

BY JENNIFER TZESES | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON MARCH 3, 2019 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)



A modern residence designed by Landry Design Group in Los Angeles.

LANDRY DESIGN GROUP

When people think midcentury modern design, images of apartments from the series "Mad Men," in all their brown-and-tweed glory, pop to mind. It's that kind of quintessential 1960s clean-lined cool that's come to define the style. But, midcentury modern design spans nearly 30 years and includes many different influences—American, Danish, French and Italian.

"Midcentury modern design was an expression of the optimism the world felt following the dark days of the Depression and World War II," said Anthony Barzilay Freund, editorial director and director of fine art for 1stdibs, an upscale e-commerce antiques and design marketplace.

"The eager embrace of the future, the exploration of new forms, materials and technologies, and the idea that good design should be accessible to anyone, all imbue the furniture with a happy energy," Mr. Barzilay Freund said.

When it comes to midcentury modern architecture, many well-known architects in the U.S. at the middle of the 20th century were interested in creating something less formal, sculptural and innovative, with clean lines, open floor plans, lots of glass and passive solar features, said architect Brian Pinkett, partner, Landry Design Group in Los Angeles, California. "Because midcentury targeted the needs of the average American, it has retained its popularity."

More: [How to Add Contemporary Style to a Period Home](#)



A modern home designed by Landry Design Group

Landry Design Group

While designers agree midcentury modern design is still relevant, they also believe consumers crave more bespoke interiors rather than one-dimensional looks. "What we are beginning to see more of is a mix of different styles of furniture from different periods; this mix creates interesting interiors that are not predictable and cookie-cutter," said Allison Babcock of Babcock Peffer Design in Sag Harbor, New York.

"Maybe it's a 1960s couch with a 1980s lamp and chrome bar stools reupholstered in light pink velvet—it's about creativity and self-expression," said Allyson Rees, senior retail lifestyles editor for WGSN, a global trend-forecasting company.

Mr. Barzilay Freund notes people are no longer exclusively using midcentury modern pieces in spaces that feel like time capsules. "Today, you're seeing classics of the era with furniture from all eras: from antiques to [new and custom pieces](#)." In fact, "new and custom design" is 1stdibs' fastest growing category (demand is up 120% from a year ago) and it pays direct homage to the design icons of the mid-20th century. "So, when you place these pieces in a room with their aesthetic ancestors, they converse quite freely and harmoniously," Mr. Barzilay Freund said.

From Penta: [Rauschenberg's "Buffalo II" Could Fetch \\$50 Million at Christie's](#)

"There's a desire for uniqueness and quality in interiors and people are looking to add limited-edition pieces to their homes," said Rome, Italy-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni. "Contemporary artistic design and works of distinctive craftsmanship—people are giving more consideration to unique items that are made for them."

And on the architecture front, many of Mr. Pinkett's clients are requesting homes that reflect their modern lifestyles. "They are interested in homes that are warmer and more comfortable to live in than the typical white-box modern home," he said.

"I see our work investigating a kind of hybrid, where we explore the intersection of modern and traditional architecture to create a new language that fuses materials, colors and textures found in traditional design with modern space planning," he said.



An interior space created by Allison Babcock of Babcock Peffer Design in Sag Harbor, New York.

Tria Giovan

The Influence of Social Media

Now, in part because of the popularity of Instagram, people don't just want one specific style; they want a more curated, self-expressed space. "Interiors are about texture, color and tactility—a curated space that's visually pleasing with a full 'look' that includes art, plants and blankets versus the utilitarian vibe you think of when you think midcentury," Ms. Rees said.

"The Internet, predominantly Instagram, has a big impact on the consumer and you can find amazing artists, craftsmen, vintage pieces, et cetera, at the push of a button rather than having to wait for the latest magazine to come out to see what the newest trends are," Mr. Salvagni said.

"There are infinitely more design and art fairs around now than at any other time in history, which has a huge impact on how consumers view design and art and how journalists and tastemakers identify trends." All this just provides even more options from which to choose.

More: [Karl Lagerfeld's Legacy Extends Beyond Fashion—to Interior Design](#)



Interior space of a Paris apartment designed by Rome, Italy-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni.

Paolo Petriani

The Past Remains Present

Mr. Salvagni believes that while authentic midcentury pieces are becoming more rare (and, as a result, more expensive), because of the variety of the genre and the enormous number of pieces in the style produced, it will still be popular for a long time to come.

Midcentury design is also still very current within the architecture and interior design communities serving as inspiration for a lot of contemporary design, said architect Isaac-Daniel Astrachan, principal of Stephen B. Jacobs Group, PC/Andi Pepper Interior Design, a full-service architectural and interior design firm in Manhattan.

"Consumer tastes are always changing ever so rapidly, especially due to technology and social media," he said. "However, they also want objects and designs that withstand the passage of time."



Example of a midcentury-inspired contemporary design, created by architect Isaac-Daniel Astrachan, principal of Stephen B. Jacobs Group, PC/Andi Pepper Interior Design.