

For Immediate Release

Upcoming Exhibitions at Mingei International Museum Honor Southern California's Mid-Twentieth Century Impact

Three shows highlight nostalgia and nature in folk art, craft, and design

May 1, 2025, SAN DIEGO, CA — Characterized by warm-toned woods, pairings of rough, earthy textures with repurposed industrial metals, and a post-war invigoration for hand-crafted arts, mid-twentieth century features captivate design lovers in Southern California and beyond. This fall at Mingei International Museum, three exhibitions showcase major elements of the Midcentury Modern scene: *Inside the Design Center*, *Boundless: Reflections of Southern California Landscapes in Midcentury Studio Ceramics*, and *Restitched: Feed Sacks in Mid-Twentieth Century Quilts*.

"This fall, Mingei spotlights artists who were the vanguard of mid-twentieth century craft and design in Southern California," said Jessica Hanson York, Executive Director and CEO. "Post-war optimism, the landscape's beauty, and evolving manufacturing and technology contributed to a moment of expansive creativity."

Inside the Design Center

September 6, 2025 – April 12, 2026 | Curators: Guest Co-Curators Dave Hampton with Steve Aldana and Todd Pitman

Ilse and Lloyd Ruocco's Design Center, located in the Hillcrest neighborhood of San Diego, was a foundation for the modern design community of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. ***Inside the Design Center*** brings to life a vignette of mid-twentieth century interior, lighting, and furniture design, featuring pieces by significant California designers, manufacturers, and craftspeople as selected by Ilse Ruocco for her 1950 showroom.

This exhibition offers an immersive, revelatory window into San Diego's culture of modernism through the lens of architecture, design, interior decorating, home goods retailing, landscape architecture, graphic design, and photography. Historic images of the Design Center set the backdrop for over 30 original pieces of modernist furnishings. Works by designers such as Ray Eames, Charles Eames, Greta Magnusson Grossman, Dorothy Schindele, Milo Baughman, and Edith Heath of Heath Ceramics are included.

Mingei hopes to inspire an appreciation for San Diego's surprising history of design and architecture. ***Inside the Design Center*** taps into the culture and community of post-war modernism, valuing groundbreaking creatives and emphasizing California's distinct mark on mid-twentieth century design.

"It's been called "ground zero" for Modernism in San Diego. Built specifically to foster community, at a time (1949) when modern design principles were not well-understood, there was simply nothing else like the Design Center—a single home for an array of top design professionals and a modern furniture showroom that was equally distinct for its early selection of pieces by California designers and makers."

- Dave Hampton, Guest Co-Curator

Featured California Makers | *Inside the Design Center*

Harry Lawenda
of Kneedler Fauchère
Modern Color
Dorothy Schindele
Milo Baughman

Greta Magnusson Grossman
Ralph O. Smith Co.
Ray Eames
Charles Eames
Luther Conover

Edith Heath
of Heath Ceramics
Henrik Van Keppel & Taylor Green
of Van Keppel Green
Gilbert Watrous

Featured East–Midwest Makers | *Inside the Design Center*

Florence Knoll and Eero Saarinen
of Knoll
Herman Miller
Elias Svedberg
Jens Risom

Boundless: Reflections of Southern California Landscapes in Midcentury Studio Ceramics

September 27, 2025 – June 7, 2026 | Curator: Guusje Sanders

Bringing forth over 150 objects from Mingei's permanent collection, ***Boundless*** explores the work of Midcentury ceramicists from Southern California. By viewing these hand-crafted vessels through the lens of Southern California landscapes—physical, political, and social—this exhibition provides a larger context for appreciating Midcentury Modern ceramics, experimentation, and influences. Many pieces in this collection were acquired or made by the Museum's founder, Martha Longenecker, as part of her initial framework for the Museum itself.

This show calls to lovers of nature and ceramics, branching into the science of ceramic glazing and experimentation during the mid-twentieth century era. ***Boundless*** transports visitors into beloved ecosystems of the ocean, desert, mountain range, and sky to make connections between earth and folk art.

"*Boundless* communicates that art is not made in a vacuum. Seeing pottery directly in relation to the nature that inspired it is very satisfying, but the exhibition pushes beyond that. It recontextualizes the ceramics within the era they were made and how artists responded to their surroundings. Of course, ceramics also involve a lot of science, and exploring the complexity and experimentation adds another layer of awe to the works on display." - Guusje Sanders, Curator

Featured Makers | *Boundless*

Laura Andreson
Martha Longenecker
Beatrice Wood
Rupert J. Deese

Frank Papworth
Harrison McIntosh
Otto and Gertrud Natzler
Vivika and Otto Heino

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Restitched: Feed Sacks in Mid-Twentieth Century Quilts

November 22, 2025 – May 10, 2026 | Curator: Guusje Sanders

Opening this fall, seven colorful quilts made from stitched feed sacks highlight the resourcefulness of early mid-twentieth century makers. In the 1930s and '40s, people affected by the Great Depression repurposed feed sacks—cotton bags used to package bulk dry goods—to make domestic items like quilts and clothes. Commercial manufacturers began printing feed sacks with vibrant patterns and prints, which gave rise to the incredible phenomenon of handmade feed sack textiles. This collection celebrates the ingenuity and creativity of feed sack quilters.

"*Restitched* is about celebrating human creativity, innovation, and resilience in the face of hardship. As explored in *Boundless*, too, when people go through difficult times, there is a desire to create with one's hands and express oneself in the objects we make. I think this is something that is happening now. People are connecting to craft and finding ways to process and heal through creativity." - Guusje Sanders, Curator

Media Images will be uploaded here when available

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ABOUT MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM

Mingei International Museum, located in San Diego's Balboa Park Cultural District, celebrates human creativity through multicultural works of folk art, craft, and design. Inspired by the Japanese *mingei* (art of the people) movement, Mingei cares deeply about design functionality, handmade craft, and bringing out the creativity that lives in all of us. In addition to rotating gallery exhibitions and event programming, Mingei's gift shop, theater, education center, restaurant, and café are backdrops for finding inspiration and connecting with the community. As the presenter of San Diego Design Week and a partner to over 50 local artists and art and cultural organizations, Mingei puts celebrating creativity at the core of its mission through workshops, film festivals, lectures, and more. Mingei is a nonprofit institution funded by admission, individuals, and institutional support.

ABOUT THE BALBOA PARK CULTURAL DISTRICT

Located in the heart of San Diego, the Balboa Park Cultural District is home to a variety of arts and culture offerings. The 1,200 acre public park has been a hub for art, science, history, and culture since the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. The Cultural District includes Balboa Park's central mesa, particularly 17 museums, performing arts centers, gardens, and of course, the world famous San Diego Zoo. Thanks to organizations like the City of San Diego, Forever Balboa Park, the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, and staff members of various institutions, the Balboa Park Cultural District is a major tourist destination.

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