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COMINGS & GOINGS | SEP 26, 2022 |

Visual Comfort appoints a chief technology officer, new leadership for Universal and Food52, and more



By [Lizzy Reisinger](#)

All across the industry, some of the biggest brands are seeing changes at the top. Read on for *Business of Home's* monthly roundup of arrivals and departures in design, manufacturing, media and more.

TO THE TRADE

New York–based multiline showroom Harbinger announced **Bobby Contini** as new showroom manager of its New York outpost in 200 Lex. He comes to the position after serving as senior sales manager at hardwood flooring and custom millwork company Madera Surfaces. Contini also brings seven years of experience with Cohen Brothers Realty Corporation, including a role as vice president of the design center division, where he oversaw marketing and showroom relations for four national design centers.

Clarence House welcomed **Andrea Brooke** as new sales specialist in its New York flagship store, where she will be responsible for developing the company's business in Long Island, Westchester and Connecticut. She will also oversee the territory's luxury brands team for Fabricut, which includes Vervain, Stroheim, S. Harris, Jean Monro, Etro, Liberty of London, Decortex Firenze and The Vale London. Brooke joins the company after sales and leadership roles at Brunschwig & Fils and Schumacher.

DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Minneapolis-based architecture and design firm Nelson Worldwide welcomed two regional

TOP STORIES

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- 2 These former Nike executives opened their fantasy store near a Wisconsin lake

leaders: **Micah Hall** as Southeast regional practice leader of hospitality and **Kirt Neal** as regional industrial practice leader of the Pacific Northwest and Greater Western region. Hall brings more than 20 years of experience in designing spaces focused on entertainment, most recently serving as an associate at the Atlanta-based design service company ASD/SKY. In his new role, Hall will oversee projects in the Southeast and create a design standard for hospitality projects. In Neal's new role, he will manage and improve the efficiency of the firm's industrial practice teams, bringing more than 25 years of design and management experience, including his latest role as studio manager of operations for Ware Malcomb, a Seattle-based commercial and corporate real estate design firm.

Global architecture and design firm Perkins&Will announced **Wyatt Frantom** as principal and design director of the company's Austin studio. An award-winning architect licensed in Texas and California, Frantom most recently served as design director and senior associate at the Los Angeles office of Gensler, where he worked for 11 years. In his new role, Frantom will work to strengthen the culture of curiosity and design exploration with a focus on collaboration at the firm's expanding Austin studio.

In a workshop on Wednesday, October 26, at 1:00 p.m. EST, certified life and business coach Desi Creswell, will share why setting a vision is the first and most important step to a fulfilling, sustainable career, and how to identify your priorities and streamline your efforts. Click [here](#) to register. Workshops are free for [BOH Insiders](#).

If you haven't taken the annual [BOH Reader Survey](#), please do. It helps our editors better meet your needs, and you'll be entered to win a free BOH Insider membership!

Houston-based residential building and interior design firm Laura U Design Collective announced **Shannon Smith** as director of interior design. With over a decade of experience in hospitality and sales, Smith designed luxury hotels in Asia and served as the senior sales representative of major public accounts at Dell before pursuing a career in interior design. Smith has been with the firm for 10 years, working closely with founder and CEO **Laura Umansky**. In her new role, Smith will serve alongside creative director **Gina Elkins** to lead a team of designers with a focus on residential design.

New York-based firm Robert A.M. Stern Architects announced the appointment of **Bina Bhattacharyya** to the firm's partnership. Joining the company in 2003, Bhattacharyya helped grow RAMSA's international footprint in the past decade, leading some of the firm's most important and transformative international design projects. Bhattacharyya brings more than 20 years of experience in architecture, urbanism and landscape design to the role and will continue to lead projects ranging from private residences and residential communities to mixed-use planning and hospitality design.

Austin-based full-service art consultancy firm Eaton Fine Art promoted **Meredith Burwell** to director of projects. Burwell has been with the firm for five years, previously serving as designer on projects including the guest rooms and suites at the award-winning Virgin Hotels Las Vegas; and the public areas, guest rooms and suites at Limelight Hotel Aspen, where she oversaw art collection curation. In her new role, Burwell will continue to curate art collections for hospitality clients, while overseeing the day-to-day operations of the creative team.

San Francisco-based architecture and design firm Blitz welcomed **Tim Haggerty** as studio director. Most recently, Haggerty served as the design director of his eponymous firm for nearly two decades and brings career experience in the luxury retail, hospitality, food and beverage, and health and wellness spaces. In his new role, Haggerty will focus on growing the firm's hospitality footprint and oversee strategic, operational, quality and design objectives of major projects.

Washington, D.C.-based architecture and design firm //3877 announced **Julia Tingle** as designer and architectural associate. Tingle has experience working on several stages of the design and construction processes, previously serving as an architectural associate at Canvas

- 3 Why is everything in design a 'blend of old and new'?
- 4 Inside High Point's antiques boom
- 5 How this Pennsylvania designer perfected her intake process
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Architecture, and most recently as a project designer for architecture and planning firm Wyn Design Company. In her role, she will oversee interior design and architecture projects from start to finish.

MEDIA & PR

After seven-and-a-half years, New York–based design writer and critic **Anne Quito** is leaving her role as a staff reporter at *Quartz*. She will join Amazon as the managing editor of a new design magazine. Quito wrote *Mag Men: Fifty Years of Making Magazines*, a book about the glory days of magazine design as told by design legends **Milton Glaser** and **Walter Bernard**, and she was the first recipient of the Steven Heller Prize for Cultural Commentary in 2017.

North Carolina–based full-service marketing agency The Media Matters announced a leadership transition, effective October 1. Founder and longtime president **Kathy Wall** will step into an advisory role, and **Dawn Brinson**, currently the vice president of strategic marketing and a member of the firm for two decades, will become president.

North Carolina–based marketing communications firm Wray Ward will implement changes at the top in January 2023. **Jennifer Appleby**, who has been with the firm for 30 years—including 21 as president and chief creative officer—will step into an executive chair role. Appleby joined Wray Ward in 1993 as senior art director and guided the agency through a strategic repositioning and reorganization across more than a dozen service areas. As executive chair, Appleby will serve as a business consultant and support the agency’s unique workplace culture efforts on her pathway to retirement. **Kent Panther**, who is currently Wray Ward’s executive vice president, will become the next president and CEO, overseeing day-to-day agency management of the firm. Panther has more than three decades of advertising industry experience, joining the firm in 2004 as head of insights and brand strategy. He helped the firm strengthen its specialist positioning in the home and building categories, and has grown its relationships with brands including GE Appliances, Levolor, Sherwin-Williams and Sonos.

After a year as a senior account manager with New York–based PR firm Dada Goldberg, **Cameron Flaherty** announced her move to Camron PR, where she will serve as a senior account director. In her new role, she will be working closely on the MillerKnoll portfolio including Herman Miller, Knoll, Hay, Design Within Reach, Muuto and Fully.

RETAIL & MANUFACTURING

Houston-based lighting brand Visual Comfort announced **Bhavya Desai** as new chief technology officer. Bhavya brings five years of experience in e-commerce, retail and infrastructure technology roles at Tampa, Florida–based manufacturer Ashley Furniture Industries, where he used technology innovation to drive significant increases in digital and mobile sales. At Visual Comfort, Desai will help the company grow through digital transformation efforts for customers and business partners.

North Carolina–based home furnishings company Universal Furniture announced Sean O’Connor will be its new president, effective January 2023. He most recently served as the firm’s vice president of sales, and he will be replacing longtime CEO and president **Jeff Scheffer**. Since joining Universal in 2011, O’Connor has occupied a senior role through some of the company’s most dramatic pivots, including moving its showroom to downtown High Point, shifting production from China to Vietnam and surviving the chaos of COVID-19.

Content-meets-commerce company Food52 welcomed West Elm president Alex Bellos as co-CEO. Bellos will become the sole CEO of the New York–based brand after a six-month interim period alongside Food52 co-founder **Amanda Hesser**, who will become executive chair focusing on big-picture brand identity, content strategy and user-community development. Bellos has been with West Elm since 2008, where he served as a vice president of strategy and development and led the retailer during a period that saw annual revenue double to more than \$2 billion. In his new role, Bellos will oversee Food52’s portfolio, which includes heritage cookware-maker Dansk and Oregon-based whole home brand Schoolhouse.

South Carolina–based textile manufacturer Milliken & Company announced a new residential design team. **Maida Cameron** will lead the decor team as director of design, overseeing the

CAROLINE GIDIERE DESIGN

Birmingham, AL

Embroidery Sales Associate

CHELSEA TEXTILES

New York, NY

Designer

URBAN GRACE INTERIORS

Santa Rosa Beach, FL

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TARTAN & TOILE

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Interior Design Assistant

SETSTUDIO

Litchfield, CT

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styling of Milliken’s residential indoor and outdoor lines. As design manager, **Linda Alley** will collaborate with customers; research and report on market trends; and lead the design performance fabrics team for the residential fabric market. **Elizabeth Stuart** will serve as senior designer, where she will be responsible for designing dobby, jacquard and leno woven fabrics for the contract, residential and outdoor markets.

Venetian designer **Luca Nichetto** ended his four-year journey as art director for the Paris-based lifestyle brand La Manufacture. Nichetto began his career working for brands Salviati and Foscari before launching his own Stockholm- and Venice-based design firm, Nichetto Studio, in 2006. In addition to designing products for La Manufacture, Nichetto created an internal PR team and graphics studio, and established brand partnerships with designers including **Sebastian Herkner**, **Nendo** and **Emma Boomkamp**. In his firm’s next design phase, Nichetto Studio will launch a new piano for Steinway & Sons and a carryall designed for the New York-based vegan handbag brand Angela Roi.

Pennsylvania-based virtual commerce retailer Qurate Retail Group announced new executives to lead its streaming efforts and QVC’s U.S. merchandising: **Soumya Sriraman** as president of streaming of Qurate Retail Group and **Stacy Bowe** as chief merchandising officer of QVC U.S. Sriraman, who most recently served as head of Prime Video channels at Amazon, brings expertise in building streaming businesses across a variety of media companies and will lead Qurate Retail Group’s streaming commerce business, focusing on the QVC+ and HSN+ streaming experiences. Bowe has 20-plus years of omnichannel merchandising experience, with roles at Macy’s and G-III Apparel Group, and will lead QVC’s in-house design development and global sourcing agency in addition to overseeing merchandising across all product categories.

INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS

The American Society of Interior Designers announced **Khoi Vo** as new CEO. With more than 20 years of experience as a design educator and leader at SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design), Vo will replace interim chief **Gary Wheeler**. A longtime member of ASID, Vo brings both an appreciation for design education and a fluency in the logistics of a big organization to the new role.

The 2023 Kitchen & Bath Industry Show (KBIS) welcomed **Amy Hornby** as she rejoined the management team in the role of associate show director. During her 25 years of experience in the industry—nine of them with KBIS—Hornby served as an executive assistant for AmericasMart Atlanta, a show coordinator for Emerald Expositions’s Surf Expo, a sales manager for KBIS and an associate show director for KBIS. She rejoins the company from her most recent role as sales director at Emerald Expositions’s NY Now.

Homepage image: Shutterstock

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