



STAR POWER

TYM DESANTO PUTS A NEW SPIN ON MODERN DESIGN WITH THE UPCOMING LAUNCH OF A FURNITURE LINE

BY ALYSON PITARRE

PORTRAITS BY TOMAS MUSCIONICO

Whatever you do, don't call Tym DeSanto a decorator.

You can't even call him a designer—at least not exclusively.

As “The Renaissance Guy” of HGTV’s hit show *Design Star*, DeSanto almost makes Leonardo da Vinci look like an Everyman. He is part designer, part fine artist, part adventure skier, part marketing guru, part musician, part reality TV star and the list goes on. His interests range from skateboarding to creating large-format manipulated photographs and writing music. He designed and built his own house—a modern 3,800 square-foot home patterned after a Palladian villa with a 1,200 square-foot studio juxtaposed on a 16-degree angle to the house—right in the heart of Fort Wayne, Indiana’s traditional Craftsmans and American Foursquares. Word spread, and he quickly started scoring his own design projects around town—a local hair salon, a unique 1970s bi-level. In late 2005, his adventurous spirit led him to apply for the first season of *Design Star*.

“I went into the show as a designer—not a decorator,” says DeSanto. “Design goes much deeper than pillows or window treatments or color palettes.”

Throughout the show, DeSanto stayed true to his trademark line, “It’s not Decorating Star. It’s *Design Star*,” often wowing the celeb judges with his clean, less-is-more

approach. Much to his fans’ surprise, however, he ended up finishing third behind Alice Fakier and the eventual winner David Bromstad.

“I really tried to stay true to who I was as a designer and articulate my passion for life,” he says. “I definitely wanted to win, but I also realized that the show would give me exposure I would never have otherwise. You never know what your next step is going to be.”

Later this year, DeSanto is preparing to launch *Y Modern*, his own furniture line with long-time design partner Dougal Hartman. While only a limited number of designs will be available initially, the line features a suspended lounge chair and ottoman, variations of side tables and a coffee table in stainless steel, aluminum, natural and engineered woods, including recycled and renewable materials.

“It is modern in the true sense of the word, not ‘modern era’ furniture,” explains DeSanto, who counts Frank Gehry, Frank Lloyd Wright, Michael Graves and Charles and Ray Eames as his inspirations. “It is characteristic of present day. I am passionate about producing fresh modern designs.”

When he’s not designing furniture, DeSanto is involved with a non-profit group called P3, records music (he has an album on iTunes), designs downtown apartment

Former HGTV Design Star and current host of World Market Center’s Style File, Tym DeSanto counts Frank Gehry, Frank Lloyd Wright, Michael Graves and Charles and Ray Eames as his own personal design stars because they are “the epitome of modern.”

"I'm a bit of a monk when it comes to design. I'm an anal retentive designer. I like symmetry."



renovations in his hometown and spends time with his wife (a clothing designer) and two sons. He also plays host to Style File, the trends watch show for World Market Center.

"Working for World Market Center is exciting," says DeSanto, who just wrapped up his report for summer Market. "Las Vegas has every imaginable style—that's the inspiring thing for me when I'm here. I'm a bit of a kid in a candy store. I'm fascinated by the over-the-top nature of the city. It is always pushing the envelope and that's something I try to do with my own design. I'm never bored when I'm here."

So what's next on The Renaissance Guy's to-do list? Possibly his own reality show—but don't expect to see him picking out pillows or wallpaper.

"I would like to do a new twist on green—an eco-makeover show," he says. "I want to encourage people to step out of their comfort zones and find out what inspires them. Design is about getting people to move forward and grow." **HD**



Inset photos, clockwise from left: A trad-mod makeover, the Shanklin residence in Fort Wayne. DeSanto's own home, Villa Dakota. He will release a furniture collection, Y Modern, later this year. Favoring clean lines and modern materials, it will include the "Frank" suspended Lounge Chair and Ottoman. See resources