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DESIGN INSIDER

Handmade in Golden Valley

LOCAL ARTISANS TRANSFORM RECYCLED STEEL INTO GREAT DESIGN FOR ROOM & BOARD.

BY MELINDA NELSON

More than 20 years ago, when the Bell family was making radiator covers, security grills, and gates in a former sausage factory in Northeast Minneapolis, they had no idea that their world of sheet metal gray was about to expand in Technicolor.

The transformation began in June 1990, when John Gabbert,



founder of Room & Board and a passionate supporter of artisans and craftspeople, asked the Bells to create a custom steel table. They produced an initial prototype, and after several iterations the product was ready for sale by September. Customers loved the sleek, clean lines of the table and the fact that it was handmade in Minnesota from recycled American steel.

Based on the success of that first table, Room & Board designers began creating simple yet sophisticated steel beds, tables, media centers, picture frames, outdoor furniture, and other pieces for Bell Manufacturing to produce. Over the years, Bell's portfolio >>

FROM BOTTOM: Led by siblings Jim and Judy Bell, Bell Manufacturing creates the Slim Round End Table (\$219) and nearly 1,000 other items for Room & Board.



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CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: The experts at Bell Manufacturing turn recycled American steel into colorful children's beds that can be custom-ordered in adult sizes. • Loft set with twin platform (\$1,299), from Room & Board, roomandboard.com

of Room & Board products grew to include beds, desks, frames, picture ledges, and other items in high-gloss yellow, bright orange, ocean blue, blossom pink, kelly green, vivid red, and other colors.

Bell Manufacturing, now based in Golden Valley, produces nearly 1,000 products including a variety of custom, "by the inch" items for Room & Board. Siblings Jim Bell, president, and Judy Bell, vice president, like it that way. "Everyone at Room & Board is extremely creative and responsive, which makes it really easy for us," says Judy.

Room & Board is equally satisfied with the relationship. "By working directly with Bell Manufacturing and other small, family-owned companies across the country, we can offer beautiful, handcrafted, American-made furniture and accessories at a great value," says Gene Wilson, director of vendor management and merchandising. "Our close relationships with artisan partners allow our customers to order custom pieces that can be delivered to their homes in as little as three weeks, and will provide enjoyment for years to come." •

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