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JULY/AUGUST 2012
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Vincenzo Avanzato and Laura Kirar with a klismos chair by Dragonette Ltd., a bookcase by Nendo for Kartell, and a Chinese drum stool by July Zhou from Pagoda Red.

THE TOP 10 LUCITE PIECES

For designers Laura Kirar and Vincenzo Avanzato, it's crystal clear that plastic furnishings are an easy way to add modern chic to any room

Of the many passing fancies exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair, one has proven its staying power: the acrylic resin known by the trade names Lucite and Plexiglas. Crystal clear, easily shaped, and strong, the material has inspired countless designers, from Gilbert Rohde, whose Plexiglas-and-tubular-steel chair debuted at the fair, to Karl Springer and Charles Hollis Jones in the 1960s and '70s.

"The early designers were adventurous, taking the material to the max," says decorator Vincenzo

Avanzato. "Now it's coming back." A Lucite piece can be a whimsical accent in a room, adding a hint of luminescence, he says. "And since it's nearly invisible, it doesn't take up visual space."

As designer Laura Kirar points out, transparency is a sure sign of quality. "The joints and seams almost disappear in a well-made piece," she says, whether it's a clean-lined design or a new take on an antique style. "I've always loved using a modern material to reinvent a classic form." ▶

THE EXPERTS

VINCENZO AVANZATO

The designer, who has offices in Miami and Paris, embraces traditional and boldly modern styles. His projects range from a waterfront hotel in Egypt to houses in Venezuela. avanzatodesign.com

LAURA KIRAR

Kirar creates lighting for Arteriors Home and outdoor furniture for Barlow Tyrie; her fabrics for Highland Court debut this fall. Her decorating firm is based in New York and Miami. laurakirar.com

TEXT BY LAURA REGENSDORF / PHOTOGRAPHY BY BJÖRN WALLANDER / PRODUCED BY QUY NGUYEN



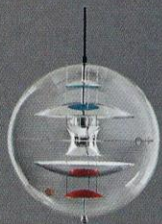
1 / SANTORINI CHAIR BY DRAGONETTE LTD.

This interpretation of the classical klismos wins praise from Vincenzo Avanzato: "I like how detailed it is," he says, noting the decorative back panel. "The designer seems to have copied a perfect chair, but in acrylic." He imagines the 35" h. x 23" w. x 25" d. piece as an accent in a living room. "But a set of these with seat cushions would also be great around a dining table," he adds. \$5,400; dragonette.com



6 / ARABIAN NIGHTS MIRROR BY NADA DEBS FROM MONDO COLLECTION

"I love the modern Moorish style of this," says Kirar, admiring the shapely arch. The clear resin frame is inlaid with brushed metal, which creates a subtle, graphic effect. The 47" h. x 29" w. mirror would make a bold statement in a foyer, she suggests. "It would also look spectacular over a bathroom vanity or tub." Additional resin colors and inlay materials are offered. \$4,500; mondocollection.com



2 / VP GLOBE BY VERNER PANTON FROM DESIGN WITHIN REACH

"A midcentury classic," says Laura Kirar of this circa-1970 Danish light fixture. Inside the 20"-dia. acrylic sphere, light bounces off the lacquered-aluminum reflectors and the blue and orange disks. "This has a Space Age feel," she says, "so I see it hanging in an informal room, such as a breakfast area, or over a kitchen island." The globe also comes with white reflectors and in a smaller size. \$2,820; dwr.com



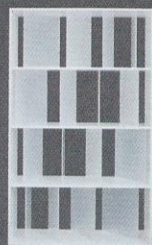
7 / HALF GRILL BENCH BY SPECTRUM WEST FROM YLIVING

With a slatted top and an X base, this bench has the look of garden furniture but is sophisticated enough for the most stylish indoor room, says Avanzato. He envisions the 20" w. x 18" d. x 18" h. seat on a terrace or in a living room, slipped under a console when not in use. He praises the construction, from the beveled slats to the exposed screws: "This is perfectly crafted." \$1,375; yliving.com



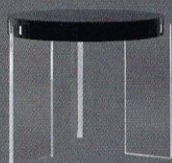
3 / STICKLEY COCKTAIL TABLE BY SPECTRUM WEST

The interlocking geometry of the base reminds Avanzato of the Arts and Crafts movement. "But this material updates it for today," he says. The cocktail table (available to the trade) has an inset glass top and is moderately sized at 32" w. x 23" d. x 18" h. He pictures it in an apartment paired with a compact sofa, or in a library. "It has a masculine quality, but with a sense of lightness." \$4,500; coutureshowrooms.com



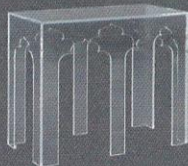
8 / SUNDIAL BOOKCASE BY NENDO FOR KARTELL

"A cool little piece," says Kirar of this unit. "It has a faceted quality, with all the struts set at different angles." The 65" h. x 39" w. x 14" d. bookcase is made of veneered, lacquered chipboard with translucent acrylic partitions. It could be used as a room divider in a contemporary space, or a pair could act as a headboard for a floating bed, she says. Black variations are also available. \$1,599; kartell.com



4 / SAM TABLE BY LIZ O'BRIEN

Kirar is a fan of this three-legged table, which emulates a circa-1940 design by Samuel Marx. "The Lucite does a disappearing act, so the lacquered-wood top seems to float," she notes. The 24" dia. x 19" h. piece is available in 10 lacquer colors, including bittersweet chocolate, shown. "It would be at home in a contemporary room," she says, "but it's one of those go-anywhere pieces." \$4,500; lizobrien.com



9 / DOUBLE ALEXANDER TABLE BY WHITE WEBB FROM DONGHIA

"Very handsome," Avanzato says, noting the clean lines and the cutouts shaped like Mughal arches. At 27" w. x 14" d. x 22" h., the piece (available to the trade) has modest proportions, so it could work as an end table alongside a low-slung sofa. "I also see it outside on a porch or in front of a daybed, as a place for books," he adds. In addition to clear, shown, it also comes in a smoke color. \$3,000; donghia.com



5 / INVISIBLE DRUM STOOL BY JULY ZHOU FROM PAGODA RED

"I would use this in a heartbeat," says Avanzato of the Chinese drum stool, which is a play on the traditional wood version. "This is a difficult piece to make, but it's well constructed, with very pretty curves." The 13" dia. x 20" h. stool would work in either a casual or formal living area, he advises. "It could serve as an extra seat in a pinch or as a small drinks table." \$2,380; pagodared.com



10 / KING GEORGE TABLE BY PLEXI-CRAFT

Crisp, tapered legs give this piece a French look, says Kirar, but the design is very minimal: "It's got just enough detail to elevate it and make it special." The 42" w. x 22" d. x 30" h. table comes with a glass top, shown, or a mirrored one. It could function as a console behind a high-back sofa, she says. "And with the right chair, it would be a wonderful writing desk or vanity." \$2,392; plexi-craft.com

The opinions featured are those of ELLE DECOR's guest experts and do not necessarily represent those of the editors. All measurements and prices are approximate.