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# NOTEBOOK

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## Ted Boerner

A Veteran Of Theatrical Design,  
His Furniture Reflects Drama  
And Passion And Is  
Worldly And Informed

BY WILL HAMILTON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE BURNS





A veteran of theatrical set design, Ted Boerner's furniture reflects the sense of drama and passion that is intrinsic to that world. His time in the theater ensured that Boerner's knowledge of design was worldly and informed, and that his creations would be emotive – an unmistakable and undeniable trait of his furnishings. Boerner has created pieces that exemplify this approach for a range of markets, from medium range prêt-à-porter furniture to high-end, made-to-order couture work. From his work for Henry Hall, Conde House, Brownstone and Design Within Reach to his eponymous Ted Boerner collection, the common threads of sophistication, balance, and comfort run throughout Boerner's designs.

That feeling of balance and sincerity of design is clearly present in Boerner's latest creation, the Commune Collection, which makes its debut in February. The collection is comprised of the Commune Table and Commune Server, complimentary pieces that speak to one another while avoiding the pitfall of an overly synonymous aesthetic. The table comes in three "breathing" shapes inspired by the art of Ellsworth Kelly – Rectangle, Square, and Round – and features a delicate veneer. The front of the server (on which Boerner is seated on the previous page) is crenulated, leading to integrated handles that emerge organically from the façade. Both pieces are constructed from FSC-certified wood.

Boerner spent time during his early years in the Wisconsin log cabin home of his grandparents, and it was here that his vision for what furniture could be first took shape. His grandfather was an artist, and had created a modern studio within the confines of the traditional walls. A modern staircase led from one floor to the next, and the walls fashioned from immense old-growth trees enclosed chairs fashioned by Eames. It is certainly not difficult to see the influence of this dichotomous home in Boerner's own work.

Boerner is an artist at combining contemporary aesthetics with traditional materials – a hallmark clearly rooted in the time spent with his grandparents, and in that which he lightheartedly calls his "Gemini duality" – and designs with what he calls "the full story" in mind. As a result of his theater work, Boerner is attentive to the bigger picture, and mindful of the importance of context: he designs by imagining the final piece as it will be in a room, paired with the user, rather than as an entity unto itself, devoid of context. Beginning with words that he wants to evoke, Boerner sketches on a roll of paper, attempting to capture the essence of the piece. "Eventually," he says, "something sticks."

With this exceptional new collection, it's clear that Boerner's designs – and he himself – will stick around for many years to come.



notebook

TED BOERNER

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Clockwise from top left: the iconic Lex Chair, which received much acclaim in 2008; the new Commune Dining Table, making its debut at Design San Francisco in February, features an exquisite "propeller" veneer and branching legs - the chairs shown are the Portal, also debuting at Design San Francisco; the armless Curved Intermezzo Sofa, a classic of Boerner's collection; the Commune Server, which debuts alongside its companion dining table in February. Background: various original concept sketches by Boerner.

