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Fall 2024

INSIDE THE DESIGNER'S CIRCLE

ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL DESIGN SOURCE AND VANGUARD FURNITURE



Skyler Sadez, Emilio & Linda Sadez, and Nicole Sadez Bobek



Andy Bray President & CEO of Vanguard Furniture

International Design Source (IDS) is a to-the-trade showroom exclusively for interior design professionals with showrooms in Naples and Sarasota, Florida. With over 90,000 square feet of floor space, IDS houses a vast collection of ready-to-go items, from fine furniture and fabrics to accessories and rugs, representing over 300 brands from some of the most respected names in the industry.

The love of furniture and design is not just a business, but a personal passion for the Sadez family. Emilio Sadez, born into the family business of furniture retailing, launched International Design Source in 1997 with his wife, Linda. With the addition of daughter, Nicole, in 2019 and son, Skyler, in 2024 to the team, the business has entered a third generation, building on past success with new inspiration and vitality, always valuing the personal touch in their service.

However, Sadezes do not rest upon their laurels by offering a vast selection of high-end products. International Design Source also provides concierge services to its clients through numerous resources and amenities that facilitate and enhance the design process for both the designer and the client. On-site design libraries with complete catalogs and upholstery samples of every line represented are available for research. A personable and knowledgeable staff is always ready to assist with any need. www.ids1.com

Vanguard Furniture

It all started in a modest facility with two employees and a perfect velvet chair. Over 50 years later, Vanguard Furniture is still making good on its name by being at the forefront of the furniture industry — from one perfect velvet chair to endless personalized possibilities.

THE VANGUARD MISSION STATEMENT: To be the industry's most customer-centric company, delivering unparalleled product, quality, and service. At Vanguard Furniture, we are not just a family-owned company, but also a fashion-driven one. With over 600 associates and six manufacturing buildings in Hickory, North Carolina, a 40,000-square-foot showroom in High Point, North Carolina, and a new manufacturing location in Hillsville, Virginia, we are constantly pushing the boundaries of style, value, and service. Our ultimate goal is to enrich lives through custom-crafted furniture that is not just functional, but also a statement of style and innovation. www.vanguardfurniture.com

Nestled in North Carolina's picturesque landscape, a rustic red barn at the enchanting Wildwind Retreat sets the stage for the 2024 IDS Designer Roundtable & Retreat. Inside this converted barn, seven distinguished interior designers convene with representatives from Vanguard Furniture and International Design Source around an impressive wooden table. While collaboration is the initial focus, the gathering quickly evolves into a vibrant exchange of creative minds that sparks forward-thinking discussions. Here's an insider's look from within the designer's circle.

Emilio Sadez, President of International Design Source, and Andy Bray, President of Vanguard Furniture, leveraged their extensive industry expertise to conceptualize the event. Sadez, at the helm of expansive showrooms in Naples and Sarasota, oversees a sprawling 90,000 square feet of finest premium furnishings, fabrics, accessories, and rugs. His vast experience in curating high-end design resources underscores the importance of engaging directly with the designers who specify these products. Sadez reflects, "Let's bring together a group of creative designers for a collaborative conversation about furniture and design. We'll delve into what designers truly want, gain their insights into the marketplace, and explore innovative solutions we can create for them."

Bray, known for his dedication to Made in America furnishings and family-oriented business philosophy, wholeheartedly supports the initiative. "Collaboration is a great word," shares Bray. "The essence of custom furnishings is collaboration. Vanguard Furniture's entire reason for being is to harness the imagination of the professional interior designer and craft one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture." ▶



Wildwind Retreat
Boone, North Carolina



Minka McDonald
President & Interior Designer
Jinx McDonald Interior Designs



Nan Wright
Principal & CEO
Wright Interior Group



Tracee Murphy
CEO & Principal Designer
Trade Mark Interiors



Diana Hall
President
Diana Hall Design



Kacey Webb
Lead Designer
L Design Studio



Lisa Guild
Principal & Interior Designer
LMG Design Consulting



Preparing fabric for pattern cutting on the laser cutter.

The retreat starts with an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Vanguard Furniture's production process, allowing designers to observe skilled artisans at work throughout each stage of furniture creation. They witness the meticulous 8-way hand-tied technique, which guarantees the highest levels of comfort and durability in every sofa. The tour also allows designers to engage directly with the artisans, fostering a dialogue bridging the gap between concept, creation, and specification. This immersive experience enhances their understanding of craftsmanship, ultimately enriching their design practice. ▶



Prepped raw materials prior to being finished.



Skilled artisan upholstering fabric to the wooden frame.



Wall of fabric cuttings. Over 3,000 currently in the line.



Close up of the factory weaving machine in action, creating a woven fabric with a paisley design.



State-of-the-art weaving machine.

The itinerary expands to include an enlightening tour of the Valdese Weavers factory, a pivotal fabric supplier for Vanguard Furniture. Designers are awestruck by the cutting-edge equipment that defines this state-of-the-art facility. "One element that makes Valdese Weavers special is that they specify fibers to make the yarns, dye, and weave, and finish the fabrics all in-house," says Harry Trachtenberg, Sales Manager of Florida and Latin America for Vanguard Furniture. "All three of those processes take place in this one factory. This level of integration is rare in the industry and allows for exceptional control over quality, customization, and production efficiency." ▶

V A L D E S E W E A V E R S



Valdese Factory floor featuring weaving machines.



On the second day, participants engage in thought-provoking discussions, beginning with a compelling presentation by Kelly Peterson, Principal of High Point Marketing. Drawing on her extensive experience in the home furnishings industry, Peterson highlights the increasing significance of the 50-plus market. This topic sparks meaningful dialogue among the designers, particularly those from Florida, where this demographic represents a substantial portion of their clientele. Peterson shares, "As our population ages, the needs and desires of the 50-plus market are becoming progressively important. This group is looking for more than just style — they want functionality that adapts to their evolving lifestyles. Our discussion at the roundtable highlights how crucial it is for designers to anticipate and meet these needs."

The designers discuss how they've seen this shift firsthand. One designer emphasizes the importance of incorporating more over-sized pulls on case goods, which are easier to grasp for those with mobility issues. Additionally, the designers address the need for attractive storage solutions, as many clients acquire numerous belongings over time and struggle to find stylish yet functional storage options. Another designer highlights the need for less glass and rounded corners as a safety concern. While these are just a few examples, the roundtable discussions were rich with anecdotes from designers working with clients, all emphasizing a broader trend in furnishings: aesthetics still hold significance, but there's an undeniable shift toward functional designs that support the evolving needs of today's homeowners — and Vanguard Furniture and International Design Source are paying attention. »

"Let's bring together a group of creative designers for a collaborative conversation about furniture and design. We'll delve into what designers truly want, gain their insights into the marketplace, and explore innovative solutions we can create for them,"
Emilio Sadez, President of International Design Source reflects.



"The retreat allows us to see through the eyes of individual interior designers, gaining a deeper understanding of their challenges, motivations, and selection process," Bray notes. This direct feedback is indispensable, shaping future product offerings and strengthening the relationship between manufacturers, showrooms, and designers. Sadez emphasizes that such events are paramount to staying ahead in the industry, pointing out, "If you're not making mistakes, you're not pushing the design buttons hard enough. The goal is to make strategic mistakes, allowing us to introduce new trends and adapt to shifting needs effectively." This philosophy resonates with the designers as the roundtable becomes a platform for exploring bold ideas and sharing daring concepts. The retreat continues to offer even more opportunities for growth and collaboration.

Bray orchestrates a thought-provoking artificial intelligence (AI) vs. human design demonstration. Designers prompt two Vanguard Furniture designers to create a non-standard pedestal table — one using generative AI and the other sketching by hand. "It is incredible to see how both approaches yield similar but distinctly different results," says Peterson. "The AI creates multiple options in minutes, but the human designer's sketches, though fewer, are more attuned to practical considerations like construction feasibility and cost-effectiveness." This exercise underscores the complementary nature of AI and human creativity, illustrating how technology enhances rather than replaces the nuanced expertise designers bring to their craft.

"Our relationship is stronger on both sides from listening and learning," Sadez concludes. By the end of the retreat, it's clear this gathering is more than an exchange of ideas — it's the start of a rewarding relationship between Vanguard Furniture, International Design Source, and the design community. The event has proven to be a successful conduit for innovation and feedback, reinforcing both companies as industry leaders. Sadez enthusiastically adds, "We're already planning to do this again!"

Written by Rachel Seekamp

Photography courtesy of International Design Source

Presenter Kelly Peterson

With more than 30 years as a creative sales and thought leader, Kelly Peterson has worked with global brands to develop and deliver powerful marketing initiatives, resulting in significant lifts in sales volume and ROI. Her industry knowledge, combined with an extensive network of client relationships, gives Kelly the perspective to support and advise internal and external teams from initial concept through successful negotiation to execution of national marketing efforts.

Kelly's extensive experience as a Group Advertising director and consultant to national and global brands has allowed her to identify and quickly resolve issues related to implementing marketing programs. She has implemented programs using print, digital, social, and broadcast media and launched several new media products, including Food Network Magazine, HGTV Magazine, and Dr. Oz's The Good Life Magazine.

Beyond media, Kelly is working with two startups in the artificial intelligence space; is on retainer with a business intelligence company and has started a voiceover practice.

Kelly is a past President and Board Chair of Women in the Home Furnishings Industry (WITHIT), a mentor for ten professional women and the College of Charleston University. She is also active in several community non-profits nationally.



Kelly Peterson
 Principal of High Point Marketing