



# AD100

## THE DESIGNERS OF THE YEAR

A PARADISE IN HAWAII  
A MINIMALIST MASTERPIECE IN BELGIUM  
plus **NATE BERKUS** SHARES  
HIS CALIFORNIA DREAM HOUSE

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## The Art of Commerce

Roman and Williams—the go-to firm for *Gwyneth Paltrow*, the Ace Hotel, and others—opens a bounteous home-goods emporium



1. FURNITURE AND OBJECTS FROM ROMAN AND WILLIAMS GUILD NY. 2. CASEY ZABLOCKI CERAMIC URNS, \$650 EACH, AND CUPS, \$175 EACH. 3. COFOUNDERS ROBIN STANDEFER AND STEPHEN ALESCH.

If you visited our house, we might sit on the sofa and have a glass of wine—it's normal," says Robin Standefer, cofounder of Roman and Williams with husband Stephen Alesch. "But it's not normal as a shopping experience." Or, shall we say, it wasn't pre-Roman and Williams Guild NY. The pair's new 7,000-square-foot

Manhattan emporium encompasses their furniture, lighting, and kitchen-and-bath line for Waterworks; artisanal objects from around the world; books; prints; an Emily Thompson flower shop; and Le Mercerie, a brasserie helmed by chef Marie-Aude Rose (wife of Daniel Rose, the chef and co-proprietor of the Roman and Williams-designed Le Coucou).

The Guild is located in an 1860s building that originally housed the oldest department store in America, though most recently it served as a bank. So Standefer and Alesch—whose clients range from Gwyneth Paltrow to the Metropolitan Museum of Art—stripped away drop ceilings and teller windows to reveal the treasured bones. Much of the marble

# DISCOVERIES *debut*

façade is currently being cleaned, unveiling what Alesch describes as a “Venice-like” exterior. The entrance on Howard Street is painted a custom shade that Standefer describes as between “French blue and indigo.” That arresting color is carried over in the open kitchen, which features an Athanor stove from France. Like everything else at the Guild, the stove is for sale (special order in this case). “Our clients, like Gwyneth, are cooks,” Standefer says.

Visitors wander beneath the majestic ceilings and through gracious arches with a sense of discovery, moving from the flower shop through the restaurant and café and into living and dining spaces filled with cabinets that are stocked with fabric and hardware samples. “It’s not precious,” Standefer says. “You can go in and play.”

The mix of antiques and contemporary objects is more than an aesthetic choice: It plays into Roman and Williams’s core philosophy. “Stephen and I have

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always had an interest in the history of techniques in artisanal objects,” Standefer observes. “It really influences our designs.” Adds Alesch, “We’re extremely stubborn about not having historical things be put on pedestals behind velvet ropes and treated as if they’re so much more extraordinary than anything in the present. A cabinet today isn’t going to have the same details as a Colonial one—we’ve moved on from that kind of molding—but we want it to have the same heft, weight, durability, and trustworthiness.” He continues, “While a lot of modern furniture challenges itself to have no memory at all, we are of the mind-set that you can absolutely do both.”

Standefer and Alesch actually sketched the initial designs for the store some 10 years ago, and “it’s been simmering like a broth ever since,” he explains. “Robin and I love to entertain. We love to cook. To us, the house is a place that’s always alive. Stores never inspired us the way being in people’s homes did. In a funny way,” he adds with a smile, “the shop is becoming like our third house.” *rwgild.com* —JANE KELTNER DE VALLE



1. SLING CHAIR, PRICE UPON REQUEST.
2. VEDRAN JASKIC WOODEN TOWER, \$4,000.
3. EMILY THOMPSON FLOWERS IN A VASE BY CASEY ZABLOCKI.
4. SLAB BED MADE FROM CLARO WALNUT, \$42,000.
5. DYLAN BOWEN CERAMIC PLATE, \$195.
6. DAVENPORT SOFA UPHOLSTERED IN CASHMERE MOHAIR, PRICE UPON REQUEST.