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## Mid-Century Modern

**AS THE NAME SUGGESTS,** mid-century modern design refers to the extraordinary furniture and interiors from the middle of the last century. With its clean, fluid lines and bright pops of color, this style is again at the forefront of interior design. Balance and symmetry play a big part, notice how elements are repeated: matching nightstands, colors, etc. Designer, author and mid-century modern expert Amy Lau (*Expressive Modern: The interiors of Amy Lau*, The Monacelli Press, 2011) is renowned for creating spaces that reference the very best of that period. "Curate, don't decorate," is Amy's design motto. Creating "livable, meaningful homes that have intrinsic value," is her goal.

Custom-designed bedding coordinates perfectly with the graphic print wallpaper. A vintage pendant light, rewired to modern standards, adds another layer of texture. Note the repetition of color that ties the elements of the room together.

A pair of Charlotte Perriand stools provides an inventive way to fill space at the end of the bed. The bedcover was custom made to match the rug.

For more information about Amy Lau, her work or her book, visit [amylaudeign.com](http://amylaudeign.com).



"Vintage midcentury modern furniture share a natural affinity with contemporary art," Amy states in her book. This is evident in the floors and flower pattern on these fabric chairs.



## From the Expert

Amy Lau gives insight to creating successful mid-century modern rooms.

- **Edit, edit, edit. Separate elements into good, better, best.** The pieces you choose to keep should be reflections of who you really are.
- **The best interiors tell the story of the people who inhabit them.** Be thoughtful in your choices along the way. This includes color, fabrics, decorative elements and furniture.
- **Use a rug to anchor the space.** Bold, graphic or colorful rugs are great building blocks in a room. Echo its colors or shapes in pillows, bedding and artwork.
- **Choose the best quality you can afford.** You may not be able to afford an original Gio Ponti table; instead, research modern designers for quality products in your price range.

# DESIGN COACH

Create your own "Mad Men"-style bedroom.

BY REBECCA ITTNER

IF WATCHING THE AWARD-WINNING AND WILDLY POPULAR TELEVISION SERIES, "MAD MEN" has you craving some mid-century design in your spaces, you're not alone. The show has influenced fashion and interior design for the past few seasons. Mid-century modern design is enjoying a strong resurgence, showing up in magazines and on home-improvement shows.

Don and Betty Draper's bedroom may be the inspiration for many a bedroom makeover, but it's not the most stylish space. To interpret the look for today's homeowners, we tapped author, interior designer and mid-century modern expert, Amy Lau. With her background of in-depth study of the movement's original designers and influences, curating expositions of mid-century modern furniture and running her own highly-successful design firm, Amy is a go-to source of information and inspiration.

In her book, *Expressive Modern, The Interiors of Amy Lau*, Amy writes: "Art provides the hierarchy of color and pattern in a room: a motif or graphic element from a painting can be blown out of scale to inspire pillows, a rug design, even a mural." This theory is demonstrated in each of her spaces. Here we showcase a few of her exquisite spaces and provide tips on creating similar looks in your own home.



The Draper bedroom has a familiar look for anyone growing up in the middle of the last century. Balance and symmetry are paramount in the room, as seen in the matching nightstands and lamps. The upholstered headboard and art hanging above the bed are other design hallmarks of the era.



Geometric ceramic tiles by Roger Capron inspired the subtle color scheme of grays and mustards.

Soothing wall color helps create a warm, inviting, restful space.

Mid-century modern design is enjoying a strong resurgence.

The textured cowhide headboard is a great backdrop to the more colorful bedding. A less expensive option would be a fabric headboard.

The geometric shapes in the artwork are repeated in the vases on the nightstand.

Pillows and bed linens reflect the colors in the artwork.

This master bedroom is an example of a subdued interpretation of mid-century modern. The same basic design rules apply, though.

The Draper bedroom has a familiar look for anyone growing up in the middle of the last century.

This upholstered headboard is reminiscent of the one in the "Mad Men" bedroom. Notice how the colors echo those in the rug.

The Serge Mouille sconce above the bed is a piece of artwork itself. If you prefer something less bold, hang a pendant light above the bed.

Matching bedside tables give a sense of balance and symmetry.

Raised striations on the duvet add texture and interest, yet its soft color imbues a calm feeling to the room.

Though done in the same soothing hues as "Mad Men's" Draper bedroom, this is mid-century modern done right. The rug was inspired by the tile work of designer Gio Ponti, one Amy's influences. The unusual five-arm lamp loosely resembles the form of a starfish.

## Mid-Century Modern Tips and Tricks

- **An artsy or geometric rug to anchor the room.** The colors (or shapes) in the rug should be reflected in other elements in the room such as the bedding, artwork and light fixtures.
- **Soft, calming wall colors** in either warm or cool tones.
- **A beautiful overhead light.** "This can act as another art piece and adds such elegance to a bedroom," Amy says.
- **A good piece of artwork over the bed.** This should tie in with the colors in the rug.
- **A large chest of drawers instead of many smaller pieces of furniture.** Don't be afraid of using a six-drawer dresser.
- **A bench or other place to sit at the end of the bed.**
- **Decorative objects should be seen as another way to put pieces of art in the room.** Make thoughtful, deliberate choices instead of crowding surfaces.

Wooden cubes are very mid-century modern and provide a place to sit or lay clothing. You could use a bench for a similar effect.

The graphic print rug anchors the room and sets the tone for colors used in the space.

**WHEN CREATING BEDROOMS AND BATHS,** Amy draws on inspiration from the era's best artists and designers, who have long been referred to as "The Mad Men of Mid-Century Design," including, but not limited to: George Nelson, Edward Wormley, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertioa, Charles Eames, and Jens Risom. Their works are truly emblematic of all that is mid-century modern and some of their designs are still being manufactured today. Do an internet search on any of their names to learn more and see their work.

Soft white walls are the perfect backdrop for the bright pops of color in the chair, flowers and painting.

## 6 Steps to a Cozy Bedroom

- A cashmere blanket to provide color and luxurious texture.
- Sefra or Signorelli sheets are her favorite, but any good-quality linens with a silky touch will work.
- Built-in double-arm wall sconces are her reading lights of choice. If those do not work in your space, place a lamp on each bedside table.
- A chair, ottoman or lounge to relax in.
- Black-out curtains to help guarantee a good night's sleep. "There are so many ways to create great black-out window treatments. I like to use a neutral fabric then add pops of color in the trim," she says.
- And finally, "No TV in the bedroom."

The natural shape of the red coral displayed in the window adds interest to an otherwise blank space.

This bedroom vanity area boasts classic mid-century modern pieces. The unique wall lamp reflects the curves of the Kofod Larsen chair that sits in front of the 1953 Gio Ponti vanity.

Great mid-century modern design can be had at most any price point. Original, vintage pieces are great investments and ensure authentic spaces. Please use reputable dealers when sourcing original pieces. Reproductions or modern interpretations of classic designs are a more affordable choice. If you're not sure about committing to the look, widely available, mass-market furniture and accessories might be right for you.