

# SCENE

WRITTEN BY KIMBERLY OLSON

## INSPIRING MIND

NATASHA BECKER



In 2020, the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco hired Natasha Becker as its first dedicated, full-time curator of African art. The South African native, who has

spearheaded numerous exhibitions and international initiatives, brings to the role substantial knowledge of both art history and African history. *Luxe* sat down with Becker to learn more about her vision moving forward. [famsf.org](http://famsf.org)

**What excites you about your role?** One of the biggest transformations in the past 15–20 years in the field is the growth of contemporary African art. Essentially, I was hired to deepen visitors' knowledge of and connection with the historical collection. But I proposed we bring contemporary artists into the mix. It was an exciting challenge to bring new critical

interpretations to the historical while also responding to the current moment.

**Is there a contemporary artist you're especially enthused about showcasing?**

Lhola Amira [on exhibit at the de Young Museum through December] is a South African artist making an impact by showing that we are all connected historically—Africans, African Americans and descendants of Africans; Native American and Indigenous people; and descendants of European settlers. By drawing on all these cultural stands, they are inviting everyone into their work of cultural healing.

**Why should someone explore African art?**

Africa is considered the birthplace of modern humanity. It is the site upon which all our ancestors first expressed abstract thoughts in visual terms. Because of the continent's extraordinary diversity and artistic heritage, it takes time to explore. Africa cannot be understood in one exhibition. Unpacking that will be exciting to someone who's not familiar with it.

## SHELF LIFE

*Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity*

In one of her notebooks, sculptor Adaline Kent wrote of her artistic process, "I want to hear the click of authenticity," an idea that fueled her work. After studying under sculptor Ralph Stackpole in San Francisco and Antoine Bourdelle in Paris, Kent set up a studio in North Beach in 1929. Her abstract pieces were influenced by everything from her travels to the concept of infinity to the natural world. She became one of the midcentury's most innovative creators, her name linked to modernist artists like Ruth Asawa and Mark Rothko. Out January 31, *Adaline Kent: The Click of Authenticity* is the first major monograph of the artist to be published in 60 years and includes an extensive chronology of her work, text by scholars, and a selection of sculptures, photographs and rarely seen pieces. [rizzoliusa.com](http://rizzoliusa.com)



INSPIRING MIND PHOTOS: LEFT, COURTESY SMAC GALLERY © LHOLA AMIRA; RIGHT PORTRAIT, COURTESY ELISABETH SMOLARZ; SHELF LIFE PHOTOS: COVER COURTESY RIZZOLI NEW YORK; ARTWORK, ADALINE KENT, 1947, COLLECTION OF JULIA HILGARD RITTER, PHOTO BY RON JONES.

# DINNER & DRINKS

SATIATE YOUR PALATE—AND DESIGN EYE—AT TWO INVENTIVE RESTAURANTS AND AN AU COURANT TASTING ROOM



## BASE CAMP

Along Napa Valley's Silverado Trail, oenophiles will find Base Camp, a new Seven Apart winery led by legendary winemaker Andy Erickson. Designed by Napa architect James Jeffery, the space features a centerpiece wine cellar flanked by a lounge on one side and a private tasting room on the other. Jeffrey joined forces with husband-and-wife team Damon and Julie Savoia of Shawback Design, who broke from the more traditional Napa Valley tasting room aesthetic to create a fresh, forward-thinking space filled with American-made furniture and art, including a sculpture by Bay Area creative Jud Bergeron. Constructed by Wright Contracting, Base Camp features an earthy palette and rich textures—think hand-troweled plaster, stone-clad walls and a cypress ceiling burned *shou sugi ban*-style to showcase its grain. The materials, like the wine itself, come together to offer a layered experience. [sevenapart.com](http://sevenapart.com)



## OCCITANIA

Newer to the Oakland scene is Occitania, featuring design inspired by the Occitan linguistic region of southern France, Italy's Piemonte and Spain's Catalonia. Architecture firm Arcsine partnered with restaurateur and chef Paul Canales to infuse the space with the region's sensations, turning to a palette reminiscent of the area's golden wheat fields, terra-cotta tiles, lavender pastures and wild greenery. Behind the brass bar, a wall dotted with recessed boxes evokes a landscape of hillside homes, imagery inspired by a native Occitan poem. "Your eye flits from point to point, taking in the art and gesture of the space," says Daniel Scovill, founding principal of Arcsine. "After you leave, the sights and memories of your experience continue to swirl, calling you back." [occitaniaoakland.com](http://occitaniaoakland.com)



## CYRUS

Ten years ago, when a landlord dispute forced beloved Healdsburg restaurant Cyrus to close its doors, fans were crestfallen. Launched by Maître D' Nick Peyton and Chef Douglas Keane, the restaurant had earned devotees—and global awards—for its fresh, modern flavors, food-friendly wines and attentive hospitality. Happily, Cyrus has reopened in a new Geyserville location with a fresh concept—dining as a journey, rooted in how we might welcome friends into our home. Hoping to offer the experience of new encounters in fresh rooms, architect Tom Kundig of Olson Kundig conjured a design that marries the modest origins of the former prune-packing plant with modern lines and organic materials, like glass, stone, steel and wood. [cyrusrestaurant.com](http://cyrusrestaurant.com)



## MEET THE MAKER

JOHN LISTON



When he used to attend design shows, John Liston of J Liston Design would display myriad offerings—candlesticks, brass trays, side tables, lighting. Visitors to his booth often assumed there was a whole crew operating behind the scenes to produce such diverse pieces. But Liston is a one-man show. He does all the design work for his studio himself, creating bold, functional, imaginative forms. [jlistondesign.com](http://jlistondesign.com)

**What path led you to the design work you do today?** I went to the Rochester Institute of Technology for jewelry design and worked for my professor during college. He did large, hammer-formed sculpture-type pieces—more monumental in scale. I enjoyed the physical aspect of that kind of work rather than sitting at a bench doing small jewelry pieces. From there, I started making work for my own apartment. When you're young, you don't have \$5,000 to spend on furniture.

**Where do you find design inspiration?** When I started focusing on furniture, my work became much more industrial with cleaner lines, which is a 180-degree change from what I had been doing. I became more interested in architecture and finding little things that are intriguing, like a window latch or rainscreen. The Batten sconce (top), my newest piece, is based off louvers.

**How do you work with clients on custom pieces?** A few years ago, a client wanted a credenza version of my Corrugated side tables. So, it's just scaling up or scaling back pieces, and then giving the client drawings of what it could be. Oftentimes, during the drawing process, you find possibilities that you didn't see from the original piece, which could change the whole design.

## OPEN HOUSE

Iconic Australian brand **Coco Republic** (bottom) brings its travel-inspired decor stateside with its first flagship store in the U.S., an over 40,000-square-foot space located in Union Square. With casually stylish offerings that nod to nature, Coco Republic speaks to an easy lifestyle shared by Australians and Californians alike. Shoppers can visit the mocktail bar to sip on nonalcoholic spirits by Aussie brand Lyres and will have access to in-store design services supported by Coco Republic's Interior Design Galleries and Design Labs. Meanwhile, at the San Francisco Design Center, both designers and homeowners can peruse luxury kitchen appliances at the new **Riggs Distributing** showroom (below). The 4,500-square-foot space features the company's best-in-class brands—the showroom is the exclusive regional distributor of Sub-Zero, Wolf and Cove appliances—displayed in premium vignettes and product showcases. Visitors can try out appliances for themselves at the Live Kitchen or choose to attend one of the numerous events already planned, including cooking demonstrations and more.

