



# Old Influence, New Visions

LA-based artisan Westin Mitchell is making his mark in the interior design industry—releasing a luxurious line of innovative conceptions, displaying a unique sensibility and remarkable quality.

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ON KOHLER STREET IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, A PSYCHEDELIC MURAL OF WHITE TORNADO-LIKE CONFIGURATIONS ADORNS THE EXTERIOR OF A MATTE BLACK WAREHOUSE. SITUATED ALONGSIDE A CRIMSON BRICK BUILDING, THE JUXTAPOSITION OF CONTRASTING COLORATION BEAUTIFIES THE SLENDER ROADWAYS AND WIDENS THE EYES OF OBSERVERS.

At the entrance of the grungy, yet engaging warehouse stand two handsome gentlemen clothed in plaid button-ups and worn out denim—Westin Mitchell and his business partner Preston Johnson—the masterminds of Westin Mitchell Design Group. Mitchell firmly shakes my hand—welcoming me into his industrialized shop full of scattered hunks and hardware. An ample American flag and glimmering strands of white lights drape from the high-beamed ceiling as we progress into

the commodious space—a distinguishable upgrade from his once two-car garage atelier in West Hollywood. He gives me a tour of the brick-exposed man cave, flaunting glass chain pendants and stunning lights composed of interconnecting spirals dangling from above.

Roused by the innovative spirit of America's heartland, the 27-year-old artisan discovered his drive for furniture design while attending antique shows, rummage sales, and flea fairs including Pasadena's notorious Rose Bowl

Flea Market—an outdoor event that attracts thousands of locals and out-of-towners on the second Sunday of every month. But Mitchell didn't acquire his own business and 6.6K followers on Instagram overnight. He applied as much elbow grease to his educational efforts as he does to his craft. The University of Arizona grad received a Bachelor in Regional Development and minored in business—eager to pursue a career in real estate—renovating apartments and flipping homes.

"I ended up moving to LA and started banging on all the doors of all the companies I ever researched," says Mitchell. And his grit bore fruit. He was offered an internship with Cleveland Art—a business specializing in re-purposed industrial pieces for custom furniture, loft living, and cutting edge designs. Securing an unpaid, four-month internship in exchange for free grub, and on-the-house materials, Mitchell studied the trade and landed a full-time gig of two years. "I learned metal fabrication, basic woodwork, lighting techniques, that kind of stuff," says Mitchell. "Then I left and started my own company, which I ran out of my garage in West Hollywood. A few months later I met Preston. He had a background in architecture and woodwork, so our mutual friends thought it would be a good idea for us to meet."

The two of them formed an immediate bond and began working on several projects together—flourishing as a team. A month later, Preston demonstrated an interest in becoming a partner in the company—willing to contribute a significant amount of sweat equity



rather than employment compensation. In 2013, Westin Mitchell Design Group LLC. was born, and the dynamic duo relocated into the 7,000 square foot warehouse on Kohler Street.

Sticking to tradition, Mitchell's artisans adhere to a code of quality and pride that distinguish genuine craftsmen from simple laborers. Fusing an attention to detail with quality mediums, new and old—distressed woods, metals, concrete, glass and fabrics, each piece of furniture provides a unique story and an exclusive design enriched by the history of recycled American materials.

"When I started, most of the reclaimed woods came from the Midwest and East Coast," says Mitchell. "We were getting it from lumber suppliers that are actually getting the materials and bringing them to LA so we don't have to go directly to the source. And because we do new fabrication, the steel comes from junkyards and machine shops. We just buy what they don't use."

For the past two years, Mitchell has been spending most of his time conceiving custom, built-to-order furnishings for restaurants, offices, retail spaces and residential locations in



the Los Angeles area. In addition, Mitchell collaborates with local interior designer Courtney Toland to originate and perfect one-of-a-kind pieces for homes and businesses in Pasadena including steel table bases and product shelving for Copa Vida on South Raymond Avenue, installation pieces made from steel and reclaimed Douglas Fir lumber for Woody's Home, an audio and visual shop on South Lake Avenue, and a solid walnut dining table for a stunning household on Madeline Drive.

From large conference tables, desks, and shelving, to coffee tables, dining chairs, and elaborate bar facades, the company builds just about anything requested. And with the current industrial craze, demand is at an all-time high. "The whole industrial, reclaimed style has become very popular, but the direction we

are moving in is slowly trying to get away from that," says Mitchell. "I just feel like the market is so saturated in it right now, and we want to brand ourselves to be on the innovative side of design."

While the aesthetics of the industrial genre and traditional machinery will remain a deep-rooted inspiration, Mitchell is en route to a new future—transforming his custom design shop into a luxurious furniture line and lifestyle brand. With a new website launching in the spring, the company will be rebranded as Westin Mitchell, and feature an upscale line of nine limited edition products—three large pieces, four lights, and two accessories. "For example, only 800 of the same light will be made," says Mitchell. "And if you purchase one, you will have one of the 800 made in the U.S. Once it sells out they're gone, and we'll release something completely new. I think it will make the consumer more satisfied too, knowing they have a limited edition piece that no one else they know has."

Rather than selling directly to consumers, Mitchell plans to sell wholesale to retailers and interior designers—hoping to acquire brand recognition through trade shows in New York and Los Angeles. "I'm just getting to the point where I don't want to do custom work anymore," says Mitchell. "If I just wanted a small, tight shop, it would be perfect, but for where I want to go, there is no room to expand into something bigger and special."

Already skilled in numerous trades, Mitchell is expanding the company's credibility and knowledge by adopting new technology practices including CNC laser cutting and Rhino, a 3D modeling program that allows designers to devise mock-up creations for printing prototypes.

"I just want to be a brand with great design and quality," says Mitchell. "I want to separate this company from others by focusing on our story of the craftsmanship and workers in our downtown warehouse. We are building everything with our own hands, and I want to show the consumer the process from start to finish so they know exactly what they're purchasing. Anyone can have a great product, but it's the amazing branding and marketing that sells it. I want to get our story out there and ultimately build a brand that people can trust." 🍷

To learn more about Westin Mitchell and his spring 2015 line, check out [westinmitchell.com](http://westinmitchell.com).