Sabina Hill

BY: DEIDRÉ DAVIS

LHC: Your background is in architecture, receiving your degree from the University of British Columbia. When did you decide to expand your focus to interior and furniture design?

SH: I established Sabina Hill Design in 1993, which began as an architecture design studio and evolved to incorporate interior design in order for me to more completely realize the conceptual vision for the homes and renovations I designed. In 2000, I began designing and producing limited edition furniture, installations and art work, drawing from my architectural training, as well as my interior design and landscape experience to create artistic pieces that celebrate our connection to a specific place.

LHC: How would you describe your design style and how is it similar or different from your furniture style?

SH: I have a contemporary design aesthetic with a strong regional influence, which I would describe more as an approach to design (and less of a style). I am inspired by the context of a project ranging from the homes and interiors I've designed from British Columbia's West Coast and Interior to Baja, Mexico.

There is a sensitivity paid to each project, which attempts to integrate a context--location, culture, landscape, climate, quality of light, materials etc.--specific to a particular region, as I am passionate about discovering, synthesizing and integrating regional elements into the design.

LHC: What practices set you apart from others in the furniture design industry?

SH: I collaborate with aboriginal artists to create original custom furniture, art and installations, which merges the rich mythology of West Coast native culture with a contemporary design aesthetic. I integrate these native motifs into my work creating a unique, contemporary expression.

LHC: How does understanding colour and art benefit you when designing?

SH: I think an art education and background provides a strong foundation for any of the applied arts. My education exposed me to many cultures and their art making traditions, one of those being Northwest Coast Native culture, where adorned objects are part of their living culture. I feel that my work is carrying this tradition forward, as I continue to explore designing furniture and artwork in ways that bring the ceremonial into daily life. Colour is certainly an important consideration when designing, as are all of the many aspects that make up a successful design, such as proportion, composition, texture, etc.

LHC: What is your production process when working on your collections?

SH: The exploration of new materials, techniques and methods usually drives my process and informs the pieces I will then develop into a cohesive collection. When I first conceive of an idea, I explore the concept by sketching, collecting material samples, and building scale models. Then, I collaborate with a First Nations artist to seamlessly integrate the motif into the design. The next phase is prototyping and finally production.

LHC: What inspired your most recent collection?

SH: Inspired by my most recent interior design projects for the Holler's, which included custom coffee table(s) and an area rug for their Whistler residence, and custom sofas, tables, and ottomans for their Okanagan residence, I sought to explore and integrate leather and textiles into my new collection.

LHC: How did you choose the type of materials you incorporated for the Harvest Collection?

SH: The Harvest collection represents a new direction for me, as I am designing pieces, which incorporate tanned salmon skins, animal hides and weaving into my northwest coast style. I wanted the collection to be about gathering natural materials from the earth's bounty and integrating them into our daily life.