

CALIFORNIA  
STYLE &  
CULTURE

# NATURAL INSTINCTS

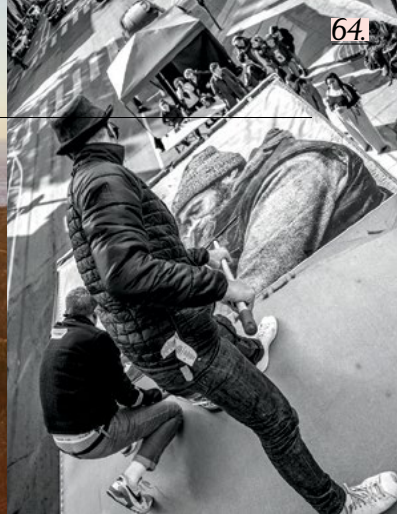
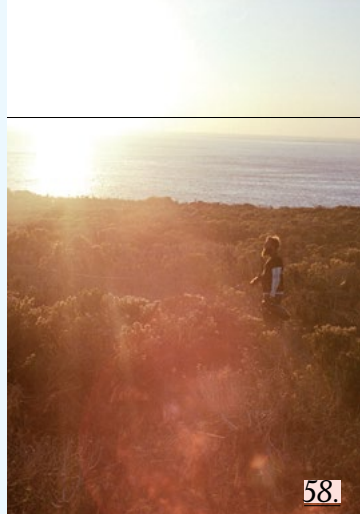
MEN'S  
EDITION

Spring 2019

**WITH** DIEGO LUNA / BODE MILLER / JR / JIMMY CHIN / CHRIS BROCK







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## Spring 2019



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LEFT: DEWEY NICKS; BEAU GREALLY; JACK PLATNER, JR.; ARTNET; AMAZING ESCAPES. COPYRIGHT 2019; DAN ARNOLD. SEE SHOPPING GUIDE FOR DETAILS. P.81.



## KING OF THE HILL

At his remote Mount Baldy studio, *Chuck Moffit* finds a natural home for brutalist design



Artist and furniture designer Chuck Moffit has an enviable daily commute: From his cabin in Mount Baldy, he walks about 30 feet to his studio — a glass-and-steel, 1,800-square-foot structure that he enlisted friends, including architect Rufus Turner, to build five years ago. In place of congested freeways, there are oak, pine and cedar trees, native yuccas and craggy boulders. Inside the 21-foot-tall studio, expanses of windows ensure a constant connection to nature and the San Gabriel Mountains beyond.



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DAN ARNOLD

“I am always reminded of scale and the interdependence of things,” Moffit says. This is evident in his work, which balances brutalist processes with delicate moments — like the Oshibana table, which is inspired by the Japanese art of floral arrangement and composed of a steel base and bronze petals. His distinct style has won him such clients as interior designers Oliver M. Furth, Nickey Kehoe and Suzanne Tucker, and high-level collectors. Last year, he was picked up by several notable design showrooms, including JF Chen in Los Angeles and De Sousa Hughes in San Francisco.

Some days, the only sounds in the studio come from the rushing waters of nearby San Antonio Creek or from the barking of his dog, Elko, a McNab that considers it his job to “defend us from squirrels,” quips Moffit. Arranging the hand-dyed leather, cast glass and inlaid brass elements of his new Stratum table, for instance, is quiet and painstaking labor. (In addition to catamaran sailing and hiking the local mountains, he and his partner, Margie Keith, spend their off-duty hours taking Elko to sheepherding training.)

The Wisconsin-born Moffit moved to Southern California in 1998 to pursue an MFA at Claremont Graduate University, where he focused on sculpture and experimented with steel. An interest in “creating objects that have a function,” he recalls, led to designing furniture. Visiting architect Bruce Goff’s corkscrew-shaped Bavinger House in Oklahoma was transformative: “It helped erase that line between the decorative arts and fine arts for me.” (Goff also designed the Pavilion for Japanese Art at Los Angeles County Museum of Art.)

Moffit’s creations often marry time-honored techniques and cutting-edge technologies. Take his



latest sconces: The fixtures, reminiscent of Japanese lanterns, are a mix of blown glass, steel and bronze. The bronze component is computer-designed and 3-D-printed.

Having shown at the Hammer Museum and been included in installations at Andrea Zittel’s Joshua Tree-based arts organization, High Desert Test Sites, he was also the subject of a hotly tipped 2016 solo furniture exhibition at fragrance and floral designer Eric Buterbaugh’s eponymous Los Angeles gallery.

As Moffit acquires new equipment for his studio, like a glass kiln or a leather sewing machine, his repertoire expands. He is currently ideating tabletop and hardware collections, both slated for release in 2020. “Bigger pieces can be all-consuming,” he explains. “In a way, it’s a nice creative break to think about something smaller.” He envisions bronze bowls and leather table runners and ruminates about sterling silver hardware accented with gemstones. The latter, he says, “needs to be run through the reality-check machine. But that’s how a lot of stuff starts out — as some kind of fantastical idea.”

Since inspiration can strike at any time, Moffit carries around a Moleskine notebook. “There might be some moment of architecture or a part of a painting at a museum — I make sure I can sketch it,” he says. It’s no surprise that he has stacks of rough sketches everywhere. “Sometimes, it’s just part of a form, and that form might turn into a table leg or a light,” he continues. “I’m looking outside now and there’s a shadow pattern on the studio from all the oak trees. You never know. ... Let’s cross our fingers and hope it keeps coming!” [chuckmoffit.com](http://chuckmoffit.com). •



Clockwise from top: CHUCK MOFFIT’s Zhinü daybed, Studio Series sconce and Stratum dining table. The artist’s Mount Baldy workspace. “Creative work is appealing for me because it is an equation that you write and solve for at the same time,” says Moffit, pictured in his studio. Opposite, from far left: Moffit’s design for the studio’s facade comprises steel and glass and stands 21 feet tall. Oshibana center table. All pieces, price upon request.