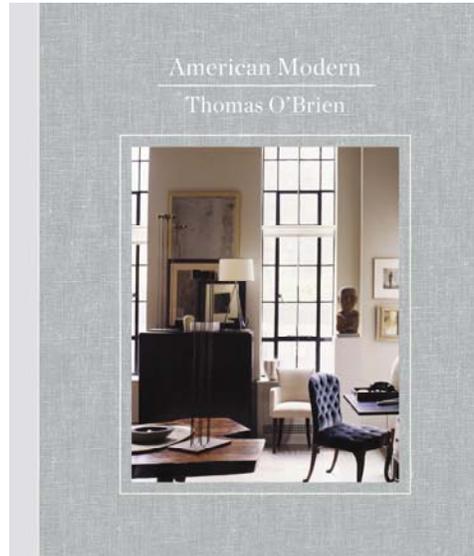


# THOMAS O'BRIEN

## AMERICAN MODERN

By Thomas O'Brien

From Abrams, April 2010



December 2009 -- Designer and merchant Thomas O'Brien has always had a passion for making useful things. Now, that sense of purpose has led him to a new medium and a debut as an author, with the publication of his first book, AMERICAN MODERN, from Abrams, arriving in April 2010.

O'Brien's venture into books has been long anticipated by followers and design fans, yet this meticulously made volume is not the usual designer retrospective. Instead, it is a more deliberate meditation on a philosophy of modernism in his work, organized into seven extensive chapters that each portray one home and one variation of modern style. The book progresses almost as a series of short stories, strung together in a gentle arc from the surprisingly traditional sensibility of an antique Connecticut country house to the art-filled studio modernism of O'Brien's own 1930s New York City apartment.

O'Brien modeled AMERICAN MODERN on the serene, studied simplicity of vintage modern photography and interior books; and like their luxurious pace, this book invites the luxury of delving deeper into homes than is typical in today's media. There is a wealth of details, pictures, and anecdotes that have never before been published, including O'Brien's generous account of his own homes, past and present. Chapters are laid out in spare page-for-page pairings of large photographs and discrete essays, making for concise reading and a chance to pause over interesting moments in the unfolding of each project. O'Brien's disarming, unguarded narration shares information that is both conversational and practical, from architectural and restoration decisions to the collecting of furniture and art. The elegant, crisp photography casts light on the ingredients of a room as much as the rooms themselves.

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419 BROOME STREET 10013 212-966-4700 FAX 212-966-4701

The sum of these elements, like the interiors they illustrate, is beautiful and unhurried, authentic and thoughtful. The book feels instantly classic, for all its moods of modernism. And that is exactly what O'Brien is after: showing what is most lasting and calm in what is modern, and revealing the presence of something modern in what is past.

"My more modern clients have always been the ones who crave actual, traditional antiques, while the traditional clients are drawn to the most pared down modernist forms," explains O'Brien. "And each style makes the other look better. These things are interconnected, and always have been, in the history of design. I wanted to do a book that looked into this approach as a really modern way of living, from whatever vantage point you start at.

"I think people are searching for ways to live well in this current moment in time," he continues. "They want to learn how to refine their taste and make good decisions, good investments. That's the real pursuit I want to help with. And there is a path I thought I could talk about that could help empower them to do that. Taking readers through a specific set of projects, in a logical progression, from traditional to modern, was a way to move the discussion forward. I picked these seven projects because they could tell that particular story. I wanted to share real choices and real time spent in these homes that I've designed. I wanted something very personal and true."

And true to his word, modernism is in the mix, not the era. In one New York apartment, a striking 1986 Irving Penn photograph of a lipsticked mouth holds court in a foyer with 19<sup>th</sup> century Austrian and Swedish furniture. In another, a museum-quality collection of vintage Jean Prouvé furniture populates a casual, comfortable family loft. Pieces from the 1920s through the 1960s routinely pair with Georgian and neoclassical revival forms of the early 1800s. It's this continuum, O'Brien teaches, with the freedom to mix pieces both adventurously and knowledgeably, that makes for an American Modern approach to design.

"What I really like to do for clients is create this kind of interior that is knowledgeable," says O'Brien. "It's about conveying an awareness and an education, and inviting people to learn about what interests them. Then you can build a design which will suit someone uniquely. If this book can be part of that education for anyone, then I feel very fortunate. It is really about this set of ideas that I think are valuable, which happen to govern how I work."

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#### About the Author:

Thomas O'Brien is an interior and home furnishings designer based in New York City. He is the founder and President of Aero Studios, one of America's most influential design firms, and the proprietor of AERO, the destination home boutique that serves as the retail storefront of the studio. O'Brien is widely recognized for his collection of Thomas O'Brien Vintage Modern products for Target, and for his own brand of new-classic home furnishings in partnership with great American companies such as Hickory Chair, Lee Jofa, Reed & Barton, Safavieh, Visual Comfort, and Waterworks. He lives in Manhattan and Bellport, Long Island.

#### About the Book:

American Modern  
By Thomas O'Brien  
Text written with Lisa Light; Photography by Laura Resen  
Abrams; April 2010  
240 pages; 200 full-color illustrations; 9 x 11"; Hardcover with jacket  
U.S. \$50.00/ CAN \$64.99; ISBN: 978-0-8109-8478-3

For information on or imagery from AMERICAN MODERN, please contact:

Karen Peterson  
Karen@KJ-Agency.com  
917-553-7638