

► Wac ◀

Scott Cartwright and Jenny Lynn Weitz-Amaré Cartwright founded wacdesignstudio in 2009 in Houston. Their story illustrates how the advantages of this city are often economic and personal. They met while attending the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. Though they both studied art, they were more interested in how art related to design, and they began by making furniture in their small apartment in Boston. But working in the city posed a problem: they could only work on projects at certain times of the day

to avoid disturbing their neighbors in their high-density neighborhood, and the high cost of renting space prevented them from moving their furniture-making to a studio.

Houston provides them with opportunities that they didn't have in Boston: access to the woodworking shop of Scott's family, who owns a cabinetry business in The Woodlands, gives them capabilities (including scrap material) they wouldn't otherwise have, and affordable studio space allows them to make things without disturbing neighbors. What is more, day jobs provide them with an income stream to sustain themselves.

After acquiring a studio in David Ad-

dicks's warehouse building, they have used models, sketches, and CAD drawings to develop their designs and determine how to build their pieces. At nights and on weekends, they drive up to the family woodworking shop in The Woodlands to produce their pieces after hours, using scraps and leftover components from the shop. Though they do not have access to more technologically advanced equipment, such as multi-axis CNC routers, the modest but well-equipped facility lets them use machines they wouldn't otherwise. With edge banders, saws, drills, joiners, and vacuum formers—even a large finishing booth—they have the means to produce well-crafted pieces. Given these capabilities, they are only limited by the amount of time they have to spare. For that reason, when they go to the shop, they make sure to have everything already planned out so they can spend as much time as possible making furniture. They already have figured out exactly what jigs and forms to make, what materials they will use, and how long it will take them to finish. And they must ready the shop for its regular business on Monday morning as if they were never there.

Though they plan out their entire weekend's production, the act of fabrication often becomes a learning process. Once, when a formwork broke while a bent plywood lounge was hardening, they realized they preferred the unexpected results. Each time they produce something, they find a simpler way of doing it or they adjust their designs for more refined results. And each new experience in production gives them a better understanding of how to continually improve their ultimate designs.

As they look ahead to the future, they want to grow their practice only to the point that it sustains them full-time. They value the idea that work like theirs has a perceived value because of its rarity. However, unlike Chloe Dao, who has adopted the more clearly established model of a fashion house—where a designer has an atelier where she can design and produce work and a retail outlet to sell that work—these designers must formulate their own independent position in the production of their design. They have no clearly delineated path to follow to achieve their goals. And that looming question may prove a greater challenge to solve than actually producing new work.

*On weekend nights, Scott Cartwright and Jenny Lynn Weitz-Amaré Cartwright work on molded plywood furniture in the finishing room of a cabinetry company in The Woodlands.*



*The duo designs primarily in plywood combining bent and planar forms, a logical consequence of available material and equipment.*