



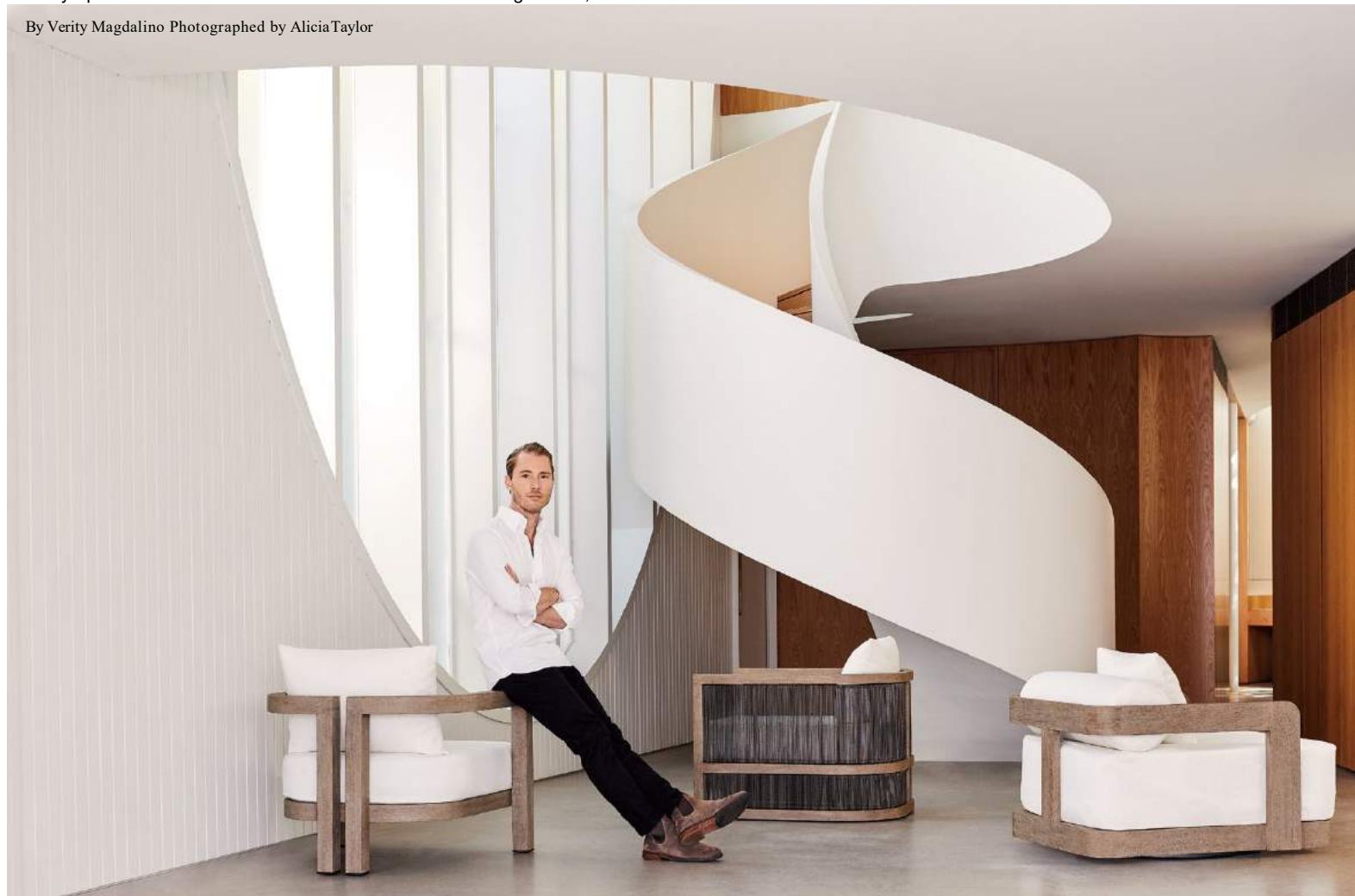
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DESIGN

SUCCESS STORY

Japanese screens and 1950s beachside architecture are just some of the touch points informing Anthony Spon-Smith's new outdoor furniture for American retail giant RH, Restoration Hardware.

By Verity Magdalino Photographed by Alicia Taylor



THESE PAGES Anthony Spon-Smith with some of his RH Artisans designs: lounge chairs from the Portofino, Capri and Remy outdoor furniture collections.

It's something I'm extremely proud of," says Anthony Spon-Smith of his invitation from US luxury furniture and homewares powerhouse RH —formerly known as Restoration Hardware—to become one of its RH Artisans.

The creative director and co-owner of Australian furniture company Coco Republic joins a roll call of industry heavyweights including Holland's Piet Boon, the UK's Kelly Hoppen and legendary Italian designer Paola Navone, all of whom produce signature furniture, lighting, homewares and textiles as RH Artisans.

Under chairman and CEO Gary Friedman, the Californian-based RH has in recent years transformed from shopping mall furniture store to a self-described "curator of taste and style in the luxury lifestyle market" with 70 mega-stores — Friedman prefers to call them "Galleries" — across the US and Canada. Some of these high temples of luxury are located in heritage buildings resplendent with restaurants, wine bars and cafés. For instance, in the New York store, a six-storey home furnishings wonderland in the city's high-flying Meatpacking District, which Friedman describes as "arguably the most innovative new store in the world in arguably the most important city in the world," there's a 100-seat restaurant, a wine terrace, a barista bar, an RH interior design firm and a whole floor devoted to outdoor furniture, complete with bubbling fountains and Romanesque statues.

It's here, in the fast-growing business of outdoor furniture, that Spon-Smith has chosen to introduce not one but three new collections for the American retailer. "I know that Gary Friedman and his senior team are very selective," he says. "Generally the RH Artisans are furniture or design fanatics or leaders — often they've been in the industry for many years and also have an understanding of the RH aesthetic, both of which I believe I qualify for and why I was selected."

Inspired by references as diverse as 1950s Bondi Beach architecture, traditional Japanese sudare screens and Ancient Greek jewellery, the unifying thread to Spon-Smith's new designs, if there is one, would have to be his love of clean-lined minimalism and perhaps the influence of one of his favourite designers, Swiss architect and exemplar of modernism, Pierre Jeanneret.

Titled Portofino and Capri, Spon-Smith's first two collections launched with RH earlier this year and will soon be on show at select RH Galleries. The ranges will also be available in Coco Republic this August. Each piece features handcrafted frames made from sustainably harvested premium teak or durable aluminium with cushions upholstered in performance fabrics designed to withstand stains, fading and wear.

Remy is the third and newest collection, created exclusively for RH in collaboration with the company's exacting design team. It hits the mighty retailer's website this June. Inspired by a home in the Sydney beachside suburb of Bronte designed by architect Luigi Rosselli, Spon-Smith believes the local feel to Remy will have broad appeal in the US. "The curves and scale [of the Rosselli house] inspired me to create a range with similar aesthetic appeal," he says. "I believe that, as an Australian, my designs are inspired by the country and coastal areas I am surrounded by. I live in Bondi, surf every day, and this comes across in my outdoor designs. This coastal influence is relevant to many of the US regions, as is the Australian way of living.

"The launch of three collections with a new artisan is substantial for RH," says Spon-Smith, who is already looking to grow the partnership with fresh designs for both outdoor and indoor furniture. "I have enjoyed the passion this process has provided to boost my own design output," he says. "It has fuelled my creativity, which overflows into other parts of my business. Mostly, I just love designing. It's my hobby, passion and profession... I'm just thankful for that, as it doesn't feel like work for me." VL.RH.com cocorepublic.com.au anthonyxspensmith.com

*“I live in Bondi,
SURF every day,
and this comes
across in my
outdoor designs”*

anthony spon-smith