

# Collecting the Contemporary

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Contemporary, sensual, sculptural, and unique furniture made with innovative techniques and incredible materials in limited editions or one-of-a-kinds, have recently moved to the forefront of collecting design. In the past few years, this type of furniture, known today as “design art,” has been promoted in galleries and auction houses as independent works of art, just like painting, sculpture, and photography. Every season, collectors have been offered a new and overwhelming variety of furniture designed by young and cutting edge artists, architects, and designers; who themselves are marketed as brand names. A new generation of serious collectors is willing to pay top dollar for furniture by such stars as Marc Newson, Ron Arad, Marcel Wanders, and the Brazilian Campana brothers.

The heightened state of the market has left new collectors, or those with limited budgets, challenged in their search for unique and remarkably designed furniture for under six figures. In this boom, when the notion of design is widely promoted, some of the contemporary designs are becoming immediate sensations and are often unaffordable. I advise collectors to focus on those pieces of furniture that stand on the defined and clear line between the mass produced and the handmade. I believe that this is a great way to discover dazzling pieces that can create fabulous and extraordinary homes overnight.

A great piece and one that falls precisely into this category is the Honey-Pop chair, created by Tokujin Yoshioka. Yoshioka is one of Japan’s leading designers, and one of the few to have had an impact on the European scene. The 40-year old Yoshioka, who is known for his breath-taking installations, was crowned a superstar in the recent annual furniture fair in Milan, where he exhibited his new Panna Chair, which to me, is a process of rethinking the Honey-Pop chair. This sculptural object, made in a limited edition, was placed at the center of a dream-like space, covered entirely with thousands of white straws glued together to create a sense of purity that transported the viewer into another place. Yoshioka is also revered for last year’s cubic-shaped Stardust chandelier, produced for Swarovski’s fabulous installation in Milan. The Stardust chandelier was made of 20 thousand crystals. It was suspended from the building’s dome, the underside of the chandelier acted as a screen, projecting an image of a woman’s face that was reflected on the black floor below.

Constructed of layers of over hundreds pieces of pleated tissue papers bonded with strips of glue and then cut to shape, the Honey-Pop structure is then opened up, forming a three dimensional sculpture reminiscent of a honeycomb. Since first introduced in 2000, this distinctive chair is a mainstay in many museum collections and has ascended to the stature of a 21st-century icon. With a strong Japanese flavor, rooted in the tradition of the Origami craft, but merged with a sculptural, almost baroque sense of design with a touch of the futuristic, the Honey-Pop has a unique presence, but yet it’s easily compliments most interiors. Its price, \$2,515 (when purchased directly from the designer, not including the cost of tax and shipping), is a bargain in today’s market for such an exciting piece of furniture, made by the pupil of Issey Miyake, which is both collectible and exciting.

*The writer is an advisor for private collecting of 20th-century decorative arts and design.  
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