

MATHEWS' FURNITURE PRESENTS

15 UNDER 40

Meet the next wave of tastemakers who are shaping the future of Atlanta's arts and design culture.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Angela Morris*

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CLARKE TITUS

Rough South Home

It was a home-renovation project with his wife, documentary photographer Bryan Meltz, that spurred Clarke Titus's interest in designing the industrial-modern light fixtures and furnishings he now produces under the label Rough South Home. Available at Atlanta MADE and West Elm Atlantic Station (as well as Etsy and his own e-shop), his one-of-a-kind pieces are ideal for "those looking for something they can't find anywhere else," he says. Employing old and new materials—gathered from Southern lumberyards, factory salvage, even his own backyard—Titus's portfolio is defined by stories, from a Depression-era freight car to an elm slab discarded by Atlanta's 2007 tornado. His most popular chairs are configured from repurposed pallets. "It's a three-dimensional puzzle," he explains, "harvesting enough similar pieces, then putting them together in the most efficient and aesthetically pleasing way." —*Kate Abney*

DAYKA ROBINSON

Dayka Robinson Designs

Since launching her blog in 2009 and design business one year later, Dayka Robinson has enjoyed a meteoric rise to acclaim. Between appearing in national publications and the Cathedral Antiques Show Inspiration House, she's collaborated with major brands such as Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, FLOR and Ballard Designs. A devotee of vintage decor and David Hicks, Robinson adores the mix, calling it "the perfect representation of who I am." Her eclectic aesthetic draws shoppers to Etsy and One Kings Lane alike, and has made her a marvelous fit for the production company of Brian Patrick Flynn, with whom she's worked since 2011. This fall should prove even more impressive for Robinson, who will launch a design-business program called DaykaTV, along with an inspirational line of paper products featuring uplifting affirmations—both of which you'll find on her website, daykarobinsondesigns.com. —*K.A.*

CARSON MCELHENY

Carson McElheny Landscape Architecture

It was his grandfather's work ethic that ultimately inspired Atlanta native Carson McElheny's reverence for the land. "We were rewarded with trout fishing in the evening if we accomplished everything we needed to in his garden," he says of spending time at his grandparents' house on the Chattahoochee River. After graduating from the University of Georgia, he spent seven years with Alex Smith Garden Design before starting his own firm in 2011. In 2012, his classic approach to landscape architecture earned him an award for his work on an Ernest Flagg home. Recently, he combined his horticultural expertise and bird-hunting passion to cultivate a top-level hunting environment, Sweetwater Wing-shooting, in Thomson, Georgia; other projects include a South Carolina plantation. —*Elizabeth Ralls*

JEN HIDINGER

Staplehouse & The Giving Kitchen

The Atlanta food community's love affair with Jen Hidinger and her late husband, Ryan, began when the pair held some of the city's first and most successful "underground supper clubs" from 2009 through 2012. Called "Prelude to Staplehouse," it was named for their future dream restaurant. In January 2013, the pair announced that Ryan had been diagnosed with late-stage cancer, and the industry (chefs, owners, staff, patrons) rallied, helping raise nearly \$300,000 for medical treatments and expenses. Inspired, the Hidingers determined their future restaurant would be a nonprofit, with every cent made going to a charitable organization helping restaurant-industry employees with unforeseen crises. Called The Giving Kitchen, the nonprofit is already thriving with a strong board and solid donor base, and will operate on the second floor of Staplehouse, scheduled to open this fall on Edgewood Avenue. —*Tucker Berta*

KATIE BELVEAL

Atlanta Decorative Arts Center

ADAC General Manager Katie Belveal has dedicated her entire career to the business of design. Noted for her attention to detail, Belveal was instrumental in opening ADAC to the public in 2012. "When I started, Mr. Portman tasked me with spearheading the project, which was a very collaborative effort," she says. "We worked with the entire design community and the showrooms, collecting six months of research." The resounding conclusion: Atlanta was indeed ready for an open-to-the-public design center. Under Belveal's direction, ADAC continues to welcome fresh showrooms—even as those in other national design centers shutter—making it an edgier, more inclusive and admired design destination in the process. And the rising number of annual events (80 and climbing), held throughout the Southeast, is proof positive. Next up: Design ADAC, which will rally design enthusiasts April 28-May 2. —*K.A.*



◀ **GINNY BRANCH**
Ginny Branch Styling & Designs
 Ginny Branch is never off the clock. "Some would call it an unhealthy obsession, but I don't go home and turn it off. I'm always dreaming up new ideas and discovering different objects and artists that I want to work with next," says the stylist and self-professed 24-hour daydreamer. Commanding a strong social media following, Branch visually documents these inspirational musings alongside her work on swoon-worthy photo shoots for clients such as Anthropologie and Ballard Designs. But the project dearest to Branch is CAMP (an acronym for Creating Art Meaning Purpose), a series of Atlanta-based workshops she co-founded to nurture the talents of local designers, artists and other creatives. As creative director, Branch helps host workshops such as floral arranging, upholstery 101, beauty tutorials, photography styling and even business acumen for small-business owners. —*Sejal Bhima*

▶ **WILLEM STEAR**
Tonic Design Studio
 He's only lived stateside for five years, but South African native Willem Stear, an interior designer and architectural consultant known for his eclectic mix of styles and distinct international flair, quickly earned a name for himself in Atlanta and beyond thanks to a background that includes managing projects from London to Dubai under the tutelage of notable South African designers. Named "one to watch" by ADAC in 2011, and nominated for Southeast Designer of the Year in 2013, his recent projects range from a residence in Sonoma, California, to restoring the Joseph Amisano-designed house (an important example of modern architecture) in which he lives and works. Up next: a small-batch line of furniture with South African influences. —*E.R.*



BRIAN CLOWDUS
Serenbe Playhouse
 On break from his MFA (Acting) work at University of South Carolina, Brian Clowdus was visiting Serenbe one summer when he met an employee and asked if the community had a theater. Her response: "No, but we should!" That brief, destined conversation eventually led to the founding of Serenbe Playhouse, which held its first productions in the summer of 2010—two in the courtyard behind the community's bakeshop on a stage built by Clowdus and the shows' actors, and one deep in the woods. The simple first season led to important critics praising its original, site-specific creative. Flash-forward five years, and Serenbe Playhouse under Clowdus' guardianship is a fierce force in Atlanta theater—doubling audiences each season, selling out shows and winning awards like "Best Musical" by BroadwayWorld and ArtsATL for last season's *Hair*. This summer, Clowdus expects its boldest season yet, with *Mother Nature* in a starring role. —*T.B.*

YVONNE MCFADDEN
Y. McFadden Interiors
 Embracing the concepts of simplicity and functionality, interior designer Yvonne McFadden has been transforming high-end homes across the southeast into serene sanctuaries for more than eight years. "There's something very peaceful about my work. I'm very big on that," says the designer. With a knack for beautifully layering organic textures and monochromatic color palettes, McFadden's work boasts a sophisticated yet tranquil verve thanks to her keen eye for editing. "I think everything speaks much louder if it has the chance to, rather than compete with a clutter of things—no matter how lovely they all may be," she says. The in-demand designer has appeared in multiple designer showhouses, including the Decorators' Show House & Gardens. —*S.B.*

RODOLFO CASTRO
Castro Design Studio
 In an age of efficiency-based, cookie-cutter design, high-end residential designer Rodolfo Castro prefers to take a slower, more soulful approach. It all starts with custom, hand-drawn plans, each individually crafted by the Georgia Tech grad himself. Growing up in a creative household (his father was a civil engineer, his mother an interior designer), Castro's appreciation for great, thoughtful design is palpable. Refusing to be defined by a particular style—modern and classical elements often mix comfortably in his vernacular—he does abide by one steadfast rule: "I don't want to be the shiny new kid on the block. I strive for subtlety. You might not notice the house the first 10 times you drive past, but once you do take notice, you start to fall in love as small details begin to reveal themselves." —*S.B.*



▶ IAN JONES

Victory Sandwich Bar and Paper Plane

A restaurateur behind two of the city's hottest concepts, Ian Jones is also a killer carpenter with a motorcycle habit. His Renaissance nature shines in the restaurants (which feature furniture he's designed and built), as does the icon he uses as a creative filter: "Victory is the kind of place where Steve McQueen would have a beer, then go work on his motorcycle, and Paper Plane is where he'd take his girlfriend to dinner." Speaking of girlfriends, Jones shares a studio with his, furniture designer Sarah Atkinson. This spring, he will reopen Victory in Inman Park and announce a new concept. —*T.B.*

◀ LIZA DUNNING

Freelance Brand Champion/Writer

Five years ago, Liza Dunning met with two entrepreneurs who needed a writer to help pitch their new venture. Their move: pivoting from a Wi-Fi marketing company (Skyblox) into a new daily-deal space. Her move: taking their model and building a brand around it. The result: Scoutmob, a website and mobile-deals app celebrating local finds and independent businesses, and Dunning became its voice—coining the name and shaping its daily content. "It was a dream connecting with a city's stories," she says. "My love for Atlanta grew tenfold." The brand has since narrowed its focus to the recently launched e-commerce Shoppe (a product Dunning helped launch), shining its spotlight on independent makers. "My biggest glory was rallying around interesting happenings and businesses in this city," she says. (King of Pops, Monday Night Brewing and Melrose & McQueen are just a few she pushed from their start.) Next up: moving beyond Scoutmob to reignite that start-up spark. "I'm going back to my creative roots. My love for this city runs deep. I want to channel that into something more impactful." —*T.B.*



◀ SARAH ATKINSON

GREY Furniture

"I'm best known for my pet and furniture photos," laughs furniture designer Sarah Atkinson. "I take photos of my designs in their various growth stages and post them on Instagram, like most people do with their kids." Her social media practice is a glimpse into how the designer feels about her work: passionate, involved and a touch overprotective in the best of ways. For each piece that's ordered, she takes her sketch to a hand-picked craftsman, but doesn't just drop it off and wait for the finished piece: "I like putting on work boots, picking out the raw steel and whatnot and literally getting my hands dirty. Each of my pieces are made to order and my hands have been on every part, throughout every step." —*T.B.*



◀ MAGARET KIRKLAND

Margaret Kirkland Interiors

A traditionalist at heart, Margaret Kirkland's graceful and timeless design style has always struck a chord with clients near and abroad. Whether working on a home in Buckhead, a Park Avenue apartment in New York or a farmhouse in Provence, France, the award-winning designer infuses each space with a deft dose of elegance. "I believe what sets me apart is my unwavering classical style; I've never been a slave to trends," she says. Kirkland got her start working for an interiors firm in New York while taking classes at Parsons School of Design. She then returned to her native Atlanta, working with design icon Dan Carithers for six years. "Working with Dan was such an education," she says. "He taught me how to plan for a room by really feeling its purpose before we ever designed it." —*S.B.*

▶ RYAN DUFFEY

J. Ryan Duffey Architect

It was a summer internship with architect Keith Summerour—where instead of fetching coffee or "sitting on CAD," he was challenged to hand-draw and draft plans for the noted classicist's residential projects—that cemented Texas native Ryan Duffey's love for Atlanta (or, more accurately, its reverence for classical architecture). After securing his degree in architecture from Notre Dame, Duffey apprenticed for Summerour for eight years before launching his own firm in 2011, where he's tackling as many as 30 active projects. Duffey's most notable commission to date: restoring the circa-1934 Evans-Cucich house on Peachtree Battle, an Art Deco mansion on the Historic Register, which has made him the envy of the architecture world. Wed to interior designer Nancy Pendergast Duffey, the pair also collaborates on projects and just combined their offices. —*E.R.*

