

# Beautiful

# BEAUTIFUL

In an era when everyone on Instagram has the same lamp, and rugs made of plastic can be delivered in two days, it's easy to forget that quality pieces take patience, attention, and an artist's eye. Step into eight of our favorite studios to meet the makers and see how it's done.



Sit (right) works with a partner-run studio in Brattleboro, Vermont, where fabricator Elisa Di Feó (left) created this Scorpio lamp.

## FARRAH SIT

Brooklyn

Lighting

"I LOVE TENSION—A MOMENT WHERE you just have to pause and look," says designer **Farrah Sit**. She seeks to create tension between viewer and object, but also relies on literal gravitational tension in her pieces: A wheel of marble hovers magically along a neon tube in a pendant, or a globe of light floats on the curve of a table lamp. "Those are the moments in life that I love," she says. "You feel your body and mind [are] just vibrating, like a tuning fork."

Cutlery is how Sit launched her career, creating tableware for Calvin Klein. "They let me whittle away at a fork design for, like, a month," she says. "They really did allow me to be creative, but you still had to work within the context of a clean office." Now, she gets her hands dirty designing for her eponymous brand of lighting and furniture, as well as Light + Ladder, a line of minimalist home accessories with a name inspired by the poet Rumi's edict: "Be a lamp, a lifeboat, or a ladder." —*Kaitlin Menza*

# Things

# THINGS



LETTERING BY SAMANTHA HAHN

Photographs by  
PAOLA + MURRAY



**RON NICOLE**

Quakertown, PA

Art

“BEFORE I BEGIN A PIECE, I DECIDE WHAT I WANT TO DAYDREAM about,” says artist **Ronni Robinson**. The process behind Robinson’s unique “floral fossils” is slow, deliberate, and painstakingly intricate. Each work begins with fresh flowers, which are carefully arranged, pressed into molded clay, then removed, petal by petal, to create a mold into which Robinson pours plaster of varying hues that dries over several hours. The results are graceful bas-reliefs of flora that appear frozen mid-breeze.

Lately, Robinson has been experimenting with a new medium—paper—capturing blossoms with the same process as her plaster molds, but using wet pulp, which, when dried, preserves their shape. The connecting thread, of course, is flowers, a lifelong love for the artist, who now picks them on the Pennsylvania farm where she and her husband recently moved. As a child, she recalls being captivated by the blooms fighting their way up through the concrete sidewalks of her Philadelphia neighborhood. “There wasn’t a lot of nature around,” she says. “But you could always find flowers coming through the cracks.” —*Hadley Keller*

“I look for certain SHAPES AND MOVEMENTS. Those are the LITTLE SURPRISES.”

Blossoms



Robinson prefers to use “found” flowers, freshly picked in nature, rather than cut stems from a florist.







## JOMO FURNITURE

Springfield, VA

Furniture

**ALTHOUGH THE GENESIS OF JOMO TARIKU'S** furniture line was a reimagining of the three-legged stools that were ubiquitous in his childhood in Ethiopia, the Kenya-born, Virginia-based designer now shies away from such inspiration.

"If possible, I try not to look at other furniture," says Tariku, "because that tends to lock you into sketching that idea." Instead, he picks an object—for his Boraatii Stool, it was the headrest used in the Oromia region of Ethiopia to protect elaborate hairstyles—and carefully studies its shape, translating it to something newly functional and comfortable. "I think, What does this silhouette say to me? And is it something that could be reinterpreted?"

Tariku creates prototypes in wood before passing off to David Bohnhoff, the skilled builder he entrusts with manufacturing his often difficult detailing. It's through this method that Tariku hopes to establish a new language of African design. "People think 'African,' they think one thing," he says. "I want to change that." —H.K.

## MIRTH STUDIO

Charleston, SC

Floor Tiles

**FIRST AND FOREMOST, SALLY BENNETT IS AN** artist. "I have more ideas for designs than make sense as a business," laughs the founder of Mirth Studio, best known for its kaleidoscopic hardwood flooring tiles. The pieces that make their way to production are thus her favorites: geometric, intricate, and bursting with color. After years of hand-painting walls and floors for upscale clients in New York, she wondered if such a look could be replicated in a less tedious (and more budget-friendly) way. The answer? Wood tiles that could be easily laid into place, digitally printed with her original hand-painted designs.

When part of Bennett's home flooded in early 2020, destroying the floors, the artist took it in stride. "I was secretly kind of excited about getting to do some new tiles," she says. Her Wanderlust Collection was released this fall. —Carly Olson



Photographs by  
PETER FRANK EDWARDS







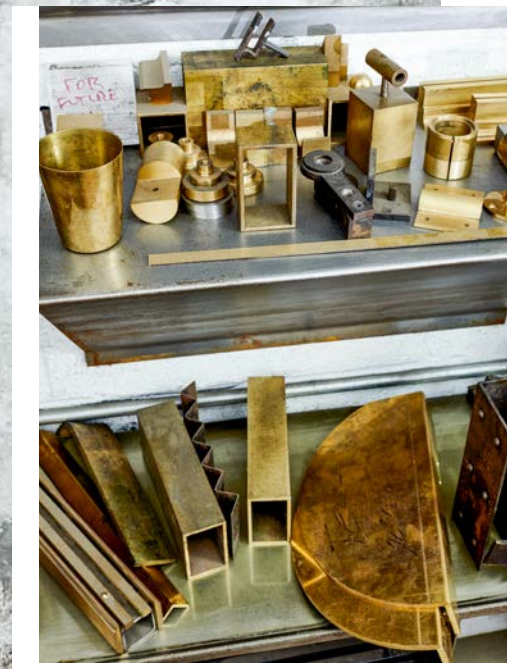
## SHELTON STUDIOS

Brooklyn

### Metalwork

**WORKING IN GABRIELLE SHELTON'S STUDIO IS A VERY** active job. The in-demand architectural metalworker and owner of Shelton Studios has her hand in a range of projects, from devising custom staircases for interiors to fabricating sculptures for artists and a long list of A-list clients, like Naomi Watts and Richard Serra. "I have a lot of energy," Shelton says. "I don't do well with sitting still."

Shelton spends her days alongside three employees in a sprawling 2,500-square-foot studio in an industrial section of Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Punctuated with three massive skylights, the space even has room for Shelton to maintain a private art studio. Last year, she completed one of her favorite projects to date: a restaurant in her hometown of Los Angeles, where she designed and fabricated all things metal, from lighting and hardware to shelving and the bar. "It was just the perfect way to be working in these two cities that I love so much," says Shelton, who even had friends and family stop by to help her during installation. "That was an absolute dream come true." —C.O.



INTERIOR: GABRIELLE SHELTON



Shelton created the curving metals inside the restaurant Five Leaves Los Angeles. Her work also graces NYC's famed Balthazar brasserie.

metalworking





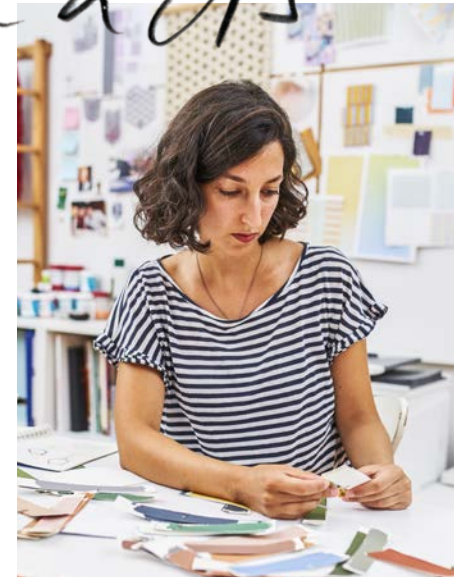
# Threads

## STUDIO BEGÜM CÂNÂ ÖZGÜR

Istanbul + New York

Rugs

IT WASN'T IN HER NATIVE TURKEY THAT **BEGÜM CÂNÂ ÖZGÜR** fell in love with rug making—it was in Michigan. “It’s just something that does not take your attention, because they’re everywhere in Turkish culture,” Özgür says. Her first time at a loom was at Cranbrook Academy of Art in the U.S. “I tried working with a lot of different materials and then I found my interest in textiles, partly because they were easier to handle compared with metalworking or woodworking,” she says. After graduation, she returned to Istanbul to set up her own studio. Her aesthetic is a far cry from the medallions and flowers one might associate with Turkish rugs; instead, she creates soft gradients of color inspired by, say, a hazy sunrise in Tuscany. “I always go to nature to make my color decisions,” Özgür says. “I love traditional patterns, but I think they are good things that belong to the Old World.” —*K.M.*



## METOLIUS RIDGE ARTISAN TILE

Bend, Oregon

Tile

**DESCRIBING THE LOOK OF METOLIUS** Ridge Artisan Tile is a surprisingly hard thing to do: At first glance, the pieces have a distinctly Southwestern feel, due in part to the technique used to paint them. (Called cuerda seca, or “dry line,” it employs wax to create patterns before glazing; the wax melts off during firing.) But then you notice the Arts and Crafts influence, the Japanese kimono-inspired florals, the medieval European iconography. “I remember someone once called it ‘world rustic,’” says the brand’s founder, **Justyn Livingston**. The former textile designer spent time in Romania, Tonga, and Guatemala before settling in Oregon, where she founded the company in 1995. Each tile is hand-painted and made to order. Livingston often works with clients to create custom installations, from fireplace surrounds and backsplashes to wall-spanning murals. “It’s a serious investment, and I want people to have something timeless that grows with them,” she says. “My intention is to create designs with a spirit of their own.” —*Emma Bazilian*





### P.E. GUERIN

New York



**BEHIND THE DOORS OF AN OLD BRICK BUILDING** on Jane Street in Greenwich Village, there's magic happening. For more than 160 years, decorative hardware manufacturer P.E. Guerin has been handcrafting unique pieces at its Manhattan foundry (it moved to its current location in 1892) using long-forgotten techniques. The process begins in the sample room, filled from floor to ceiling with nearly 100,000 specimens—knobs, faucets, hinges, latches, and more—and which Vice President **Martin Grubman** likens, aptly, to “the wand shop in Harry Potter.” Next, the chosen piece is cast in sand

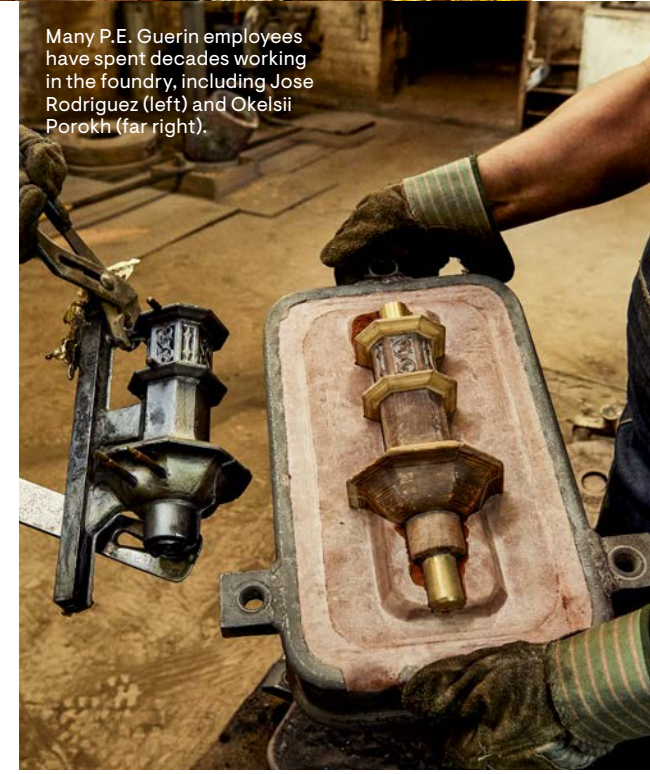
See these (and other) extraordinary craftspeople bring their pieces to life at [housebeautiful.com/beautiful-things](https://housebeautiful.com/beautiful-things)

before being filed, chased (a process that involves using miniature chisels and hammers to add detail), and polished to perfection. It's a painstaking process—according to Grubman, a single basin set takes roughly 40 hours to complete—but one that gives each piece a truly one-of-a-kind character. No two are exactly alike, and that's the point: “It's like comparing a handmade sweater to a mass-produced one,” Grubman says. “The machine-knit sweaters will all be perfect, and the hand-knit ones might have a few imperfections, but which one would you rather have?” —E.B.

“It's like the WAND SHOP in Harry Potter.”



POUR: P.E. GUERIN



Many P.E. Guerin employees have spent decades working in the foundry, including Jose Rodriguez (left) and Okelsii Porokh (far right).



Polish