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Matthew Fairbank's Brooklyn workshop is where the furniture designer crafts his minimalist pieces that often nod to historical details. *Opposite:* Fairbank looks to the work of French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec for inspiration. Shown here is an exhibition titled "étapes," held at France's Villa Noailles in 2008.

PORTRAIT AND TOP RIGHT: DAVID BARTOLOMI. OPPOSITE: ©STUDIO BOURULLEC.

Growing up with sketchbooks and canvases, Matthew Fairbank always figured he'd become a painter. But, when he offered to jumpstart a classmate's car while attending RISD and spied the pieces she was crafting for her furniture design concentration, he inadvertently jumpstarted his career as well: "I begged the department to let me in." Since debuting his first collection at the BKLYN Designs show in 2009, Fairbank has established himself as a designer and manufacturer of elegant, minimalist furniture with subtle nods to decorative periods. Fairbank's fine-art sensibility is ever present in his pieces (think mortise-and-tenon joinery, textured domestic woods and satin brass hardware he fabricates himself), encouraged perhaps by a 'no machines' first semester in school. "Working with hand tools made me appreciate not how quickly you get to the end goal, but which route you choose to get there," says Fairbank, who, in addition to working on pieces to show at ICFE, plays in a band called Small Devices. "I've taken the scenic route." *matthewfairbankdesign.com; 917.414.1419*

Fairbank's inventory includes pieces crafted from domestic woods and satin brass, such as the angular Osiris chandelier, shown.



ARTISANAL CALLING

MATTHEW FAIRBANK



Work approach:

I try to distill the forms of the past through a current lens, creating stark minimalist pieces accented with restrained historical details.

What's inspiring you now?

When I look to the past, old things seem new again. Currently, I'm loving Art Deco furniture and the Wiener Werkstätte era.

I'm reading...

The Craftsman, by Richard Sennett. It explores the importance of craftsmanship, which Sennett defines as "the desire to do a job well for its own sake."

Design icons:

Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec and Rich Brilliant Willing are some of my favorites. I am very inspired by artisans who take a hands-on approach to design.

Inside tip:

In Buddhist meditation, there's an emphasis on staying in the present and focusing on one task at a time. This wisdom helps me throughout the day.