

Maine Home

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+DESIGN



THE ARCHITECTURE OF A DREAM

Two couples with deep roots in Maine
return to the midcoast



Maine Street Made

"Out of the box" is a phrase that springs to mind when viewing the artful, intelligent interiors—and new Mercantile and Manufacturing line—of Portland's Maine Street Design Co.

688

Congress Street isn't your typical retail storefront. In fact, it isn't a retail storefront at all. Yet this doesn't stop curious onlookers from ogling the stylish displays—and inquiring within about purchasing the products.

It is pretty good advertising for Maine Street Design Co. founder and principal designer, Brett Johnson, whose firm is known for producing interiors with a fresh, contemporary spin on the traditional aesthetic.

Beyond the beautifully staged window lies Johnson's small studio where he and his team conceptualize and plan interior projects for clients from Maine to Florida.

Johnson also uses the studio to showcase his Mercantile and Mfg. collection (not yet available for retail sale) made by skilled artisans, furniture makers, and upholsterers right here in Maine.

"I wanted to create a line of versatile pieces that could singlehandedly update a space while giving a nod to the wonderful heritage of Maine craftsmanship," says Johnson.

Johnson's own heritage includes generations of mariners and a family history of living on the coast of Maine. Fueled by this legacy along with nearly two decades of design experience, Johnson has forged relationships with several multi-generational family businesses who now collaborate in the creation of these Maine-made pieces.

The collection is his interpretation—in scale, texture, and otherwise—of both vintage finds and design influences like Swedish modernism. The Secretary, for example, with its beautifully slim

profile, is an homage to an antique, yet Johnson's addition of modern, hand-finished hardware and its gray color elevate it into a category of its own.

All of the pieces, from the Secretary and Brett chair (a lovely upholstered chair that works as well at a desk as it does in the dining room) to upholstered headboards, nightstands, console tables, beds, and more are made using locally sourced materials and traditional techniques. The pieces are customizable depending on the space and client's preference—Johnson will make design tweaks like raising or lowering, making something wider, changing a surface material, color, you name it.

Johnson is very keen on color in a space and curates a very tightly edited library of fabrics from sources that include the English fabric company Romo (and its six brands), which happened to be visiting Maine Street Design at the same time as our Field Trip. As Johnson thumbed through Romo's new fabric collections, he began to envision future upholstery projects, potential window treatment options, and pillows—all part of his design-service offerings.

Next up on Johnson's to-do list? Happily, the collection will be available soon on Maine Street Design's website. Until then you can pop by 688 Congress Street and have a peek—or make an appointment with Johnson to view the line up close. **PHOTO**



FIELD NOTES:

BRETT JOHNSON'S 3 GO-TO DESIGN TIPS:

1. Don't overlook the final layer of personalization. So often, people get the foundation right but forget to work in art, antiques, or family heirlooms that give a house a sense of history and place.
2. We always honor the light and landscape palettes in our designs. The reflection of what's outside greatly affects how you feel inside; this can be enhanced with well-placed lamps and lighting options.
3. We often paint an entire interior the same color, then work the palettes of each room around that. This creates a feeling of space and fluidness in even the smallest of homes.

1. Brett Johnson, owner/designer of Maine Street Design Co.
2. A collection of vintage books. Johnson's attracted to book covers and appropriate titles for use in interior projects.
3. The Swedish-inspired Secretary and Brett Chairs are part of the Maine Street Mercantile and Manufacturing line. The Mandavilla Prints are by ML Norton Art.
4. A lamp, created by Johnson's good friend at Old Stuff in Belfast. Shade by Michael Rego.
5. The design process starts with a pinboard, shown here, to display fabric samples, photographs, and other details for each room.
6. Johnson and design assistant Lisa Morris share a workspace and pin-up board that showcases memorabilia and inspirations.
7. A collection of glass vessels reminds Johnson of fishing nets.
8. Johnson's library of reference books.



TAKE A FIELD TRIP TO MAINE STREET DESIGN CO. AT 688 CONGRESS STREET IN PORTLAND, OR FIND THEM ONLINE AT MAINESTREETDESIGN.CO.