



Kitsching for a Compliment

DL CHATS IT UP WITH THE DARLING DESIGNER OF POTTERY, FURNITURE, HOTELS, TEXTILES, AND JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD

FOR ANYBODY FAMILIAR WITH JONATHAN ADLER'S RAPIDLY meteoric rise in the design world, it's easy to think he must have all the answers ("Brown and blue. Moi's signature color scheme is the answer to most of your problems," or "Dress like a backup singer.") To imagine Adler facing a design dilemma throws into question one's entire belief system. So it is comforting to know that Adler has Mrs. Goldstein to turn to. Mrs. Goldstein, who lived next-door to Adler when he was growing up in rural New Jersey, was one of his earliest influences. "Much more chic [than] über-chic fashion designer Miuccia Prada," Mrs. G., he says, taught him "to be graphic, bold, and confident, and to put things in your home that make you happy."

That's all well and good for Mr. Adler, but where does that leave the rest of us? Since we likely do not live next door to a Mrs. Goldstein, we're pretty sure the solution does not lie just beyond those country-fried lace-trimmed damask curtains on the other side of our driveway. Which is where Adler comes in. As improbable as it might sound, Jonathan Adler is our Mrs. Goldstein. And why not? In 13 short years he's gone from selling his pottery out of his fourth-floor walk-up studio to designing interiors for posh (and wildly popular) resort hotels like the Parker

Palm Springs. Indeed, it seems this humble potter may be poised to take over the world (though he says emphatically that he only

As born-again Christians ask themselves when confronted with a dilemma, "What would Jesus do?" so I ask myself, "What would Mrs. Goldstein do?" —Jonathan Adler, My Prescription for Anti-Depressive Living

wants to design it). Sound far-fetched? So did needlepoint pillows with 1970s muscle cars on them – until Jonathan Adler came along. And he's got help, too, in the form of his longtime partner – celebrity window dresser, author, and sometime-guest on *America's Next Top Model*, Simon Doonan, and their Norwich Terrier, Liberace.

Recently, he was generous enough to share some of his wisdom with *DL* to help answer the nagging question (and our mantra), *What would Jonathan do?*

JONATHAN ON ...

... Design Influences

"Palm Beach Regency and Hollywood Regency and Desert Regency are ... a fusion of traditional Regency architecture and Mod moxie. I'm an eclecticist. I'm grounded in Modernism, but not dogmatically so – I love the drama and adventure of Regency, I love the optimism of West Coast Modernism, and I love to mix it all up ... I would say that I have lots of influences from Modernism, traditionalism, art, architecture, etcetera. And I put them all together in my mental blender and they come out feeling fresh and familiar at the same time."

... High and Low Culture

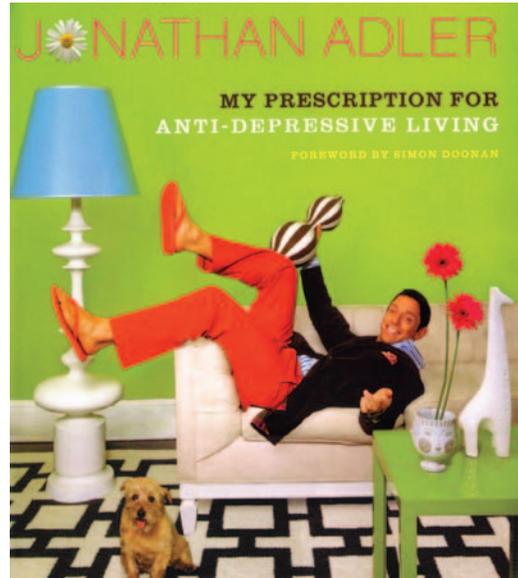
"I'm a populist. I hate inaccessible and pretentious art and I hate elitism ... I celebrate TV ... I hate pink flamingos and tiki dolls – too kitschy. But, when kitsch is married to craft, as it is in the gigantic porcelain poodle lamp that presides over my bedroom, or the series of marquetry clown portraits that I bought in Capri, it can be transcendental. The traditional iconography of kitsch [like] poodles and clowns can soar to incredible heights when interpreted by truly creative, skilled, and talented artisans."

... "Adler Style"

"Yes, I do cruise myself on eBay, and some weird stuff pops up. Recently, there was this really freaky and disturbing doll – plastic, fake hair, etcetera – that was described as 'Jonathan Adler Style.' I think I might have been offended, but I don't really know what it means."

... Success & Failure

"My failures have not been spectacular, but they have been many. I have a giggly enthusiasm for design, and I'm lucky to be prolific ... In terms of surprising successes, the best surprise has been the popularity of my ceramic animal collection. I've always loved and collected ceramic animals, and when I started to make my own, I thought it was just a folly. But, as it turns out, people love animals."



In *My Prescription for Anti-Depressive Living* (ReganBooks, \$34.95) Jonathan Adler shows that his delicious, whimsical style can be attained by all. In it, he explains the process behind some of his most notable projects while highlighting others that inspired him along the way. Organized into call-to-action tenets (Liberate Your Inner Hippie; Minimalism is a Bummer; etc.) the book is happy, insightful, and entertaining – just like an Adler-designed interior.

JONATHAN ADLER FURNITURE

Although his ceramics can be found in smaller boutiques such as Veri Peri at The Parker Palm Springs and Retail Laboratory in Phoenix, Haus Modern Living will carry some of Mr. Adler's fabulous furniture, like this walnut-framed Palmer sofa, inspired by simple, architectural, post-1950s design. It's named after Michael Caine's character, Harry Palmer, in *The Ipcress File*. There are 94 fabric options (oyster-colored antique striated velvet shown); starting at \$3,000. **More:** www.jonathanadlerfurniture.com



... the Important Things in Life

"If you have a great mate, nothing else really matters. Love can free you up to take risks in your career and try things you might not try on your own ... [Simon and I] are sort of infantile 80-year-olds. We do stay in almost every night and have squillions of varieties of herbal teas. But, we spend most of our time playing ping-pong and hitting each other and chasing our Norwich Terrier, Liberace."

INSIDE HIS WORLD

Adler grew up in a home rich with inspiration. His father was a "rigorous minimalist," he says, while his mother preferred a more "exuberant and chaotic" look. (To this day, Adler's work embodies the happy fusion of spare Modernism and unabashed over-the-top-ness.) He discovered pottery at summer camp, when he was just 12, and soon began experimenting at his own potter's wheel (a *bar mitzvah* present). He attended Brown University "allegedly," as he puts it, to study heady abstractions like semiotics and art history. But his heart had more earthly desires, luring him to the nearby Rhode Island School of Design for his pottery fix. After a short (and, by all accounts, painful) stint in the entertainment industry, Adler returned to making pots he would want to buy – work that's "happy and communicative and speaks to people rather than critics."

Adler's first big break came in 1993, when Barney's department store placed an order for his pots. For the next four years, Adler filled all the orders himself. In order to meet increasing demand for his pieces, he began working with Aid to Artisans, a non-profit organization that connects U.S. designers with artisans in developing countries for what Adler calls "a P.C., non-Kathy Lee Gifford sort of business relationship." Many of his pots, as well as his textiles, are made in Peru.

He opened his first store in SoHo in 1998. He now has six – each its own groovy, little world – across the country, and an entire range of wares (including new lines of furniture) in dozens of shops and boutiques.

WANT TO MEET JONATHAN ADLER?

On October 26 from 6 pm to 9 pm, Mr. Adler will be at Haus Modern Living in Scottsdale, AZ (address below), signing his pottery purchased the day of the event. He is also creating one custom piece to be auctioned off that night. Proceeds will benefit Noah's Wish.

WHERE TO FIND THE GOODS

Haus Modern Living

www.hausmodernliving.com
4821 N. Scottsdale Road, Suite 109,
Scottsdale, AZ; 480.423.5444
& Biltmore Fashion Park; 2440 E. Camelback
Road, Suite 101, Phoenix, AZ; 602.277.0111

Blank Space

Mandalay Bay; 3930 Las Vegas Blvd. So.,
Suite 131, Las Vegas, NV; 702.632.9399

Adler's groovy, new Bargello pillows; Adler at the potter's wheel; the spa at his first hotel design, The Parker Palm Springs (see page 28 for another reason to visit); parts of his iconic ceramic animal collection.

