

MADE IN THE USA



AMERICA'S TOP FURNITURE MAKERS ARE HARD TO BEAT WHEN IT COMES TO EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN, BUILD AND COMFORT. CAVIT&CO FOUNDER DEBBIE CAVIT SHARES SOME FAVOURITE BRANDS WITH MICHAL MCKAY.



In her book *Timeless Luxury*, Debbie Cavit focuses on what makes a brand stand out in a field filled with furniture wannabes. Such qualities as texture, craftsmanship, comfort and, of course, design have been her benchmarks since she started Cavit&Co more than 25 years ago. Her preference has always been to create warm, inviting homes that afford a relaxing atmosphere in a comfortable, elegant environment. And when she noticed a definite movement away from the very popular French Provincial style of the mid 1990s, her search unveiled an American company called Baker Furniture.

Baker made pieces from sycamore or mahogany, with clean, refined lines, elegant hardware and superb craftsmanship in the upholstery. Along with its sister company, McGuire Furniture, the two brands kindled her appreciation for the excellent workmanship to be found in the United States and created an enduring admiration for its leading furniture brands. Sifted from a lengthy list of global manufacturers and designers whose work inhabits Cavit&Co showrooms, here are some standout American names:

BAKER

In 1890 Dutch-born Siebe Baker founded an interior woodwork and door company near Grand Rapids, Michigan. From such beginnings, the company has established an international reputation as one of the most innovative brands in the business. Sister companies McGuire Furniture and Milling Road were introduced along the way, further enhancing the group's impeccable reputation.

Baker is recognised for the quality of its workmanship and design excellence. Bedroom furniture from stage designer Joseph Urban, a modernist selection by Kem Weber (which led to the debut of the movement in the US) and a reproduction programme based on mainly English provincial furniture but crafted by European experts, cemented Baker's place among industry leaders. Chinese Modern, art deco, Danish Modern and Asian designs followed.

Top designers came onboard as consultants who contributed unique collections under the Baker umbrella. John Saladino and Barbara Barry (known for her Hollywood glamour style) were the first. Other design luminaries followed, including Laura Kirar, Jacques Garcia, Tony Duquette and Andrew Arbus. Latest in this line-up is esteemed French architect and designer Jean-Louis Deniot, who has crafted an 80-piece collection including furnishings, accessories, lighting and upholstery inspired by 20th-century furniture and formal, 'aristocratic' interiors.

MCGUIRE

Known as the champion of 'California Casual' with a relaxed, unpretentious yet still elegant modernity, the label was launched in San Francisco by John and Elinor McGuire around 65 years ago. Their goal was to "reinterpret natural materials into objects of perfect proportion and design" and today the company continues to "elevate craft to an art form that reflects today's new definition of luxury, comfort and design".

Nature was and is its platform and McGuire's indoor and outdoor pieces are formed from a fusion of materials such as rattan, rawhide, bamboo, teak, leather and bronze, with the unique use of pattern and texture providing a major point of difference. Simplicity combines with authenticity in quality handcrafted products with a heritage style. Lately, designers such as Barbara Barry, Jacques Garcia, Bill Sofield and Thomas Pheasant have refined that casual approach with their own contributions. The latest collection includes 36 pieces from Steven Volpe – who acknowledges the McGuire family for inspiring his design aesthetic – using rattan, rawhide and cane (deemed classics of tomorrow). A lighting collection by Jonathan Browning adds to the easy mix, in which he combines the signature McGuire Danish with glass, steel and brass and an unglazed white bisque porcelain. Craftsmanship at its zenith.

MILLING ROAD

Baker started Milling Road when it acquired the Grand Rapids Chair Co in the 1950s. The aim? To produce an assortment of simpler, less costly furniture. Revamped in 1990, in 2015 Baker relaunched Milling Road as a stand-alone brand with a fresh philosophy. It debuted with a new collection by Kara Mann, a designer of international repute and an influential style maker whose designs can be seen in the pages of *Elle Décor*, *The New York Times* and *House Beautiful* among other publications. At High Point Market, one of the largest international furniture expos in the world, a collection of 45 statement pieces reflected Mann's edgy yet sophisticated style. She was the first in a series of guest designers who now lend their creativity to the Milling Road portfolio.

This move was part of the Baker strategy to confront the fast-changing home furnishing landscape while allowing the parent company to remain true to a heritage rooted in design, craftsmanship and exquisite detail. Inventive, stylish and casually sophisticated, the new Kara Mann range meshes with the Baker image of urbane and sumptuous design. It also offers design enthusiasts customisable options with 100 types of fabrics and finishes, all delivered within a short timeframe.

BOLIER

Bolier is a fairly new addition to the American furniture scene. Founded in 2004, its ethos is 'luxurious simplicity'. The finest materials and traditional craft techniques create furnishings that are informed by the past yet designed for a modern lifestyle.

Comfort is the cornerstone, based on clean lines and versatility within an ever-changing kaleidoscope of interiors. The brand is informed by collaborations with the world's best designers alongside a commitment to sustainability. Names to be found in its collections are John Black, Michael Vanderbijl and Dakota Jackson – all world-renowned designers. 'Classic meets casual' might best describe the Bolier brand.

VERELLEN

Verellen is a brand tailor-made for relaxation. Sumptuous sofas and armchairs are its trademark – and this is what seduced Debbie Cavit. Exhausted from the toil of traipsing the endless aisles of High Point Market, she fell into a huge four-seater sofa and could not believe the comfort. It was the Camille, created by Belgian émigrés Tom and Sabine Verellen, the first piece from the duo and the platform for an upholstery collection sought after by top interior designers. Together they brought a love of casual design from their birthplace, yet they were captivated by the exquisite volume and quality of American upholstery. A base of eight-way tied springs within their chairs and sofas guarantee supreme comfort, while handcraftsmanship, sustainable timber, recycled metal coils and packaging and soya-based foam cushions are all part of their eco-conscious doctrine. Distinctive details such as elegance, authenticity and superb upholstery achieve timeless sophistication.

RALPH LAUREN HOME

Debbie Cavit had admired the Ralph Lauren brand for at least 10 years before she made her first approach. They had not approved a Ralph Lauren agency internationally for two years. Her persistence paid off. Within 24 hours of receiving her proposal, the brand was hers. As anyone in the design world knows, the name Ralph Lauren is synonymous with American lifestyle. As the first American fashion designer to launch a furniture brand, Lauren's home collections include two new ranges each year and the comprehensive portfolio of beautifully handcrafted products also encompasses lighting, textiles, floor coverings and accessories, allowing a truly cohesive furnishing style. An English country house sensibility informs the Ralph Lauren Home brand: sophisticated, timeless and universally chic.



Milling Road



Ralph Lauren



Kelly Wearstler

..... KELLY WEARSTLER

Sought after by the style makers of America (and Europe), Kelly Wearstler has an originality pretty well unmatched by her contemporaries. Distinctive, sophisticated and at times offbeat, her designs cover everything from lighting, furniture and rugs to wall coverings, tiles, fine china, jewellery, objets d'art and fine china. The juxtaposition of raw with refined gives an edginess which has quite literally revolutionised modern American interior design. Suffice to say her appeal reaches out to an A-list clientele from the film and music industries. Her own bespoke furniture collection is typical of her style, but her collaborations with some of the top brands in the world of interiors make her a force to be reckoned with in the luxury market. Four coffee-table books have earned her a place in the *Los Angeles Times* bestseller list and added to her international presence.

..... ALFONSO MARINA

A Mexican artist who established his name in 1971, Alfonso Marina produces exquisite, highly elaborate designs in handcrafted wood furniture. Sustainable plantations supply his wood and he imports a wide variety of additional materials from around the world. Veneer, marquetry and intricate pieces utilising hand-lathed or -carved details are inlaid with pieces of bone, tortoiseshell or metal. The overall effect is a combination of antique with a warm patina. Such graceful pieces sit comfortably within a modern or classical setting unrestricted by period or provenance. His expertise extends to painting pieces with decorative elements, a traditional process in which he forges different metals, including iron, to produce authentic, freestyle designs: covetable objects of real beauty to inspire any interior.

..... VISUAL COMFORT LIGHTING

The name says it all. Based in Houston, Texas, this innovative company is renowned for its signature designer lighting. By collaborating with some of the most influential designers – such as Ralph Lauren, Barbara Barry, Aerin Lauder and Alexa Hampton – pieces range from table lamps through to wall sconces, stunning chandeliers and alluring outdoor illuminators. Designs cover the gamut from vintage-modern to neoclassical. By incorporating natural materials such as metal, ceramics, parchment papers, silks and linens, this diverse collection utilises distinctive hand-applied finishes in a range of designs that symbolise perfect style and function.

..... ROBERT KUO

Born in Beijing, Robert Kuo moved with his family to Taiwan where his father, an art professor and Chinese watercolour painter, opened a cloisonné atelier. Robert became his apprentice and acquired hands-on training in the art of cloisonné, from preparing copper bases to enamelling and firing the kilns. During this time he visited the United States and became convinced the American environment was what he needed both personally and professionally. In 1973 he opened his own cloisonné studio in Beverly Hills. By incorporating the influences of art nouveau and art deco, he introduced a Chinese tradition to a whole new audience. Shifting later from cloisonné to repoussé (the art of hammering decorative relief onto metal) and Chinese lacquer, his handcrafted treasures come in such organic forms as rock crystal base lamps or coloured Peking glass that reflect semiprecious stones. And his collections of cloisonné lighting for McGuire and Baker are elegance personified; a juxtaposition of peace and excitement and a brilliant way of spreading the light. ▣

