

TOP OF THE LINE

Nobody oversees more renovations than America's leading designers. Here, a roundup of their favorite craftsmen and artisans, the ones they turn to time after time



A pastoral mural by Franklin Tartaglione.



A work in progress at Tartaglione's Ghent, New York, studio.

DECORATIVE PAINTING

FRANKLIN TARTAGLIONE For a house in Maine, he painted a dining room mural of a dark pine forest. For Princess Maria Christina of the Netherlands, he covered the ceilings of two drawing rooms with dramatic clouds. Tartaglione—who splits his time between studios in Brooklyn and Ghent, New York—studied painting and printmaking at the Pratt Institute in New York before apprenticing to renowned decorative painter Robert Jackson. He founded his own firm 27 years ago and specializes in the entire range of decorative painting, all executed in eco-friendly water-based acrylic and latex paints. 917-297-2003; franklintartaglione.com.

JEFFERSON MILES A former scenic artist for film and television, this Los Angeles-based painter creates murals and trompe l'oeil for many decorators, including Peter Dunham and Mary McDonald. 323-497-1017; jeffersonmiles.com.

BOB CHRISTIAN DECORATIVE ART Designer Suzanne Rheinstein relies on this Savannah, Georgia-based decorative painter to create delicate murals rooted in classical motifs. 912-234-1960; bobchristiandecorativeart.com.

NICOLAS PASQUALE VALLE This L.A.-based painter conjures decorative effects for designers like Paul Fortune. 213-200-6937; www.nicvalle.com.

WOODWORK & CABINETRY

HULL HISTORICAL Brent Hull's Fort Worth, Texas, firm produces accurate period millwork, from paneling and moldings to staircases, mantels, furniture, and, of course, cabinetry—much of it made by hand—with an emphasis on English, French, Gothic, and Colonial styles. Hull, the author of *Historic Millwork*, serves such Lone Star designers as Justin Seitz, who has used Hull for both residential remodeling and new construction projects. “You name it and Brent can do it,” says Seitz. “He has really brought fine historical trim work and hand carving to our neck of the woods.” Hull Historical is the exclusive millwork provider for the Winterthur Museum in Delaware. 817-332-1495; hullhistorical.com.

ATELIER VIOLLET This all-bespoke Brooklyn manufacturer specializing in marquetry was established in 1986 by Jean-Paul Viollet, a seventh-generation descendant of the man who created the Viollet family's original company in France in 1836. The workshop has served such *crème de la crème* designers as Jacques Grange, Victoria Hagan, David Kleinberg, Peter Marino, and Stephen Sills. 718-782-1727; atelierviollet.com.

ANTONIO'S ANTIQUES A standard-bearer in the world of restoration and fine custom work, where everything is hand-made, Antonio's has been in business in San Francisco for more than 50 years. “Antonio's works with a lot of unusual materials,” says James Hunter, one of the Wiseman Group's three principal designers. “They recently did a fabulous parchment top for a metal table for us.” 415-781-1737; antoniosantiques.com.



French-style paneling and moldings by Hull Historical.



Hull Historical's Federal-style arches and pilasters.

METALWORK & FABRICATION

FERRA DESIGNS Founded in 1989 by Robert Ferraroni, this studio, located in the redeveloped Brooklyn Navy Yard, has gained a well-earned reputation for excellence in techniques that range from classic blacksmithing to the latest in water-jet cutting—and everything is done in-house. Many on staff have industrial-design degrees, and they artfully produce complex staircases and railings, decorative screens, furniture, fireplaces, and more. “They have a deep understanding of the materials, and apply the same attention to detail and refinement to both architectural metalwork and freestanding pieces,” says Lee F. Mindel of Shelton, Mindel & Associates, one of Ferra's many high-profile design clients. 718-852-8629; ferradesigns.com.

LES MÉTALLIERS CHAMPENOIS French-trained artisan Jean Wiart came to the U.S. in 1984 to work on the Statue of Liberty and stayed to oversee an atelier in Paterson, New Jersey, that focuses on traditional metalwork, particularly the art of repoussé (metal shaped by hammering the reverse side). Architect Peter Pennoyer says he relies on LMC for “the virtuosity of what they build and their creative spirit.” 973-279-3573; l-m-c.com.

REIFICATION This high-end shop for metal fabrication has been a fixture of the San Francisco design scene since 1969; its meticulous products appear in museums and galleries as well as private homes. “They're knowledgeable and experienced,” says designer Steven Volpe, “and their work is always beyond reproach.” 415-553-4183; reification.com.



A stainless steel porthole door by Ferra Designs.

CURTAINS & SHADES

ZIRLIN INTERIORS When Alessandra Branca wants couture details on window treatments, she relies on this Chicago workroom, which has been operated by the same family since the 1950s. The Zirlins can whip up anything from Versailles-worthy bed canopies to state-of-the-art motorized blinds and shades. They worked on the restoration of Chicago's Driehaus Museum (aka the Marble Palace), crafting wall upholstery and draperies in silks, brocades, and velvets. Popular with such Chicago interior designers as Suzanne Lovell and Tom Stringer, Zirlin Interiors' reputation extends beyond the Windy City—designer Michael S. Smith and Paris decorator Jacques Garcia have also commissioned window treatments

from this venerable atelier. 773-334-5530; zirlininteriorsinc.com.

ALEXANDER NAVAS & ASSOCIATES More than a few Hollywood celebrities have had curtains made by hand at this Los Angeles workroom, which also creates its own hardware. 818-904-1080; alexandernavas.com.

ERIK BRUCE A protégé of the late curtain-maker Mary Bright, Manhattan-based Erik Bruce continues her approach to window treatments with a contemporary aesthetic. 646-896-1091; erikbruce.com.

STITCH NYC David Martinez's workroom, situated in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, hand makes chic window treatments for decorators including Jamie Drake. 718-875-6763.



Curtains by Zirlin Interiors in Alessandra Branca's Chicago apartment.



A wall finish that evokes mother-of-pearl by Orazio De Gennaro Studio.

WALL FINISHES

ORAZIO DE GENNARO STUDIO For walls as smooth as marble, interior designers such as Robert Stilin and Steven Gambrel call on Brooklyn-based Orazio De Gennaro, who learned the ancient art of Venetian plaster in his native Italy. De Gennaro is a one-man show: He selects the lime, marble dust, and pigments that go into his finishes, hand mixes them, and then applies them on site. "I'm very proud to say that everything is made by me from scratch," he says. In addition to smooth and textured limestone finishes,

De Gennaro has created an ethereal fresco finish inspired by the brushstroke work of classical Italian painters. 718-855-5379; oraziostudio.com.

HOLTON ARTS Miami painter Richard Holton is a genius at trompe l'oeil and creating wall finishes with an age-old patina. 877-846-5866; holtonarts.com.

PLATEAU PAINTING CO. For lacquer walls that gleam like mirrors, decorator Alexa Hampton turns to this Mamaroneck, New York, firm. 914-631-5140; plateaupaint.com.



FURNITURE REFINISHING & RESTORATION

OSCAR'S FURNITURE REFINISHING Mexico-born Oscar Elguea provides an unlimited palette of surface techniques to Southern California's leading designers. He's adept at lacquering, French polishing, distressing, and faux finishing. His clients include decorator Peter Dunham, who says, "Oscar is an old-school finisher who does killer antique-looking finishes, but he's also a genius at the modern stuff, like Tony Duquette—style faux malachite." 323-735-7317; oscarsrefinishing.com.

CHRISTOPHE POURNY STUDIO "Christophe grew up in a family of antiques dealers," notes designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, "so he's incredibly knowledgeable." The Brooklyn-based Pourny's work on New York's City Hall included the restoration of George Washington's writing table. 718-855-8865; christophepourny.com.

ELIZABETH HARGRAVES MANDY Renowned for her delicate surface finishes, this New York restorer specializes in lacquering and japanning. Designer Maureen Footer notes that she "restored a Japanese lacquer tray table, a Directoire chest, and a Jansen chair in just one room of a recent project." 212-744-3214.

GOODCHILDS This Dallas showroom and workshop traces its roots back to a firm founded in 1907 in Windsor, England. Today, clients include Michelle Nussbaumer, who uses Goodchilds both for her design business and her Dallas store Ceylon et Cie. "Peter Goodchild knows how to repair anything without taking away its antique glory," she says. 214-742-7000; goodchildsync.com.



A credenza with a lacquer finish, top, and a desk with hand-drawn chinoiserie detail, above, both by Oscar's Furniture Refinishing.



Ornamental plasterwork at Washington's National Building Museum restored by Giannetti's Studio.

ORNAMENTAL PLASTERING & RESTORATION

GIANNETTI'S STUDIO George Giannetti founded his Washington, D.C.-area studio in 1935 and created so many government seals and federal-building details that he became known as the "eagle man." The firm, now run by his sons and grandson, has built a five-star reputation with its ceiling medallions, fireplaces, column capitals, moldings, and pediments for such buildings as Mount Vernon and the U.S. Capitol. Says designer Darryl Carter, "There are no words to adequately describe my respect and appreciation for their talent. Giannetti's is uncommon in their exacting detail and their love of preservation." For the past year, Giannetti's has been working with Sroka Design of Bethesda on a new 39,000-square-foot home in Potomac, Maryland, that has custom hand plasterwork in 19 of its rooms. 301-927-0033.

DAVID FLAHARTY SCULPTOR This Philadelphia-based artist, with 35 years of experience, has provided his services to the period rooms in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Blue Room at the White House. 215-234-8242.

FOSTER REEVE & ASSOCIATES "Foster has a deep personal interest in history," says designer Richard Cameron of Atelier & Co., "and he and the sculptors on his staff in Brooklyn do the finest custom plasterwork of anyone I know." 718-609-0090; fraplaster.com.

MICHAEL LAUER STUDIOS The Charleston, South Carolina, artisan specializes in everything from cornices to fireplace surrounds. Besides private commissions, he has lent his talents to the restoration of the Thomas Bennett House, one of Charleston's grandest. 843-801-3588; michaelauerstudios.com.



A Tudor-style ceiling by Giannetti's Studio.

UPHOLSTERY

DMITRIY & CO. From a pillow shop on New York's Lower East Side, David Feldman has transformed and expanded his Russian-born grandfather's humble business into Chelsea Workroom, a custom upholstery atelier, and Dmitriy & Co., a showroom in the Flatiron district. Interior designers such as John Saladino and Jesse Carrier count on Feldman to create handmade furnishings the traditional way, using hand-tied coil springs and horsehair construction. Dmitriy & Co. stocks Belgian linens and Italian velvets, along with its own tailored furniture collection. "We equate making upholstered furniture to a bespoke suit," says Donna Blekhtser-Feldman, Feldman's wife and business partner. "We size people up and build each piece to order." 212-243-4800; dmitriyco.com.

EVERY BOARDMAN These upholstery specialists—with showrooms in New York City and Chicago—can customize any of their furniture styles, such as concealing a TV lift in an elegant bed's footboard. 800-634-6647; everyboardman.com.



A sofa designed and upholstered by Dmitriy & Co.

DESIGN QUEST CUSTOM Designers like Kelly Wearstler trust L.A. upholstery expert Jose Luis Escobar and his team—including one of the best slipcover fitters in town—to get the job done with élan. 310-838-1226; dqcustom.net.

JONAS When the White House needed a pair of strié velvet sofas for President Obama's Oval Office, it ordered them from this legendary New York City work-

room, which has been in business for more than 80 years. 212-691-2777; jonasworkroom.com.

MT CUSTOM New York interior designer Michael Tavano is the creative director of this Harlem-based workroom that specializes in custom-made upholstery and window treatments; clients include Jamie Drake and Thom Filicia. 646-476-7070; mtcustom.com.