



museum of arts and design

## JONATHAN ADLER CURATES A JOYFULLY ECLECTIC TAKE ON CRAFT AT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

*The Mad MAD World of Jonathan Adler Opens May 31*



Left: David Gilhooly, *Bread Frog as Coffee Break*, 1981-82. Photo: Eva Heyd. Right: Jonathan Adler, *Utopia Carmen Bowl*. Photo: Courtesy of the designer.

NEW YORK, NY (May 1, 2025)—This summer, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) invites audiences into the glamorous, witty, and wonderful universe of celebrated ceramicist and designer Jonathan Adler. In his first curatorial role, Adler presents more than 60 works from the Museum’s permanent collection, alongside his own iconic designs, in *The Mad MAD World of Jonathan Adler*. The exhibition, on view May 31, 2025–April 19, 2026, brings Adler’s singular design vision to MAD’s collection, spotlighting the artists, materials, techniques, and ideas that have inspired his aesthetic.

“When I started making pottery 30 years ago, the first pot I ever sold was at the gift shop at the American Craft Museum (MAD’s former name). I used to wander the halls of the Museum, inhaling inspiration from my craft and design heroes,” said Adler. “A lot has happened in the intervening 30 years, but I have always been a potter first and foremost. Juxtaposing my work with these incredible pieces from the Museum archive is a career highlight.”

Organized into thematic vignettes, the exhibition offers a tour through Adler’s fascinations: *Authentica* celebrates the sleek forms of mid-century modern ceramics; *Optimistica* embraces

exuberance in all its forms; *Funkiana* and *Kottler-ia* explore craft's capacity for satire and subversion; *Erotica* turns up the heat with sensual works in ceramic, fiber, and glass; and *Americalia*, *Metallica*, and *Animalia* round out the exhibition with patriotic pastiche, glimmering metalwork, and Adler's Mother Nature-inspired menagerie.

Designs from Adler's own studio appear throughout the exhibition, massed in striking tableaux and staged in a visual dialogue with the Museum's collection objects. The installation is designed by Simon Doonan, author, TV personality, legendary window dresser, former Creative Director of Barneys New York—and Adler's husband. Doonan's design, with its massing of objects in associative relationships meant to spark wonder, recalls the maximalist style of display favored by mid-century modern designer Alexander Girard for The Girard Collection at the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe, NM. The exhibition's audio guide, a conversation/kibitz with Adler, will be available on Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app.

"Jonathan's refreshingly unpretentious perspective on MAD's collection is playful and irreverent, while at the same time deeply respectful of the makers and movements that shaped modern craft and his own creative practices," said Elissa Auther, the Museum's Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Ladson Chief Curator. "The exhibition offers myriad insights into Jonathan's creative mind—and his heart, as his love of objects, materials, and those whose legacies precede his are felt throughout the gallery."

Adler has built an international reputation for his innovative approach to design, which deftly combines humor, impeccable style, and skilled craftsmanship. The exhibition marks a return to the time and place it all began—in 1993 he sold his first pots in the Museum's store (then known as the American Craft Museum). *The Mad MAD World of Jonathan Adler* brings his creative journey full circle.

The latest in MAD's collection-based exhibition series, *The Mad MAD World of Jonathan Adler* will be extended through a series of related public programs featuring the designer at the Museum. Additionally, The Store at MAD will stock a selection of iconic Jonathan Adler products.

## **EXHIBITION CREDITS**

Generous funding for *The Mad MAD World of Jonathan Adler* was received by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

## **ARTISTS ON VIEW (ALPHABETICAL)**

Magdalena Abakanowicz; Ita Aber; Alice Adams; Robert Arneson; Fong Chow; Michael Cohen; Claude Conover; Hans Coper; Val Cushing; Fritz Dreisbach; Ruth Duckworth; Verne Funk; David Gilhooly; Maurice Heaton; Robert J. King; Howard Kottler; Earl Krentzin; Rodger Lang; Marvin Lipofsky; Phillip Maberry; John C. Marshall; Mary McFadden; Judy Kensley McKie; Glidden McLellan Parker; Gertrud Natzler; Otto Natzler; Don Niblack; Richard Notkin; Eve Peri; Marc Petrovic; Kari Russell Pool; John Prip; Lucie Rie; Edwin Scheier; Mary Scheier; Preston Singletary; Toshiko Takaezu; Lenore Tawney; David Tisdale; Patti Warashina; Ann Welch; and Betty Woodman

## **ABOUT JONATHAN ADLER**

Jonathan's mission: to bring Modern American Glamour to your life. How? By creating a foundation of timelessly chic furniture and accessorizing with abandon.

It all started with pottery. Jonathan first gave the wheel a spin at summer camp when he was 12 years old. He was obsessed with clay the moment he touched it. Unfortunately, his passion wasn't always encouraged. After his college professor told him, "You have no talent. Move to New York and become a lawyer," he attempted to comply, moving to the city and working in the entertainment biz. Three years later he quit and went back to the wheel.

In 1993, Barneys bought his collection of pots, and in 1998, he opened his first store. Now he has stores located around the globe and his offerings span furniture, lighting, décor, and more. His products – and iconic interior design projects such as the Parker Palm Springs – are all rooted in his commitment to outstanding design, impeccable materials, and unparalleled craftsmanship.

His motto? If your heirs won't fight over it, we won't make it.

### **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN**

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit [madmuseum.org](http://madmuseum.org).

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