

Partners



In Design

A young couple is creating a thoughtful interiors practice that's all about the Hudson Valley's traditions and its talented artisans.

By Janet Siroto

Right, Davidson and Biddle on their property in Germantown, which was formerly a pear orchard. Below, the Library Lamp is inspired by wood-paneled libraries, and the warm glow of the perfect reading lamp.



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or a young couple just entering their 30s, the design duo of Pippa Biddle and Ben Davidson have an uncanny knowledge of and reverence for the past. While their peers may be contemplating Viva Magenta, Pantone's color of the year, and low-slung modular sofas, the pair are funneling their passion for antiques and interiors into Quittner, their historically-informed design practice. Their business not only honors Hudson Valley traditions but also serves as hub for the area's artisans.

Biddle and Davidson possess a staggering amount of intel about vintage design, having always been drawn to what's not new. Biddle grew up in Katonah, "in an old house and around antiques," she recalls. "I was always interested in design and what makes a home, both practically and on a more conceptual level." Despite a brief stint in Portland, Oregon, Pippa's education and subsequent jobs never took her much farther from the Hudson Valley's pull than NYC.

Davidson, always a collector, learned the finer points of furniture and architectural restoration working in historic preservation in Pennsylvania after he graduated from college. After a major project ended about seven years ago, he headed to the Hudson Valley to help his family with his grandmother's property. What he had intended to be just a short sojourn stretched into many months. All the while, he was gathering and tending to antiques, enough—as it would turn out—to furnish an entire store. "He accumulated enough to fill storage units—yes, plural," jokes Biddle.

Pairing Up

How the couple's paths



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crossed is perhaps the ultimate meet-cute story. They had met at summer camp in the Adirondacks as kids and “dated” there for a full two weeks. After that, they just “kept finding each other over the years,” says Biddle. When Davidson landed upstate, the pair reconnected—this time, for real—and began building a life together. In 2018, they launched Quittner Antiques, as it was then known, using Davidson’s middle name as its moniker. The shop was dedicated to presenting American and international pieces in smart and stylish ways that could work in modern homes. It was housed on the ground floor of the home they shared in Germantown. Marriage soon followed in 2019.

In addition to their chically curated antiques, the store’s old-meets-new lighting attracted a following.

Davidson proved to be adept at rewiring and restoring almost anything that can be illuminated, from vintage farmhouse enamel pendant lamps to extravagant floral-motif chandeliers. They also channeled their antique expertise into literary pursuits, writing the “Object Lesson” column for *The Magazine Antiques*, among other pursuits.

Rethinking and Reinventing

As they built a clientele, along came Covid, making operating a business out of their home impossible. So Biddle and Davidson hit reset and debuted something new. In 2020, they moved to their workshop, a black barn that they restored on Route 9G in Germantown. Last spring, they shortened the name to simply Quittner, and began focusing on restoring lighting as well as creating their own designs. They’ve crafted lighting that marries past and present. The milky

Right, the breakfast boards were inspired by the small cutting boards Biddle’s grandmother used for toast. *Below*, the Palatine Collection.





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porcelain Hallie flush-mount fixture, for instance, pays homage to the 1930s, while the Lex canister-style floor lamp makes use of black walnut in a simple form that defies dating.

In December 2021, the enterprise expanded to the warehouse next door, a hangar-like space that affords them room to present not just antiques but also goods by their blossoming network of local artisans, from printers to ceramicists. Their artful mix of old and modern earned them notice, including a collaboration at the 2022 Kingston Design Showhouse. In May, Quittner launched their first tableware line, the Palatine Collection, at Field + Supply's spring market. The collection is inspired by archaeological finds at the German Reformed Sanctity Church Parsonage, a historical site and oldest preserved building in Germantown. "We are excited to be able to expand our homewares offerings in a way that will also deepen understanding of the material history of the Hudson Valley," says Biddle. A portion of profits will be donated to the Friends of Historic Germantown.

"We want to represent how we live," she explains, "and encourage using pieces from the past when possible. It's always the most sustainable choice." That's why they still stock plenty of antiques—sweet chairs with traces of original paint, centuries-old blanket boxes, old maps, and plates from antique books on flora and fauna.

Networking the Neighborhood

But when vintage isn't the right option, they hope their customers will buy something beautifully made that supports local

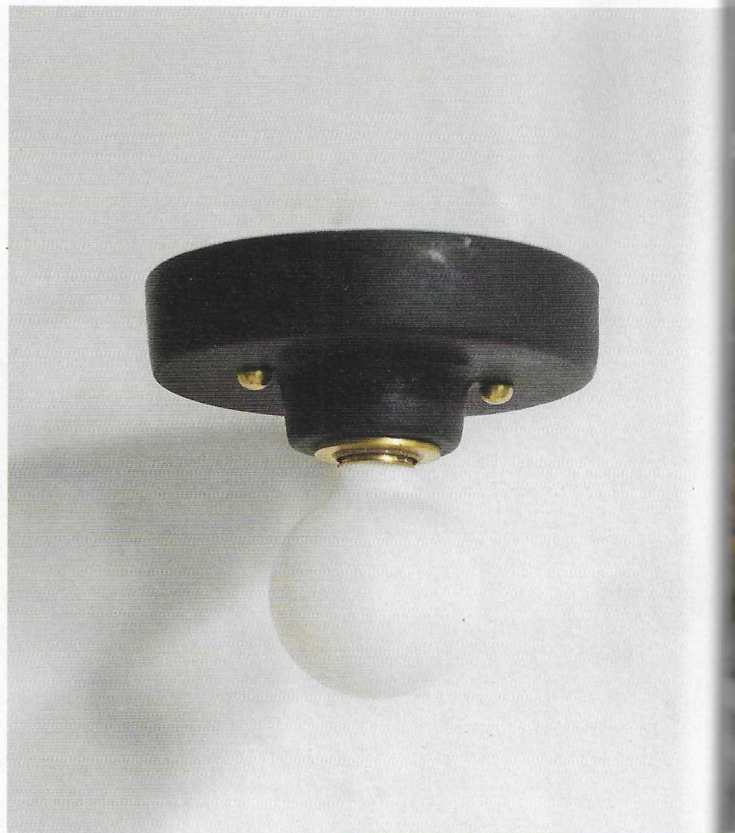
craftspeople. "If we can produce everything within 100 miles, that's something we take pride in. It reflects the special talent of those living here in the Hudson Valley," says Davidson.

The couple's shop proudly displays Tivoli-based Michael Billeci's heirloom-quality Windsor chairs—each takes 100 hours to craft. They offer clever drawer pulls, whimsically shaped like human hands, made by East Durham's Eznic Metal Arts, known for casting luxury jewelry. The couple also design pieces, like their petite wood "breakfast boards" (perfectly sized for a croissant or small charcuterie selection), inspired by boards Biddle's grandmother used.

The conversation about local life and traditions are every bit as important as their wares for sale. In the new larger space, the couple loves to host events, from happy hours with drinks and their favorite soft pretzels (locally made, of course), to panels with the area's historians and creators.

The business, however, is not the only project that keeps them busy: They are building a new home in Germantown and raising their 2-year-old son Crowe. They spend their off-hours (midweek, since the business is open on weekends) picking for new pieces and digging through estate sales and auctions.

Otherwise, they explore the nooks and crannies of the region. Favorite spots include Traghaven, a whisky pub in Tivoli; Misto food pop-ups around the HV; and Coxsackie's Hi-Way Drive-In. "We get burgers and popcorn and make a night of it," says Biddle. "That place is such an asset for those of us with young kids in the area." No surprise there: As always, staying local is what they love most.



Top, the Hallie Surface Mount Light, inspired by 1930s fixtures. Top right, The Palatine Collection cup serves as a wine or cocktail glass, a cup, or a mug. Right, the Small Surface Lamp features a hand-cast porcelain base and brass details.



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