



### The Terms

#### LIVE EDGE TABLE

An unfinished edge of a tree that shows organic undulation in texture, color, and evenness

#### OLD WORLD JOINERY

Joining disparate pieces of a furniture item by carving out pockets in the physical wood for an adjoining piece to slide into

#### HUDDLE TABLES

Smaller than a conference table, these tables are perfect for a quick, informal meeting anywhere in the office

## Custom Creations

**Coterie uses old world methods to inspire collaborative, sustainable spaces**

By Emily Torem

One of the first things you'll notice at **Coterie's** Chicago studio is the impressive volume of custom furniture projects the husband and wife duo **Jaime** and **Carrie Covert** have going.

On a visit in late spring 2017, Coterie is wrapping up custom art deco bathroom vanities for Chicago's new BLVD restaurant ("People are going to flock to that one," Carrie says.); ceiling panels for the Sofitel hotel in Chicago; an industrial steel waterfall for a private home; and steel bases for three salvaged marble tabletops whose prior legs looked dated and needed a little love. They're distinct styles for distinct clients, but they're a breeze for Coterie, especially considering Jaime's extensive training in Amish furniture-making and several apprenticeships in his youth, where he learned to build in many styles using old world joinery and other classic building methods. Add to that the couple's pursuit of perfection, and you've got beautiful pieces.

The couple started Coterie after Carrie, at the time in e-commerce and marketing, became exasperated with her job. "Every time I started with a startup, it would implode and I would be out of a job." Jaime suggested they build something together instead. "She knew how to build a marketing plan, and I needed a business partner," he says. Now in their third year of business, the couple is busier than ever, adding to their robust portfolio of restaurants, hotels, retail spaces, and offices in Chicago and around the U.S.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF COTERIE

### DESIGNING BETTER WORK SPACES

"I love building gigantic conference tables," Jaime says. "I think every office should have one." It's what most of those clients ask for, too. Recently, a repeat office client wanted a more modern and open feel, so Coterie built them two giant tables from reclaimed oak with a steel base, plus two credenzas with contemporary flair.

Another way to cheer up an office? A sense of community. "Jaime's built a lot of kitchen islands for offices lately so a team can enjoy lunch together," Carrie says. "A lot of offices are very old-school with cubicles where you can hear a pin drop," Jaime says. "I love when you can hear people and it's very lively—huddle tables, conferences tables, somewhere to meet and share ideas."

### RECLAIMED WOOD IS WORTH THE EFFORT

One of the biggest challenges as a small furniture business is reconciling client expectations about pricing with regard to reclaimed materials.

"People think reclaimed wood is cheap, especially if they have a stash of it, but there's a whole acclimatization process that has to go on in the shop before we can use it,"

Carrie says. Not to mention cleaning the wood. They've had to pull out not just nails, but bullets, dating back to the wood's time as a tree.

That said, reclaimed lumber is one of Jaime's favorite materials to work with, as it helps each piece tell a story, adding warmth, dimension, and context to a space or room. "I love working with reclaimed material," he says. "When you're cutting an old beam in a house that's been there for 110 years, which used to be a 300-year-old tree, you're getting textures and colors that are unexpected."

Chicago's Coterie creates unique conference tables that people want to work around.

Coterie is also passionate about small business and makes the time to connect with clients face to face. This past winter, a customer had a mountainous request—a 22-foot live edge table delivered to Virginia in a single week. The duo made it happen. "Jaime did some crazy overnights and knocked it out," Carrie says.

While the couple prizes collaboration with their clients every step of the way, they also get excited for moments where they get a handful of napkin sketches. "I love seeing what Jaime will come up with," Carrie says. Ultimately, Coterie likes to see that their furniture does good and makes people happy. "It feels really good to provide office furniture for companies that care about their employees because they're trying to make a warm, inviting space for them that will be energetic and inspiring." **gb&d**