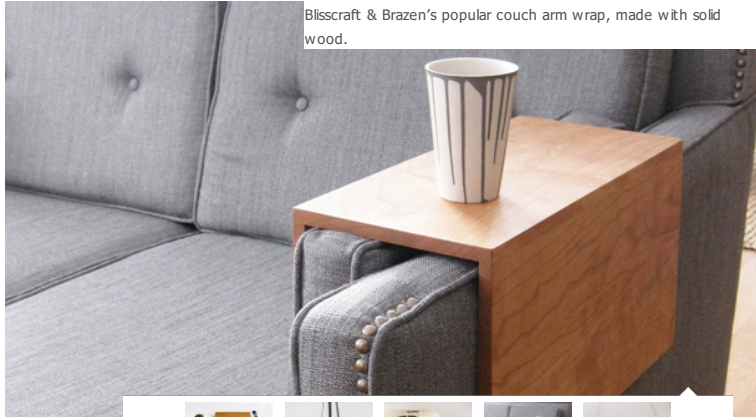




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Blisscraft & Brazen's popular couch arm wrap, made with solid wood.

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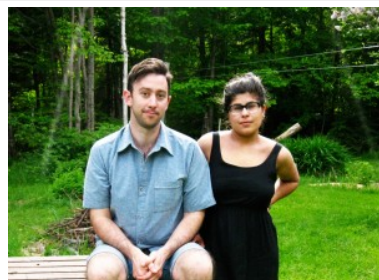
June 26, 2014

Blisscraft & Brazen: When Wood Meets Metal

by Katia Jean Paul / Photos by Rachel Rachna Dhawan

There was **Brazen Design**, a line of nature-inspired sterling silver statement jewelry by designer Rachel Rachna Dhawan. And there was **Blisscraft**, woodworker Aaron Reaume's custom wood furniture business. When the roof of the couple's home – a fixer-upper – almost collapsed and the back of the house threatened to fall apart, Dhawan was forced to move her silver studio into Reaume's woodshop for a season. And so **Blisscraft & Brazen** was born.

While still running their respective businesses, since 2011 the designers have been working together to make furniture, decor accents and household items primarily handcrafted out of wood and metal, two opposite materials that—like Reaume and Dhawan—complement each other beautifully.



Aaron Reaume and Rachel Rachna Dhawan, the duo behind sustainable home goods label Blisscraft & Brazen.

Melding their respective skills, they make various goods, including candle logs, made-to-order dining tables, salad servers, plant hangers, and recently, wine racks, from recycled materials at Silverwood, their one-acre home in Ste-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson, a rural town north of Montreal in the Laurentians.



Their arm wrap—a sleek solid wood-laptop-stand-cum-food-tray built to spec that fits snugly around the armrest of a sofa or across an ottoman—is especially popular. "They're great for urbanites who don't have a lot of space to expand the functionality of their couch," says



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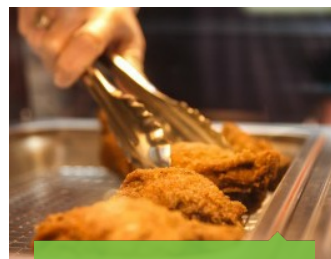
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Bath caddy made with reclaimed wood.

Reaume. Their bath caddy—a flat wooden plank that stretches along the width of the bathtub for holding one's book and glass

of wine while taking a warm bath—takes the juggling act out of the perennial R&R ritual. "The bath caddy is an at-home, treat yourself spa," says the woodworker. "It lends itself to an experience."

The result: functional and beautiful furniture, and minimalist goods that do just what they set out to do while lending elegance and charm to a room. "So much home decor is about unnecessary embellishments," says Dhawan. "For us, it's the material that provides the beauty." The sleek and modern offerings from B&B are sold through Reaume and Dhawan's online shop, [Etsy](#) and at trade shows, including Montreal's [Smart Design Mart](#), [souk@sat](#) and [Puces Pop](#), and Toronto's [One of a Kind Show](#).

But besides clean, uncluttered designs, what's most appealing about B&B is its ethos rooted in sustainability. Reaume and Dhawan spare no effort to source natural occurring materials to make their creations, salvaging scrap wood, forest deadfall, old copper electrical wiring, jewelry and leather, roadside furniture and even the occasional broken piano to repurpose into items for the home. The artisans



The Acorn necklace, the fruit of Reaume and Dhawan's very first design collaboration.

also use beeswax and an eco-friendly hard wax oil that is toxic-free, food safe and free of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) to finish off their wares. Even the packaging and materials used to ship their creations are 100 percent biodegradable. However, both admit establishing an entirely sustainable business isn't always easy or feasible. "We are living in a time where we're still not there yet," says Dhawan. "Certain things are either extremely expensive for us to option or they're extremely hard to find."

Being green in all aspects of life is a value both Dhawan and Reaume shared early on as Fine Arts undergraduates at Concordia University when they met back in 2001.

Dhawan—a Torontonian—launched Brazen Design in 2007 following her studies in fibres and a short stint at École de Joaillerie de Montréal.



Ziggy dining table made with recycled barn wood and cast iron pipes.

Reaume, also from Toronto, obtained a diploma in cabinetmaking from the Rosemount Technology Centre following his studies in sculpture and has been making custom furniture professionally under the name Blisscraft ever since, though he admits, less formally than Dhawan makes jewelry. "I kind of started making things for people who needed things," says Reaume. "It's still very much less formal than

Rachel's business. I still kind of just make things for people who need things."

Four years ago, after Dhawan—who was diagnosed with Lupus, a chronic illness, when she was 18—became ill, suffering from environmental sensitivities, the couple moved from Montreal to the Laurentians, trading city life for the clean, fresh-aired countryside.

But despite being surrounded by lush forests, a freshwater lake and wildlife, the couple still drives to the city from time to time to stock up on organic food at Segal's on the Main, pick up silver and lumber, and catch up with friends over a good meal in and around their old stomping ground: Mile End.



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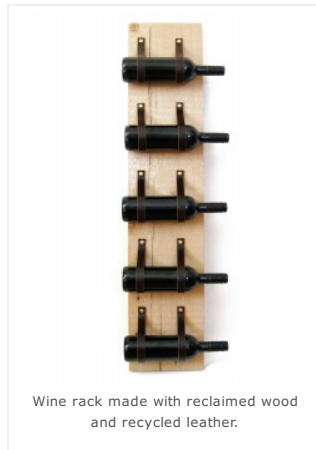


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So what's next for the design duo? New products inspired by the art of record collecting. And further down the line, the couple hopes to build an environmentally friendly woodshop, complete with a biodiesel truck running on vegetable oil for transporting products and lumber.

In the meantime, the artisans have a bit of advice for home owners and apartment dwellers in search of new furniture and household wares to christen their abodes: "When you buy something handmade, custom made and locally made, the likelihood that it'll fit your needs, be of very high quality and last is much higher than if you were to buy a filler," says Dhawan. Reaume offers equally sobering advice. "You should only ever really bring anything into your life that's useful or beautiful."



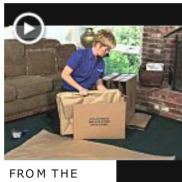
Wine rack made with reclaimed wood and recycled leather.

Blisscraft & Brazen household goods, available at <http://blisscraftandbrazen.com> and on [Etsy](#).

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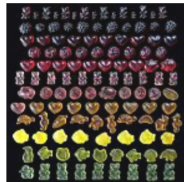
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