continued, "and I'm hoping my friends will share the same enthusiasm." It was his enthusiasm for owning his own business that inspired the launch of this showroom. Prior to this, Sugarman had supervised the carpet department of the Green & Hinkle furniture store on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. It was there that a man asked Sugarman if he was interested in starting a "to the trade" showroom for Spanish rugs. Sugarman was more than eager to take on that challenge. Though he had no startup money, he did have the confidence to ask his boss, Lou Green, to lend him the \$3,000 he needed to go into business for himself. Green readily lent the money, and Sugarman made a deal with the Spanish importer that allowed him, after six months of business, to bring in other manufacturers' rugs and carpets.

Decorative Carpets Inc. was on its way. Robertson Boulevard was an obvious choice for the showroom because it was already well established as the design district of Los Angeles. Over the decades, the company has become known for its colorful hand-tufted rugs and carpets, which have been installed around the globe in corporate spaces such as those of IBM, Nike, Sony, Toyota and Warner Bros and in hotels including the Four Seasons, St. Regis, Hyatt and the Sawy in London. In 2011, Decorative Carpets collaborated with its neighbor, Commune Design, on a collection of eleven rugs hand-knotted in Nepal in wool, hemp and silk—all in completely natural tones. Lou Sugarman remained chairman of the company until his death in 2005. His son, George, who grew up in the business, took over as president in 1988. More recently, George's daughter, Sara, joined the company as vice president of marketing and sales, making it a third-generation family business.



COURTESY DECORATIVE CARPETS, INC.



COURTESY MAXFIELD TOMMY PERSE

## MAN IN BLACK: TOMMY PERSE

It was 1969 in Los Angeles, and hippies and rock music still reigned on the Sunset Strip. Beads, flowers, incense and bold psychedelic colors were everywhere—everywhere, that is, except for a boutique oddly painted black on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood. It was one door west of the famed Troubadour nightclub where singers Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Carol King performed regularly during that final year of the hippie Sixties.

Inside that clothing and accessory boutique, which owner Tommy Perse named Maxfield Bleu, it was evident that Perse was fascinated with one thing: the color black. Black cloaks, blankets, toothbrushes, clothing—you name it, they were all in black. Even his promo mailers were called "black mail." By the time the 1970s rolled around, the shop's name was pared down to Maxfield (named after artist Maxfield Parrish), and Perse began to carry clothing and accessory brands never seen or heard of in L.A. By the 1980s, the shop was the only place in town to find hip lines such as Comme des Garçons, Giorgio Armani, Yohji Yamamoto and Chrome Hearts jewelry.

When Maxfield moved to 8825 Melrose Avenue in 1985, the once street-friendly boutique's facade now became an imposing concrete fortress with its back turned to the street and its entrance in the rear. Monolithic monkey statues added an artistic whimsy to the shop's entranceway. The now-renowned Simon Doonan decorated the shop's one street display window for eight years, and the seven-thousand-square-foot gallery-like interior became a minimalist wonderland filled with the odd, rare and expensive—from bicycles to eye glasses, purses to furniture, taxidermied animals to art and, of course, lots of black clothing. Perse is a true rock star among retailers, a pioneer who changed the way L.A. dressed, and did it according to his own vision. Nowadays, wearing his long gray hair in a trademark bun, dressed in black and wearing Chrome Hearts jewelry, Perse continues to fill his shop with the most unusual and expensive items and clothing around.



COURTESY MAXFIELD TOMMY PERSE



### MODERN CLASSIC: SALLY SIRKIN LEWIS

"Every instinct in me said that this area was poised to become a focal point for our industry," recalls designer Sally Sirkin Lewis, commenting on why she became a part of the West Hollywood design district in the early 1970s. She made that move when the Black Rabbit Inn, the hip music industry restaurant at 8727 Melrose Avenue, became available. Lewis leapt at the opportunity to transform what she called its "funky, dark interiors" into a "chic showroom whose luxury of space would allow the furnishings to breathe." The J. Robert Scott showroom opened in 1972 with furniture upholstered in white Indian cotton, floors stained in ebony, batik throw pillows and rugs of zebra hides—not to mention walls covered in straw wrapping materials that she salvaged from shipping crates, which would eventually become Lewis' popular "Madagascar" woven raffia wall covering.

"Our first year in business was a thrilling time," says Lewis, "because some people said we wouldn't last six months." But time has been on Lewis' side. A great lover of contemporary art, Lewis continually pared down the essence of classical furniture designs until she created what many consider her quintessential piece: the Art Deco Fauteuil. Its inspiration was 18th Century French fauteuils, but Lewis wanted a contemporary, unadorned version with an elegant natural wood veneer. First sketched in 1980, the chair debuted in 1982 to acclaim that included an article in the *Hollywood Reporter* hailing Lewis as "among the most stylish women in California." Awarded more than one hundred and fifty U.S. design patents and named a member of the Interior Design Hall of Fame, Lewis has proved her early naysayers wrong—six months have turned into forty-two design-filled years.

the 70's



SALLY SIRKIN LEWIS

PHOTOS COURTESY J. ROBERT SCOTT; SALLY SIRKIN LEWIS BY KARYN MILLET



### MASTER ARTISAN: ROBERT KUO

"I chose the West Hollywood Design District to build my first showroom because of its energy and the creative environment," says Robert Kuo, founder of Robert Kuo Ltd. The flow of energy and creativity has always been part of life for Kuo, who was raised in Taiwan after his family moved from Beijing in 1947. Kuo's father, an art professor and watercolor painter, started a cloisonné atelier where Robert became an apprentice at age fifteen. It was here that Kuo got hands-on training in the very painstaking ancient art of applying enamel between raised metal designs. This basic training was to serve him throughout his artistic career, which included opening a cloisonné studio in Beverly Hills upon his immigration to the U.S. in 1973. Southern California offered an environment where Kuo could cultivate a clientele that appreciated the new ways in which he developed cloisonné to include influences from Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Those new ways also included new shapes and finishes as well as different objects to which he applied his craft and vision.

In 1984, the Robert Kuo Ltd. showroom, designed by architect Larry Allen, opened at the corner of Melrose Avenue and San Vicente Boulevard, providing a striking modernist counterpoint to the blue-glass Pacific Design Center directly across the street. Inside the showroom, one finds furnishings that range from small tabletop items to large tables and cabinets as well as large landscaping elements. Of note is the fact that Kuo's "Goldfish Bowl" was acquired by the Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery in 1991 for its permanent collection. Today, Kuo's repertoire also includes items done in repoussé (hammering decorative relief onto metal), which rounds out the cloisonné and lacquered items. He often travels to China to train craftsmen in creating new pieces that are later finished to perfection in Los Angeles.

the 80's

### GLAMOUR GIRL: NANCY CORZINE



NANCY CORZINE

COURTESY NANCY CORZINE

Nancy Corzine has been a fixture in the West Hollywood Design District since she opened C&C Imports, her first showroom, on North Robertson Boulevard in 1983. At first, C&C was a small business selling raw chair frames imported from Spain. But Corzine had a larger vision of selling finished and upholstered chairs and having her own factory in Los Angeles. She wanted to do everything with glamour, elegance and style as she saw it.

As her business and reputation grew, Corzine chose to keep West Hollywood as the base where she showcased new and classically inspired furnishings and conducted her own interior design practice. When she introduced her Napoleon Lounge Chair in 1984, it became not only one of the most successful pieces in her line, but also one of the most copied around the world. Corzine was passionate in protecting her valued designs, fighting tirelessly against counterfeiters. In a 2004 story in *The New York Times* about her battles, she recounted coming across a factory illegally copying her furniture. "...I climbed onto the roof of my Range Rover, jumped over the fence and went in," *The Times* quoted Corzine as saying. Now that's passion for one's art.

In 2000, Corzine opened her first self-branded showroom at 8747 Melrose Avenue and later opened Corzine Fine Art, also on Melrose. In 2009, she published *Glamour at Home*, whose success led her to expand her furniture line globally to include Saudi Arabia, Russia and the Middle East. In 2013, she opened her first showroom abroad in Jakarta, Indonesia.



COURTESY ROBERT KUO

COURTESY CRAIG SUSSER



CRAIG SUSSER

**MARTYN LAWRENCE BULLARD, THOMAS LAVIN, NATHAN TURNER & CRAIG SUSSER**

These men are stylish, clever, handsome and successful. Confidence reigns in their courts, and they are all self-made. Collectively, they have seventy-seven years of experience living and working in the West Hollywood Design District.

Martyn Lawrence Bullard is the British-born interior designer, author and TV personality from Bravo's *Million Dollar Decorators* who is sought after by friends and celebrities alike to decorate homes, hotels and villas around the globe. Bullard—who opened his first design shop in West Hollywood in 1996—up close is soft-spoken, articulate and always the proper English gent with a taste for the colorful and the exotic.

Over the past 19 years, showroom owner Thomas Lavin has demonstrated time and time again that true style is a process of continually expanding one's knowledge of history, fine art, fashion and cultures, not just the decorative and applied arts. Lavin's mind is akin to a laboratory, where ideas of what to mix and mingle for his showroom are always being formulated.

By the time interior designer Nathan Turner opened his first showroom in West Hollywood in 2002, he had already cultivated his love of adventure and travel, as well as honed keen culinary skills. His 2012 book, *Nathan Turner's American Style: Design and Effortless Entertaining*, combines these passions.

Restaurateur Craig Susser is one of those success stories that people love to hear about: from waiting tables in 1988 to now owning Craig's—one of the hottest restaurants in West Hollywood. "If you do it right, you're not just serving food," Susser told *The New York Times* in 2011. And Susser is doing it right, for sure. After all, where else but at Craig's will you find megastar George Clooney behind the bar shaking up his own cocktails?

THOMAS LAVIN



THOMAS LAVIN BY FRANKISHNAI, COURTESY OF THOMAS LAVIN

the 90's

forward



NATHAN TURNER



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## DECADES OF DESIGN: HOLLYWOOD'S SECRET HISTORY

By Caroline Bullough | 21 JANUARY 2015



Los Angeles is sometimes seen as a city with no sense of history. That's not strictly true - though there is a definite feeling of impermanence about many of its buildings and a sense that youth and novelty reign. But as Decades of Design, a new exhibition in the West Hollywood Design District reveals, some of its districts have fascinating histories.



Charles Eames courtesy of Herman Miller Inc

A showroom for Herman Miller from 1949, designed by Charles and Ray Eames, still stands on Beverly Boulevard

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