

Jean de Merry

*By Abigail Stone
Photo by Sam Frost*

It's fitting that Jean de Merry is also a novelist. His showroom's lighting, case goods, decorative objects, textiles and rugs weave a tale of beauty rooted in centuries-old artisanal French techniques—marquetry, lacquer, inlay—and exquisite materials—shagreen, parchment, bronze—that conjure up a more elegant time.

"I've always been into antiques," de Merry says, explaining how he and his partner, Christian Darnaud-Maroselli, got their start importing European furniture. But the demand, especially for club chairs, exceeded the supply. Hoping to replace the worn leather on one piece, he found himself doing a deep dive into the tanning processes his family had been perfecting for centuries. That research coincided with the discovery of the designs of Eileen Gray. While best known for her work in chrome and glass, Gray's earlier pieces, like the rare *Sirène* chair, employ lacquered wood. These two events coalesced the duo's aesthetic, prompting their move to furniture creators and producers and setting the standard for the craftsmanship that defines their line. "I wanted to create things that I liked," says de Merry. The pieces were picked up by Holly Hunt in 2007, and the couple opened their shop on Melrose Place in 2011.

In 2016, they moved to a sprawling space in the Pacific Design Center that allowed the expansion of their atelier. In addition to their own work, they represent almost two dozen artisans including Marmol Radziner, Philip Nimmo, Natasha Baradaran and Azadeh Shladovsky.

"Creating a character and designing a chandelier is the same process: I close my eyes and I see three or four chandeliers and I focus on one," says de Merry. With *Ferla*—a new, casual collection—launching this spring, and his latest novel being translated into English, it looks like a new chapter is just beginning.

