

# King Charles

When he's not dreaming up apps from his mod Carlsbad studio, Brit design guru Charles Curbun splits his time between here and his new Bay Area studio. We take stock.

| By Gillian Flynn | Photography by Ethan Pines |

"I am a chair collector," says the bespectacled Charles Curbun in his British accent. Serious understatement. You see, Curbun, the designer behind DD Studio, is chair-obsessed. Charles Eames, Marc Newson, Ron Arad and Verner Panton? Check. These days he's dabbling in making his own.

"The chair is a highly sculptural piece. Quite often, you look at them more than you sit on them," says Curbun, who often moves chairs between his homes in Leucadia and downtown. "You can always find a great place for them."

For 35 years, Curbun has been at the forefront of international product design, crafting everything from Qualcomm's first satellite phone to Microsoft's updated slot machines that can be personalized. "Gone are the days of the smoking seniors with coin buckets," says Curbun, who lectures on design at UCSD and CSU Long Beach. "Casino gambling is turning into social gaming. There's much more than pulling a handle."

The studio ethos is "experience design." More than ever, products meld technology, functionality, art and aesthetics. "We now talk about creating something that somebody can get immersed in completely," he says.

Last month, the company opened a second office in Palo Alto for clients in the Bay Area. A recent success story includes the home security camera system that links to an iPhone, which he designed for an S.D. defense startup that was just purchased by Netgear.

But back to the chairs. His latest sculptural prototype enlists Malama foam, a lightweight, eco-friendly soy foam made in San Diego. "It is amply sized and amazingly comfortable for a solid structure," he says. "It is glassed like a surfboard with a glossy surface."

Quite the throne.



#### HOT SEAT

Charles Curbun in his custom chair made of foam used for surfboards. The TV is a 1959 Philco Predicta Princess Swivel. "I like to collect iconic products from different periods. This TV really epitomizes the ultimate luxury presence of the product. It was designed the same year as the Cadillac Coupe de Ville with its massive fins and bullets."

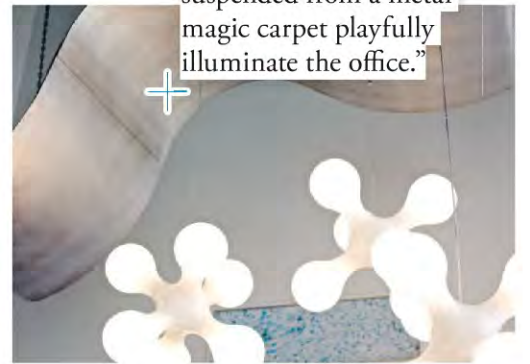
+ **Curbbun's  
Design  
Essentials**



“They’re part of my extensive Dunny collection, each a different artistic expression on the same base form.”



“The tequila table is one of my early designs for serious drinkers—belly up and choose your poison. The legs are 1950s artillery rounds.”



“A series of massive jacks suspended from a metal magic carpet playfully illuminate the office.”



“I love the raw early days of Shepard Fairey. I have eight Hawaii prints and Joe Strummer from the Clash on paper and metal.”

“Another of my favorite sculptors/designers is Isamu Noguchi. Japanese simplicity within beautiful forms and authentic materials.”



“‘The Creativity Goddess,’ 18-by-60, by Doug Snider, a local ceramic artist.”

