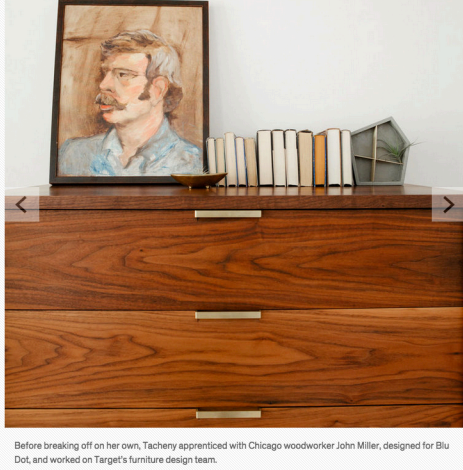


Modern Woodwork by Way of the California Coast

WRITTEN BY: ALEX ROMAN FEBRUARY 5, 2015

Bay Area designer Alice Tacheny crafts elegant wood, brass, and leather pieces.



Before breaking off on her own, Tacheny apprenticed with Chicago woodworker John Miller, designed for Blu Dot, and worked on Target's furniture design team.

Courtesy of Lisa Kaseman
Photo details

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Alice Tacheny is surrounded by good design. She lives in a historic Eichler neighborhood in the Marin Headlands. Down the road is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's last projects—the Marin County Civic Center. "But nothing is too polished and revered [here]; things have changed over time and it feels utilitarian and lived in. There's this crumbling midcentury aesthetic that I really like," Tacheny says.

Tacheny didn't study design, but after college decided she wanted to do something creative and hands-on. She apprenticed with Chicago woodworker John Miller, designed for Blu Dot, and worked on Target's furniture design team. She moved to California in 2009, started her eponymous studio, and launched her first furniture collection in 2012. She works with a variety of woods; her collection features maple peg hooks, a white oak credenza, and walnut dressers. Brass features prominently. Tacheny recently launched a number of accessories, including a latigo leather wall pocket and cast concrete boxes. All of her pieces are made in the Bay Area, either in collaboration with local artisans or by Tacheny herself.

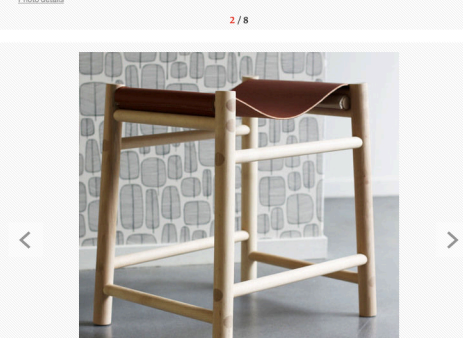
Each piece gets a trial run in her home, where she lives with her husband and two kids. Eichler houses are made for entertaining, and they often host neighborhood families. While she anticipates a future where "our kids are going to have massive house parties with teenagers jumping off the roof and into the pool," the continual presence of visitors means her work gets sufficiently tested. The resulting collection is durable, simple, and graceful. "It's about finding a solution for a design problem and making it look as if there is only one obvious answer, the one you created."



"The star of the Tide collection is the pull detail, which I get asked about a lot," Tacheny says. "It's tricky to execute because it requires a lot of machining and fitting, and the pulls are my design so I have them custom made. I am always having to break it to people who contact me about buying the hardware how difficult it is to install. To me, grace in physical form means making something look clear and simple and beautiful when in reality it's much more complex to execute and make perfect."

Courtesy of Jeffery Cross
Photo details

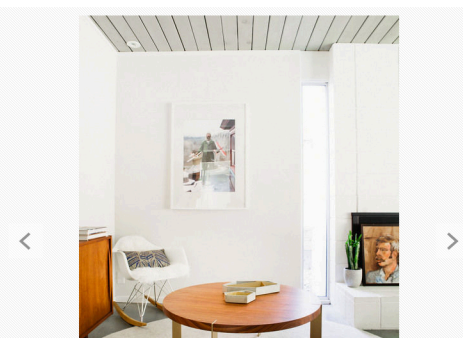
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"I love a good wedge joint. Its super strong and so satisfying to whack that wedge in tight when I'm gluing it up. This is a really fun stool to make. The design of the sling seat references old camp chairs and campaign furniture. The slings are actually removable—tension between dowels and the frame hold them in place."

Courtesy of Alice Tacheny
Photo details

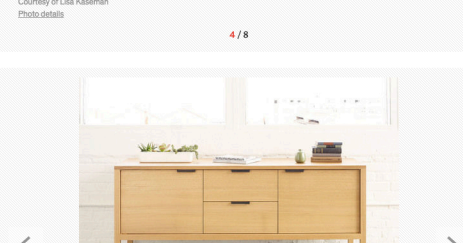
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"Walnut is everybody's favorite right now so I work with that a lot—and the smell of it when it's being cut is one of my favorite smells in the world, so that's fine with me. It's a delight to work with. The materiality of this table and the relationship of the brass to the walnut is really what drives this design."

Courtesy of Lisa Kaseman
Photo details

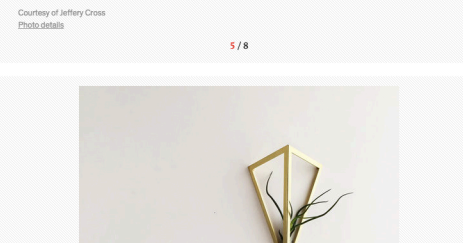
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"Ideas come to me in steps and starts, and often at really inopportune moments (like when I have deadlines for other projects) so I am always trying to find time to test out ideas in my shop when I get the chance. I don't dwell very long on things or sketch a million variations; I do better just jumping in with mock ups or foam and paper models, and then refining the physical models until I am ready to build the prototype. I have lots of prototypes floating around the shop and my house."

Courtesy of Jeffery Cross
Photo details

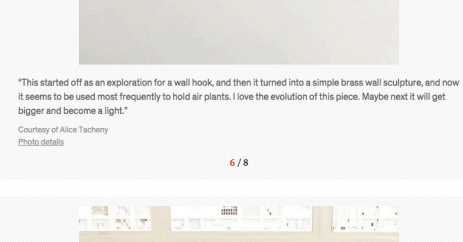
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"This started off as an exploration for a wall hook, and then it turned into a simple brass wall sculpture, and now it seems to be used most frequently to hold air plants. I love the evolution of this piece. Maybe next it will get bigger and become a light."

Courtesy of Alice Tacheny
Photo details

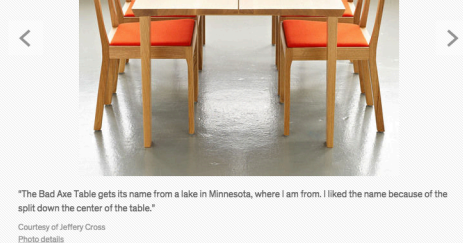
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"The Bad Axe Table gets its name from a lake in Minnesota, where I am from. I liked the name because of the split down the center of the table."

Courtesy of Jeffery Cross
Photo details

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"I think there is that myth out there that woodworking is a male-dominated field and that it's an uncomfortable place for women or we are always having to prove ourselves. That couldn't be farther from the truth in my experience. I might have been a little bit of novelty when I started out 16 years ago, but beyond that it's always been a non-issue."

Courtesy of Jeffery Cross
Photo details

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