

A WEALTH OF LOCAL TALENT

WE DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR TO FIND SUPERIOR CRAFTSMANSHIP

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER SERGENT

If you're looking for a distinctive piece of furniture to set the tone for an entire room, think twice before you head to the mall, because DC's suburban office parks and out-of-the-way side streets are home to shops and factories where local craftsmen are creating some stunning work.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Dry bar cabinets, **Art Woodstone Studio**; Danish cabinet, **David Iatesta**; Lolita armchair, **David Edward**; Crystal Round cocktail table, **Salvations Architectural Furnishings**; Henderson's dining table, **Caleb Woodard Furniture Co.**; St. Germain side table, **Harris Rubin**.





Barry Remley stands before antique architectural salvage that hangs on the wall of her Silver Spring, MD, shop as inspiration for her ironwork.

SALVATIONS ARCHITECTURAL FURNISHINGS

Barry Remley's business was born of necessity: Her husband wanted something "different" to furnish his first office in 1986. Her friend Donetta George at The Brass Knob had just purchased the doors, brackets, and moldings from an old convent on H Street, and Remley used much of it to create unique tables and étagères in her husband's office. "That was really, really fun. His office looked great and everyone loved it," she says.

At the time, Remley's youngest child had just entered school, and she was ready to go back to work: "I decided to try to turn a business out of it," she says, referring to her specialty of having custom ironwork made from or inspired by architectural salvage, from street grates to French balcony railings. Salvations Architectural Furnishings was born in Silver Spring, MD.

Twenty-three years later, Remley has a solid following among interior designers, both local and national, and 10 to-the-trade showrooms in the United States and Canada. In the process, her work supports at least three local blacksmiths who fabricate her designs before they come back to her shop for finishing. "It really provides some bread-and-butter work to support the artwork that they do," she says.

Salvations Architectural Furnishings
301.445.1400 | salvationsaf.com

CALEB WOODARD FURNITURE CO.

As it turned out, Caleb Woodard could not get away from his roots as the son of a furniture and cabinet maker in Tennessee. He came to Washington after college to take a job at a trade association, but after a while, "I just realized that this wasn't what I wanted to do." He started working part-time at Old Dominion Woodworking in Arlington, VA, and ultimately started his own business, sharing space in the same shop.

Woodard's major influences are mid-century modern, and he looks to the works of George Nakashima and James Krenov for inspiration. But he doesn't want to be

tied to any one genre. In his commissions, he says, "I try to focus on each piece to the max, instead of setting a certain style."

Woodard makes house calls to discuss how each piece will fit in a customer's home. Says his wife, Melanie: "He's very good at interpreting what clients desire and what they're looking for without sacrificing his perspective as a designer."

Caleb Woodard Furniture Co.
202.243.8249 | calebwoodardfurniture.com

Photographs by Lydia Cutter



Newlyweds Caleb and Melanie Woodard stand in his Arlington, VA, shop with a finished credenza in the background. Melanie handles the business and marketing while Caleb works his craft.



Sons Kevin, David, and Greg Pitts now run David Edward, along with their golden doodle, Lulu, and their Cavalier King Charles spaniel, Willy. Their father, Edward Pitts, founded the company in 1963 when he took over a bankrupt re-upholstery business in Baltimore.

Photographs by Anne Gummerson

DAVID EDWARD

Walk through the sleek furniture offerings at Vastu downtown, or at the elegant DSA Associates in The Washington Design Center, and you'll find David Edward's work.

Its sprawling factory in Baltimore is one of two – the other is in Pennsylvania, where the wood frames are built and then sent to Baltimore to be finished, upholstered, and shipped out across the United States, Mexico, Canada, England, Japan, and the Middle East.

But at its core, David Edward is a family-run business of a father and three sons that places a premium on the needs of each customer. "Unconditional Positive Regard for the Individual" is a phrase that hangs prominently over the Baltimore reception desk.

That's probably why so many top architects and designers (Robert A.M. Stern, Dakota Jackson, Philippe Starck) have them fabricate their custom furniture. To wit: "We hand-sand every product for an hour and a half," says Greg Pitts, one of the sons of company founder Edward Pitts. "Everything is stained by hand."

David Edward | 410.242.2222 | davidedward.com

DAVID IATESTA

After many years of restoring antiques and working with designers in the high-end furniture manufacturing business, David Iatesta started his eponymous company in 1998 with the guidance and support of Designer Frank Babb Randolph. "He's really been a mentor of mine," Iatesta says. "Billy Baldwin was his mentor, so I'm second-generation Billy Baldwin," he adds with a chuckle, referring to the American design legend.

A walk through Iatesta's shop on the Eastern Shore in Stevensville, MD, bears out Iatesta's obsession

with detail, especially when it comes to recreating antiques he's found on his world travels. And there isn't anything he doesn't do in his to-the-trade work. "I'll make dining tables into chandeliers, if people want that," he says. "Our custom capabilities are endless." His newest lines include upholstered pieces and textile designs.

But whatever it is he's making, from wood furniture to lighting to metalwork, Iatesta sources his materials from the United States whenever possible, and most of it comes from the immediate region. His current interest is recreating

wood finishes inspired by the piles of driftwood he collects on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, which range in color from cream to tan to bluish gray.

Iatesta has become a go-to for top designers; his lines are featured in 13 showrooms in the United States and one in Canada. He's proud of the fact that all his designs start and finish in Stevensville, where his factory has expanded to three huge spaces in an office park just across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. "We do everything here," Iatesta says. "The raw material comes in, and the finished product goes out."

David Iatesta | 410.604.0360 | davidiatesta.com



David Iatesta and his beloved rescue beagle, Sparky, pose on a pile of driftwood from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, which serve as inspiration for the Driftwood finishes on his new furniture.



With the American and Georgian flags hanging above, Tea Okropiridze, her husband George Tkabladze, Mitchell Osman, and Erick Osman stand in their Herndon, VA, shop, their furniture designs interspersed with George's sculpture.

Photograph by Lydia Cutter

ART WOODSTONE STUDIO

First of all, Art Woodstone is not a person. "He" represents four artists who came together to make and restore fine hardwood furniture as a day job to support their art habits, which range from sculpture to textile weaving to collage on glass to painting and etching on wood.

"It was all about art. The only reason we met each other was art," says George Tkabladze, a Georgian who met brothers Erick and Mitchell Osman through mutual friends while he was in the United States on art

grants. Hence, "Art" is the first name of the business. Wood and stone are the materials they use to create custom furniture, which has become a favorite of local designers.

The Osman brothers have a long history with furniture, as their parents ran a Furniture Medic franchise when they were growing up in Herndon, VA, and their father had a complete wood shop full of tools in the basement. That basement, in fact, is where Art Woodstone was founded before

the group could afford its own space. Erick and Mitchell continue to operate the franchise as an extra source of revenue, and in the process, they've learned how and why cheaply made furniture tends to fall apart.

"If you spend money on [high quality] furniture, it's going to cost you less in the long run," Erick Osman says. Having a relationship with the person who makes your furniture is also valuable, he adds. "People still call and ask for Mr. Woodstone."

Art Woodstone Studio | 571.323.2248 | artwoodstonestudio.com

HARRIS RUBIN

No one calls Harris Rubin "Harris." He was named after his grandfather, but his parents always called him Rick, after Humphrey Bogart's character in *Casablanca*, their favorite movie.

Here's looking at Rick, who was raised in Bethesda, MD, and ultimately started his custom furniture business in Brooklyn, NY, in 1990 but relocated closer to home in Baltimore in 2002.

Rubin specializes in contemporary metalwork pieces, such as tables and consoles, but his four-person shop also does beautiful work with wood. In addition, their mosaic-topped tables are fabricated with glass tile; they cut and sand each tiny piece from large plates they purchase in every imaginable color.

"Every piece is made to order. Everything can be geared for what [customers] want," Rubin says, adding that they take orders from retail customers in addition to the trade.

Rubin never went to art school. After majoring in political science and studio art at Bowdoin College, he trained the old-fashioned way, as an apprentice to various sculptors and furniture makers in New York, Italy, and Spain. To pay the bills, he started doing work for designers and architects, and that's how his custom business was born. Now, he mentors young art students in his own studio. "I love doing that, because that's how I learned," he says. **ws**

Harris Rubin | 410.426.0062 | harrisrubin.com

Photograph by Anne Gummerson



Left to right: Jack Volker, the primary metalwork artisan; Rande Greenwald, a mosaic specialist; Bryan Quante, who does metalwork and finishing; and the designer behind it all, Harris "Rick" Rubin.