



TRIPLE-THREAT DESIGN FIRM, UNHEIM, IS BRINGING THEIR GENIUS TO BESPOKE

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L.A.-based design firm UnHeim is what one might call a jack of all trades. Their design model is a triad: architecture, landscape, interior design—the firm rarely undertakes a project in which they don't touch all three aspects. Given UnHeim's California locale, it may be tempting to attribute their indoor-outdoor approach to their Golden State heritage. After all, California, near-perpetually bathed in sunshine, was the birthplace of the indoor-outdoor living phenomena in the mid 20th Century. But for UnHeim founder and principal, Micah Heimlich, his firm's indoor-outdoor philosophy has origins that push back to much more venerable times; times in which, as Micah puts it, "different professions were not so divorced from one another."

There is certainly nothing divorced-feeling about the projects in UnHeim's portfolio. Of course, part of the appeal of working on all aspects of a design is the opportunity one has to create a holistic environment. When all components are touched by the same hand, a space steadily thrums rather

than awkwardly starting and stalling. In part, this is due to the creation of custom pieces—which, if you think about it, is really the fourth realm of design, and one in which (no surprise) UnHeim excels at.

BROWSE UNHEIM BESPOKE PIECES

UNHEIM has recently begun making their custom pieces available through DECASO. Their offerings range from well-engineered everyday items (the [Modular Planter Cover](#)) to the divine (the [Celestial Series Carpet](#), an oracular rug embedded with a glittering array of Swarovski crystals). In light of their newest endeavor, we spoke with Micah recently about UNHEIM’s guiding principles as well as the firm’s sources of inspiration—their subversively elegant [manhole rug](#) most definitely included. Learn more about why this team is verifiably star-bound in our revealing Q & A below.



Tell us how you got your start in design.

This is the tale of two uncles. As a young lad, I was instructed in the niceties of antiques by my Uncle Seth, who was a tireless collector. He would often reference his large collection with detailed comments about their history and the business in general, but he was also careful to draw my attention to the many books he owned on the subject. In particular, I remember studying art glass and Judgenstil with him. He had a good eye for valuable items, such as Teco pottery and Fabergé silverware. Though price was always uppermost in his mind.

Sam, the other uncle, owns a Jed Johnson house. It was big deal when it was completed, and everyone flew in for the weekend. Family reunions and Thanksgiving dinners were always held there. I vividly remember entering the new house, with its English Georgian furniture, its atrium just below the foyer, and its cavernous staircase. There were even concealed bathrooms behind paneled walls. One could really go on and on about the marvels of Sam's house. In retrospect, this was a defining moment for me as a teenager.



You began working for an architecture firm, then moved on to a landscape firm, followed by a design-based firm. Did you always know you wanted to merge these three mediums?

That life imitates art (or vice versa) is such a romantic notion. In my case, I only know that I have always tried to surround myself with beautiful objects. Certainly, my upbringing helped me gravitate towards architecture school, and after that, I worked in the office of Eric Owen Moss for several years. Then a job came up at a Beverly Hills landscape office, mainly because I've always been really good at CAD work. After that, I freelanced for some time with an interior designer in the Hollywood Hills, where I learned that what each medium seeks to capture is a certain look or image, and that often these looks can be very different. It's hard to explain, but you can see it when comparing the different design approaches brought to bear on, say, lobbies, opulent interiors, or parks. Over the years, I have noticed just how disconnected—both visually and functionally—the end result can be. This isn't always the case, but we've all seen it. My aim is to create holistic environments, down to the least component.



Describe a project in which you undertook multiple parts, be it any combination of interior, architecture, and landscape.

I don't know if there has ever been anything other than that. Since the early twentieth century, who hasn't tried to relate the inside to the outside? It isn't just a California cliché. Also, in our case, we have mostly worked on projects with pre-existing grounds or structures, so our hands have been somewhat tied. We've added to the sites, mostly by developing unused areas. I prefer to say that our office wears all hats, which is what it used to be going back centuries when the different professions were not so divorced from one another.

EXPLORE UNHEIM BESPOKE



PLANTERS

Customizable Plantum American Ha...



CONTEMPORARY HANDMADE RUGS

"Celestial" Series Carpet #2



TABLE LAMPS

“Lava Rock” Lamp



WALL MIRRORS

Customizable “Thought Mirror”





How do you approach custom work? Do you use it out of necessity, or does custom factor into the overall design of a project much sooner?

Custom-made is my preferred mode. I am especially attracted to built-ins and scaling furniture to fit a room. Customizing found objects, like crystals, onyx, or sheets of mica, is also a fascination of mine. Of course, it's not all about re-appropriation. I also love finely wrought, classic, or iconic objects made by others, and even specialty items from antique stores or junkyards. There is so much amazing design out there for the asking. You just have to have the patience to hunt for the right piece and to know how to use it — or to have it fabricated.

EXPLORE UNHEIM BESPOKE



[PATIO & GARDEN FURNITURE](#)

Customizable Onyx Seating



[LANTERNS](#)

Customizable Semi-Precious Light...



[CONTEMPORARY HANDMADE RUGS](#)

Customizable "Celestial" Series ...



PLANTERS

Customizable Plantum Acrylic Mod...





Was there a defining moment when you decided to that you wanted to make customizable product available to the public?

There were many such moments—It’s not that this is particularly unusual in the history of Design. However; DECASO seemed like a good fit. It’s really a new adventure for the office. Right now, I’m working on a new line of bespoke furniture, called “Furbishure”™ — the pun sort of gives you an idea of what it entails.

How has technology changed the way you approach design projects?

Technology allows greater access to information more quickly. Not only does it aid precision, but it allows you can to explore many different ideas on the fly. Technology speeds up everything, and offers the means to conjure something out of thin air. But all technology is fun, old or new. For example, I still use a fax machine and an original iPod.





The customizable “City of L.A.” rug seems like it must have a compelling (if not outright quirky) story behind it. Can you tell us a bit more about how that piece came to be?

I’ve always been fascinated with the urban landscape as a kind of parallel dimension, with hidden doors or portals into the unknown. Years ago, my husband and I used to walk the streets of downtown L.A., when it was still edgy and relatively dangerous. It was then that I started photographing manhole covers. We even tried altering the words etched into them, giving them an X-rating. But then we realized that they were already pretty far out, as they often have “Made in Mexico” or “India” stamped on them. Then the office made rubbings of some of them, which eventually made their way into rug designs.

From the items you have listed on DECASO, a good deal of them seem to highlight function. Is that something that you constantly keep in mind when designing items and spaces?

Yes, everything has a (social or ritual) function. Even art. What we call form is nothing but the point of contact with a given set of human functions, be it a reclining body, perambulator, or spectator. The problems associated with hanging art and how to deploy a particular furnishing for maximum effect are not really that different.

EXPLORE UNHEIM BESPOKE



[DINING TABLES](#)

"T-table"



[CONTEMPORARY HANDMADE RUGS](#)

Customizable City of L.A.



[LADDERS & STAIRS](#)

Customizable “Petsteps”



[DOORS & GATES](#)

Garden Gate Latch