

DESIGNER

# Miles Endo: HE'S GOT THE BEAT!

*Japanese heritage and taiko drums  
serve as inspirations.*

BY STACEY MARCUS

**I honestly didn't know if I was hip enough** to interview Miles Endo. The multi-talented Rhode Island designer, a finalist in "Ellen's Design Challenge," Ellen DeGeneres' hit HGTV show, creates custom furniture from wood and metals and recently launched a lighting line inspired by the textured interior of Japanese taiko drums. Luckily, he is as nice as he is gifted.

Endo, who was born in Tokyo and raised in Honolulu, grew up in an artistic home listening to the sounds of his father's music and watching his mother create visual art. "I stretched for the best art college in the United States," says the Rhode Island School of Design graduate. Although his original intention was to study architecture or transportation design, he found the world of furniture design more aligned with his need to maintain creative control and be involved in the decision-making process.

After graduating from RISD, Endo moved to Soho to learn about furniture design, but missed the creative and collaborative shop environment. He ultimately returned to Rhode Island and launched STUDIO ENDO, where he specializes in creating custom furniture, home goods and taiko drums.

Meet Miles Endo at the 21st Annual Fine Furnishings Show, November 4-6, 2016, at the Pawtucket Armory. Along with seeing Endo and his work, attendees can discover a spectacular collection of handcrafted items, see a special showcase of furniture designed by students from local schools and furniture programs, and explore new product launches.

PHOTO: MILES ENDO



Last summer when he was in Los Angeles working on a large scale monument project, he heard about testing for Ellen's Design Challenge. Soon a talent casting representative reached out and encouraged him to apply. Fast forward through the vetting process of 500 designers to when Endo is being matched with HGTV Home Improvement Expert Karl Champley. "I was so happy to be paired with Karl. He has a great knack for creating surprise features and our personalities were in synch," says Endo. After the first design challenge, Endo realized that "my design was safe and I really had to push myself."

One of the highlights of the experience was when Ellen arrived on set with the final five contestants. Each one picked a suitcase containing the name of one of her favorite travel destinations. She challenged them to be design tourists, taking inspiration from countries she loves to visit. Endo, up last, had the opportunity to take any of the other designers' locales or go for a mystery destination. He selected a surprise spot which was ... Japan! "It looked like it was scripted," says Endo, who created a multifunctional room divider with elements influenced by a Japanese temple. His final design before leaving the show as the #3 finalist was a multifunctional kitchen table/island cart on wheels with pull-out stools, inspired by food trucks in Japan.

"The experience allowed me to think about my work creatively," says Endo, who found the hiatus from running a business refreshing. His HIRA Lighting Series features textured surfaces that reference the carved interiors of the drums that inspired them. Their copper interior's matte surface reflects a ring of LEDs that are projected to create a radiant light.



Different custom finishes are available for the HIRA pendant, whose textured surfaces were inspired by taiko drums.

Endo is looking forward to exhibiting at the Fine Furnishings Show this fall in Rhode Island, where he is stationed next to the RISD booth. "Exhibiting at the show will be coming full circle for me," says Endo, who fondly remembers attending the show as a sophomore at RISD.

"Miles is a great role model for the students and other designers," says Karla Little, show owner. "I recall how excited I was when I saw him on season two of Ellen's Design Challenge and realized that he was from my own backyard. I couldn't ask for anything more fun for everyone!" [SITEHOME](#)

PHOTO: RYTHUM VINOBEIN



Beautiful and refined, the HIRA media cabinet is the first one of its kind to use textured copper as sliding doors.

PHOTO: RYTHUM VINOBEIN



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