



MEET THE MAKER

MITCHELL SIEGEL



A master of metamorphosis who's known for transforming exotic woods into functional art and decor for the home, Mitchell Siegel recently moved his business, Cocoon, from Connecticut to Naples. With a showroom on Fifth Avenue South, as well as a sprawling woodworking facility in the Naples Design District, Siegel and his team handcraft one-of-a-kind pieces that include everything from towering root sculptures to live-edge tables to wall art and decor. Stop by the facility to watch the fascinating process, and they'll work one-on-one with customers to select or customize the perfect piece. cocoongallery.com

How did you get started in creating these pieces? My previous career in my family's textile business took me to Southeast Asia, Brazil and the Philippines, where I noticed the abundance of nature that was repurposed as functional furniture and decor by locals. I was inspired to take it to the next level and celebrate the nature's artistry by transforming the elements into functional art. I secured a license as an exporter of exotic wood and opened our first retail location in Greenwich, Connecticut.

How do you source the wood for your artisanal pieces? I travel extensively to remote mountain villages in Southeast Asia to work with local, licensed experts to source trees that have been uprooted or scheduled for removal—we do not remove live trees. I select raw materials based on their interesting shapes for tables, sculptures, statues and decorative objects; imperfections and twisted limbs often make the best art forms. The raw wood then arrives in our Naples woodshop, where it undergoes multiple processes to create art.

Why is sustainability so important to you? I want to have a small footprint on these fragile environments. My respect for the natural world and the lives of the locals with whom we work is my overriding concern. Our entire ethos is a celebration of nature as art.



PHOTOS: COURTESY COCOON GALLERY.