

interiors[®]



MARK BOONE
 MODERN ROOTS

TEXT: MARY ORE
 PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM FROST



"I'm using a lot of the materials we used forty years ago, but using them in a totally different way," says Mark Boone, who bought Los Angeles-based Mimi London, Inc., from its visionary founder—and his mentor—18 years ago. "I'm more edited in my eye than I was, and that comes with exposure and age and wisdom, so I tend to think more reductively than decoratively." With some 300 pieces in the collection and seven showrooms around the country, the company continues to tap into a founding value that has finally come of age. "Environmental sensitivity is the very pillar of what our company is about," Boone says.

Boone's sculptural, sophisticated designs revel in the organic qualities of the materials. The star-shaped knot hole in a rounded spruce base becomes a lamp's signature feature. A spruce "coin" is sanded and split to create a pair of side tables that are named, with Boone's characteristic sly wit, for the Panama Canal. Walnut stumps with uncanny human forms are reimagined as "Sumo" tables.





All the wood is dead-stand, naturally fallen or reclaimed. "We'll come upon a cache of materials and go from there," Boone explains. "I ask, 'What can I do with that material; what are its unique characteristics?'" The discovery of uprooted trees from a 100-year-old walnut orchard in Santa Barbara, which was being converted into a vineyard and a lima bean field, led to a selection of richly burlled, naturally edged pieces. "One day that will run out. There's a finite quality to what we do that's both exciting and terrifying."

To be a successful designer requires an innovative vision, business savvy, heaps of energy and, preferably, as in Boone's case, a gracious manner, perhaps owing to his upbringing in Virginia. "I wear a lot of hats," says the designer, "running the showroom business, heading up an interior design firm and designing an entire furniture collection." During travels to his showrooms, he meets with local designers. "A designer will say to me, 'Gosh, I wish you had a new bed,' and I'll say, 'I will if you want one,'" Boone notes. Many of the pieces he creates for private clients—the tech entrepreneurs and captains of industry for whom he designs interiors from Aspen to Palm Springs—end up in the collection, too.

While his work has a distinctly contemporary look, "I draw a lot from very traditional forms," he says. "I buy antiques from Scotland or Belgium and reproduce those as they would have been done in the 18th century, while creating my own spin." Charmed by a chair that originated on Scotland's Orkney Islands hundreds of years ago, he became intent on reinventing it on a larger scale. He bought bales of sea grass for his fabricators to figure out just how the backs were hand-lashed, a labor-intensive process. ■ *Mimi London, Inc.*, 310 855 2567, mimilondon.com; *Mark Boone, Inc.*, 310 855 2567, markbooneinc.com

