

# Modern-day chic

## Designers offer updated take on desert style

By Judith Salkin  
The Desert Sun

Interior designers Arthur Elrod and Steve Chase are famous for the lasting mark they left on upscale homes across the desert. Today, Trina Turk, Christopher Kennedy and Kurt Jaeger are updating classic desert chic for the 21st century.

But they're not doing it on a home-by-home basis: Kennedy and Turk's home goods are carried by retailers across the country.

Jaeger's custom metal pieces can be found in homes and country clubs across the desert.

Turk's work is the most commercially accessible. At her flagship store on North Palm Canyon Drive, Turk offers midcentury-inspired home accents — from pillows and bedding to beach towels and table-top accessories — that bring the vibe of earlier eras into the home.

With Macy's now carrying Turk's bed linens in its online catalog and in larger stores across the country, the style is available to the whole country.

Kennedy, who opened Christopher Kennedy Design in 2005, started on a smaller scale.

He began selling a line of furniture that incorporates the clean modern lines for his sofas, chairs and credenzas two years ago at his design studio and Egg and Dart stores in Rancho Mirage and Denver.

"I realized when I designed one of the pieces that it started with a drawing I'd done while I was in college," Kennedy said of the Franklin credenza. "I didn't realize it, but I guess I'd been thinking of doing furniture for a while."

As an architecture student at Drury University in Springfield, Mo., Christopher Kennedy spent summers working at Disney World resorts in Florida.

That experience helped refocus his concept of how he could change people's lives with designs for their living and work spaces.

In 2010 Kennedy launched his furniture line, designed to work as well with midcentury modern and art deco, as contemporary and transitional designed rooms.

"Easy elegance" was the goal and the idea wasn't necessarily for buyers to take each suite en masse.

"Instead of taking all the pieces in one of the lines, people can start with one or two



Designer Christopher Kennedy shows the David chair and ottoman he designed for his husband David Clark. Kennedy brings architectural elements to his furniture. G. CRAWFORD

statement pieces and build the rest of the room around them," Kennedy, 36, said. "Of course, if they really want all Richter in the bedroom, that's fine."

For his designs, Kennedy drew inspiration from modern design eras, and from architects like William Cody who shaped the look of the desert.

The coffee table with its sleek, uncluttered look that bears Cody's name draws on the architect's own use of long horizontal planes.

The Richter pieces offer a bit of Kennedy's sense of humor, with vertical bars on the pieces that resemble the graph of an earthquake's activity.

Other pieces were influenced by those closest to Kennedy.

The Robert chair is reminiscent of a streamlined art deco roadster.

"I designed it in honor of my father who loved cars and used to take to Concours d'Elegance in Pebble Beach when I was a child," he said.

The David chair and ottoman, a twist

on midcentury modern design, was named for Kennedy's husband, David Clark.

"He kept asking me for an easy chair," Kennedy recalled. But with other professional commitments, Clark's request was backburnered.

"One day he told me he was going to Mathis Brothers to buy a La-Z-Boy and I told him to wait," Kennedy said.

Each piece is handmade here in the Coachella Valley or in Los Angeles, where Kennedy opened a showroom earlier this year. "I got into design to make a difference in people's lives," Kennedy said. "My furniture is more removed because I don't get to meet the buyers, but I hope it has a positive impact wherever it's used."

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