

ART AND DESIGN

WIDELY REFERRED TO AS THE KING OF OUTDOOR FURNITURE, AMERICAN-BORN RICHARD FRINIER IS CREDITED WITH BRINGING LUXURY AND SOPHISTICATION OUT OF THE HOME AND INTO THE GARDEN. TIM PHIN CAUGHT UP WITH RICHARD AT THE NEW YORK LAUNCH OF HIS NEW COLLECTION FOR DEDON.

by Tim Phin

HAS YOUR AMERICAN BACKGROUND INFLUENCED YOUR DESIGN STYLE? While America is the land of cultural diversity, it has been my extensive travels around the world and the indigenous people, art, creativity, and architecture that have influenced my design vocabulary more than anything else. I prefer to work in a broad range of styles from traditional to modern and also in a wide variety of materials to bring an idea alive with spirit and personality. WHAT WAS THE PROCESS THAT YOU WENT THROUGH IN ORDER TO DESIGN THE TRIBECA COLLECTION FOR DEDON? As with all of my design work with Dedon, I am inspired by the company's proprietary Dedon fiber. I had an idea to create a new design that would have an overall light form and appearance combining the weaving fiber with dynamic hydro-formed frames. The hydro-formed frames were developed and are used most commonly for racing cars and performance bicycles. The result was Tribeca, a soft-modern design that is remarkably strong yet light in weight. I called it Tribeca, which is a contraction for an area in lower Manhattan known as the triangle below Canal Street in New York. I call this design Tribeca because it is an arrangement of triangles, which transforms from thick to thin lines and morphs from round to elliptical profiles. As for the general design process, I create dimensioned drawings that are converted to CAD. Each frame is first hand formed to create the profile then woven to find just the right proportion and comfort. This process is repeated over and over to refine and perfect each item in the collection. Once the form is finalized, tooling for each component is developed to produce the framework within exacting specifications, then woven by Dedon's expert craftsmen. To bring Tribeca from concept to production took nearly three years of development. AFTER THREE YEARS I BET YOU WERE PLEASED TO SEE THE FINAL PRODUCT? They say that good things in life are worth waiting for, so yes, all of the research and development time we put into Tribeca was definitely worth it. We were able to perfect the hydro-formed frames, a new handwoven box weave pattern, a new push-button and infinitely adjustable chaise lounge, and many other details that simply just take time to perfect. WHAT DOES 'DESIGN' MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY? Design means bringing to life the spirit and personality of materials into a functional object. I've always tried to blur the lines between art and craft, form and function within the limitations of durability, weather resistance and comfort. I am proud to know that over the past thirty years, I have created well over a thousand designs



all sold into the worldwide marketplace with most of them still in production today. YOU WERE ONE OF THE FIRST DESIGNERS TO COLLABORATE WITH DEDON AND YOU HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO AS 'THE KING OF OUTDOOR FURNITURE.' WHAT OTHER CAREER HIGHLIGHTS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED? My furniture design career began as a pattern maker, and custom furniture maker. The first production furniture design I created sold 9,000(!) sets, so it was at that point that I thought I might be on to something by focusing on furniture design. I spent more than 20 years with Brown Jordan and the last ten years as a consulting designer with co-branded collections around the world for textiles, lighting and furniture, all for full-time outdoor placement. I have been honored and humbled to have received over 70 design and career achievement awards, and in 2009, I received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Home Furnishings Alliance and the International Casual Furnishings Association both based in North America. YOU ARE BEST KNOWN FOR YOUR MASTERY OF A RANGE OF STYLES, FROM MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY TO TRADITIONAL AND CLASSIC FORMS. HOW DOES YOUR PERSONAL DESIGN STYLE REFLECT THROUGHOUT THE DEDON TRIBECA RANGE? Since the beginning of our collaboration, I have drawn from the DNA of Dedon. While each collection of designs reach a different customer, they all possess the family resemblance. Some more modern than others, some with reference to more specific cultures, and some just make you smile. Tribeca has a certain twenty-first century urban edge, but with a slight resemblance to mid-twentieth century European modern. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DEDON IN TERMS OF THEIR TYPICAL DESIGN STYLE? As Dedon's first designer, we have collaborated together to create what represents about half of the company line. I feel a strong part of what Dedon design style is today. Over the years, we have created a diverse range of style 'personalities,' but the designs retained a common connection. 'Dedon Style' has a broad appeal worldwide and has been the stimulus for countless interpretations in a segment of the business that has become a billion dollar industry. WHAT'S THE NEXT DESIGN PROJECT FOR YOU? I am always working on new designs with my friends at Dedon. As for Dedon, they are always creating new ways to surprise everyone. It is my great joy and reward to be a part of the company's history and now a part of its future. As I always say in my own life and work, 'I see the future and I like what I see.'