

Made in America

The US furniture industry has seen a decline in sales in the past few years as a result of the recession – with issues like unemployment and housing prices to consider, consumer spending has been worn down to the absolute essentials and furniture hasn't been on that list. But if this year's High Point Market is anything to go by, it seems an upturn has begun



◀ Century Pagoda Pizzazz

every piece of furniture in between (seriously) High Point Market has something in every style and at every price point. "You do not see anything like this anywhere in the world," comments Brian, and I think I can vouch for that – I

walked and bused and, at times, limped through as much as I could manage in three days and still felt I only scratched the surface of what was on offer.

From high-end classic design houses (Scott Thomas and Century Furniture) to emerging designers doing cool things with unusual materials (like a sofa made of zips and cardboard lights) there is a massive amount to see.

Twice a year High Point Market attracts some 80,000 people from 110 different countries and despite some travel complications – courtesy of a certain volcanic ash cloud – international buyers still made it over. Brian adds that he's seen an increase in interest from the Middle East, particularly wealthy buyers – "The good thing is that they recognise the importance this plays in terms of the type of home furnishings that you can find here."

An economic impact study of the industry in the US estimated

that it was valued at \$8.2-billion annually – this spans furniture manufacturers, distribution centres, headquarters and design centres all focused on furnishings. The industry in North Carolina alone has an impact of \$1.2-billion a year on the entire state.

Expectations going forward are that it will continue on this upward turn, Brian notes that there has been a certain period of consolidation with weaker retailers folding and their market share being taken up by larger businesses. Overall, the story is a positive one – the city that lives and breathes furniture has emerged from the downturn unscathed and excited for the future.

High Point Market snapshots

There is just not enough room to cover all the pieces that caught Gulf Interiors' fancy

▼ Century Mendocino Settee



"We have been seeing a pretty significant change in the US industry with a lot of the manufacturing going over to China, it was a business based on volume and low price points and that is beginning to change now. We are starting to see the quality improve and the price points adjust accordingly. I think the consumer, because of the experience they've had is less likely to make disposable purchases and look at things that are practical with longevity," explains Brian Casey, president and CEO of the High Point Marketing Authority.

And now that their budgets are looking a bit more positive consumers aren't happy with stale designs and products past their sell-by date. "What we're hearing and seeing at this market is that retailers are now looking for fresh product on their floors because consumers are familiar with their products and want something fresher," adds Brian.

From accent pieces to upholstery and



▲ Century Omni Console Tangerine finish

so here is a very, very brief selection of some noteworthy pieces.

Century Furniture's Pagoda Pizzazz Love Seat

Appearing as early as 200 AD in China and branching out into Japan and Vietnam, pagodas are an ancient and traditional architectural form with major staying power. Infusing this traditional form with a vibrant colour palette, Century Furniture has imagined the pagoda with a youthful twist. One of Century's keynote fabrics this spring is a print of silhouetted pagodas framed by fretwork lattice in a bold turquoise colour.



Omni Console Tangerine finish

Splashes of colour are everywhere this Spring, pulling us into a happier, more optimistic mindset. Colour lifts our spirits and coupled with sharp, interesting lines this piece really brings a bit of sunshine to the room.

Beatlemania

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of one of the most legendary bands in history, Century Furniture embraced the Beatles at this year's Market. Iconic Beatles tapestry is married with the graceful and simple lines of the Mendocino settee, which boasts an eco-friendly sustainable frame and soy-based cushions.

Keeping it real


Austin, Texas-based Four Hands is just one of those slick companies with cool designers and cutting edge products. Four Hands sells to hundreds of retailers all over the world and founder, Brett Hatton, his partner Matthew Briggs, and the design team have created a brand with its finger firmly on the pulse of what's hip and happening in the global design arena.

Their showroom at High Point was filled

◀ With a drop down handle this light will fill any workspace with style and function. Either over a kitchen island or desk this light draws attention

with many great pieces; we've picked a few examples from Four Hands' recently acquired lighting company – Architects and Heroes – and its partnership with eco-conscious designer Thomas Bina; the bina subsidiary.

A new direction in conscious livable design, bina offers beautiful sustainable furniture that is hand-crafted from exotic demolition hardwoods as well as white oak and black walnut.

Architects & Heroes (A&H) joined the Four Hands brand offering in March this year, over the last decade, A&H has developed a stunning lighting line with each piece created by hand. 



▲ Thomas Bina is a groundbreaking designer in the realm of sustainable harvesting and reclaimed woods, like these old telephone poles



▲ With the sofas made from used truck tarpaulins no two pieces are alike