

Sight Unseen



AMERICAN DESIGN HOT LIST 2023

Dan John Anderson

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Having spent most of his life in the Pacific Northwest, Anderson relocated to the desert

in 2012, moving to Joshua Tree, California, where he apprenticed in the studios of artists Andrea Zittel and Alma Allen. In his solo practice, he combines the best of those artists – Zittel's expansiveness with Allen's sense of proportion and scale – making monolithic, hand-turned sculptures and objects from native woods like pine, cedar, and oak, often patched with butterfly joints like some kind of High Desert Nakashima. It's trendy right now to make rough-hewn sculptures using tools like a chain saw, lathe, grinders, and chisels, but Anderson was one of the first – and best – of this generation to do so.

What is American design to you, and what excites you about it?

American design is a lot of things, I suppose that's what excites me about it – kind of anything goes in the proverbial melting pot. My work mostly stems from a more folk/craft, material-based tradition, but I love to see things get mixed up – raw and refined, industrial and primitive, neutral and colorful, old, new, etc. Variety makes for a more engaging conversation; new combinations and different contexts spark new feelings which go back into the pot and around we go.

What are your plans and highlights for the upcoming year?

I'm working towards another experiential installation out here in the desert as a kind of continuation of a couple similar projects that I did here over the last few years. The first was High Desert Dinner in 2020, an installation of sculptures, furniture, and tablewares made with help from friends in this community to facilitate a small series of dinners that we hosted in a remote desert wash adjacent to A-Z West in Joshua Tree. This event marked the 10-year anniversary of my first visit to the desert, and for me, it was a way to celebrate, express gratitude for, and pay respect to this place and my experience of it since. The second such installation was Pink Moon Ruins in 2022. This took place at an historical or maybe legendary location out here that had been left in ruin since a large earthquake struck in 1992. Here, I installed a series of sculptures which in this context were intended to further evoke a spirit of place. This space was additionally activated by performers and guests, all effectively adding to the continuation and memory of this place. My interest in these kinds of experiential installations is layered. As someone who makes furniture and sculpture, I think that, among other things, these projects give me an opportunity to explore how objects and context can function to facilitate or instigate the unfolding of a more primary and essential part of ourselves. I also appreciate the adventurous spirit involved in these kinds of efforts and what that adds to context, story, and memory. The date of my next installation is still TBD as I am trying to figure out how to fit it in with what else I have coming up.

Recently we finished a larger series of work with friend and architect Linda Taalman as part of her overhaul of the Chandon Winery in Napa. We made a couple dozen various

scale and unique pieces that figure prominently throughout the ambitious project. Unfortunately no photos just yet, but we'll be able to share soon.

I just had a small collection of work with The Future Perfect at Design Miami, and I have a piece up at The Blunk Space in Point Reyes for the 100 Hooks show. I just shipped another small collection of work to The Future Perfect in New York and one up to Spartan Shop in Portland.

In the studio, we're currently working on an entry door for Play Mountain in Tokyo — old growth redwood salvaged from a barn near Sacramento that is getting sculpted and will include a few little cast glass windows and cast bronze door handles.

In early April, I have a smaller solo show with SCP in London. Later in April, we have a traveling group show that I have put together with my friends at Curators Cube in Tokyo. It will be a collection of work from three Japan-based artists — Kazunori Hamana, Yukiko Kuroda, and Yu Kobayashi — and then two American artists, myself and Ido Yoshimoto. This collection of work will first be installed and exhibited at A-Z West in Joshua Tree and then will travel north, where, two weeks later, it will be installed and exhibited at Salmon Creek Farm in Albion, CA. Later in the fall of 2024, I will have a solo show at Sogetsu Plaza in Tokyo with Curators Cube.

In addition, I have a number of commissions in the works, as well as some exciting professional possibilities percolating. Through all of this is also the expansion of our studio, which is a big project in and of itself, but much needed as it will allow for more space, greater means, and greater potential.

And always, there is our house — still chipping away, but getting closer.

What inspires or informs your work in general?

I want to make things that furnish the landscape of our subconscious. I'm driven by a sense of exploration and inspired by the people, places, and moments along the way. I also find inspiration in doing the work and I'm motivated by feeling more than thought. Engaging nature and collaborating with raw material tend to point me in a good direction.













