

The Modern Mix

By Gale Steves

It used to be that if your tastes were decidedly modern, your choices were limited in Tampa Bay. Not anymore. With Being and Doma in St. Petersburg, District Designs, Scan Design, and Miami

Modern in Tampa, you don't have to go to Miami or New York to see the latest selections. Even furniture stores that carry a variety of styles now have sections dedicated to contemporary furni-

ture. But to find the latest trends that will be coming to stores everywhere, we did head to New York to the International Contemporary Furniture Fair in May. And here's what we found.



Photo courtesy of Rick Lee Designs. www.americanleather.com

The lowdown

It's very European to sit lower to the ground. The usual American upholstered piece measures about twenty-four to twenty-seven inches from the floor to the top of the cushion. Many new sofas and sectionals sit at the European height of eighteen inches. The Arclounge by Rick Lee, for American Leather, is a perfectly comfortable example. The bonus is that it is also a sectional and can be configured as separate pieces to suit your entertaining style of the moment.



Photo courtesy of Modénature. www.modenature.com

Tall story

To counteract the horizontal line of lower seating, many designers frequently use extra-tall elements to bring the eye upward and to add drama to a room. The Henry Becq-designed Poeme bookcase from Modénature, a French furniture manufacturer, comes in a dark ebony finish and serves this purpose. When used as a group of three, these timeless bookcases create an impressive wall for accessories and books.



Photo courtesy of Design Within Reach, www.dwr.com

Table service

Many of us think of comfort in the upholstered sense and totally ignore the table. Tables can be too high or too low, depending on what we're doing, whether it's having breakfast in bed, reading the paper in an armchair, or snacking in front of the television. Furniture makers have crafted nesting tables and other fun tables to address this. A modern classic, Eileen Gray's side table, designed by the Irish designer in 1927, solves the table-height problem. The 20-inch, height-adjustable side table, available from Design Within Reach, reflects Gray's desire for functional perfection. It is also practical in living spaces, bedrooms, or, (thanks to durable chrome-plated steel), on the terrace.

High lights

It was just a short time ago that freestanding outdoor lighting was approved by Underwriters Laboratory. Now, even chandeliers can add a sense of mystery and style to your outdoor dining table in the evening. CL Sterling and Son's Garden Shade illuminates from above and is intended to be hung from arching branches or appropriate wiring. In anodized aluminum, it is available in a number of colors to add depth and interest to the overall landscape design.



Photo courtesy of B&B Italia, www.bebitalia.it

Supporting cast

Stainless steel is the metal of choice these days, and it is finding its way from the kitchen to furniture and accessories and beyond. Designer Chris Howker created the Double Dip Bench for B&B Italia and it makes a great statement wherever you place it. Durable and sleek, it feels good to the touch and requires little care. If you take it outside, remember to stay away from the pool or waterfront, but it looks great in a protected area. **DR**