ALIFE OF DESIGN

Perfectionists Richard and Catherine Frinier reflect on lives well spent in the worlds of travel and design.

By Mark Brock

ver the course of four decades, Richard Frinier has become a design icon within the casual furniture industry, first as creative officer with Brown Jordan, where he helped establish the brand's cutting edge in casual furniture, then as president of DesignResource, to his design consultancy today, where he serves casual industry category leaders.

We reached out to Richard, and wife, Catherine, to invite reflections on a life devoted to design for outdoor living.

Richard Frinier is a native and lifelong resident of California, a place that has provided an environment where creativity and outdoor lifestyles became engrained in his personality and career.

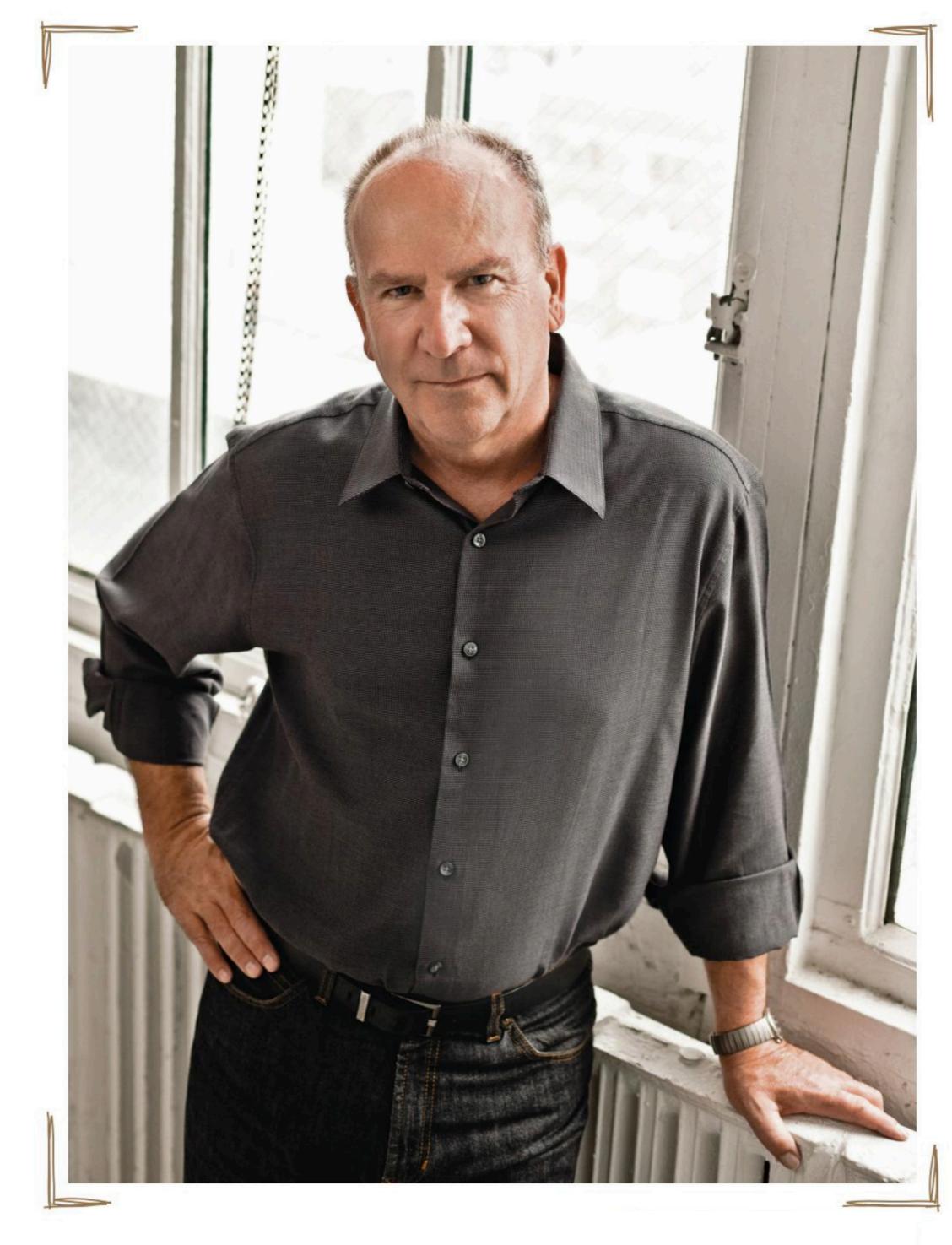
Richard Frinier: "When I turned eight, we moved from Los Angeles, where I was born, to the suburbs where orange trees grew from across the street to as far as you could see. The days were long riding my bike, skateboarding, and exploring. I delivered newspapers from a bag on my bicycle handlebars and watched as my brother made a surfboard.

"While we were some 15 miles from the ocean, my friends and I called ourselves the Inland Surf Club. We made our own wet suits, and I shaped my first surfboard. My parents' garage became my workshop making all sorts of things such as a sail for my skateboard, a small boat, and an attempt to build a fiberglass sports car from a VW chassis. Life was different then."

Tell us a little about your family and how it shaped your career.

Frinier: "My father was an accountant and retired after working 50 years for the Union Oil Company of California. My mother was an artist and painter, and would cut and sew her own dresses, and a few shirts for me. She worked for the local middle school as an executive assistant to the principal, the same school that my brother and I attended. My parents played bridge with their friends, and every summer we would take a road trip to see how many states we could visit.

"Creative influences came from my mother, while planning, strategizing and discipline came from my father."



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Top to Bottom: Richard in Le Mans, France, on his 1964 Triumph. Frinier working in the Anton Lang Pottery Studio.

As a young man, Richard decided to explore Europe, an experience that ultimately led him to a career in design.

Frinier: "As soon as I went off to college, my mother and father set off to see the world. Wanderlust was in our family. When I was about to turn 21, I decided to take a break from college and left for Europe. As it was cool and common at that time, I hitchhiked for a while until I realized that the best way to experience my adventure would be by motorcycle. Not just any motorcycle, but one like Steve McQueen rode in "The Great Escape." So I hitchhiked to London and bought a Triumph.

"From London, I rode through France, Spain and crossed into North Africa. I spent about two weeks in Morocco, from Tangier to Casablanca and Marrakesh and through the Atlas Mountains to the edge of the Sahara. The adventure continued through Italy and Germany before shipping the bike back home. It was my first of many travels throughout Europe, but those four months of being a free spirit were some of the best of my adventures."

You mention many travels to Europe. We understand it was during one of these trips that your design career began to come into

Frinier: "When I was 24 years old I had just graduated from college with a degree in art and wanted to see if I could apply anything I had learned at school. Leaving for Europe with only \$250 and a one-way ticket, I challenged myself to stay a year.

"I was running out of money when I reached Munich. It wasn't as easy as I thought it might be to get a job. I had taken some pottery classes in college, so I traveled to the village of Oberammergau south of Munich and knocked on the door of the Anton Lang Pottery Studio and presented myself as a master potter from California.

"Karl, Anton's son and master potter, let me throw some pots on the kick wheel to show him my skills. I made three or four large vases, one that ended up as a pitcher with a spout and a handle, and I was hired. I could tell Karl wasn't that impressed, except for the pitcher.

"Karl named the pitcher 'Krug Rikkard' or 'Richard's Pitcher,' and two weeks later we set up a booth at the Ambiente Fair in Frankfurt to show off our pottery, including Krug Rikkard. To my amazement, we received orders for 40 pitchers. In school, we were taught to make one of a kind pieces not multiples. Now, I was challenged to make all 40 look alike. I returned to the studio later that year to make even more Krug Rikkards to meet the demand and build inventory.

"Earlier this year, I was again traveling in Europe and made a point to drive to Oberammergau. The potter's studio is still there, although it is now the artist's studio of Karl's daughter. It was a great visit and stories of the earlier days were shared."

Richard's design leadership in the casual industry came about as the result of serendipitous events, leading him to the position of chief creative officer at Brown Jordan and a 20-year career that helped to transform an entire industry.

Frinier: "Before I joined Brown Jordan in the fall of 1981, I was teaching furniture making to college students while also developing a lighting collection. My big break came when I was asked to design a bedroom collection for a California-based company. To our surprise, in the first five years of production they shipped 9,000 sets.

"Outdoor furniture design was not on my radar until I saw a chaise lounge on the cover of the Los Angeles Times magazine. It was somewhat of an epiphany as I was drawn to its minimal and sculptural form. The chaise was from Brown Jordan, which was only an hour away from where I was living.

"I did some research, created some drawings, and contacted Brown Jordan to offer my freelance services. I met the design manager on a Friday to show him my concepts and learned that, on the following Sunday, the company would be running an ad for an entry-level designer. I was not looking for a full-time position, though over the weekend it occurred to me that if I were there every day, I could make it happen. On Monday, I applied for the position and, after several interviews, I got the job.

"Funny how it all worked out, as I was there for 21 years every day making it happen, and now I'm still working with Brown Jordan only from the outside circling back to my original idea.'

Spanning two decades, Richard's career with Brown Jordan not only elevated the Brown Jordan brand, but also illustrated the possibilities of stylish, comfortable, and durable outdoor furniture.

Frinier: "In the 1980s, Brown Jordan was known for its storied design legacy illustrating the classic California lifestyle. I was fortunate to work with mid-century modern designer Hall Bradley, a talented yet very quiet and thoughtful creative spirit. I learned much from being in his presence.

"Over two decades I evolved to become the company's chief creative officer and also became president of an in-house creative division that I formed, DesignResource. My role was to oversee design and creative processes for the company's 14 brands, including design, research and development, brand differentiation, marketing, advertising, and public relations.

"I traveled extensively and worked with master artisan craftspeople around the world. It was a prolific time for me when I created more than 1,000 individual pieces of furniture across hundreds of collections. It was astoundingly challenging, inspiring, and rewarding to source and design products while also directing photography for marketing and advertising campaigns, and showroom build-outs to convey our brand message.

"My wife, Catherine, and I became business partners and created our design studio with a sabbatical nowhere in sight. Today, we enjoy design, creative collaborations, and consulting with Brown Jordan, Century Furniture, DEDON, and Sunbrella, and will be adding interior furniture and other categories to our portfolio. It was not a matter of risk-taking to create our own firm, but a continuum on what was next for Catherine and me."



Frinier working on photography with Brown Jordan.

"I was given the opportunity to become the ambassador for a brand that I had discovered many years before on the cover of a magazine quite by accident. All that we achieved at Brown Jordan during those years set the stage for the next chapter of my work."

Was it a leap of faith or a logical career progression to leave Brown Jordan and create the Richard Frinier Design Studio?

Frinier: "In 2002, I had been with Brown Jordan for almost 21 years. The company was going through changes and so was I. It was the right time for me to retire from Brown Jordan, and I was ready for a sabbatical with some time off. My plan to get away for a break, however, was upended almost immediately by a new project.

Richard often sums up his design philosophy in three words - "authentic, relevant, and memorable." We asked him to elaborate.

Frinier: "My personal design mantra is that my designs must be authentic, relevant, and memorable. I challenge myself to achieve these attributes in each of my designs with the goal of making an emotional connection with others. For a designer, there is really no greater compliment than to know that people make that personal connection with your work.

"Sometimes, when I'm traveling to international or national trade shows where my designs are being shown, I am fortunate to see people when they experience my designs for the first time. It's pretty amazing when someone begins to smile, relax, and be drawn into the piece to experience it. It is really why I do what I do.

"The very best retailers appreciate the importance of making an emotional connection with their customers, which makes it even more important for me to design furniture and textiles with this in mind."

The casual marketplace has evolved from thinking about individual pieces of furniture to the concept of the Outdoor Room. How has your work figured into this transformation?

Frinier: "Since my first outdoor designs emerged while I was working at Brown Jordan, I strived to meet a high standard that I believed the brand was created to achieve. Once there, I was driven to go beyond the past and became a creative disrupter.

"As I became more confident in my direction as marked by successes across the industry, I began to affect changes in the perception of the outdoor furniture category. I played a role in designing and fueling many socioeconomic trends, including the Outdoor Room, elimination of boundaries between interior and exterior living spaces, staycations, daycations, resort living, and resort-at-home lifestyles.

"More than at any other time in history, the need for balanced living is growing because of the increasing demands made by the live-work-play environment. This is true for those who work at home and for companies who require employees to be at work for longer hours and days. For us, indoor/outdoor living and balanced living is not a trend. It's a lifestyle choice and it's only going to grow in importance, necessity, and popularity."

While design has been essential to the progress of the outdoor category, Richard also recognizes the importance of advanced materials and manufacturing processes.

Frinier: "We ask a lot of materials and products to withstand the outdoors, and they certainly deliver. I sometimes think, however, that lifetime warranties are not really what people are interested in. More and more I see people interested in refreshing and changing out their furniture, textiles, and accessories, not because they are not lasting for years, but because they want a different look or function for their homes as their life experiences evolve.

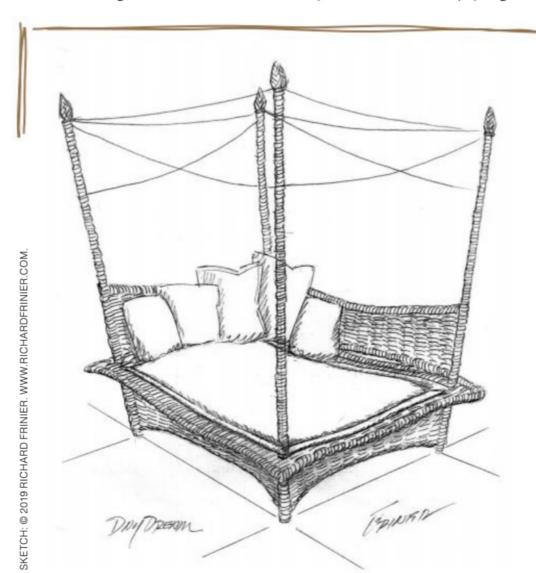
"When I'm designing furniture and textiles, I think about the person who will be enjoying the furniture. I set the

bar high for myself and hope to inspire and encourage the brands we collaborate with. It goes back to making an emotional connection with others through design. It's my intention, starting with initial concepts, to deliver the unexpected in the most visually appealing and physically comfortable way possible."

Anyone who has worked with Richard Frinier knows that an essential element in his success has been his partnership with his wife, Catherine. We asked her about her life story and partnership with Richard.

Catherine: "Richard and I were born and raised within three miles of one another. Even though we did not know each other in those early years, we knew the same places and grew up in the Los Angeles area of Southern California. When we finally met in the fall of 1981, I learned that he was teaching furniture making at the college level, and that he had also just accepted a design position with Brown Jordan.

"At that time, I was working for a large regional medical center in their combined capital development, fundraising, and community education departments. I was part of a small staff responsible for producing more than 100 fundraising



The sketch and completed product for DEDON's Daydream Daybed.





Catherine Frinier.

and community events each year, in collaboration with an extraordinary group of community volunteers.

"Richard and I became friends through friends in common; we married in 1986 in Las Vegas when we quietly eloped between Christmas and New Year's. It was the only time that he was not traveling for new product development.

"We have resided in the Belmont Heights area of Long Beach for many years. We live in a classic California Mediterranean home originally built in 1922 that Richard restored and we remodeled over time. We are presently building a modern home in the Santa Barbara area with a significant design studio space to collaborate with our clients, mentor students, and as a gathering place for creative thinking."

How has your career prepared you for your role today, working with Richard and with your casual industry clients?

Catherine: "My career has spanned three decades with an emphasis on luxury brands and co-branding, marketing, sales management, public relations, and communications. These experiences have encompassed commercial, retail, and luxury residential real estate, architecture, interior design, and non-profits. The past 25 years have been almost exclusively focused on luxury- and design-related industries, with the past 16 years fully engaged in collaborating with Richard in our creative consultancy.

"I'm fascinated with and drawn to the larger picture of business, identifying the potential for mutually beneficial collaborations, both short- and long-term, for our business and for others. My experience has uniquely prepared me to imagine and implement valuable design ideas and provide meaningful direction for our consultancy and clients. I spend time immersed in material research and participate in fabric conceptualization, color stories and development, as well as marketing and public relations.

"Richard and I are opposites in almost every way. We believe that our opposing points of view are a strength and also a luxury of our partnership. After working together and being married for so many years, however, it's not uncommon for us to see things in total agreement. We definitely understand, respect, and appreciate one

"Our work is intensely visual and intuitive. It is exploratory and experimental. It is focused and honed."

— Catherine Frinier

another and each other's preferences, which can change rapidly as neither of us sits still very well. We are always looking toward the future and evolving our own perspectives. It is this openness and flexibility that drive change and how we see things, inspiring creativity and energizing innovative thought processes."

Many casual furniture retailers can relate to the challenges and the opportunities of working with a business partner who is also a spouse. So it is with the Friniers.

Catherine: "The reality is that we are with each other all of the time with little exception. We often, but not always,

work seven days a week because the work is demanding. As Richard has traveled to more than 40 countries across five continents, and I have traveled to more than 30 countries across four continents, we are admittedly and quite happily immersed in our work by choice and enjoy the life we have created together. We sometimes add days onto business travel. We are overdue for a trip to Morocco and a future extended stay in Australia.

"Our work is intensely visual and intuitive. It is exploratory and experimental. It is focused and honed. We are fully engaged with and loyal to those with whom we collaborate. We are dedicated, disciplined and each of us possesses an extremely high level of endurance, all with a clear vision to innovate, create, and make things happen. I believe very strongly that we must design our days as they become our lives."

While some may think that creativity is similar to a lightning bolt from heaven, it's actually long hours and hard work, as Richard can attest.

Frinier: "As an artist, I draw my concept sketches and develop scale drawings by hand. There is an intuitive process that takes place when drawing by hand that is not the same as designing digitally. While CAD and other programs are essential for developing prototypes, there is an intrinsic sense of artistry and authenticity that can only be originated from the mind to the hand.

"Once I have conceptualized a design and dimensioned scale drawings, I work very closely with our client's R&D and engineering departments to develop CAD drawings to exacting specifications. Prototypes are built. Adjustments are made to finesse every detail until ideally there is nothing left to add and nothing left to take away.

"I am fortunate to work with clients that have the capability of releasing new designs at different times of the year and not always within the confined schedule of market to market. Some designs come to me quickly and can be realized in a shorter time period. Other designs, and exploring new materials or manufacturing techniques, require much longer research and development timeframes."

Richard and Catherine work with some of the casual industry's leading brands, requiring them to collaborate with deeply experienced creative and business leaders with specific ideas for how their brands should be translated into products.

Frinier: "My approach is to design in a way that draws upon my own perspective yet innovates through the lens of the client. My methods are inspired, conceptualized, designed, and driven by what can be and what is missing in the marketplace.

"My processes of ideation, innovation, and contributing to a brand's design evolution are quite different from client to client. This is in part because the clients we work with each have their own distinctively unique history, legacy, culture, vision, core strengths, and challenges. My approach and methods must be as unique and different as each of my clients.

"We strive for design that is clear and visually strong, making it instantly understandable. If you have to think about it, it's not good design. I challenge myself to observe the principles of reductive detailing so there are no excessive design details, and results are only what are needed to achieve the desired impression and experience. "For a design to be timeless and to make an emotional connection with others, it must be compelling in its form, function, and comfort. The story of how it came to be should be as compelling as the design itself. It is the essence of good design. How it looks. How it makes you feel. The places it takes you emotionally, as an experience.

"My passion for materials, innovation, and modern design, and my appreciation for authentic classic details all come together as part of my approach. Catherine and I have a deep appreciation for rich textures, sophisticated color palettes, the power of storytelling, and the compelling nature of strong photography and artistic imagery. All of these are integral elements in the creative process that comes together in building and sustaining elevated brands.

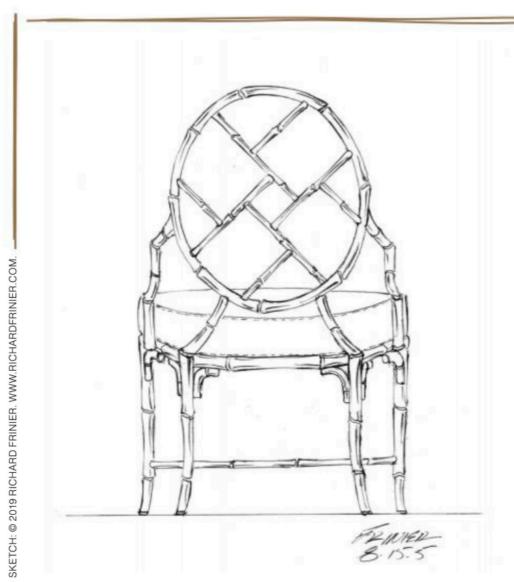
"Sometimes the story comes first, with innovative materials or styling that inspires the design. And sometimes the story follows the design as it begins to surface during the development process. Good design is a result of vision, innovation, and courage, not fear or focus groups. We also believe that authentic, relevant, and memorable marketing tells a compelling story about inspired design that is worth writing, learning, telling, and selling."

When it comes to designing new products, risk is a natural part of the process. Richard recognizes the need to push beyond the expected and accept the attendant risks.

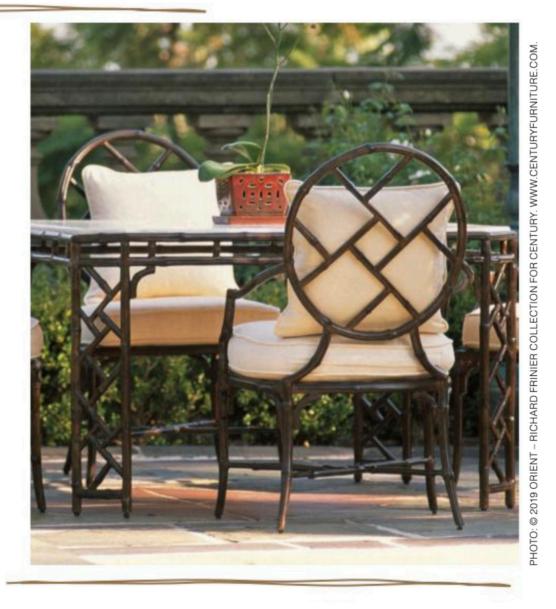
best designs have come before their time, only to find their place later when the rest of the world has caught up to what I have been seeing. This may be because I prefer to do the opposite of what others are doing. If the market is going traditional, I go contemporary. If people feel safer going transitional, I may go modern or do something exotic and definitely unexpected. I like to focus on what's missing and what can be. As a designer, I have often said, 'If it's trending, it's ending.'

"My work is an evolutionary process of imagination, visualization, ideation and experimentation. As a designer, I believe that failure is part of the process. It's not for the faint of heart. Good design takes courage, endurance and patience.

Richard is quick to acknowledge that his success as a designer has been possible because of the talent and dedication of the people who fabricate his designs and the people who market and sell them.



The sketch and completed product for Century Furniture's Orient.



Frinier: "Among the unsung heroes of our industry there are the technicians and artisan craftspeople around the world who work tirelessly with passion and talent against intense deadlines to create the amazing products we enjoy in our worldwide marketplace. It is something that we rarely see mentioned or recognized, yet working with these individuals has been a highlight of my life's work.

"We also cannot over-emphasize the

"We also cannot over-emphasize the role of specialty retailers because without them there would be no casual industry. It's retailers' vision, passion, and love of this business that provides a stage where consumers can make an emotional connection with what we have collectively designed and brought to market."

Richard champions how quality design contributes to a life filled with peace, comfort, and tranquility. With so many demands on their time and talents, we asked how Richard and Catherine find time to detach from the work.

Frinier: "Because we love our work, we admit that we work a lot, but that doesn't mean we're not enjoying the process or our lives. We are advocates of travel and traveling for your work. We believe in staycations, daycations, and even five-minute vacations throughout the day. It is sometimes as simple as the walks we take along the ocean, the bay, or around the neighborhood.

"It may be starting each day with tai chi and a tall, iced matcha tea, or waking up from an unintended yet restorative afternoon nap after stretching out in a chaise in the garden under filtered sunlight with a light breeze blowing. It's all about finding one's own pace and balance, whether traveling around the world or mind traveling, dreaming, and imagining something between our own two ears. It's whatever brings us back to our center, and sometimes that means just practicing being quiet and still."

Many people who know Richard well describe him as "humble." How does he feel about this description?

Frinier: "I'm just one of the many people in our industry busy walking the walk.

I observe in great people that quietude speaks volumes. I do not consider this as being humble. It's a matter of civility to listen more than you speak, and to toggle between being the teacher and the student."

For many years, Richard and Catherine have supported the development of young designers. We asked why.

projects from around the world. It's an extraordinary opportunity that has led the students to internships and employment with remarkable firms.

"Our latest student project is the ICFA/ Richard Frinier Design Scholarship that reaches out to professors of design across the country. Our mission is to incorporate our design scholarship challenge into



Design students from Auburn University received sponsorships from the Friniers, and attended the Best of Year event by Interior Design magazine.

Frinier: "We have been fortunate to be successful with our work, and the home furnishings industry has been very good to us. We feel a responsibility to reach out to design students by supporting trade scholarships and educational opportunities to make them aware of our industry as a viable, exciting, and rewarding career choice.

"For a number of years, we have supported design scholarships and opportunities for design students to attend major industry events. These events include the annual *Interior Design* magazine Hall of Fame Gala and the Best of the Year awards ceremonies in New York.

"During these events, we introduce students to industry leaders so they can learn about a life dedicated to design leadership. During the Best of the Year awards ceremony, students experience incredible architectural and interior design annual design curricula with the goal of raising awareness of our casual furnishings industry and providing an opportunity for students to enter the scholarship contest to visualize and present the future of outdoor living by design.

"Catherine and I wish to inspire these students of design through an immersive experience. We are delighted to be planning for the next scholarship competition with ICFA open now and receiving entries through May 31, 2019.

Last question – how would you like to be remembered?

Frinier: "As an authentic, relevant, and memorable person who played an integral and passionate role in creating innovative and experiential design while investing in the future by supporting design students."

Frinier Designs Have Garnered More Than 90 Industry Awards

During his 40-year career, Richard Frinier has designed several thousand pieces spanning hundreds of collections. These designs have generated more than \$1 billion in sales worldwide for partnering brands in residential, contract, and hospitality markets.

In addition to this phenomenal sales record, Richard's creations have attracted more than 90 design excellence and career achievement awards - successes he shares with the brands he represents, the artisan craftspeople who bring his designs to life, and specialty retailers who market and sell those products.

Below are a few of Richard's most significant awards:

- Quantum from Brown Jordan was recognized with awards from multiple design trade organizations and specified broadly by the A&D (architecture and design) community, validating Richard's quantum leap into the outdoor furniture industry and his first outdoor design. Quantum has remained in continuous production at Brown Jordan for 36 years.
- Richard's original Orbit design for DEDON inspired a movement toward iconic outdoor furniture creations that has permeated the casual industry. Orbit was recently identified as the Best Outdoor Design of the Decade by Interior Design magazine.
- Richard is a recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Casual Furnishings Association. This award has particular significance for Richard because it is supported by the industry to which he has dedicated his career.
- Richard has also been inducted into the American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame. The significance of this reward for Richard is its recognition of how the casual furnishings industry has fostered an increasing emphasis on design excellence on par with all home furnishings, inside and out.

Top to bottom:

Frinier at the ICFA Lifetime Achievement Award ceremony. Frinier being inducted into the AHF Hall of Fame with Jane Seymour and Thom Filicia.

Frinier colleagues, friends, and family celebrating the award. Frinier standing by the "Wall of Fame" in High Point at the pinning ceremony.









Frinier Designs Result In Milestone Events for Casual Brands

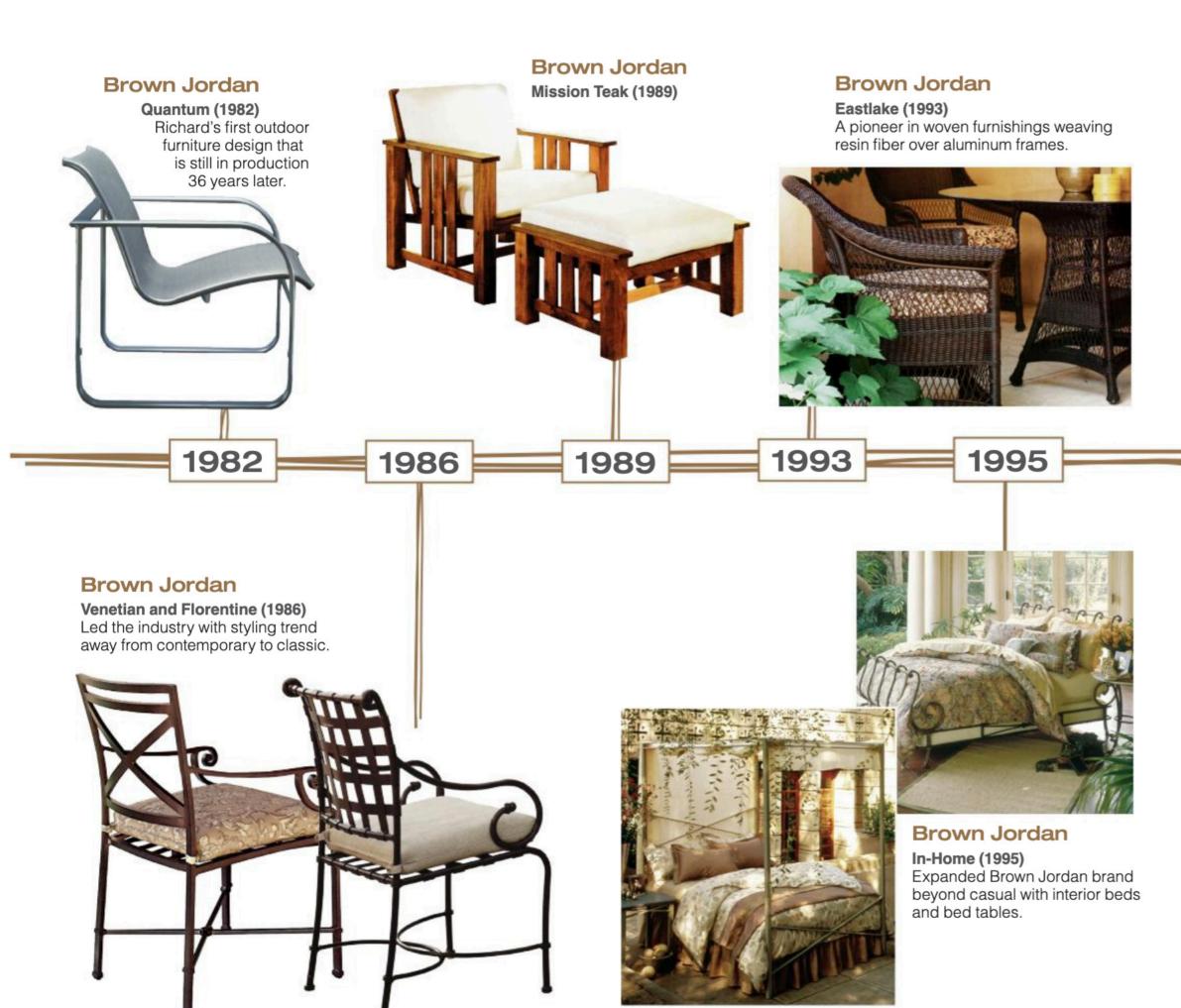
Designs from Richard Frinier have often proven to be milestone events for the brands he represents, opening up new frontiers not only for those brands, but also for the casual industry as a whole.

For example, it was under Frinier's leadership that Brown Jordan developed woven resin weaving over powder-coated aluminum frames, fueling a new furniture category.

Other innovations from Brown Jordan have included

neoclassic wrought-aluminum furniture styles that changed how outdoor furniture was previously perceived, going against deeply entrenched trends. Under Richard's leadership, the company also experimented with material categories, including marine-grade stainless steel, colorful and translucent medical-grade tubing, and parabolic elastomeric textiles.

Paradigm shifting creations from the fertile mind of Richard Frinier over the past four decades include:





Brown Jordan

Streamline (1999) Shifting to a modern silhouette upholstered with translucent tubing.

Brown Jordan

Nxt and Vu (2000) Futuristic styling with frames of marine-grade stainless steel and faux leathers.

Brown Jordan

Wave (2001) Adapted a material used in contract office seating to casual furnishings.



DEDON

to emulate.

Tango (2003)

Designed to bring an

and contoured form

unexpected sculptural

that would prove to be popular and challenging

DEDON

First round and rotating canopied daybed, iconic for its originality within the industry; named Best Outdoor Design of the Decade



Orbit (2003)

by Interior Design magazine.



Century Furniture

Tangier Collection (2018)

Moroccan-styled with innovative triaxial-weave pattern and octagonal-shaped modular sectional



Brown Jordan

Cloud Nine (2010)

Leading edge sculptural, organic form with low profile and contoured surfaces.

Sunbrella

Architexture Collection (2018)

A current Sunbrella fabric collection that received an IDSA IDEA Award for textiles and also a Best-of-Year Award from Interior Design magazine; inspired by the global architectural movement surrounding the surfacing and resurfacing of iconic building façades around the world.



1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2010

2012

2013

2015

2018



DEDON

Daydream (2002)

Fantasy piece that revolutionized daybed design with undulated surfaces and romantic sky canopy; voted the most emulated and Best Design Over the Past 30 Years by Robb Report Luxury magazine.



Century Furniture

Archipelago (2002) Blurred the lines between outdoor and interior styling and

Century Furniture

Andalusia Royal Canopy Lounge (2002) Launched the new Century Outdoor furniture division with an award-winning collection that represents a luxury resort in a chair.



Sunbrella

Sunbrella Fabrics by Richard Frinier (2002-present) Collaboration with Sunbrella on more than 1,000 fabric designs

designs elevating the perception of performance fabrics specified for interiors as well as exteriors.



Flex (2012)

Updated traditional vinyl strap seating incorporating Sunbrella stretch strap.



Brown Jordan

Connexion (2013)

Modern modular frame styling providing limitless configuration and upholstery customization more commonly seen in interior furniture design.



Century Furniture

Palm Beach Royal Lounge Chair (2015)

Romantic interpretation of classic peacock-style chair that furthered motion design, rotating 360 degrees on recessed inline skate wheels.



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