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hospitality design

the economy's a bitch
...but creativity is thriving!



By Jana Schiowitz
Headshot by Surrinder Singh



she's crafty

"Growing up in India, I saw so many handicrafts around me but saw that these were dying with modern, machine-made furniture coming into the market," says designer Reeta Gyamlani. "I decided to start a company that would be able to make products that had modern day application while reviving the craft." Easier said than done, she found out. In a culture where "being either a doctor or an engineer are default options and being a designer was almost contrarian," Gyamlani needed a lot of determination to create her now her six-year-old firm, Farrago Design.

After completing schooling in India, she came to New York City to study at Pratt, earning a master's in design management in 2002, and working as a designer at Hirst Pacific (a product design and branding company), AWA Lighting Designers, and Federated Merchandising Group. With a burning desire to bring traditional hand craftsmanship to modern day design, Gyamlani co-founded her company with her mentors, Arthur and Rita Ermolino. "I knew the products we would design would be a medley of many things—people, materials, and techniques," she says.

For each collection that Gyamlani designs, she studies, develops, and uses a new technique or material that was not necessarily accessible to product designers before. For her latest, the Patterns in Sand collection, she chose resin for its endless options. "The concept started from reviving the craft of inlay," she says. "We were looking at how inlay has been used over centuries and wanted to have a modern take to it." Gyamlani started with a water-based resin and the results exceeded even her expectations—she was not only able to offer a wide range of colors, but found that the material also fit the firm's eco-friendly philosophy. "Being sustainable has to become an essential part of everyone's lifestyle to make the change."



Left, from top: Two pieces from the Patterns in Sand collection: the Fleur end table and stool, and the Lilies table using an inlay technique.

High Tech: The designer is working with Philadelphia-based design firm Point B on advanced software and designs to give craftsmen the ability to make more precise patterns. "It's going to be a unique combination of old crafts meeting today's technology—a 'laptop mit lederhosen' of sorts."

Lesson Learned: Gyamlani aims at creating products that are both timeless and have a "wow" factor. "A well-designed product will be an heirloom and that's what I try and manufacture."

Work It: Gyamlani would love to collaborate with fashion designer Carlos Miele. "I think his philosophy is very similar to what we are trying to achieve—working with local communities and making a difference. I love his use of patterns and colors and think we could do something magical in collaboration."

www.farragodesign.com



Left, from top: The Serenity end table and stool and Half Moon table, both part of the Sand collection and made of camel bone chips overlaid on wood; and the Lilies Buffet piece, from the Patterns in Sand collection.

