

# CLASSIC DRIVER

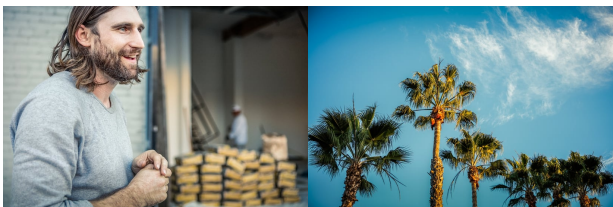
## [Stephen Kenn's LA-made furniture is a new answer to an old problem](#)

### Lead

"Creating things that are worthy of repair" — that's the motto of Stephen Kenn, a Los Angeles-based furniture designer whose original, minimal, and sustainable pieces are designed to last lifetimes...



Operating from (and living in) a converted loft in Downtown Los Angeles with his wife, Beki Opperman, Stephen Kenn lives and breathes to design and create. "The world doesn't need another chair," he says, "but maybe the world needs a chair that makes you think about its form or suits people's new ideals." It's a novel way of looking at how to solve an old problem in a new way — essentially the design philosophy of Kenn's eponymous design studio. That, and drawing on Los Angeles' incredible wealth of resources and connecting its abundantly creative people to create sustainable goods that will be passed from generation to generation. There's a reason he called his first furniture range the Inheritance Collection...



Having started his career in denim at just 20 years old, Kenn relocated from Canada to California 14 years ago. Years later, when the recession hit and put an abrupt halt to his business, he discovered a store of surplus military fabric and set about sewing and selling hundreds of bags. This became a business in itself, until seven years ago, when he sold it to establish his own furniture design studio, driven by the desire to create a living space that reflected his personality and tastes. "I started ripping sofas apart to see how they were built and I knew there was a way to make them simpler," he comments. Sure enough, his very first 'reimagined' sofas were received extremely well — his first customer was a certain Tommy Hilfiger.



Seven years later, and Stephen Kenn Studio produces a variety of LA-made goods, including tie-ups with such brands as Victorinox and, coincidentally, a tasteful collection of bags crafted from the very remanufactured military fabric that helped him to create the business in the first place. His multiuse loft is a fantastic space, filled with a mix of motorcycles (LA's biggest secret, apparently), furniture he's created, and thoughtfully collected items, such as books and whiskeys. "We've identified that I'm a creator and my wife, Beks, is a collector," he explains. "I want to spend all my money on new ideas, while she wants to spend all her money on books or whiskeys or things she likes to collect. Together, this is what it looks like!" The pair host coffee mornings and cocktail events for no reason other than to meet other Angelenos and to try to unite a community — their optimism, thoughtfulness, and drive is truly infectious and a wonderful example of just what you need to succeed in this fiercely competitive city.

*Photos: Alex Lawrence for Classic Driver © 2018*

#### **Gallery**











































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