

investing in luxury upholstery, it's about the way that it feels when you sit on it, when you touch it. It's impossible to get that from a computer. You just can't."

The key to success in the better-end upholstered furniture business, McGann believes, "is offering a really wonderful shopping experience that is visually stimulating, interesting and inspiring. You need to do more now to lure people out of their homes, to get into their cars and go somewhere, especially when they can sit at their computer scrolling."

Inside the chic and airy Lillian August stores, best described as a one-stop resource for unique and luxurious home furnishings, the focus is on "creating a friction-less experience. We have what we call our Project Area, which is a large, dedicated space with lots of tables where designers can work. That's where all our fabric samples are, and we have a dedicated trade team with multiple people there to support the designers. There's a café, so you can eat, have coffee and stay there all day. It's designed to be a beautiful showroom experience that really supports our trade clientele, but also our in-house designers who have a great place to work with clients."

THE INSTA-FACTOR

In some ways, Instagram has been a boon to the luxury sector in that "it's an amazing way to share beautiful imagery and get inspired and connected with brands and designers," McGann describes. "For so many designers now, their only investment in marketing is the time they spend with Instagram. And all the emphasis on personal expression means that people want to make more of a statement. For a long time, everything was gray, monochromatic and safe. But people now are feeling a little

bit more adventurous. They're thinking about how their room will look photographed for their Instagram feed."

As fall is typically the big push at retail, "we're highlighting brands that we work with and spotlighting their specific points of view, supporting them through Instagram posts, emails and on our website, where brands like Timothy Oulton and Sonder Living have their own designated spaces," McGann says. "So much of this is a constant quest to get more content and if you can partner with brands like these that have beautiful imagery, it helps to feed the beast. We're also doing that with our own signature line — Lillian August for Hickory White — giving it more real estate in every sense of the word."

"The best designer interiors have custom elements and personal details that set them apart," August says. "The collection boasts a myriad of fine fabrics and Old-World forms combined with urban chic styling. These layers are meant to feel collected over time with archival references that tell the story of a home."

Bold, saturated color and fabulous prints being more "Insta"-friendly than, say plain neutrals, it's surely no surprise that these will be making a comeback both at High Point Market and in Lillian August stores this fall, where the European couture high fashion that inspired the designer's spring season is just now beginning to hit the floors. Designed to make people stop scrolling in their feeds, the Modern Living upholstery collection, for example, presents versatile performance fabrics — "huge in an area like Connecticut where there are so many young families who don't want to invest in something their kids are going to destroy," — lush velvets, and Italian-style trophy fabrics with the designer's signature color confidence. **FLD**



Top Left: Lee Industries celebrates 50 years of timeless design with a classic chair in unusual settings. Above left: Lillian August infuses home with a couture fashion aesthetic. Above right: The small-scale Dessa Chaise designed by Marshall Erb for Stanford Furniture.