

# Made in the USA

It's not often that you'll find Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan on the same side of an issue, but ask either one and he'll tell you he's all for buying American. But to buy American we have to make American. Though we're not the manufacturing powerhouse we were at mid-century, there's still plenty of good design rolling off our assembly lines and out of our workshops.

First the bad news: According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, American manufacturing hit its postwar peak in 1951, when it accounted for 27.9 percent of the gross domestic product. By 2010 that percentage was down to just 11.7 percent—a small tick above the 2009 nadir of 11.2 percent—and the production of furniture and related products as a percentage of GDP accounted for just half of what it did in 1977. As a percentage of GDP, similar declines have hit the manufacturing of textiles, electronics, and appliances with loads of middle class jobs disappearing, too. They wouldn't call it the Rust Belt if all its cogs were turning.

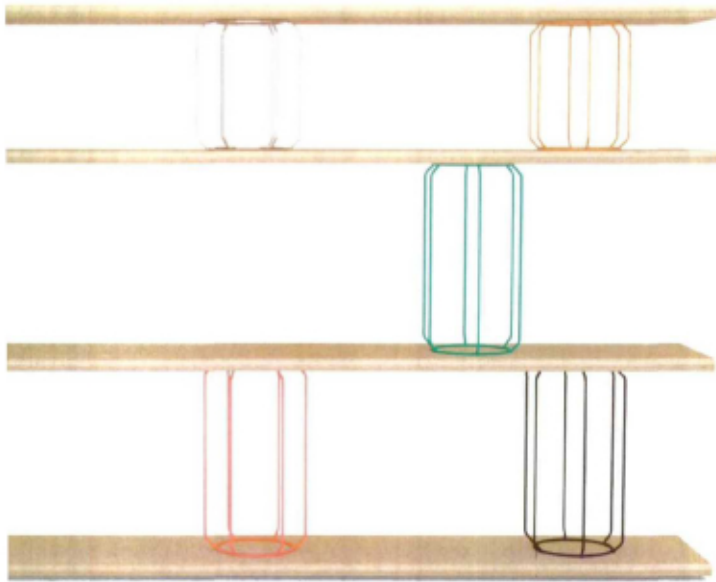
Competition from low-wage countries, manipulated foreign currencies, and a penchant for off-shoring production has put the American factory in dire straits. Yet, when we rounded up the best of American-made design, we were pleasantly surprised at the breadth of goods still made on our shores.

A flashlight made in California, a fly swatter in Ohio Amish country, nail clippers in Idaho, eco-savvy furniture in Philly, and stoves in small-town Mississippi are just a few of the designs that roundly refute the notion that America doesn't make anything anymore. Even more impressive is the constellation of major cities and tiny townships that host the still-chugging American industrial machine.

Granted, some everyday objects (we're looking at you, MacBook) will likely never be made domestically. The odds of ever talking, texting, or becoming the mayor of anything on an American-made mobile phone are slim, but the following pages offer a rousing guide not only to the designs dreamed up here in the United States but to the designers (sung and unsung) who have ensured they are made here too.

So whether your political predilections run toward assuring high wages for workers or robust protectionism (or maybe both), take a page from your old pals Ralph and Pat and look again for the sweetest words in American design lexicon: Made in the USA.

Story by Aaron Britt  
Illustrations by Steven Noble



**Circus, 3 Shelves**  
by Stephen Burks for Mattermade

*Made in Brooklyn, New York*

At Mattermade, nothing is more important than capturing the exact specifics of a design, which means that the best results are achieved without the use of machines. An actual person bends and welds the steel cages that support the Circus shelves, and the rift-cut, Forest Stewardship Council-certified oak is also finished by hand. Here, production methods never alter a design; instead they steadfastly serve it. [mattermatters.com](http://mattermatters.com)



**Klhip Nail Clippers**

*Made in Los Angeles, California, and Ketchum, Idaho*

Although nail clippers might strike you as just the kind of cheap, disposable product likely to be produced overseas, the ergonomic design and limited lifetime guarantee of Klhip is as American as apple pie. The surgical-steel pieces are made in Los Angeles, and the clipper is finished in Klhip's hometown of Ketchum, Idaho. Only a small magnet in the clipper comes from outside the United States. [klhip.com](http://klhip.com)



**Evans Table**  
by Room & Board

*Made in Minneapolis, Minnesota*

The clean lines and warm finish make the Evans table a good fit for trads, mods, and those who can't make up their minds. The family-run metal fabricator Bell Manufacturing makes the steel bases; the process of machining, grinding, hand-welding, and painting takes about a day to complete. Room & Board then assembles the tops and bases. [roomandboard.com](http://roomandboard.com)



**Bean Boots**  
by L.L. Bean  
Brunswick and Lewiston,  
Maine  
[llbean.com](http://llbean.com)



**Fiesta Dinnerware**  
by Homer Loughlin  
China Co.  
Newell, West Virginia  
[hchina.com](http://hchina.com)



**American Modern Dresser**  
**Six-Drawer Low**  
by DWR Design Studio for  
Design Within Reach  
Bradford, Vermont  
[dwr.com](http://dwr.com)



**Improve Toothbrush**  
by Prevent Care  
Products Inc.  
Morristown, Tennessee  
[improvetoothbrush.com](http://improvetoothbrush.com)



**Scrap Lights**  
by Graypants  
Seattle, Washington  
[graypants.com](http://graypants.com)