

Designers You Should Know OFFICIAL

Amy and Mark Leveno are, together, the firm OFFICIAL. They met in 2004 while in architecture school at the University of Texas at Austin, married in 2012, and began their own practice that same year in Dallas. OFFICIAL has designed a range of commercial, hospitality, and residential interiors that often encompass custom furniture or lighting, which they craft themselves or have fabricated. Recently, OFFICIAL designed the Jettison cocktail lounge and a Houndstooth Coffee location (below), both in Dallas.



Why the name OFFICIAL?

We feel that the name OFFICIAL is open and representative to the many scales of our design work. We wanted our name to reflect the collaborative nature of a design studio in which every member of the team's effort is equally important to a project's success.

Why did you decide to start the practice?

We started our studio because we felt like we both have strong design voices that should be shared. While working for other firms, we independently entered a number of competitions and won many of them, so it was really about finding the right time to jump out on our own.

Working together, what is unique about your overall design approach?

It is important to us to take on each project as a new adventure. As both architects and furniture designers, our approach is to work at varying scales, from understanding the overall site

and context of a project down to the smallest details of trim and cabinetry. We design every project, big or small, with a singular, holistic concept, which allows everything else to fall in line with that original idea.

You have designed custom furniture for many of your interiors. Is that your preference—to be able to design bespoke furniture? Does it depend on the client?

We are always looking for opportunities to incorporate our furniture designs into our architectural projects. Some clients are enthusiastic about having custom pieces that we make ourselves, and for others we will design pieces for the contractor to produce. Our goal is to have our workshop be a creative, model-making, and prototyping space while utilizing craftspeople to do larger quantity fabrication. As an example of our furniture, we designed the Peanut Rocker (below) with walnut and steel.

In your opinion, what is important in design today?

We believe that our job is to improve people's lives on a daily basis. We can achieve that through simple moves—like natural lighting via solar orientation and smart planning—and through intricate moves like a radiused edge on a wooden bench. We know that a well-designed space makes people feel good.

What's next for OFFICIAL?

We are going into construction on a 22,000-square-foot corporate interior, wrapping up an artisanal ice cream shop, and doing a series of residential remodels and additions. We are installing a pair of eight-foot-long linear aluminum LED lights that we designed and fabricated in-house for a ground-up custom home we just completed in Austin. Long term, we are working with local investors to develop a creative, multi-studio concept for the design and construction industry. Our goal as a studio is to keep our portfolio diverse in both scope and scale. **c**

