

THE ARTISAN

DMITRIY & CO.

A secret source for those in the know, this husband-and-wife team turn out handcrafted furniture that combines the fine craftsmanship of old Europe with the smooth style of New York.

BY SARA BLISS | PHOTOS BY JOSH GADDY

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Ask anyone who has undergone a home renovation in New York, and they will tell you that finding the city's foremost design resources is a challenge. "Like the network of top ateliers in Paris, it's an underground culture. You kind of have to be in the know," explains Donna Feldman, who, with her husband David, runs Dmitriy & Co., a Chelsea showroom featuring the pair's custom-made furniture and a smattering of antiques ("Dmitriy" is David's given name). Unlike the city's art or fashion scenes, which make access simple with street-level shops and galleries, the talented upholsterers, craftsmen, seamstresses and pillow-makers that cater to the design community are often hidden in upstairs workrooms throughout the five boroughs. And the fact that designers generally keep their favorite sources a closely guarded secret makes finding them harder still.

In Dmitriy & Co.'s New York showroom, a Sablon sofa — which combines classic proportions and sleek lines — sits next to custom tables with hand-wired solid-walnut and white-glass tops.

➤ *Visit Dmitriy & Co. on Istdibs*



A photograph of three Japanese hair ornaments (kanzashi) displayed on a dark, rustic wooden table. The ornaments are made of metal and have a cup-like shape. The one on the left is light-colored with a mottled texture. The one in the middle is dark and polished. The one on the right is a medium brown color with a textured surface. Each ornament is mounted on a small, dark metal stand. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Dmitriy & Co. is known to top architects and design firms including Robert A.M. Stern, Carrier & Co. and Tom Delavan, but it's also open to members of the public, or at least those intrepid enough to find the showroom, which is secreted away on the second floor of a nondescript building on West 25th Street. After braving a small elevator and passing through a teeny gray vestibule, visitors are rewarded with the sight of a design oasis, populated by a mix of gorgeous furniture as well as such unique items as a 17th-century Italian ebonized mirror and Japanese hair ornaments used as decorative accessories.

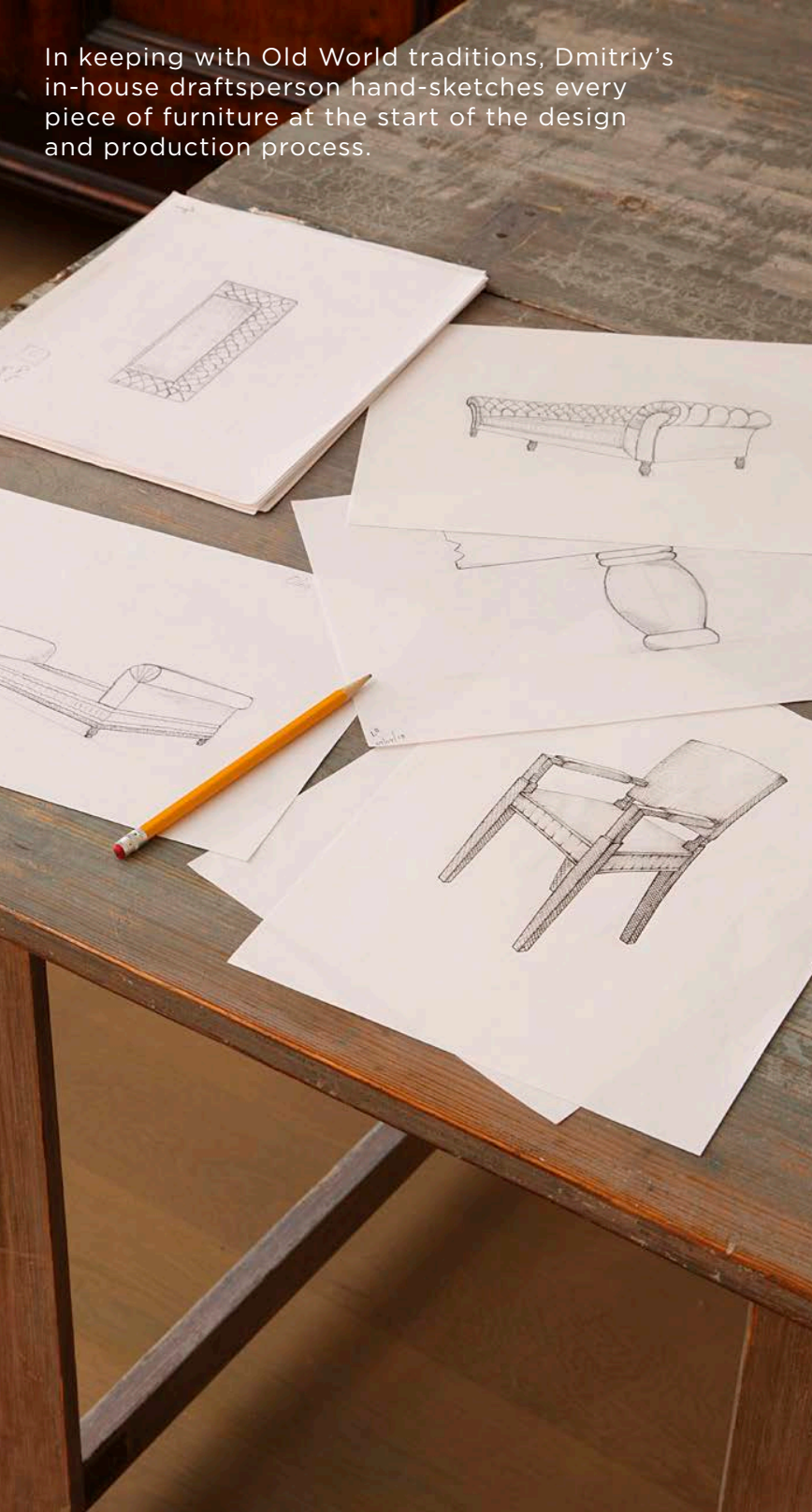
In addition to its bespoke furniture, Dmitriy & Co. offers a selection of antiques from around the globe, including these Japanese hair ornaments, likely dating from the 19th century, atop a French 17th-century walnut table.

A sophisticated, international sense of style is exactly what the Feldmans had in mind when they opened Dmitriy & Co. in 2011. David learned the design trade early, starting at age 17, when he had to quickly take over his family's Lower East Side pillow shop after his father was diagnosed with cancer. He immersed himself in all aspects of the upholstery business and forged relationships with several of the city's top workrooms and designers. "I was cutting, sewing, stuffing, delivering, meeting with clients, answering phones...everything," David recalls.

Five years later, in 2003, he opened Chelsea Workroom, which specialized in custom drapery and upholstery commissions for new and antique pieces. While studying for the LSAT, Donna, by then married to David, began helping out at the Workroom, where she promptly fell in love with the business and opted to join forces with David instead of attending law school. "Handling everything from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European antiques to contemporary furniture showed us exactly what goes into a well-made piece: the quality, the craftsmanship, the attention to detail. We learned what makes furniture last," explains David. "I began compiling a diary in my mind of how I would want to make furniture if we ever started our own line."

Well-suited for a library or bedroom, Dmitriy's Antwerp Library Chair is described by Donna as "generously deep."





In keeping with Old World traditions, Dmitriy's in-house draftsman hand-sketches every piece of furniture at the start of the design and production process.

“We wanted to reinterpret classic lines to be a little bit slimmer and sleeker, but not cold. We wanted some soul there.”

That mental diary eventually translated into Dmitriy & Co., which the Feldmans launched together, with David mostly focused on the creative end and Donna the business. The company's raison d'être was to address a gap they perceived in the market between ultra-contemporary designs and traditional pieces. “We wanted to reinterpret classic lines to be a little bit slimmer and sleeker, but not cold. We wanted some soul there,” says Donna. The couple takes frequent trips to Europe, and Dmitriy & Co. pieces incorporate the best elements of Old World

French, Belgian and English design and craftsmanship while exuding a New York sense of sophistication and cool. (Donna and David are, after all, Brooklyn natives.) To wit: The sleek-lined Seine sofa, which is more than nine feet long, would add a dose of contemporary refinement to a loft space, while the Dmitriy Daybed, featuring French mattress stitching and prominent rolled arms, would look at home in a classic six. “Mattress stitching has always been seen as a bit informal, a more relaxed, bohemian type of detail,” explains Donna. “But we have reinterpreted it to be very sophisticated and chic.”

In addition to aiming for the visually gorgeous, the Feldmans aspire to create furniture that is beyond comfortable, going so far as to measure their clients' personal proportions to ensure the custom furniture is the perfect fit. "It's about creating that balance between having a really comfortable seat and a beautiful piece," says Donna, which they achieve with such traditional practices as eight-way hand-tied springs, cotton-jute webbing and horsehair padding. "We use some of the same techniques and materials that were used two-hundred years ago," explains David. "But we've combined that with today's technologies and materials."

On the following pages we take a closer look at the steps that go into constructing "tomorrow's antiques," as Donna describes their pieces. It's a labor-intensive process that takes approximately three months per piece and is all performed by hand in their Manhattan workroom.

The couple compares the process of creating their furniture to the making of a bespoke suit.





STEP ONE

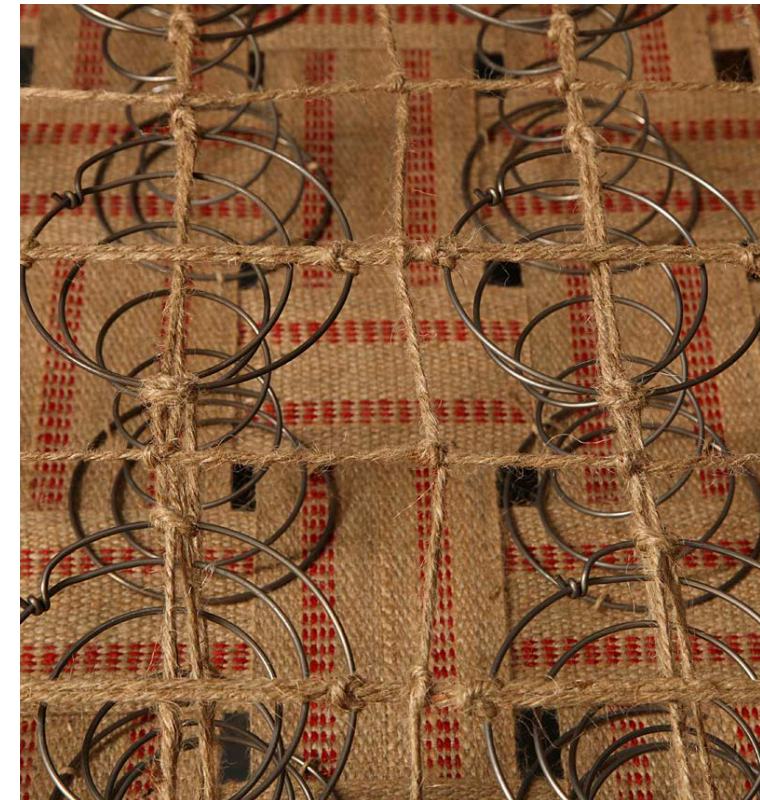
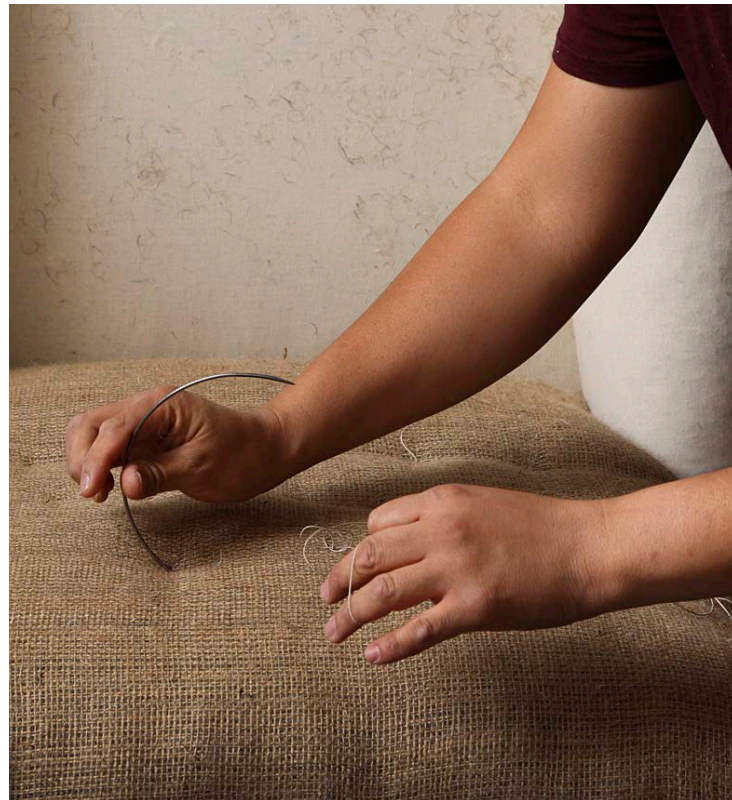
Fashioning the Frame

Each piece starts with a kiln-dried maple frame that is double doweled (connecting one section of the frame with another via round wooden pegs) and hand-jointed for additional durability. “We only use maple,” explains David. “It lends strength and doesn’t warp.” The frame pictured here will go on to be Dmitriy’s Antwerp Library Chair (shown on page four).

STEP TWO

Springs and Things

“If you were to look inside furniture from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made in England, Italy and France, you would see the same exact webbing, springs and twine that we use in Dmitriy & Co. furniture,” explains David. Cotton jute webbing is woven back and forth across the frame to serve as support for the springs. Each metal coil is sewn to the webbing and hand-tied to the coil next to it. Each row of coils is tied front to back, side to side, and diagonally two ways, for support. To create give and firmness in different places, springs are varying heights and are tied at different levels. “In the seat, they are of a heavier gauge in the first few front rows, and get looser closer to the back of the seat, so you sink in a bit more when you sit,” explains Donna. A layer of natural burlap is then placed over the springs and hand-sewn using a curved needle to hold the fabric in place.





STEP THREE

Fill It Up

When it comes to padding the body of a chair or sofa, “the type of filling plays a key role in determining the comfort of the seats, backs and arms as well as influencing the shape of a piece,” explains Donna. Dmitriy offers three fill options for padding: horsehair, foam or its patented combination of foam and horsehair called the Fair System. The horsehair padding shown here is covered with burlap and then covered in glazed cotton or muslin that is nailed to the frame.

STEP FOUR

Fabric Finish



Seat cushions are hand-stuffed with white goose down or foam-wrapped down and then covered with muslin. Fabric is hand-cut and initially placed with tacks, then adjusted to make sure there is a tight and symmetrical application of fabric throughout and that patterns align. The fabric is then hand-sewn into place and attached to the frame with French nails. Upholstery details like welts, trims and skirts or mattress stitching, top stitching, pleating and tufting is all done by hand. Seams and corners are hand-sewn and closed to an absolutely perfect finish.



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