

Lifestyles

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Fresh design from France

INTERIOR DESIGNER Steven Miller of San Francisco just returned from a week of business in New York, a vacation in Cape Cod and a shopping spree in Paris. Before he left, I asked him if he'd share his thoughts and photos on his favorite finds when he got back.

His main mission was to find cool new accessories for Brownstone Furniture, a company owned by Reed Kingsley and his brother, Tiburon resident Chris Kingsley. On Nov. 2, Brownstone celebrates its big move to the newly constructed Metro at



P.J.
BREMIER

Fine Living

Showplace Square in San Francisco. It will be open to the trade and the public, unlike the two other showrooms in Las Vegas and North Carolina.

The company is based in



Richmond and it's focus is on furniture with clean, contemporary lines using high-grade environmentally friendly woods and American-made finishing materials. Miller, who designed the new showroom, will also design a line of furniture sold there.

Miller was joined in France by

Reed Kingsley and their destination was Paris' famed international Maison & Objet. "It's the No. 1 show for lighting, accessories and home decorative objects," Miller says. "What surprised me was how huge it was. It was divided into six different pavilions that featured groups such as lighting, furniture,

ILLUMINATING:

With their elegant simplicity, Anna Torfs' precious glass pieces capture light in a beautiful way. They are some of the innovative products San Francisco designer Stephen Miller plans to bring to the Bay Area at Brownstone Furniture.

Provided by Stephen Miller

textiles, ethnic objects, and each was the size of the Moscone Center. It would take five days to see everything."

The first pavilion they wandered into perplexed them. "It was interesting to see the

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influence of American country design," Miller says diplomatically. "Little geese with bonnets holding a basket of dried flowers, wooden boards with sayings like 'home, sweet home,' and cute embroidered pillows. You have to say, 'Wait, this isn't Wisconsin. It's France.'"

Once someone directed them to Scenes d'Interieur, though, "We knew we had hit paydirt," he says. "Everything in this pavilion was well-

designed, well-proportioned, stylishly presented, and there were inventive things that you don't see often in the U.S."

Here are some of his choices that you'll find soon at Brownstone with Miller's comments.

► "Forrestier Paris is long one of my personal favorite companies and we'll be the first to represent it on the West Coast. It's striking, polished cast aluminum wall lantern makes a bold design statement.

► "With their elegant simplicity, Anna Torfs precious glass pieces in clear or jewel-tones capture light in a stunningly beautiful way. Layers are cut into the pieces so that you can see the various striations of color.

► "Celia's luscious hand-knotted rugs from Tibet are inspired by nature and use the finest vegetable-dyed New Zealand wool. The designer has a great eye for pattern and the colors are beautiful. The Black Rose rug looks like someone took a bouquet of roses and threw them on the ground, leaving an outline. It's so very current."

What you won't find at the showroom, but are too fun not to include, are the rest of Miller's favorites. You can see these im-

"They're doing things that are exciting, that have a little more verve than what we see here."

— Stephen Miller, interior designer

enjoy them indoors as well.

► "La Madelene Andeluze transforms the concept of the ordinary garden planter by using unconventional materials and great colors — greens, ochres and rusty pumpkin.

► "Rita Jordens' spirited, cast pewter, zinc and bronze *maison et garden* accessories — hurricane lamps, candlesticks, architectural objects — have a timeless quality. The zinc is dull

and very pretty.

► "Ego Paris' fabulous tete-a-tete is an innovative outdoor lounge that's ergonomically designed and exquisitely executed. It comes in a variety of colors.

► "Limited Edition features an astounding collection of ultra-modern carpet textures like a pad of colored, connected felt balls. We visited its showroom on the Rive Gauche and saw amazing things like a carpet made of felt discs that were strung to a jute backing and looked like little coins in one or two colors.

► "Farnese Casa's spectacular Murano glass-and-metal light fixtures whimsically combine materials and form to create a singular vision. There's one that has Murano crystal beads, strung to look like little pearls, on a bright orange-red powder-coated metal chandelier. It's just stunning. It looks traditional but it has a modern interpretation."

Warmth and humor

Miller noticed that one color was noteworthy for its prominence at the show. "Each exhibitor has a fairly elaborate series of rooms and a lot of square footage," he explains. "Many of them chose a middle value, warm gray to define the space — the walls and carpeting. It's a color which was very appealing."

He also detected a distinct playfulness especially, but not restricted, to carpets. "There's a lot of humor in the texture of carpets," Miller says. "They're doing things that are exciting,



Photos provided by Steven Miller

ON A MISSION: Designer Steven Miller visited Le Parc des Expositions in Paris to find new products for Bay Area homes.

that have a little more verve than what we see here."

He cites felt and rayon shags as examples. "The rayon has a great luster to it," he says. "We normally see wool shags where the wool looks dead. This is all about people being interested in seeing something more innovative underfoot."

That would account for another of his favorites. "There was this one rug that had a crazy texture that was basically felt balls, almost the size of tennis balls, that are somehow secured to one another and look like half domes of wool," he says, noting that they come in light gray, Prussian blue, red or orange.

"Would it be comfortable?" I ask.

"It would probably feel like you were getting a massage."



TIMELESS: Rita Jordens makes accessories for the home and garden with Old World style.

parchment and rough, unpolished wood. And for fun, doors to the casework open up to reveal a cobalt-blue interior.

When asked, fun is pretty much how Miller describes his trip to Paris, too.

To learn more, visit stevenmillerdesignstudio.com. For more information about Brownstone Furniture, visit www.brownstonefurniture.com or call 510-236-0703.

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