

CALIFORNIA HOMES

THE MAGAZINE OF ARCHITECTURE
THE ARTS & DISTINCTIVE DESIGN

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Large Pavilion VI Sofa in an idyllic summer setting. The Hepplewhite Demi-Lune Side Table with Adams Top. Hands of a craftsman in the McKinnon and Harris workshop in Virginia.

The duo was determined to create timeless furniture that showcased high design, and in 1991 they established their furniture company. When it came to choosing a name for their company it seemed fitting to pay homage to their grandmothers. They aptly settled on McKinnon and Harris, a combination of the surnames of their grandmothers. After 23 years of business, the Massies—with the help of their skilled craftsmen and women—have taken their passion project and parlayed it into an international success.

Anne and Will attribute their childhood years in Lynchburg, Virginia to their eventual interest in estate furniture design. Visits to museums, art shows and antique shops with their parents helped garner their

appreciation for treasured goods. In the same way that heirlooms are passed down through generations with reverence, the Massies set out to produce outdoor furniture to stand the test of time.

“There is such a disposable mentality with furniture put outdoors,” remarks Anne, “that we wanted to do something that had a real permanence to it, something that would be enduring.”

After a period of trial and error, Anne and Will discovered that aluminum would be the best and most physically enduring material with which to craft their furniture, as aluminum does not rust. With hometown roots and a wealth of fine craftsmanship firmly planted in Virginia, it made perfect sense to conduct all production of

their furniture in Scott’s Addison, a neighborhood of Richmond filled with highly skilled artisans.

The McKinnon and Harris employees are unquestionably the heart and soul of the business and are fondly considered members of Anne and Will’s extended family. The highly skilled team covers all ends of the artistic spectrum, from metalworkers to welders to finishers to calligraphers. Each year, they make about 2,000 pieces of aluminum furniture, and at least ten people work on each piece for a total of about forty hours from start to finish. Because every piece is handmade, delivery time is set around twelve weeks. And while a part of the design world has become accustomed to overnight ship dates and mass-produced furniture, McKinnon and Harris’ numerous customers validate that there still exists an appreciation for goods made in small production.

Every step of the process, from sculpting to packaging, is done with extreme precision. Blair Watson, the head of packaging, is a fine arts graduate with a penchant for meticulousness. She is responsible for measuring each box from end to end, writing the labels in calligraphy, fastening the labels just so, and implementing other precise touches.

“Some of the guys give me grief, saying I don’t have to be so particular,” she says, “but my philosophy is that the presentation matters.”

The truly remarkable aspect of McKinnon and Harris’ business is that they have succeeded in offering such a unique type of handcrafted service on an international scale. With showrooms in New York, London, and a flagship in Los Angeles, their visibility has allowed them to make a profound impact on the interior design community. Accomplishments and recognition aside, for Anne and Will Massie the true reward will always exist in creating outdoor furniture worthy of becoming cherished heirlooms for families and their future generations.

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Notebook

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Art & Craft

A Brother and Sister With a Heritage of Treasured Design Create Outdoor Furniture to Last a Lifetime

BY NATALIE WAY

FOR ANNE AND WILL MASSIE, the sweet nostalgia of summers in their grandmothers' gardens inspired them to design landscape outdoor furniture for estates, gardens, and yachts.

"We have all of these memories, all of these attachments to furniture," Will says. "Each piece when we were growing up had belonged to somebody and had a particular story that was connected to it."