

HOME

STYLEMAKER SPOTLIGHT

Alice Tacheny

By Anh-Minh Le

Furniture designer Alice Tacheny is often asked where she studied design, and the answer usually surprises people. “I never went to school for design, but instead studied biblical studies and first century Judaism,” she says.

However, furniture design did pique her interest at an early age. “My mom would bring home funny little orphaned pieces of old furniture from the Salvation Army and refurbish them,” Tacheny says. “She is very industrious, and it definitely rubbed off on me.”

By the end of college, she realized that academia wasn’t for her, and, immediately upon graduating, entered into a woodworking apprenticeship in Chicago. She went on to join the design team at Minneapolis-based Blu Dot and then the furniture design group at Target.

In 2009, she relocated to the Bay Area. Soon thereafter, Tacheny established her eponymous studio (www.alicetachenydesign.com) and, in 2012, released her inaugural furniture collection.

“I wanted to work with my hands; I wanted to create something that I designed and to be able to use the materials that I hand-picked because they were beautiful and pure instead of cost-effective and could be mass-produced,” she says.

Tacheny’s pieces are decidedly modern, with an emphasis on quality, craftsmanship and details. She makes her beds, tables, chairs and case goods in collaboration with an Oakland woodworker and handles the final assembly, upholstery and finishing in her own shop. A line of accessories created last year — that includes vessels and wall-mounted items — is all her own.

“My work is really elemental — the parts are very simple geometric shapes that fit together in a logical way, and it’s all expressed,” says Tacheny. “That’s deeply satisfying to see and to touch.”

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Deborah Svoboda / The Chronicle

The Tacheny cheat sheet

Class action: “In the Bay Area, there are so many places to take classes and get your feet wet with a DIY project. One such place, where you can totally geek out, is TechShop. They have several locations, with a wood shop, metal shop and plenty of things you never knew you needed — like a giant quilting machine. It’s a pretty incredible resource for prototyping and getting a big project done with equipment you probably wouldn’t normally have access to.” (www.techshop.ws)



Jessica Pons / The Chronicle

Sound advice: “My family and I live in a very 1960s suburban Eichler neighborhood, and we have friends over a ton because these houses are so perfect for entertaining. A big part of entertaining for us is simply having the right music on. We are indie rock fans, but anything that has relevance to you and the people you are with will do wonders. Music sometimes gets overlooked, especially when you’re having a last-minute gathering, but I feel like it’s what binds everything together and is such a great catalyst for good conversation.”

Decorating 101: “When it comes to interiors, there is nothing worse than walking into a place that looks as if it was all purchased at one place at the same time, no matter how ‘nice’ it is. Layering in pieces that have a story — with you or even with someone else — has a huge impact. A beautiful vintage blanket from the flea market can make a boring chair from Ikea look completely rad.”

Travel tip: “When you are vacationing in a city, go to the weirdest museum you can find. It’s a great way to really learn about the quirky side of the culture in the place you’re visiting. Years ago I was in Boston and I went to the Museum of Bad Art, which is pretty rinky-dink and weird, but it was so much fun. And let’s face it — bad art is hilarious.” (www.museumofbadart.org)

A few favorites



Kenya Miles

Traveling Miles: “I recently met Kenya Miles, an up-and-coming textile designer in Oakland. She does a natural indigo dye process on her fabrics and makes beautiful things with them. She recently went to Ghana to learn a traditional hand-stamping dye technique, and I can’t wait to see more of her work incorporating this process.” (www.travelingmilesstudio.com)

Flax: “This brass, wall-mounted object is so great to just place anywhere. It adds a little depth and brightness to a wall, and looks pretty stunning grouped together. Another fun thing to do is to stick a botanical something into them, like a tillandsia or plant clipping.” (www.alicetachenydesign.com)



Melissa Kaseman



Melissa Kaseman

Peace Industry rugs: “These handmade wool felt rugs are incredibly thick and cozy and make you want to get down and roll around on them. Locals Dodd and Melina Raissnia produce them in their workshop in Turkey using a traditional rug-making technique, and they are based on Melina’s own designs.” (www.peaceindustry.com)