



A look inside Eny Lee Parker's New York studio. Photo: Sean Davidson

16 Female Makers We Are Still Obsessed With

AD has profiled some of the most talented women in the business



By Hannah Martin

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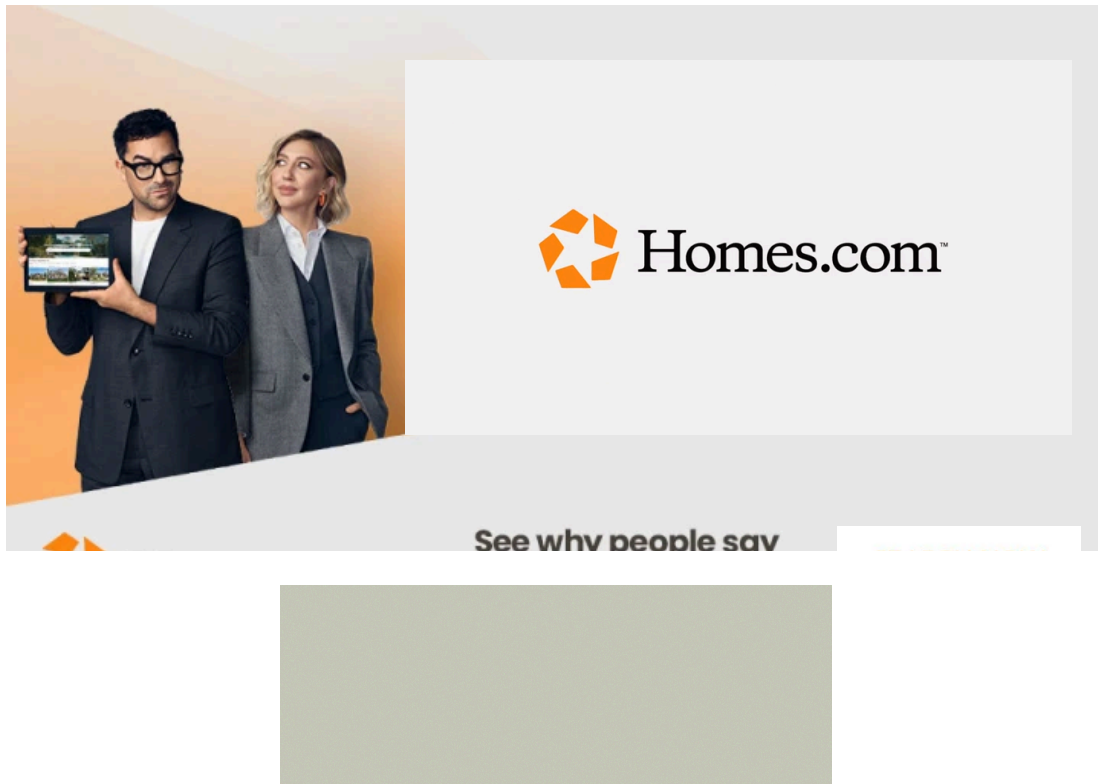


AD has long championed the work of independent makers, whose cutting-edge creations offer new windows into the world of craft. These 16 women, previously profiled in our pages and online, are making a name for themselves in their chosen mediums, whether they construct handwoven rugs, anthropomorphic lamps, or bewitching light fixtures. Sourced by some of the biggest interior designers in the business, these makers are likely already on your radar. If not, it's time to get caught up. Here are their stories.

Alice Gavalet

“It all starts with shape and color,” says this rising-star French ceramist [Alice Gavalet](#). Using a knifelike tool, she slices earthenware into flat forms that she then hand-assembles into three dimensions, firing the results before painting them with colorful enamels for one last bake, all in her petite workshop just outside Paris. The wild and whimsical pieces (squiggly striped vases, mirrors outlined in zany shapes) take inspiration from Ettore Sottsass’s playful objects, Jean Dubuffet’s graphic compositions, and her nine-year-old daughter’s spontaneous drawings.

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By Gavalet's admission, her own works—often large and heavy—aren't exactly practical, but, she says, "I consider them sculptures that can be used." It's an idea she undoubtedly gleaned from the 10 years and counting she has worked as an assistant to the legendary furniture designer Elizabeth Garouste, known for her spirited takes on functional objects. [instagram.com/alicegavalet](https://www.instagram.com/alicegavalet)



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#ceramique #terre #rouge

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Anna Karlin

Anna Karlin has always followed her instincts. Just two days after starting a job at a big-time London design firm in 2006, she quit. Four years later, she moved across the Atlantic to Manhattan to set up her own art-direction firm, and a few years later, in 2012, dared to create a line of furniture. Each risk produced reward: Her art-direction business has landed clients like Adidas, Lululemon, and Fendi. And her product line—which started with sleek glassware, a hoop-shaped light, and some chess-piece stools—has captivated the design world. Now, from a moody studio-slash-showroom in Chinatown, her sculptural furniture, lighting, and accessories have become new classics. annakarlin.com



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Arati Rao

After years working on the corporate side of the fashion industry, Arati Rao needed a change. “I felt disconnected from the process of making,” explains the New York–based designer, who quit her job in 2009 and headed to India, her family’s homeland, to explore its rich craft culture. “People can make anything there,” she marvels. “You just have to find it.” Founded in 2012, her own brand, Tantuvi (it means “weaver” in Sanskrit), has quickly segued from textiles to rugs and other home products. Rather than producing the wares in factories, Rao tapped cottage industry workers in Rajasthan and Telangana to create graphic dhurries and rugs. Natural fibers are dyed by a family in Jaipur before being sent to villages in Rajasthan’s Thar Desert, where they are woven on panja looms. tantuvistudio.com



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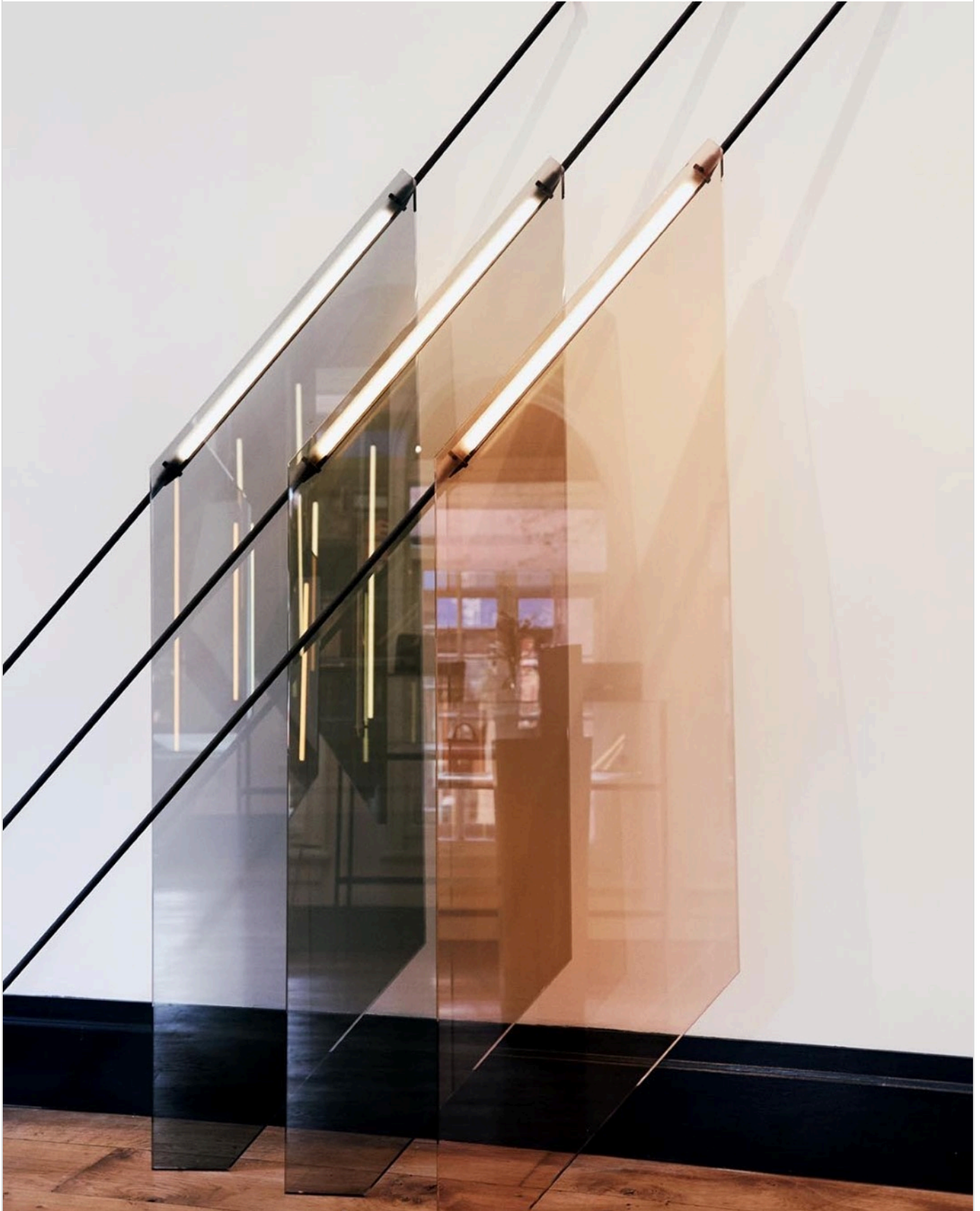
Bec Brittain

Bec Brittain has an impressive pedigree: She was lighting designer Lindsey Adelman's first paid employee. ("New York's lighting scene is like a family tree," she explains.) But since going solo in 2011, Brittain has quickly established her own branch. Her flexible SHY light system—an infinitely reconfigurable constellation of LED tubes and metal rods—has become her own lighting-world claim to fame, winning her the attention of clients ranging from Mike D of the Beastie Boys to J.P. Morgan. More recently, she has pivoted into a more collectible, commission-based practice. becbrittain.com



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Block Shop

“We’re a family business on both sides of production,” says Lily Stockman, who cofounded a hit textiles line with sister Hopie and works with five family-run studios in India to realize their hand-block-printed patterns. After starting with graphic scarves in 2013, Block Shop has expanded into a home collection that includes pillows, bedding, rugs, and fabric by the yard. Marked by eye-popping geometric motifs and sunny SoCal palettes, it’s all on display at their Los Angeles showroom. blockshoptextiles.com



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Coffee or Cream??? New winter-weight cashmere scarves launching SOON ! ✨

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Carmen D'Apollonio

Carmen D'Apollonio often works solo, but she never gets lonely in her Los Angeles studio, where she's surrounded by ceramic lamps and vessels in progress, many of them people-size. "They become a bit human," she says of her inanimate companions—some of them anthropomorphic, others vaguely figurative. "They're like a little family."

D'Apollonio's ceramics practice began eight years ago, when she signed up for an introductory course in traditional Japanese raku pottery in her native Switzerland. After relocating to L.A. in 2014, she landed a high-profile commission: The French fashion brand Céline requested three ceramic displays for an advertising campaign. The work evolved naturally from there—a continuation of a process that, she insists, "is actually very simple." First she draws her ideas; then she coils the clay into the desired form. "I don't have any structure," she notes of her entirely hand-built technique. "Whatever I want to do, I do." carmendapollonio.com



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Chrissa Amuah

"In Ghana, if someone is wearing particular colors or patterns, I'll know whether they're grieving a loved one or if the person is elderly or young," says designer [Chrissa Amuah](#). "There is a culture of giving names to fabrics that convey sentiments, wisdoms, even humor." The London-born talent, Ghanaian by descent, has long been inspired by adinkra, the vast lexicon of symbols that has been incorporated into local pottery, architecture, and textiles for centuries. She celebrated those motifs in Duality, her first collection of fabrics for Bernhardt Textiles.

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"When people think of African-inspired fabrics, there's a certain cliché or stereotype," says Amuah, who founded Africa by Design, a platform for makers from sub-Saharan countries, in 2017 and collaborated with Nigerian architect Tosin Oshinowo on conceptual headpieces for Lexus's 2020 presentation at Design Miami. "But Africa is such a diverse continent. I think it's important to provoke people's way of seeing things." amwadesigns.com



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The DUALITY COLLECTION, a collaboration with [@berhardtdesign](#).

For me, textile design is a process that starts with my hands. I've always worked like this. Using my hands is how I love to explore creating textures, which excite the eyes and that also evoke feelings, which compliment my Adinkra inspired design.

To create 'Ink', I started by drizzling ink onto pieces of walnut veneer and watched the ink bleed into the grain of the wood. I had limited control of the outcome. The ink meandered to form unique lines, creating an abstract pattern. The final result is a nonfigurative design that is soft and inviting. For the collection it has been translated and constructed by using thick bands of chenille floating over a slightly textured background and is available in five colorways.

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Egg Collective

“We were the first women in the woodshops where we worked before starting our company,” says Crystal Ellis of [Egg Collective](#), the New York–based design firm that she launched with friends Stephanie Beamer and Hillary Petrie in 2011. Ten years later, they have left their peers in the dust, building a reputation for exquisitely crafted furniture while shaking up the male-dominated field. “We grew up in the ’80s and ’90s, with the rise of mass consumerism, so we see our process as the antithesis of that,” Ellis says of their holistic design philosophy. “We want the pieces to outlive us.” Locally crafted—whether in their own Brooklyn woodshop or nearby stone or metal ateliers—Egg’s creations promise to stand the test of time. [eggcollective.com](#)

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Eny Lee Parker

“I’ve always worked with my hands,” says the Queens-based designer [Eny Lee Parker](#), reflecting on her love of clay. “It’s like collaborating with Mother Nature. You can manipulate the medium, but you never know what will happen when you fire it.” She first clicked with ceramics during a 2016 residency through the Savannah College of Art and Design, where she was getting her master’s degree in furniture design. The thrown-terra-cotta tables, planters, and vessels she made at the time debuted at Sight Unseen Offsite just months later, launching her career before she had even graduated. In the years since, Parker has evolved that hand-hewn language, achieving commercial success with sculptural lamps dappled with finger marks and topped with glowing orbs. [enyleeparker.com](#)

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Esha Ahmed

“*Makrosha* is the Bangla word for ‘spider,’” says the New York City–based, Bangladesh-born [designer](#), explaining the name of her new textiles brand. She relates to the arachnid, or what she calls “nature’s weaver.” Over the course of her career—which included three years as a textiles specialist for the AD100 firm Peter Marino Architect—she has spun a web of expert artisans across the globe, among them the Katu tribe in Laos, who entwine beads in their threads, and West African craftspeople who work wonders with cotton and raffia. She recently launched her own collection of super-luxurious fabrics, produced in Senegal, Laos, Nepal, India, England, and France. They range from a fantastical, hand-embroidered pattern based on 17th-century French silks to a shimmery, raspberry-hued ombré. [makrosha.com](#)

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Gabriella Picone

“Idda means ‘her’ in Sicilian dialect,” says artist and designer [Gabriella Picone](#). It’s a word she heard often growing up between New York City and Lipari, the Aeolian island off the coast of Sicily. Now it’s the name of her new studio, which she launched last year while hunkering down in another seaside locale, the North Fork of Long Island. What started with paintings, one-of-a-kind ceramics, and whimsical, limited-edition pareos (the sarong-like skirts worn by Sicilian women in hot summer months) has now expanded to include Italian-made home staples. All draw inspiration from the Sicilian lifestyle, especially its art of dining. “Every meal is so considered—your whole family sits down, you talk, you tell stories,” reflects Picone. “I wanted my work to address this ritual of coming together.” [iddastudio.com](#)

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Katie Stout

“It’s not about being sexy,” New York–based designer [Katie Stout](#) told *AD* in 2017, ahead of her first solo show at New York gallery R & Company, “The girls are just having fun.” For the show, she devised a sort of squad—a series of cartoonish lamps and mirrors, the naked female forms of which Stout sculpts in clay and paints candy colors. One girl did a headstand; another sat on a friend’s shoulders. Wires went in and out of bodies; nipples at times doubled as touch sensor switches. Stout, in the years before and since, has taken the art and design worlds by storm creating furnishings that seem to laugh in the face of convention, all the while letting you in on the joke. This off-kilter sense of beauty has quickly won over daring aesthetes such as fashion iconoclast Jeremy Scott and *AD100* designer Kelly Wearstler. [katiestout.com](#)

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Leah Singh

Upon returning to India after attending Parsons School of Design, [Leah Singh](#) experienced her homeland’s vibrant textiles with fresh eyes. “I saw an opportunity to modernize these traditions and target a new market,” explains the designer, now based between New Delhi and New York. Age-old techniques, she learned, were languishing as artisans pushed their children toward office jobs. But at local Indian markets she connected with producers from across the country who could stitch, weave, and print her patterns on pillows, carpets, throws, and more. “I don’t change the way they work,” says Singh, who adapts these customs with her own color palettes and architecturally inspired motifs. “They’re so special. They’ve been there for so long. I want to highlight that.” [leahsingh.com](#)

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Maryam Turkey

Working as part of the Silver Art Projects residency program in New York for the past year, the Pratt graduate [Maryam Turkey](#), who came to the U.S. from Iraq as a refugee in 2009, has drawn connections between the countries she's called home. The loosely architectural forms of her mirrors, lamps, and tables are all coated in a tactile brew of paper pulp, plaster, and resin inspired by the earth structures she grew up around in Baghdad. A trio of stools titled Oikos—"home" in Arabic—nods to the simple houses she sketched obsessively as a child. ("A square with a little square inside of it," she muses.) maryamturkey.com

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Megumi Shauna Arai

Raw. Imperfect. Gestural. Emotional. These are words [Megumi Shauna Arai](#) uses to describe textiles that inspire her—whether traditional Japanese *boro*, 19th-century American crazy quilts, or patchwork marvels by the women of Gee's Bend, Alabama. But this self-taught artist could just as well be describing her own make-do confections, hand-stitched in her Brooklyn studio using vintage fabrics, rough-edged scraps, and colorful silks. (She dyes them herself with natural agents like logwood, indigo, and cochineal, jars of which fill her shelves.) Arai's intuitive, pieceworked technique turned heads last fall at the 1955 Eliot Noyes House in New Canaan, Connecticut, where one of her tapestries was spread across the bed as part of an exhibition by Blum & Poe, Mendes Wood DM, and Object & Thing. [instagram.com/oneflewup/](https://www.instagram.com/oneflewup/)

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Mimi Jung

At [Mimi Jung](#)'s Los Angeles studio, several looms reveal hundreds of hours of work. In one weaving, gauzy mohair seems to creep across the weft, like a live edge. In another,

highlighter-yellow rope threads through thick poly-cord. “I can work an entire day on just two inches,” she says of her slow, solitary practice, beloved by the likes of Yabu Pushelberg, Philippe Malouin, and Jamie Bush. Jung, a South Korean immigrant who grew up in New York and studied fine art at Cooper Union, came to weaving by accident. In 2011 she enrolled in a machine-knitting class only to learn it was canceled a few days in advance. The program instead put her in a weaving class. In no time, she was hooked. “I immediately compared it to painting,” recalls Jung, who quickly expanded from traditional fibers such as wool and cotton into unexpected materials like mohair, which lent her works a feathery transparency. “A loom is essentially a canvas; you’re just working in a linear way.” mimijung.com

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[Hannah Martin](#) is the senior design editor at Architectural Digest, where she has worked since 2014. She contributes regular features on emerging talent and design history, often covering subjects that straddle the worlds of art and design. She writes two monthly print columns—'Object Lesson' and 'One To Watch'—as well as ... [Read more](#)

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