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## THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLER

by Annette Stramesi

As with traditional furnishings, modern furniture can now claim fault lines that distinguish chronology and style. Terms like "midcentury modern," "classic contemporary," and, lately, "neoprimitive," testify to its pervasiveness and acceptance by a growing number of fans.

But, come again, doesn't neoprimitive contradict the traditional modern rigors of form, line, and function?

Walt's KorQinc collection of reconstituted cork seating illustrates two other dimensions of modern furniture. Says Miller, "No one has ever used this very familiar material in the way to create seating that is both sturdy and flexible, in addition to being comfortable."

The KorQinc group also represents the "greening" of furniture-making. A nontoxic food glue holds the cork, a renewable resource, together. Ecological friendliness is of increasing concern to manufacturers, and European makers, particularly those in northern Europe, are taking the lead.

Are Europeans far more receptive to modern furnishings than Americans? It's true that after two wars fought on their soil, Europeans have had to look to the new rather than the old. "Europe was devastated by World War II," says Miller, "and afterwards, those countries collectively looked to the future. In Italy, post-war modern design took off." The Italians poured many lire into promoting and marketing their output throughout the world. With Europe setting the trend, Americans are becoming increasingly interested in contributing to and supporting modern design.

The media, particularly the shelter magazines that showcase modern interiors, have advanced the cause. "People are far more educated about modern furniture today. While there may not be as many new designs as may have been done in past decades, the demand is out there," he says.

While the young are expected to be more receptive to modern, older adults who are scaling down from large homes are often interested in a more contemporary look for their smaller houses. For these people, scaling down equates with springing down, and they are ready to embrace a new esthetic.

Once considered the province of the educated, modern has been brought to the middle class, through the media, and through such super-chains as Pottery Barn, Crate and Barrel and IKEA.

not, "Appreciation of form is a precursor to an appreciation of materials and production values. When you are twenty, you may be able to afford only a knockoff. Learning to value quality and the process often comes later." Miller pauses in front of the child-sized reconstituted cork chairs, and smiles. "Wouldn't they be wonderful in a schoolroom?" The truth is, you can't start too young. ■



Top: The Drum series of stools and side tables by Johnny Rose meld sophisticated production techniques with ancient textures and forms.

Bottom: The work of Laura Klar is some of Miller's most recent additions. Shown here is her Karma lounge chair, which combines painted wood with nubby hand-spun yarn; circle 90.