

# CLEARLY INSPIRED



CHARLES HOLLIS JONES IN THE BOLT CHAIR FROM HIS TUMBLING BLOCK LINE.

ERIC MINH SWENSON

**CHARLES HOLLIS JONES**, PIONEER IN ACRYLIC DESIGN, CONTINUES TO ADVANCE THE FIELD AFTER MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF GROUNDBREAKING WORK, WHILE ALSO INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION OF TALENTED ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS.

**A**fter more than four decades of innovative acrylic design, Charles Hollis Jones isn't slowing down. Instead, he's creating new furniture designs and art pieces, as well as showcasing his work in art galleries and museums across the country. Jones is also the designer of The Museum of California Design's Henry Award, which will be presented to Frank Gehry in October 2015 for his achievements in product design.

At the start of Jones' career, there was certainly no prestige factor. "When I first began looking at acrylic, it was just called plastic, which had come to mean cheap," says Jones. "But I didn't see it that way. For me it was a transparent, light refractive medium that needed to be revealed for the wonder that I saw it to be." And it turned out that a discerning and devoted contingency agreed, with Jones garnering a client list that included a who's who of Hollywood stars, literary giants and design world darlings. Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball, John Lautner and Tennessee Williams were among the first to commission pieces from Jones.

Determined to push the limits of acrylic, Jones came up with the idea to incorporate metals in what he likens to the "way that a jeweler sets a diamond in platinum or gold." This desire to innovate drove his career, successfully working through the challenges posed by fusing acrylic with disparate materials including chrome, nickel, brass and steel.

GINGER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jones' designs filled many of the most chic Palm Springs homes during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as today. A resurgence in the popularity of acrylic has made Jones' vintage pieces highly coveted, but, if you're lucky and/or persistent, not altogether impossible to find among the stellar selection of vintage shops in the greater Palm Springs area.

Several pieces by Jones, on loan from the collection of Dorothy Meyerman, will be heading to Palm Springs as part of the "Illuminating Objects" exhibition at the Palm Springs Art Museum Architecture and Design Center from Oct. 10, 2015 through Jan. 3, 2016. The exhibition examines how we perceive light on objects, while exploring numerous designers' and artists' use of varying materials with differing transparency, reflectivity and other traits that impact the interplay of light.

While aware that the climate for acrylic design has changed, with a new crop of talent working in the medium and drawing inspiration from his trailblazing advances, Jones is gracious and undeterred. "When you find a new way to use a material, a way that is your own, an original way, you open a path of possibility that others are naturally inspired to follow, and of course, that's wonderful," says Jones. "It's satisfying to know that fulfillment of your creative vision has awakened others to an expanded vision of what is possible for them."

Four talented artists from across the country reflect on Charles Hollis Jones' work and influence.

CHARLES HOLLIS JONES DESIGNS AT THE MICHAEL JON GALLERY IN MIAMI.



charleshollisjones.com



## STEFAN BISHOP

ARTIST / DESIGNER  
LOS ANGELES

### WORK

I consider my work to be abstract scale models of various landscapes and topographies, focusing both on elements of nature and urban industrial constructs. I approach the process from a material and form basis, largely as an expression of images formed in my dream and/or subconscious life. It's significant to find how these images relate to parts of my psyche and personal history, but my goal is for the shapes and raw materials to impact the viewer viscerally without the underlying explanation. My work tends to ride the line between fine art and design and when ideas are formulating, the specific function, whether utilitarian or not, enters the conversation only long after the particular language starts to take shape. I am a fine woodworker by craft and so most of my work starts there, in the wood shop. Even if the pieces end up being cast in bronze or carved out of stone, the forms are developed and created first out of wood.

### ON CHARLES HOLLIS JONES

What is amazing to me about Charles' work is its combination of both total exuberance and flamboyance and at the same time its brilliant refinement and restraint. Using everything from super soft, subtle curves to explosive geometric shapes, and all out of ultimately pure materials, Charles' work can be loud yet soft, calm yet forceful, clear and simple yet puzzling and complex and all in the same breath. Astonishingly Charles has never lost faith in the materials he began to explore decades ago. He has relentlessly pursued every possibility imaginable and stayed true not only to his materials but to his very specific language.

### FAVORITE PIECE BY JONES

By far my favorite piece by Charles is the Lucille Chair, which I believe was



originally made as a vanity chair for Lucille Ball. Much like the commissioner of the piece, the chair is elegant, refined and dainty, yet at the same time, has enormous strength and character that can carry a room. To me, it's the perfect example of how Charles can make something so stunning and dramatic with such wonderful simplicity and restraint.

### UP NEXT

Currently, I have a solo exhibition at Cristina Grajales Gallery in New York on view through November 25. The gallery will also present a selection of my work during Design Miami Basel in December.

stefanbishop.net



PHOTO BY MEENO



ALAN GUTIERREZ AT THE MICHAEL JON GALLERY, SITTING IN A CHARLES HOLLIS JONES ROCKING CHAIR. A BRASS SMOKING SET BY JONES FROM GUTIERREZ'S PERSONAL COLLECTION SITS ON THE SIDE TABLE, ALSO DESIGNED BY JONES.

## ALAN GUTIERREZ

ARTIST AND CO-OWNER  
OF MICHAEL JON GALLERY  
(MIAMI/DETROIT)  
MIAMI

### WORK

I am a painter and a producer, so I utilize theatrical mechanics and equipment in the presentation of my work. And in an expanded role of a producer, I co-run the gallery, where we try to offer new contributions to the discourse. We've formed a really strong and loving family of artists, and we're very excited to continue to support everyone's ambitious endeavors.

ON CHARLES HOLLIS JONES:  
I never realized how one person's

obsession with a single material could dramatically shape moods, tones, and environments – the domestic theatre, until I got to know Charles. His work continuously elevates levels of elegance, openness, light and confidence, with a general appreciation for craft, beauty and design, and an admirable consideration for one's personal surroundings.

### FAVORITE PIECE BY JONES:

My personal favorite CHJ piece is a 3-piece brass smoking set – I traded a painting of mine with Charles for it. They're older pieces and the patina on them is really nice. It doesn't even matter if I smoke or not – it's really the best domestic prop.

UP NEXT:  
Thinking more about this idea of the

domestic theatre has lead me to design an edition of table lamps that cast theatrical lighting, to be released at the NADA art fair with Locust Projects this December. I also have a large-scale site-specific work I'm producing for one night at the Vizcaya Museum & Gardens in Miami during Art Basel this December. And the gallery is participating in Art Basel in Miami Beach again, showing new works by Egan Frantz, so it'll be a busy week! Then in January we'll be featuring Charles at the Palm Beach art fair with an amazing selection of new chairs, a bar cart and his iconic Edison Lamp.

alan-gutierrez.com  
michaeljongallery.com

## GISELA COLON

SCULPTOR  
LOS ANGELES

### WORK

The Pods are acrylic sculptures that radiate light and energy allowing the experience of pure color and form in space. I refer to them as non-specific objects because they possess perceptual ambiguity; they constantly change, fluctuate and shift in appearance depending on variable lighting conditions and the viewer's choice of location.

### ON CHARLES HOLLIS JONES

CHJ embraced the spirit of modernism right at its inception. Along with several prominent SoCal artists, he was a pioneer in utilizing acrylic as an aesthetic material, which had previously been reserved exclusively for industrial and military applications. His innovative and prescient use of cutting-edge materials paved the way for acrylics to become part of our daily lives, embodying a modern lifestyle. To lead a truly refined life, one must curate life in every aspect. Meaningful art, great design, and objects of aesthetic beauty ultimately enhance the human condition. CHJ has admirably pursued this philosophy of creating objects of beauty that enhance life's experience.

### FAVORITE PIECE BY JONES

My favorite CHJ piece is the Waterfall Desk, presenting a marvelous combination of steel and lucite which are naturally opposite materials. In this clean-lined piece, he creates a balanced juxtaposition of durable and ephemeral properties. The steel radiates industrial strength, yet the softer curves of the Waterfall design coupled with the transparent light-infused lucite make the piece inviting and sensual.

### UP NEXT

Currently I have a solo exhibition at The Butler Institute of American Art. This exhibition will travel nationally to several other museums such as The International Museum of Art and Science, McAllen, Texas; the Castellani Art Museum, Niagara, New York; the Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon, Georgia; and the Roswell Museum of Art, New Mexico.



GISELA COLON  
AT HER 2015  
ACE GALLERY  
EXHIBITION  
WITH "HYPER  
ELLIPSOID  
(BLUE)," 2014.



WATERFALL DESK BY  
CHARLES HOLLIS JONES.

[giselacoln.com](http://giselacoln.com)

PHOTO BY BODE HELM

## JUSTIN BEAL

SCULPTOR  
NEW YORK

### WORK:

I make sculpture.

### ON CHARLES HOLLIS JONES:

I admire Charles' relentless dedication to a single material through his long career. In much the same way that the Eameses used plywood in ways no one had thought to before, Charles developed methods of stretching and twisting acrylic that vastly expanded the potential of the material. I keep returning to a beautiful black and white photograph of a Harlow chair, such an elegant use of a single sheet of acrylic.

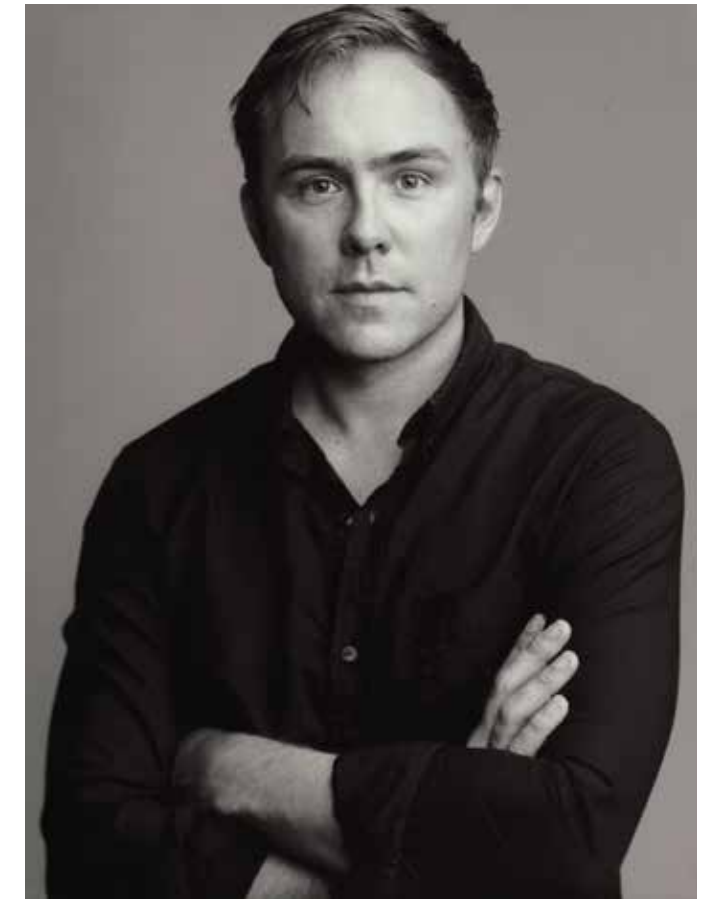
### FAVORITE PIECE BY JONES:

I love the beds. To me, the iconic detail of Charles' work is the seamless joint between acrylic rod and brass hardware. In addition to looking great, the beds showcase this connection. The twisted acrylic posts on the Dean Martin bed are also a particularly great example of Charles' innovative use of material.

### UP NEXT:

I am currently working on a book about architects, the body, drugs, sick building syndrome and sex.

[justinbeal.com](http://justinbeal.com)



CAPTION

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS