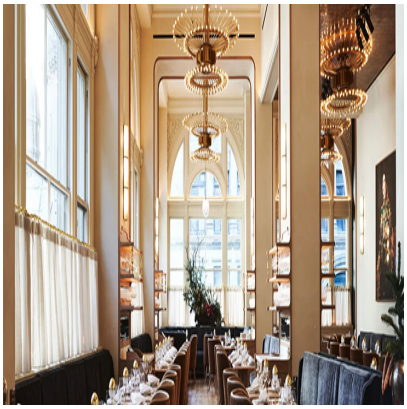


Old World Charm: Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch

Description



Stephen Alesch and Robin Standefer in New York, April 2016

Husband-and-wife team Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch are the charismatic, larger-than-life founders of Roman and Williams, an American interiors and architecture firm making waves throughout the contemporary design world. Founded in 2002, their company took the names â??Roman and Williamsâ?? from their maternal grandfathers, a move that would set the stage for their design ethos, with its old-world charm, familial warmth and focus on sustainability. Their combined creative energy has filled some of the worldâ??s most adventurous interior spaces, but it is in New York that they have left the most indelible mark, filling hotels, clubs and homes with rustic materials, hand-crafted objects and richly tactile surfaces.



Roman and Williams, the Boom Boom Room, New York, 2010

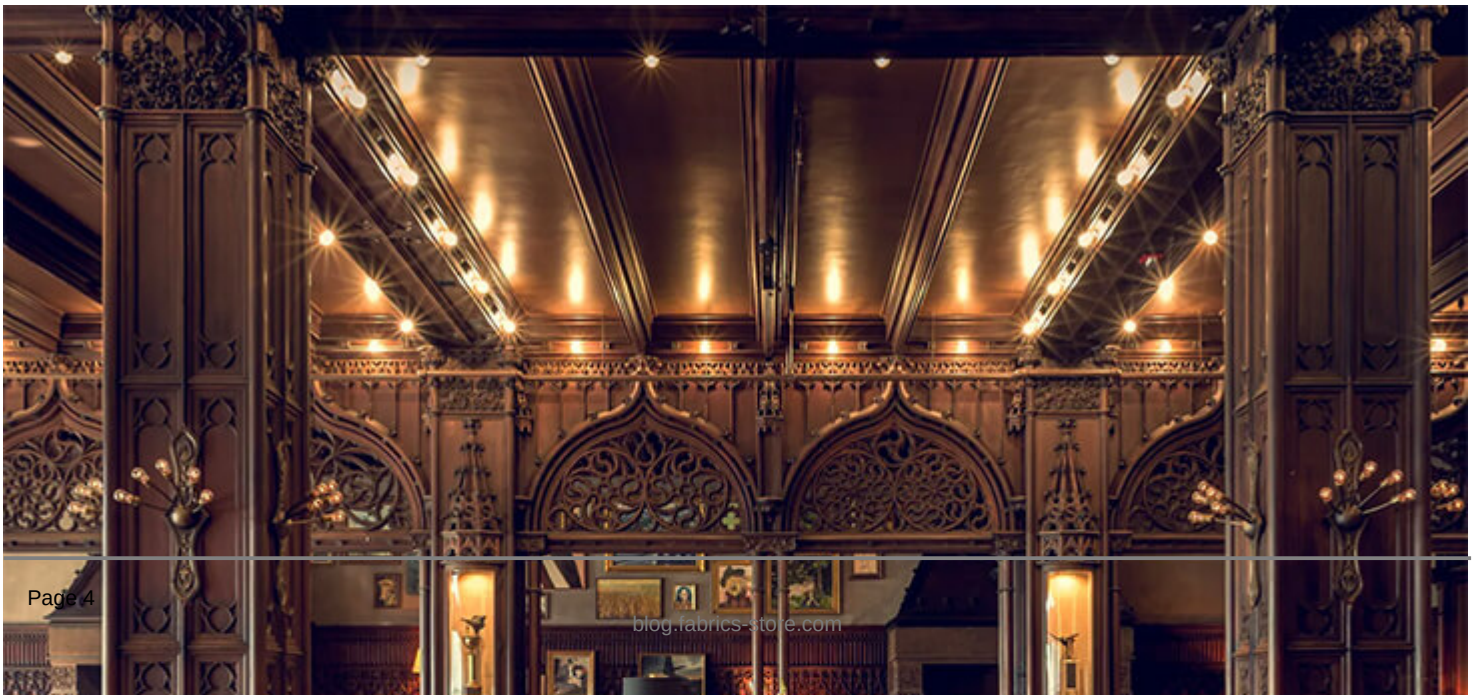
Robin and Stephenâ??s paths first crossed in 1992 when both were working in Hollywood film sets, creating eye-catching and instantly memorable staging for the industryâ??s leading movies. Hailing from New York, Robin was working as a production designer, while Stephen, from Malibu, was designing film sets. The pair joined forces within the film industry, where they worked for over a decade with huge crews building stages for Hollywood films, but by 2002 they were ready for a new challenge. After taking up one long-term residential commission, they saw the potential to create a more long-lasting, meaningful impact in the world, and before long they had abandoned film entirely to focus on interiors.



A Brooklyn home designed by Roman and Williams, Copyright Bruce Buck 2014

It was the rounded, three-dimensional realm of experience of interior design that had Robin hooked, as the observed, â??experiences are more important than design.â?• This lived-in, long-lasting quality is something they aspire to in all their projects, aiming to create spaces that are approachable and human. Even so, the influence of film stayed with them as they branched out into a new arena, as Stephen noted, â??I think we always think of the camera â?? your eye, the first revealâ?¦ that first powerful impact establishing shot.â?•

As might be expected, the closeness the couple share, on both a personal and professional level is not without its challenges, particularly when both are such strong characters. â??Weâ??re both demanding. Weâ??re both bossy,â?• says Stephen, â??Itâ??s not like classical music playing all day long.â?• But it is this tenacious drive that pushes both team leaders to challenge one another. Stephen admits he can be the slower worker, while Robin likes to move things along, so each pulls the other in line. He explains, â??If I slack off or get lazy, she picks up on it right away. And vice versa. If sheâ??s moving too quickly on projects, Iâ??m like â??Slow down!â??.â?• On a creative front, Robin emphasises how important each of their individual design visions is within the team, saying, â??I think you have to be able to connect with your own creativity, your own vision, and then make it strong together.â?•



blog.fabrics-store.com

Chicago Athletic Association Hall, Â© Alan Shortall 2015

Both also speak of a desire to switch-off from work mode in their down time together, where they enjoy mutual creative ventures outside of work including surfing, planting vegetables, cooking and making pottery in their rustic Montauk home. This relaxed, hippie vibe is one they carry out into their design work, which, as sentimental as it might sound, is fuelled by â??loveâ?? for the hard-won, hand-crafted objects they work with. â??Thereâ??s something beautiful when you pour your heart into objects and then people have them and use them,â?• says Robin. It is this love that keeps them going through the hard times, when money or permit issues threaten to shut their enterprises down, or compromise their design vision.



Roman and Williamsâ??s latest restaurant project Veronika in New York

Throughout the many spaces they have designed, this solid integrity and emphasis on craftsmanship is clear to see, from the Boom Boom Room club in New York, with its old Hollywood-style honey-glazed colour scheme combining alder, brass, burl wood and cream leather, to the Metropolitan Museum of Artâ??s new British Galleries, which displays 400 years of British art in a sensitively nuanced, well-lit space. Looking ahead, Robin and Stephen have an alternative vision of the future, not the one filled with pristine white Modernism and Space Age style that we are used to seeing, but one that is instead more nuanced and ecologically aware, with a profound respect for the world we live in.

CATEGORY

1. POWER COUPLES

Category

1. POWER COUPLES

Date Created
August 8, 2021
Author
rosie-lesso