

DESIGN

Patio People

*An evolution of poolside lounging,
from postwar to present day.*

BY SHELLY CANNON



Courtesy Brown Jordan, © J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004, R.10).

■ It was a confluence of optimism, confidence, and hope. The end of World War II brought a renewed embrace of the American Dream. In the postwar boom of suburban housing and babies, people aspired to more: to get married, to own a home, to start a family. Living well in suburbia was an end in itself.

Planned communities and tract homes, and by extension patios and yards, grew exponentially. People learned they could extend their modest living areas to the great outdoors. Even more, the middle class found itself with something it had never enjoyed in abundance — leisure time. For this burgeoning population, leisure was a modern construct. Both the physical space and time to enjoy it offered opportunity for entertaining, relaxing, and gathering with friends. Intimate yet inclusive, the ubiquitous American backyard was born.



above: Brown Jordan Tamiami chairs were de rigueur around any self-respecting American pool in the '60s and '70s.

right: A Salterini wrought-iron clamshell settee.

opposite: Richard Neutra's Kaufman House was the perfect indoor-outdoor space in which to place just the right piece of furniture.



Sean Lockyer, an accomplished architect and designer with Studio AR+D Architects in Los Angeles and Palm Springs, grew up in the colder climate of Philadelphia. Photos of places like California, Hawaii, and Bora Bora captured his young imagination.

"I was always fascinated by this idea that there were rooms completely open to the outdoors," says Lockyer, who today seamlessly integrates his homes' interior and exterior spaces for optimal flow.

At the midcentury mark, homeowner demand for outdoor furnishings was in its infancy. The personal swimming pool heightened the popularity of patio culture. It elevated patio pursuits of grilling hamburgers, reading the paper, and sharing late-night cocktails by providing recreation and ambience as well as serving as a potent symbol of prosperity.

Living on the patio and around the pool became an integral part of life, necessitating spaces to sit, dine, and lounge. Prompted by this need, architects like Richard Neutra, who produced his own line of extruded-aluminum lounge chairs, sought to fill the product void; and designers such as Milo Baughman and Greta Grossman began to create dual-purpose pieces befitting areas both inside and out. A new kind of casual comfort was right at home, one step beyond the threshold of the sliding glass door.

Enter trailblazers Robert Brown and Hubert Jordan, who in 1945 founded a company that is now synonymous with the industry's finest quality. They sought to produce high-end all-weather furniture. Salterini, a company started in the 1920s by immigrant John B. Salterini, is recognized for leading the revival of wrought-iron garden furniture through the early 1950s. At the same time, teak was introduced to the outdoor furnishings market; once used only for flooring and building boats, the dense tropical hardwood, rich in oil, was naturally resistant



to disease and insects. Other popular materials included vinyl strapping, wicker and rattan, and colorful metal pieces.

From the start, Brown Jordan enlisted a crop of talented designers to develop its outdoor-living lines. In 1947, Californian Walter Lamb conceived the Bronze collection, which, despite its name, contained no bronze but rather paired cotton cording with brass pipes and fittings salvaged from sunken World War II naval ships. Japanese designer Tadao Inouye collaborated with Brown Jordan to produce 1956's Kantan collection. Inouye's designs attracted a modish crop of buyers, including the Kennedys, and his tables and chairs remained popular through the 1960s. Brown Jordan reintroduced the Kantan collection in 2008 with streamlined frames and refashioned, ultra-comfortable straps. That same year, the company reissued Lamb's original S-shaped lounge chair, part of the Bronze collection, as well as the 1961 Tamiami line by designer Hall Bradley.

Interior designer Kristine Schultz, co-owner of Patios Plus in Rancho Mirage, is the Coachella Valley's exclusive Brown Jordan distributor.

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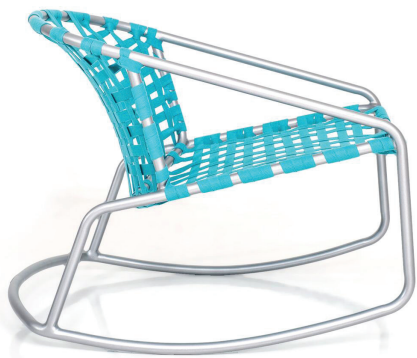


She believes the interest in reintroduced lines affirms the timeless appeal of midcentury design. Schultz has long been a champion of the desert's indoor-outdoor way of life.

"We've always worked to bring the inside out," says Schultz, whose family bought the Rancho Mirage outdoor furnishings showroom in 1992. Business has grown dramatically through the past 25 years and she has become well acquainted with Brown Jordan's illustrious history.

After the war, the GI Bill enabled the industry to reach for new materials that had been previously limited or rationed — among them aluminum, tubular steel, wrought iron, and vinyl. During the 1950s and '60s, designs closely replicated trending interior styles such as Brown Jordan's Chinese Chippendale-inspired Calcutta line. Designed in 1967 by Hall Bradley, it evokes Chinoiserie and Hollywood Regency-style cast-metal bamboo patterns. Add to the mix of manufacturers the Heywood-Wakefield Company, whose early wicker and rattan products are now considered collectibles; established in 1897 when two competing firms joined forces, it had a growing presence in the 1960s and '70s postwar comeback as more affordable outdoor synthetic materials became available.

Other renowned outdoor designers of the period include Richard Schultz (of no relation to Kristine), known for pairing woven mesh with cast aluminum and steel, as well as



opposite: Hendrik Van Keppel and Taylor Green, Lawrence House, furniture, 1957.
above: Brown Jordan Kantan rocker.

Hendrik Van Keppel and Taylor Green, who both contributed to the pared-down elegance of poolside chaises and chairs.

Patio furnishings of the '80s and '90s, like their predecessors, remained basic: a simple set typically included a table and four chairs, perhaps with an umbrella and a nearby

chaise lounge. Today, pieces are elaborate, sophisticated, and sometimes as pricey as their indoor cousins.

Kristine believes the outdoor furnishings business was further propelled in the early

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2000s when *Architectural Digest* featured on its cover a new line from Brown Jordan photographed at a palatial Malibu home owned by Cher. The image introduced the world simultaneously to the Havana collection and to woven resin. It looked great. It was resistant to the sun. And it became an instant hit. Kristine Schultz notes that unlike other materials such as metal, which must be renewed with powder coats to maintain quality, resin is highly durable. “The biggest evolution is woven resin that looks like wicker, yet has the same high quality as interior furniture.”

Mark Nichols, owner of Mark Nichols Interiors in Palm Springs, also observes the “variety, durability, and luxe feeling” of contemporary materials. “Technology has created the ability to produce fabrics that look like chenille, velvet, and mohair,” he says. “[They] can be sculptured or have patterns or photographic prints.”

Elaborating on architecture’s role in determining how people live, Lockyer asserts that “a strong connection to the natural environment” is key. The residences he designs embody this sensibility. They contain alfresco spaces providing a protected yet open living area that seem one with the interior layout. “Outdoor materials must repeat the design of the interiors,” he says. By extending design elements such as the ceiling and flooring, he ensures continuity from the inside out. When Lockyer’s firm handles the architecture for a home, it also designs the landscape to further the sense of cohesion. “We all need places to go ... whether gardens or private areas,” says Lockyer. It’s something he accomplishes by “creating little nodes of activity, places to wander, explore, and retreat for privacy.”

Nichols notes that patio trends now include everything from full-size upscale kitchens and cabinetry to giant ceiling fans to 12-foot cantilevered Shademaker umbrellas that, in effect, create another outdoor room. Seating can translate to everything from hammocks that sway beneath palm trees to outcropped granite boulders to Brown Jordan patio sets.

Sundry surfaces complement modern seating arrangements. “We’re seeing alternative tabletops like ceramic because

glass is hard to maintain and can break,” says Schultz, adding tabletop accessories that provide ambient lighting, such as chargeable lanterns, are another big open-air trend. “We’re seeing a surge in outdoor lighting.” Also trending, she says, are outdoor sound systems and furniture made from eclectic combinations of materials, such as aluminum, teak, and upholstery.

Nichols says our increasing avoidance of suntanning through the past 15 years has led to more homeowners demanding shaded environments, sheltered by temporary or permanent structures, which he calls “destination areas.” Schultz recommends the

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ultra-luxe Italian umbrellas by Tuuci to create an inviting sun-shielded space. The attention to detail and shapely modern designs make them engineering feats, she says, and true “works of art.”

Now, as before, manufacturers continue to work with leading furniture designers to craft the next trend. White House interior designer Michael S. Smith teamed up with Brown Jordan in 2016 to launch three new collections, among them Deia, with a 1940s Italian vibe, and Arbre (French for tree), featuring hand-lathed metalwork that mimics tree branches.

In 2017, patio furnishings are sophisticated and have evolved, offering designs so elevated, the living is as big as all outdoors.