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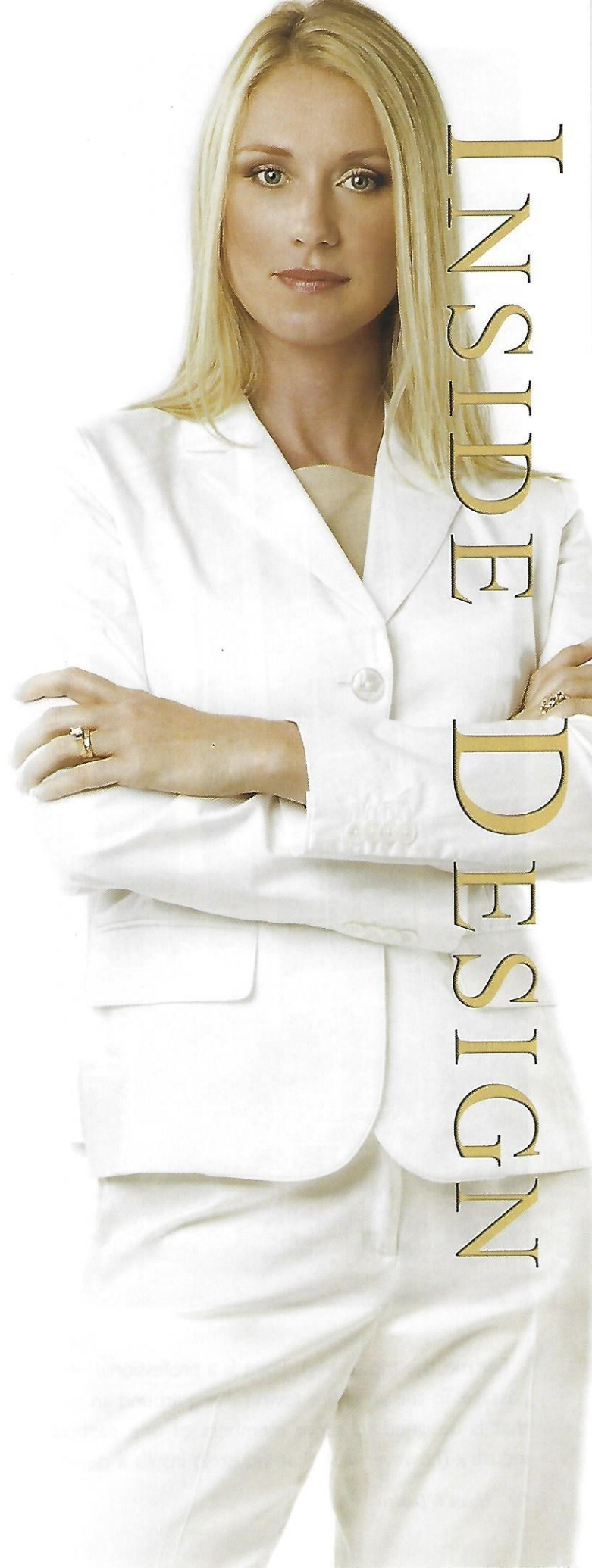
Behind The Scenes At High Point

by *Kira Krümm*

From its pine tree-covered hills to its home-spun hospitality, North Carolina is recognized as more than just home of the Tarheels. Among those working in the interior design trade, it is more widely known as the location of High Point, a small town that has made a big impact on the interior design industry. High Point is what most consider the world's largest furniture and home goods exposition. Closed to the general public, the High Point market is accessible to design professionals, but with the help of top designer Kira Krümm, *Home & Design* takes you behind the scenes to experience the sights, sounds and excitement that is the High Point International Furnishings Market.

A Rite Of Passage

The market began more than 125 years ago when High Point's large resources of lumber and plentiful labor spurred the establishment of many furniture factories. Those factories turned out work of such quality that High Point's reputation as the heart of the home furnishings industry quickly grew. Today, the community hosts two market events per year that attract more than 80,000 people perusing offerings by more than 3,000 exhibitors (whose work - furniture and accessories from around the globe - is displayed in over 200 buildings, totaling almost 12 million square feet of show space.) ▶



For me, the trip to High Point is a professional rite of passage. To see an entire town rallying around an event that is designed to serve members of one particular industry, (however vast that industry) instills a designer

with a measure of participatory pride. The trip to market signifies that you have achieved a certain level of success in your career. Arriving in High Point, you can't help but feel like you've made it.



renowned Century Furniture Industries, Highland House has been manufacturing the ultimate in upholstered furniture for 46 years. I was greeted by Rob McQueen, my "Rep" (industry shorthand for "Manufacturer's Representative.") Knowledgeable and dedicated Reps like McQueen are precious resources and industry partners to the design trade.

McQueen takes valuable time from his work at a busy market to show me through the beautifully-detailed showroom where the newest lines are showcased in a delightful fashion. In recent years, Highland House has enhanced its traditional product line with a new design that draws inspiration from the European countryside. Essentially, they've created a look that is more casual and relaxed. They have fused classic European styling ▶

Manufactured Excellence

With floor plans of several of my projects in hand, I'm off and running (in comfortable shoes) for what will be a typical day in this productive trip to High Point.

My first appointment is at the Highland House showroom, one of my favorite upholstery and case goods lines. Recently acquired as a subsidiary of the

OPPOSITE – One of more than 200 buildings where over 3,000 exhibitors show their goods to the trade the bi-annual High Point Market.

ABOVE – Krümm examining Highland House fabrics. The company has been manufacturing upholstery and case goods for more than 46 years.

BELOW – Knowledgeable manufacturer's reps like Rob McQueen are precious resources and industry partners to the design trade.



quality of the materials and methods of construction.

That point is driven home at my next stop by Tara Albrecht, the Rep for Hancock and Moore. Since 1981, the master craftsmen at Hancock and Moore have honed their company's reputation for producing quality furniture that is as resilient as it is attractive. This product has earned its reputation for quality. I've been told the President of the United States even sits on a Hancock and Moore chair.

While average consumers may not be aware of the intricacies of double-doweled frames, reinforced corner blocks and 16-way hand-ties, (all hallmarks of Hancock and Moore's work,) consumers do understand accountability. The artisans at Hancock and Moore, upon completing each frame, individually sign their names to the work, much like an artist signing a master portrait. That's passion.



with American-style comfort. It is their ability to customize, however, that makes the trip all the more worthwhile. Each Market, buyers can find an array of colorful new fabrics with vibrant patterns and plush textures. As my Associate Erin Carlin and I meticulously search through fabric samples for a particular shade of green (needed for a specific project,) I remain fully aware that the essence of fine furniture goes beyond the visual allure. As with most beautiful things, appearance is the initial attraction, but the true beauty lies beneath in the



Such passion also underscores the efforts at P.A.M.A. Furniture, my next appointment, a company with Italian origins and methodologies that are of the Old World. The demeanor of the staff, however, is all North Carolina-friendly. Ann Marie Pennisi-Page, vice-president of sales, (whose entire family has been dedicated to building the company,) greets me.

P.A.M.A is recognized in the industry for their high quality, customized finishes. Just when you think you've seen everything, you'll find finishes that are truly unique. Between the standard wood tones and basic colors, there are endless combinations and techniques from

OPPOSITE ABOVE – Hancock & Moore's contemporary leather chair, ottoman and screen. Since 1981, the master craftsmen at Hancock and Moore have honed their company's reputation for producing quality furniture that is as resilient as it is attractive.

OPPOSITE BELOW – Hancock & Moore's classic armchair. The artisans at Hancock and Moore, upon completing each frame, individually sign their names to the work, much like an artist signing a master portrait.

ABOVE – P.A.M.A Furniture's classic European gilded sofa. P.A.M.A, a company with Italian origins and methodologies, has a meticulous approach to the finishing process, evident in their fine furniture.

BELOW – Ann Marie Pennisi-Page, vice-president of sales for P.A.M.A Furniture. P.A.M.A is a family-owned and operated business and is recognized in the industry for their high quality, customized finishes.

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which to choose. "If it's not a quality product, we won't sell it," says Pennisi-Page.

Their meticulous approach to the finishing process is evident in their furniture. Pennisi-Page explains how craftsmen seal, stain, pad, rub and glaze, repeating this process several times. This is followed by antiquing, highlighting and application of a minimum of two coats of lacquer -- all done by hand. The company's standards are exact and their finished results extraordinary. ▶

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Masters of Design

The other very tangible benefit of traveling to High Point is the opportunity to interact with some of the world's best and brightest designers. To my surprise (and delight) at the Harrison & Gil showroom, I met Christopher "Guy" Harrison in person.

Company founder (and designer extraordinaire,) Harrison's designs can be found in the world's poshest resorts and the homes of the world's most celebrated personalities. His styles have their own signature, and patented distinction, which often include his specially configured leg designs. Explaining his newest line, Harrison says, "The mood is contemporary, but the values are classic."

Harrison also welcomes the challenge to create such an identifiable brand image within an industry that too often allows for unimaginative duplication. "Integrity is very important to me," Harrison says. "I will not copy anyone's design. My goal is to reinterpret, not replicate."

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While describing how he was inspired to create his signature styled legs for chairs (credited by some as the most elegant concept since the Chippendale), he explains how he imagined the graceful form of a woman. "It isn't enough for something to look beautiful," he says, "it has to look sophisticated too." Beauty and sophistication, accented with artistic charm, are the tools of the artist who is Christopher Harrison.

OPPOSITE ABOVE – Harrison and Gil chair, displaying Christopher "Guy" Harrison's patented, signature styled legs (credited as the most elegant concept since the Chippendale). Beauty and sophistication are the tools of this artist, who draws his inspiration from the graceful form of a woman.

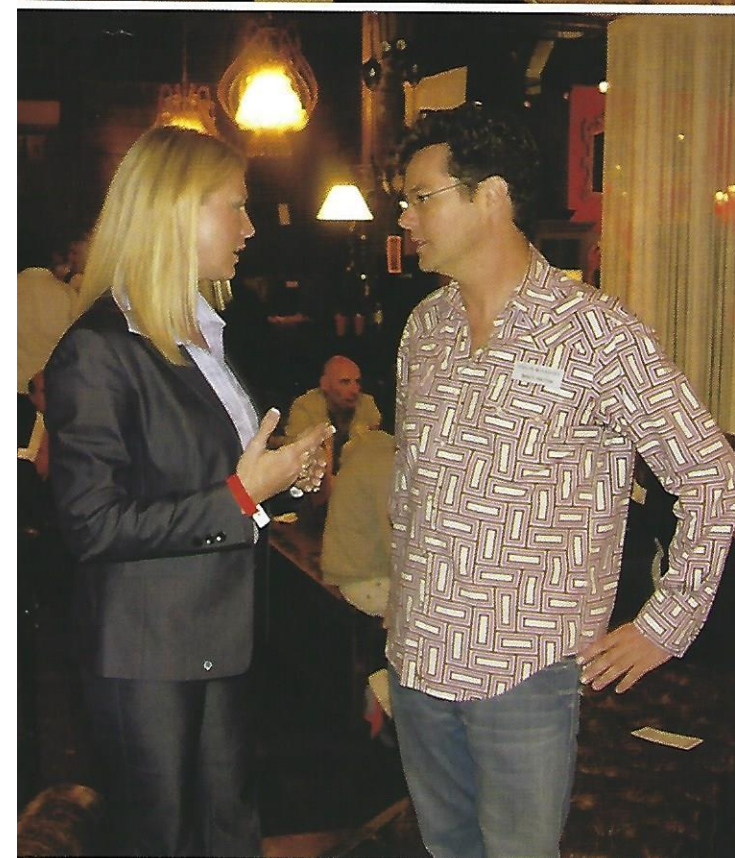
OPPOSITE BELOW – Christopher "Guy" Harrison, Harrison and Gil's founder sharing videos designed for his newest line with Krümm and her Associate Erin Carlin. Harrison's designs can be found within some of the world's most posh resorts and the homes of the most celebrated personalities.

ABOVE – Krümm and Mario Morales, owner of Mario & Marielena. Morales introduces one of his newest bedding lines at this market. The bedding is among the most beautiful of any in the industry and incorporates a plethora of different textures and rich colors made with the strictest of professional standards.

The mattresses on display at Mario & Marielena look more than inviting after a long day of walking showroom to showroom. The bedding is among the most beautiful of any in the industry and incorporates a plethora of different textures and rich colors, made with the strictest of professional standards.

The company, founded by Mario Morales, has garnered increasing acclaim, and not only because of its innovative design. Morales says his company's mission is "to please and supply." This is accomplished by blending colors that correspond with either their customer's inspirations or their own.

The company's professional attitude shows both in the design process and their approach to customer service. Their reputation rests on their ability to deliver quality goods, and Morales' emphasis on the importance of relationships. "The most refreshing part of Market is meeting talented individuals who are in touch with what is going on," he says. Mario & Marielena offers more than decorative and high-quality goods—they offer consistency and dependability, two traits that never go out of style. ▶



International Celebration

So ends my first day, but the experience is far from over. The evening brings a entirely different itinerary to meet new people and celebrate old industry friendships. The early buzz is about a runway fashion show. As it begins, there's no question who the models are. Rather than seeing leggy *fashionistas* strolling upon the catwalk, these models come in the form of furnishings. There is an obvious connection between fashion and furnishings and the event served to further underscore that which has brought all of us together, the world's largest home furnishing market.

The highlight of the night is the party at the showroom of Four Hands. With the music resonating across the room, it's a feast for the eyes, coinciding with an actual feast for attendees. In addition to providing



some relief from the day's rigors, this party offers a great opportunity to interact with peers and hear the latest business news while mingling with the industries most recognized celebrities. Bret Hatton, founder of Four Hands, is not only recognized for the successful company he has built, but also as a humanitarian. Hatton recently established *Learn to Live*, a program that provides educational assistance, primarily to young women, in India, where less than 40% are said to be literate. While most can sense that the work of interior and furniture designers is all about serving the needs of people, occasions such as this remind me of the depth of that service as extended by compassionate members of the industry.

OPPOSITE ABOVE – Buddha heads on display in Four Hands' showroom, located in an old refurbished warehouse and one of the largest and most impressive show spaces at Market. Four Hands imports the majority of their exotic goods from India and Asia.

OPPOSITE BELOW – Krümm talks with Brett Hatton, founder of Four Hands, who recognized both for the successful company he has built, and also for his humanitarian efforts. Hatton recently established "Learn To Live," a program that provides educational assistance to young women in India.

ABOVE – Krümm and Associate Erin Carlin entering the Four Hands party, a highlight of the Market and a benefit for Hatton's "Learn To Live" program.

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After 16 hours, our first day at High Point comes to an end. We return to the hotel buzzing from the excitement and exhausted knowing that tomorrow we will be doing it all over again.

Homecoming

The greatest testament to High Point's status as an industry treasure trove, exists not in the power of the purchases to be made there, but the passion of the people that make it possible. Collectively, they are artists and artisans, decorators and designers, manufacturers and retailers, all striving to deliver the quality we expect as consumers. The trip to High Point makes for one of the more memorable highlights of a career that is truly about working with, and serving, people. For the people in our industry, High Point remains as more than just the name of a town – it's a feeling that you bring home with you. ♦

The next High Point Market will take place from October 16 to October 22, 2006. Kira Krümm is an award-winning Interior Designer and COO of Kira Krümm Interior Design, located at 6062 Taylor Road, Suite 801, in Naples. She may be contacted by phone at 239 593-4413, by email at Insidedesign@kirakrumm.com or by visiting www.kirakrumm.com.

Photos courtesy of Kira Krümm Interior Design / Bill Schiller Photographer