

Strand Design

Everyone should work with their spouse. At least, that's what Sharon and Ted Burdett think, and it works well for them. In 2009, they left their respective design careers to open Strand Design in their home town of Chicago. From their studio in the West Loop, they provide product design services for clients, but also craft objects, by hand, from sustainably sourced and locally manufactured materials.



The Burdett's apply their shared modern aesthetic to a range of industrial and household product categories, including furniture, lighting, and accessories. They love the challenge of designing a product that expresses the nature of a material or process. For example, their "Core Table System" is fabricated from locally-sourced white oak. The "Seven" lamp is made from hand-cut veneer, sourced from reclaimed urban lumber.

They're also inspired by looking at existing products with an eye toward improving form and function. Recycled tire rubber adds to the design, as well as the durability of their "Lug Trug" line of storage products.

Inspiration (Really) Close to Home


The Burdett's are the proud new owners of a condo in an iconic 1964 high-rise designed by Bertrand Goldberg. The unique space is providing inspiration to a "surprise" product line they will introduce at the winter 2014 Market which may – or may not – include the perfect cocktail tray; storage solutions for a 500-square foot home; and small accessories that look like they belong in 2014 and 1964 equally.

Design First. Food Second.

Sharon and Ted are "obsessed" with food and love to cook, and may have opened a restaurant if design hadn't taken them in another direction. While Chicago's culinary scene has plenty to offer, they're also happy with campfire eats when camping in Michigan.



Alchemy Goods



Whoever stole Eli Reich's messenger bag in 2003 probably didn't realize that the transgression would result not only in the creation of a company, Alchemy Goods, but also a nationwide "upcycling" initiative.

Reich could not find the perfect replacement bag to carry along on his bicycle rides, so he made his own—out of extra inner tubes lying around his apartment. That first prototype, created on his home sewing machine, caught his friends' interest, and soon orders came in from local bike shops.

In 2004, Alchemy Goods was born, bridging the medieval transformative act of alchemy with the 21st century idea of upcycling, which turns unwanted objects into something of greater value. The company custom manufactures unique bags, wallets, backpacks, tech sleeves, belts and other soft goods from used advertising banners, old seatbelts, and reclaimed inner tubes. To date, Alchemy Goods has recycled 400,000 inner tubes, keeping them from the landfills.

Eli works on products with staff designer, Margaret Chin and other key staff members. The team is not only challenged by trying to upcycle as much material as possible, but also by working with tubes which aren't flat, and are only available in small dimensions. Their most successful results include the top-selling "eco vegan" Franklin Wallet, the Elliott Toiletry Bag, the Pike messenger bag, and the Mercer mini iPad shoulder bag.

Some 325 retailers – specialty stores, gift shops, university stores, outdoor stores and bike shops – carry "Ag" products. Look for the debut of several new bag and wallet styles at the winter 2014 edition of NY NOW™, inspired by the company's cycling customers in urban markets. New messenger-style bag and backpacks are simple, clean and European in design.

Seattle Central


The "right product in the right place at the right time" convinced Eli to base his company in the historic SODO district of his "progressive" home town of Seattle. Alchemy Goods now directly employs 14 local residents. Eli enjoys being out in the city on his daily bicycle commute, or on weekends when he's hiking or playing Ultimate Frisbee with friends.

Tiny Numbers Tell Big Story

Each Alchemy Goods bag has a small number stitched in the upper right corner. The tiny number represents the bigger picture -- the percent of upcycled material that goes into each product.



Hand in Hand



Both Courtney Apple and her husband Bill Glaab knew they had to do more. The Philadelphia-based couple met in college, then followed respective careers in photography and financial services. The pursuit of personal fulfillment, as well as a yearning to do good in the world, inspired them to start Hand in Hand in 2011.

Hand in Hand was designed to offer more than just scented candles, bath salts, and bar soap. For every bar of soap purchased, the company donates a bar – as well as one month of clean water – to people in developing countries, primarily Haiti. Millions of children die each year due to illnesses, which could easily be prevented by hand washing and clean water.

“The goal was to come up with a household product people use every day, which had the power to save lives. The best part of our job is being able to give back,” says Bill.

Courtney is the company’s chief visionary, while Bill handles the business operations. The two are, admittedly, complete opposites, except when it comes to changing the world. They’ve just returned from the mountainside village of Onaville, Haiti, where they built the area’s first well. It will provide clean water for more than 240 families, some of which had to walk nearly ten miles for water every day.

A Cleaner Future

Hand in Hand plans to release a number of new products in the near future. Among its newest is a line of candles, made from 100% USA-sourced, GMO-free soy wax. All products are offered in these succulent scents: orange blossom, white tea, lavender, rose water, sea salt, wildflower, and fern.

Good for the Planet, Too

Bill and Courtney’s mission doesn’t end with clean water. Every product sold also saves 50-square feet of rainforest. These “social entrepreneurs” use natural ingredients, harvested and grown in an environmentally-friendly way. One thing you won’t find in their soap: palm oil. High demand for palm oil has resulted in rapid clearing of tropical rainforests.



Matouk

Despite his family's 84-year history designing and manufacturing some of the world's best-made linens, George Matouk Jr. is not content to rest on the countless laurels earned by Matouk, the company now in his hands.

In 1929, John Matouk brought what he learned about fine linens from Italy to New York, and focused on meeting a demand for exquisite fabrics and intricate hand work. Fast forward to 2013, and Matouk is blending those upscale touches into beautiful products people can use in their daily lives.

Behind its newest designs are Annie Graham, product development and design manager, and Lulu de Kwiatkowski, a talented artist who takes inspiration from her world travels and childhood memories. "Lulu renders amazing organic and graphic motifs that we feel really work with the core Matouk aesthetic, and resonate with our customer," notes Matouk.

Three generations of Matouk leadership have seen more than design evolution. In 1985, George Matouk Sr. moved the company from Manhattan to Fall River, Massachusetts, drawn by its tradition of American textile production, and a community of skilled craftspeople. The current headquarters are located in a state-of-the-art solar energy building that produces over 35% of the electricity required for operations.

A Mediterranean Mood

Among the new Matouk products debuting at NY NOW™ in February: a new "Lulu DK for Matouk" bedding collection inspired by the Mediterranean. Lulu, who spends her summers in Porto Ercole, Italy, has captured the idea of a garden with a feeling of the European seaside.



Bursting at the Seams

When Matouk moved into its current Fall River facility in 2005, George didn't realize that less than a decade later, it would grow beyond the 47,000-square foot space. A major expansion has begun to double the facility's size. The plan also calls for adding 45 new jobs, on top of the existing staff of 90.