



A team of seasoned industry veterans, backed by the power of an iconic name, will officially launch an upholstery company at the October market they say is driven by a passion for bringing quality, value and integrity back to the marketplace.

The company is Aria Designs, started by the Arditti family and backed by Broyhill Investments, established in 1980 to manage the Broyhill family's proceeds from the sale of manufacturer Broyhill Furniture.

Aria will produce domestic mid-priced upholstery with a manufacturer in the Lenoir area, which it has not identified, and will blend it with more labor intensive, bells-and-whistles seating made in China. Covers will be offered in fabrics and leather, with sofa retail price points ranging from \$799 to \$1,999.



The Aria team includes Boyd Wilson, left, Richard Olmeda, Paul Broyhill, Hunt Broyhill, Jeff Arditti and Ted Arditti.

Future products are expected to include occasional, bedroom, dining and other categories.

The executive team consists of Hunt Broyhill, chairman, who also heads Broyhill Investments; Jeff Arditti, CEO; Ted Arditti, executive vice president; Richard Olmeda, executive vice president of sales and marketing; and Boyd Wilson Jr., vice president and CFO of Broyhill Investments.

It's unclear whether manufacturing legend Paul Broyhill, 88, the retired president and CEO of Broyhill Furniture, will have a role in Aria.

"Dad will tell you he won't ... but he lives and breathes furniture," said Hunt Broyhill.

Jeff Arditti was president and Ted Arditti vice president of Regency House Furniture, a family-owned occasional and case goods company that quietly went out of business last year after nearly four decades.

Olmeda is a former president and CEO of Stein World and former executive vice president and an equity owner of Magnussen Home, and also was with Silver Furniture, Tri Designs and Texas retailer Finger Furniture. His expertise, Paul Broyhill said, could put the company in the table business quickly.

Hunt Broyhill, who has spent 18 years as an investment analyst, and Wilson, who was financial manager for 21 years at Kincaid, will play an active part in Aria.

Said Hunt Broyhill, "We had a good, sound business opportunity managed by a very skilled and experienced team of people that all of a sudden came together to launch this company. So it really wasn't about the economics or the economy but the opportunity to go out there and catch market share - and sometimes that can be done in a down economy."

After quiet previews at recent High Point and Las Vegas markets, the company is shipping to several Furniture/Today Top 100 companies from its China factory and has exceeded its monthly budgets, said Arditti.

The company also is scheduled to ship from two dedicated lines in North Carolina in the near future.

"We're going to be on retail floors by the end of March. We're launching very aggressively at the High Point Market in October," Arditti said.

The company's new second floor, 10,000-square-foot showroom in the Crown Mark building (the old Pennsylvania House showroom) at Green and Wrenn in High Point will contain 15 rooms of upholstery, along with some wood occasional pieces.

Aria's Asian container-direct program features carved wood upholstery that will address a lavish and luxurious Old World traditional look. It includes biscuit tufting and fabrics like linen and velvet.

Imported transitional frames may have exposed wood with hand-rubbed finishes, covers that include linen, updated colors and nail heads.

Price points range from \$1,499 to \$1,999 for fabric and leather, which can be mixed in containers.

Domestic products will be "hipper, cooler, cleaner ... not too edgy but will have wonderful color on the pillows and a wonderful pallet of colors on the base cloths, which you will see this fall,"

according to Arditti. "Where you see this at \$1,499 to \$2,499 (from competitors), we'll be at \$999 to \$1,299 for a compelling program that delivers in three weeks."

Starting price points likely will be \$799 for two or three groups and move upward, with volume sales expected at \$999 retail.

Olmeda, who will lead a projected sales force of about 35 independent reps, said the company has focused on flow of containers for Top 100 customers and is now turning to other product categories.

As demand increases, Jeff Arditti said the company will be able to warehouse domestically. It already has warehousing for Panama Jack upholstery, which it is licensed to produce.