

Optical Illusions at the Architectural Digest Home Show

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John Eric Byers' carved stool

"Is that wood or metal?" "Is this clay or leather?" "Are those porcupine quills, or what?" Time and again, my stroll through Made, the artisanal section of the annual [Architectural Digest Home show](#), caused me to stop and question my own eyes. Every traditional medium was in evidence, plus neon and plastic, but I wasn't always sure exactly what I was looking at.

Among the many splendid wood pieces on offer, [John Eric Byers](#)' hardwood stools and credenzas, with their pocked-marked, blackened surfaces (achieved with a power tool, he assured me) exhibited a cool steeliness yet were warm to the touch. [Souda](#), a Brooklyn-based design house, displayed off-white porcelain bowls and pendant lights whose undulating forms had been slip-cast in reusable leather molds, so that inherently cool surfaces acquired the warmth of skin. At the [Elizabeth Lyons](#) booth, the Rochester, New York-based glass artist corrected my assumption that I was looking at blown and cast-glass flowers in her charming Large Spring Bouquet chandelier. Not at all – each of the 60 multi-petaled blossoms, in shades of blue and yellow, is hand-sculpted and mounted on a steel armature. [Fiyel Levent](#)'s delicately pierced paper lanterns, inspired by Noguchi and Ruth Asawa, are produced via laser-cutting technology, the patterns inspired by central Asian and Islamic architecture. But was this actually ivory-colored watercolor paper? I wondered, because it glowed with the translucence of vellum. In contrast, [Patrick Weder](#)'s Honeycomb paper table lamp, which appeared to have been formed over chicken wire, bore more than a passing resemblance to a branch of white coral.

While functional objects predominated, a number of Made exhibitors were there with art that ranged from painting and sculpture to framed textiles. Most unusual were [Catherine Latson](#)'s illusory botanical collages made with twigs, vines, moss, leaves, feathers, and, curiously, the tubular tips of peacock feathers – not porcupine quills as I originally thought. Latson, who is famous for her Asian bittersweet vine sculptures, here displayed her ethereal-yet-boreal creations in large Lucite box frames, where they appeared to float, as if caught in a passing breeze.

Of course, no one can escape an AD Home show without a dip into the main event, where kitchen and bath purveyors hold sway. But as I headed down the main aisle in pursuit of the perfect cook stove, a flash of vivid blue caught my eye – no, not a Viking range or a Le Creuset pot, or even the first bluebird of spring, but a magnificent pod-shaped vessel by [Kathy Erteman](#) gracing the booth of Tucker Robbins. I was drawn to it, well, like a moth to a flame, a glowing reminder of the power of art.