

STRONG AND STYLISH



STAINLESS STEEL, CAST IRON AND WROUGHT IRON ARE THE MEDIA OF THE MOMENT IN HOME FURNISHINGS

BY DEBRA MCGAUGHEY

Admit it: When you consider the fortunate task of acquiring new furniture for your home, the idea of sitting on cold, hard steel doesn't intuitively come to mind. There is, after all, your burning desire to create warmth and comfort in your environment. How can a twisted piece of wrought iron ever hope to accomplish this?



ABOVE: *The Bongo High Dining Table and Bongo Bar Stools can turn a nook into a trendy dining area or even a bar. Thick quarter-sawn stained walnut veneer tops out the satin nickel-plated square tube iron base with neat parallel lines. Table, about \$300; bar stools, about \$140 each at CB2*

BELOW: *The Gulf Stream Collection by Richard Frinier for Century Furniture uses precision-welded, marine-grade stainless steel to reflect the best of coastal living, indoors and out. The product line includes sectionals with corner units, lounge chairs, ottoman and more. See Richard Frinier groupings at Ladco Washington Park Design Center.*





ABOVE: Add a punch of color — or two or three or four punches — with Knoll's stackable X3 chairs designed by Marco Maran. The flexible one-piece seating shell sits on a chrome-plated steel base. Suggested retail price is about \$380 each, with bar-height stools also available. Sunset Settings is a Knoll dealer.

ABOVE: Pamper yourself with The Tiffany Collection by John Le Shane for Johnston Casuals Furniture. The vanity, mirror and stool shown are in a Topaz powdercoat with a Pink Chicago Leather seat. More details include a specially cut and shaped 1/2-inch glass top with two round insets. Suggested retail price is about \$1,800. Visit www.johnstoncasuals.com for a dealer near you.



ABOVE: From CB2, the Baseline Bed of industrial steel in a flat charcoal powdercoat squares off in an open platform design. Twin, about \$400; full, about \$430; and queen, \$450

That is where many people make a most unfortunate mistake. The latest productions in metal furniture suggest nothing of a cold, unforgiving form, designed only for those who appreciate its hard lines or industrial rawness. Today's metal offerings are stylishly clean, delightfully retro and fused with a cross-section of woods, fabrics, cushions and finishes that make them one of the most sought-after furniture trends available on the planet.

CONSIDER THE CHAIR

"Metal is just another wonderful medium," says Bill Peck, owner of Peck & Company, a Montrose-area custom furniture design firm specializing in metal fabrication. "You've been in a home that has too much of one thing, right? Well, too much wood makes a home moody. A balance of materials is what's really, really important. You can balance that moodiness out with a bit of metal."

One item to consider is a chair made of stainless steel. Now, before thoughts of hospitals or warehouses come to your mind, carefully consider its construction. It's made of woven stainless steel, formed to fit a person in a relaxed fashion.

"It's so different, and it has such clean lines," says Dale Johnson, co-owner of Eclectic Home in the Heights, of a specific chair at his store. "This chair can be used indoor or outdoors, but most of my customers have been using it indoors. It's actually very comfortable."

The \$890 chair, which is made in Romania, has been offered at Johnson's store for about a year. He says the manufacturer is now making a love seat in the same style, which also will be offered at Eclectic Home.

"People are buying one or two at a time and putting them in their living rooms or family rooms," Johnson says. "It's definitely a contemporary piece."

CUSTOM OPTIONS

For people who want custom-designed or custom-crafted metal furniture, Peck & Company offers a wide variety of options. The business can make or reproduce just about any metal object...and often does.

"Sometimes a client will see something in a design magazine that they like, or they see something on their European trip, a particular light fixture, for example. And we can make it," Peck explains. "We're just a flexible



ABOVE: Comfortable seating indoors or out, Brown Jordan's Vu line comes in gleaming stainless steel with a wide assortment of fabric colors and textures for seat cushions. Find Brown Jordan products at Patio 1.

LEFT: The Romania-made metal chair from Eclectic Home features shiny sleek lines and a soft woven curved seat. The chair can be used indoors or outdoors.

company that can do traditional designs, which are popular in Houston, or items that are modern with brushed nickel or brush stainless finishes.”

The company cuts no corners in its ability to create a unique piece of furniture. Peck says the first step is to make a drawing of the furniture to scale (“so there are no surprises”). The second step is blacksmithing, where the piece is actually built or constructed.

Next, the item is sanded. The last steps involve preparing the piece for a particular finish and then applying the finish, which can include leaving it in its natural state or decorating it with paint or even gold leaf.

The firm also can add a bit of metal to an existing piece or create a strictly decorative item to increase visual interest in a home.

“Maybe you need a metal leg for a vanity or a little console table in the entry or a little bracket to hold a bookshelf,” says Peck. “We can do that, too.”

OUTDOOR BEAUTIES

Of course, outdoor use of metal furniture always is in fashion. Some of the most classic, clean patio furniture available for homeowners can be found in collections by Brown Jordan. While the vast majority of its furniture is made from aluminum, two of its collections, Nxt and Vu, come in gleaming stainless steel with a wide assortment of fabric colors and textures for seat cushions.

At Something Special Interiors, two white-painted, wrought-iron patio sets continue to captivate fans of casual outdoor living. One set is square in shape and has cup holders on each corner of its table. Another set is round. Both have coordinating metal end tables.

“The good thing about metal is that it holds up, it’s very durable and doesn’t warp,” says Jane Ross, owner. “The decorative designs are very romantic. They bring back the Victorian era-type feeling. And all you have to do to clean them is hose them off.”



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PHOTO BY ANTHONY RATHBUN

LEFT: Master metal craftsman Bill Peck, owner of Houston's Peck & Company, and one of his custom creations

BELOW: From the new Baker Studio lifestyle collection, the Corfu Chaise combines cool bronze steel with soft leather for a sophisticated form. The suggested retail price is \$4,424. Visit Baker Houston on Uptown Park Boulevard for a look at Baker furnishings.



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