

# Clean House

NEWLY LAUNCHED, ZIGGY CRAFTS NONTOXIC FURNITURE AND ACCESSORIES IN SOUTHTON



BY ANN LOYND BURTON

Nothing helps combat a chilly winter in the Northeast like hunkering in at home under a warm blanket. But as it turns out, indoor pollution hits its peak in colder months, when toxins, too, are in for the long haul — trapped in the house with windows and doors sealed. That's why Ziggy, a new nontoxic furniture and home accessories brand crafted in Southington, is out to make your home cleaner, year round.

According to founder and interior designer Emily Butler, toxins don't just come from obvious sources like cleaning products and burning candles, but also from built-ins such as cabinets and shelving, furniture, paint and accessories. "For example, I bought a little valet tray for my bathroom recently," she explains. "When I opened the box, it smelled like paint in a way that made my head hurt."

Engineered wood known as fiberboard can contain formaldehyde and toxic binders. Glues and paint and lacquer finishes may hold harmful chemicals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can cause irritation and are suspected of being linked to increases in cancer. Butler never took chemicals' health effects too seriously until she was tasked with designing a home for a client who wanted to stop introducing potentially toxic furnishings in her home. Butler teamed up with brothers and local craftsmen Ziggy and Tom Brodowski to create custom furniture and built-ins for the job, and the idea to bring the "Ziggy" approach to nontoxic home furnishings was born.

Today, the Brodowskis and their team make every piece from the brand's Southington workshop using nontoxic materials and finishes, even high-gloss lacquer, that fall below the limit for low VOC content set by Greenguard, a division

of UL Environment. Their all-hardwood construction employs formaldehyde-free plywood, water-based paint and a "green" water-borne glue to ensure a smooth finish.

The result helps both consumers and craftsmen breathe a little easier, literally. "The concerns surrounding toxicity and limiting your exposure is really important," Butler says. "We want to do that not only for our customers but also for ourselves, because the person being most exposed is the one who is creating these products."

As an interior designer, Butler wanted the pieces to not only *be* good but *look* good as well, so she designs with an "intentionally simple" approach. "Our aesthetic has been clean and simple, so it really lends itself to any environment — whether you love vintage textiles or prefer designs that are more modern," she says. Ziggy's accent tables, consoles and dressers are all available in an array of high-gloss hues (including Cheeky Coral and Juniper) as well as in an offering of neutrals and wood finishes. Added earlier this year, mirrors and valet trays have an upcycled spin in the form of vintage brass corners that Butler calls "a nice complement to what we're trying to do."

To keep prices as low as possible, Ziggy subscribes to a direct-to-consumer model with a trade program for interior designers, and Butler says the Connecticut design community has been incredibly supportive since the brand was launched last April. Interior professionals can drop into the Southington workshop or Ziggy's new studio in New York City's Flatiron District. "We've had a strong Tri-State response," she says, adding, "and I think it's because we're local, have a positive brand message and are more or less family owned. Ziggy and Tom have been working with Connecticut designers for a long time, and they've built a positive reputation as perfectionists."

[studioziggy.com](http://studioziggy.com)

## Detoxing your home

The pros at Ziggy have some recommendations on limiting exposure to toxic substances at home

Use natural cleaning products such as vinegar, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, and even plain water to clean your home. Check out the Environmental Working Group's cleaning guide at [ewg.org/guides/cleaners](http://ewg.org/guides/cleaners).

Avoid unnaturally scented products (candles, trash bags, air fresheners, household cleaners) that are often filled with chemicals and can emit as many VOCs as cars.

Look for low- or no-VOC products for painting, varnishing and other household projects.

Open windows and circulate new air to allow for as much ventilation as possible. The air in your home can be 2 to 5 times as polluted as the air outside.

If you are building a home, consult with your contractor on choosing safe, renewable materials.