



Over the the last few years Mikael and I have met up for coffee, run into each other at events around Los Angeles and visited each other's studios and every time we talk immediately about process, materials and the future of art and design. This chair and ottoman was born out of a mutual love and respect for one another and the general desire to bring new things into the world. This piece is one of a kind and will never be replicated. The rug Mikael has selected is over 100 years old and we both have a deep appreciation for where it's come from and see this new form as a celebration and furthering of it's story.

## Stephen Kenn

KKR Tell me about the first piece of furniture you ever made? Do you still have it?

SK My introduction into furniture design came about through curiosity. I had spent about 3 years immersed in bag design and working closely with vintage military canvas. My approach was to reduce the frame down to it's simplest form and expose the functionality and then use materials that tell a more interesting story.

I started with a sofa that I bought at a thrift store and I took all of the fabric off and burned the wooden frame until it was black. I exposed the springs and webbing and used flat head nails to reupholster the old foam with military half shelters, the seat cushion was made with vintage burlap medical sacks and olive canvas.

The result was something new, the process was exhilarating but I couldn't help but think that I could reduce this form even further. It was after this initial exploration that I designed The Inheritance Collection. I have kept this original sofa with a matching chair in my studio wrapped up for archive purposes and am looking forward to keeping other prototypes along the way.

KKR I love how ingrained your life is with your business, there doesn't seem to be much separation. Was that a conscious choice between you and Beks? Do you find it helps drive the story of your brand?

SK It was never really a conversation to separating our personal life and our work life. I tend to be a pretty open book about my successes and failures and find that when things are tough at work i give more attention to that space and when things are less busy I travel and seek inspiration, but it all feeds itself. Regarding Beks and I being married and working together, we've had to work really hard at making that healthy. It's easy to be all consumed by work and let that be the driving force. I do feel like our transparency helps drive the story. If I'm excited about something it can make its way into the narrative of where the company is going and I'm able to be much more focused both inside and outside of the office.



KKR Is there one place (client/person/institution) that you dream of seeing one of your couches?

SK That's a good question... I'm already blown away with our client list and have never really had a "dream" client or partnership. I get really excited by the transformation of our design when we have outside influences. For example this project that we worked on together is something that I would have never done alone but because of your passion for these rare vintage rugs and seeing them take on new forms, I then have the opportunity and challenge to figure out how to make that work for our furniture. I hope we have the chance to work with many other creative people who are passionate about textiles and design.

KKR One of the things that I've come across in my work is limits, both in my photography and rug dealing. In photography, Polaroid went out of business at the height of my work (which was all Polaroid based) putting a definitive end on that project. With the rugs, I can only buy what's in the country (we currently aren't allowed to import) so I'm pulling from a closed system, once a rug is gone it's gone. I know you've run into some issues finding more military fabric for your iconic couch. How does that affect your business or mentality about what you have produced. Are you fine letting it go or do you wish for more?

SK I really love the vintage military fabric. It's been such a rewarding material to work with because the result is surprising every time. Knowing that it's limited does make it hard in some ways but also knowing that something is special and can not be made forever is a really important thing to remember. Lately we have asked customers to get involved with the sourcing. We have been transparent about how difficult the material is to find and we have been met with customers who ship us their tent that they grew up camping as a family in or others have got on the phone and started tracking down the material themselves. I love this! It feels like they have skin in the game and that we are working on their furniture together. Every time the client feels more connected to the product because of their involvement in the process.

KKR When I approached you about a rug chair...what were your thoughts? What made you say yes?

SK Initially I wasn't sure that it was possible, which is rare for me to say but you were insistent, ha ha. Our conversations were always in line and we shared the same philosophy on why we feel that it is important to bring new things into the world. The story has an inherent value. I see this project as not only a collaboration that resulted in a chair and ottoman but also as a conversation that has driven us both to care more about what we do and return to the question of why we do it. For me it's the act of exploration that drives me forward the curiosity that sparked my first initial love for furniture is rekindled every time I get to make something that I've never made before.

## Mikael Kennedy of King Kennedy Rugs

SK A quote or philosophy that you return to often?

KKR I've been playing around with this idea of embracing Folk Art as a way of design. In some ways it brings in elements Wabi Sabi, but it's just making things, wether you know how to or not, embracing the imperfections, the mistakes. I know how to operate a sewing machine, I make a ton of stuff but I would never say I know how to sew. None of my lines are straight, or even planned out, but they are beautiful and serve a purpose.

SK Oldest rug that you've been in possession of (And do you still own it?)

KKR I've come across a few pieces from the mid 1800's, I don't still have them. What I love most about this project is cycling the rugs through the collection. I get to buy any rug I fall in love with and then pass it on to someone else, this is more art dealing to me than antique dealing. I try not to be too nostalgic or precious with the rugs. It's what keeps me from being a hoarder. Everything is for sale at some point, there are always more rugs to be found. My prized piece right now and one of my oldest is a Navajo Chiefs Blanket from the turn of the century, it's a piece I secretly hope never sells.

SK KKR A trick that you've discovered, that helps you make decisions?

SK I don't think anyone would ever accuse me of having trouble making decisions. I'm fairly impulsive, to me there is no point worrying wether a decision is right or not, you'll find out eventually and then adjust.

SK An artist you admire? (And why?)

KKR Robert Irwin, the everyone should read "Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees", he understands things on a different level than most people, how he talks about art and his art is on another level. One of my favorite parts is where he argues with an art critic in an interview insisting that a kid in the valley building a hot rod is an artist like any other.

SK Something that keeps giving you hope about the future?

KKR Just that it exists, every day is a blessing, especially doing what my wife and I do, pursuing lives based on art, we are very lucky to be able to do what we do. I never for a second take that for granted.

