

THE ART & SCIENCE OF DESIGN

MERRITT CREATES INTERIOR SOLUTIONS FOR ESTATES & SUPERYACHTS

By Pam Dawson

The Mark of True Craft

The estates and superyachts of the mega rich are designed by famous architects, constructed by well-known builders and decorated by celebrated interior designers. But who are the artisans, engineers and installers that bring these visions to life? There is big business in being a few steps off stage and one such company is Merritt, a \$50+ million interior strategy firm. With a half century history as an ultra-high-end woodworking company, Merritt has expanded traditional boundaries of this particular niche to now encompass a breadth of services and products. With a team comprised of millworkers, master carvers, carpenters, metal workers and installers as well as architects, engineers and project managers, Merritt has quietly created a league of their own and is arguably leading its industry.

Why Wood?

Clearly, wood is practical, functional, sustainable and recyclable. But it also has a strong emotional quality that is irreplaceable. Wood has an extraordinary amount of character – it wears its history on its sleeve. Conditions such as weather, birds and insects have tremendous impact on how a tree grows and the marks

it bears. Geography and age, as well. When a tree is felled, its entire past will be part of its future.

Whether for use in a dining room in some of the world's most extraordinary superyachts or for a library in an ultra-estate there are highly specialized woods that meet needs both structural and aesthetic. The timelessness of the product itself and its evocative nature can account for why woodworking is both a craft and a science that has withstood the test of time and is taking companies like Merritt right into the future of architecture and design.

And yet, as Mark Mantione, Vice President of Sales and Marketing said, "Wood is both the start and end of our process, but it is everything in the middle that makes the Merritt difference. The painstaking care we take in preparation, design, engineering and installation is why we are at the forefront. We don't simply create and install a piece or a product, we take every aspect of a room into account when we participate in a project. Our partners consider us both collaborators and a safety net, as we ensure no detail is ever unaccounted for." >



Chief Executive Officer Michael Merritt and Executive Vice President, Keith Merritt.
Photo Credit: Courtesy of Merritt

A History Fueled by Passion

Cleveland, Ohio-based Merritt, formerly Merritt Woodwork, celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. Along with that milestone, or perhaps because of it, this innovation-first company is also celebrating expansions, acquisitions and the culmination of a comprehensive rebranding campaign.

Merritt was founded in 1967 by George A. Merritt, a cabinet maker and master carpenter who believed that while his craft may be traditional, his business should be boundary breaking. While under his direction, Merritt grew from being a local cabinet making enterprise to a regional one specializing in the high end residential market. Eventually, Merritt became recognized as the top custom fabricator in northeast Ohio. All along



Jim Roycroft
Courtesy of Merritt

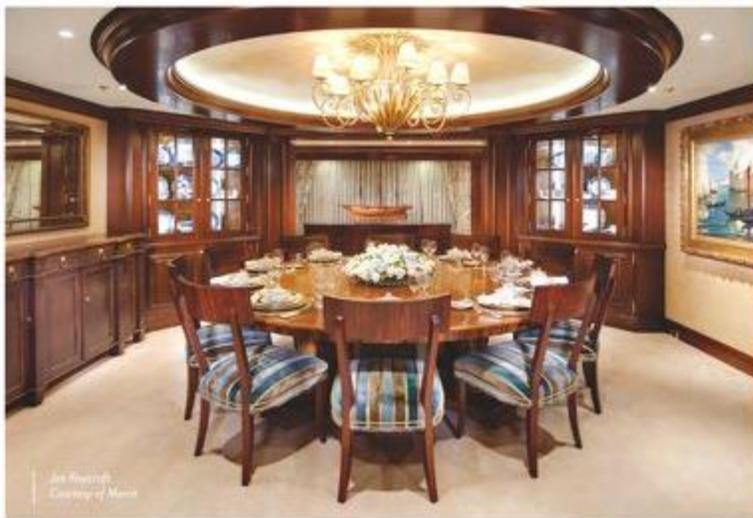
he groomed his sons to be not only tradesmen but businessmen.

Five years later, Merritt is operated by his sons, Chief Executive Officer Michael Merritt and Executive Vice President, Keith Merritt. Both sons maintain their father's principles of quality, consistency and innovation as guiding directives. But they also brought to Merritt a grander vision of potential. In just fifteen years under their direction, Merritt has grown to become recognized as the industry leader, a purveyor of precision and a master of both the art and science of interiors for residential estates and superyachts. Today, Merritt operates seven offices across the United States and the UK, and an engineering headquarters in Germany.

"Our father worked with his hands and his heart," said Michael Merritt. "He understood the value of quality and only perfection could satisfy him. This is why his business and reputation took root. We've maintained those standards and added technology and a vision beyond woodworking itself that have allowed us to become so vital and strong in a very competitive international market."

More than Woodworking

While widely known for its luxury interior architectural woodworking, Merritt has grown well beyond that definition to provide clients with an unparalleled set of interior services ranging from the expected: woodwork and joinery manufacturing, carpentry >



Jim Roycroft
Courtesy of Merritt



Courtesy of Merritt

and installation; to the surprising and unexpected: hardware, metalwork, specialty materials and classical decoration. However, their most defining program, and what has elevated them to the very top of their field, is their all-encompassing engineering and consultation services. Unlike industry competitors, Merritt looks at projects from a holistic point of view, understanding that every piece in the puzzle contributes to the final, extraordinary results demanded by the world-renowned interior designers and architects with whom they collaborate, as well as the home and superyacht owners themselves, primarily ultra-high-net-worth individuals.

"At Merritt, we have always strived to exceed the definition of our industry and to develop a standard, above and beyond the expected," said Michael Merritt. "Our clients, and their clients, expect a level of precision that is only executed with extraordinary collaboration, craftsmanship and painstaking detail. It is through delivering on this promise that we are changing the very definition of woodwork from the inside out."

While headquartered in Cleveland, Merritt of today is a global enterprise. The company's growth has come from an array of strategic developments including the acquisition of a highly regarded west coast competitor, Design Woodworking, as well as an internationally recognized classical wood carving operation. In Germany, where woodworking is a revered craft and respected tradition, Merritt assembled a team of highly experienced individuals who project manage and engineer work around the globe.

This growth in talent and capabilities, coupled with an expansion in capacity, has furthered Merritt's mission to step ahead of the standard set of industry deliverables by managing the entire process from design concept to project delivery while ensuring an exacting and uncompromised finished product anywhere in the world, on time and within budget.

With more than 250 employees and more than 152,000 square feet of manufacturing space, Merritt maintains a team of highly skilled and passionate architects, engineers, detailers, 3D modelers, project managers, cabinetmakers, finishers, machinists, operators, traffic and delivery specialists and on-site superintendents and carpenters. Computer-assisted design and management, climate-controlled factories, the most advanced equipment and judicious use of automation ensure faultless accuracy and timeliness,



while minimizing waste. Paneling, marquetry and veneering are crafted in-house on some of the largest-scale equipment in the industry by artisans who have perfected extraordinarily painstaking hand procedures to achieve fits and finishes that mechanization cannot possibly duplicate.

A Fresh Approach

In celebration of the company's 50th anniversary, and in anticipation of continued double-digit growth, Michael Merritt and Vice President of Sales and Marketing Mark Mantione oversaw a complete rebranding campaign including name, logo, website, videos, social channels and more, positioning Merritt's client and consumer facing image on par with its sophisticated collaborators and well beyond that of any of its competitors worldwide.

"Merritt has continually evolved throughout its history, growing and expanding to meet every new challenge," said Mantione. "We decided this was the perfect time to take that internal approach and apply it to our external identity. Today the same level of aesthetic beauty, precision and artistry that is the mark of our product is expressed at every level of the company."

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