



NOVEMBER 2004

# ELEMENTS OF LIVING

RESOURCES FOR RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

## CUSTOM

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### 1. RICHARD WRIGHTMAN

*Chatwin Chair.* Richard Wrightman learned his craft while working for an architectural fabrications firm. Two years ago, he introduced a line of furniture inspired by the classic British colonial officer's chair, a utilitarian piece of furniture with elegance to spare. The collection now consists of 12 pieces, and he continues to add to it. Wrightman makes each piece to order in his Long Island City, NY, workshop, and offers full customization. His other, equally impressive line of furniture (inspired by mid-twentieth-century modern designs) can also be customized. **44-01 11th Street, Long Island City, New York 11101, 646-382-4904, [www.rwrightmandesign.com](http://www.rwrightmandesign.com)**

### 2. JACOB MARKS

*Easy Chair.* After graduating from Colorado College with a history degree, Jacob Marks went to work for a cabinetmaker in San Francisco and soon realized that he wanted to make contemporary furniture of his own. So, three years ago, he set up shop in North Carolina, where about 80 percent of his hand-crafted work is by commission. He also has a line of

furniture called Wishbone, which is produced to order and can be fully customized. "Some use the pieces in Wishbone as a springboard to other designs and others order as is," says Marks. "The furniture is suited for collective or individual uses, in public or private spaces."

**3315 Highway 54 West, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, 919-412-0260 [www.theconversation.us](http://www.theconversation.us)**

### 3. SPEKE KLEIN

*Mary Chair.* Run by Robin Speke and Thomas Klein, graduates of the now-defunct design school Parnham College, Speke Klein offers full customization of its furniture line and accepts new commissions. The partners apply time-tested furniture-building techniques to contemporary designs, and their rigor earned them this year's International Contemporary Furniture Fair's Editor's Craftsmanship award—no small feat for a company that just turned five. All products are built in Speke Klein's Ontario, Canada, facility and are available through its showroom and website, as well as 10 US retailers. **800-806-3006, [www.spekeklein.com](http://www.spekeklein.com)**



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## Design Notes

Today, we're taller and wider than our ancestors were, so sitting in antique chairs for long stretches can be uncomfortable. As a result, custom-built chairs—especially dining chairs—have become very popular in recent years. To meet the needs of consumers who demand chairs sized to fit their body types, designers often have reproduction chairs made larger than the originals.

“Matching upholstery pieces create stagnant design. I am a firm believer in mixing old with new pieces.” — Barclay Butera



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Huniford furniture is sold through the Dwellings showroom and website. **Dwellings, 30 East 67th Street, New York, NY 10021, 800-95-DECOR, [www.dwellingshome.com](http://www.dwellingshome.com)**

**4. BILLY BALDWIN STUDIO**  
*Slipper Lounge Chair.*  
Legendary designer Billy Baldwin designed one retail line of timeless upholstered furniture and tables during his career, the rights to which now belong to Ventry, a custom-furniture shop in Locust, NJ. Both the Baldwin line and the

others carried by Ventry are made to order. “We are a fully custom shop,” says owner Susan Dempsey. “If it can be done, we will do it.” Ventry’s products are sold through showrooms across the US and through the company website. **732-872-7300, [www.BillyBaldwinStudio.com](http://www.BillyBaldwinStudio.com)**

## Design Notes

If the 70s and 80s were about furniture sets and matching upholstery, the past decade-and-a-half have thankfully seen a return to eclectic mix-and-match furnishings. “Matched upholstery pieces create stagnant design,” says Barclay Butera. “I am a firm believer in mixing old with new pieces. It’s important to allow yourself to keep things that mean something to you while adding something novel and hip.” The lesson? Make your furniture look like it has been collected over generations—including your own.