

PEOPLE: INTERVIEWS

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David Rockwell Takes on the Product World

Rockwell Group's design legacy extends beyond interiors, with imaginative products born from collaboration

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Rockwell Group's first foray into products came courtesy of Maya Romanoff. "I always respected Maya, and he respected me. He had never worked with an outside designer before, and it was a new thing for him, too," recalls David Rockwell, founder and president of the New York-based firm.

When Rockwell and the late Romanoff, founder of his eponymous luxury wallcoverings company, first met to discuss a potential collaboration, they both had planes to catch afterwards. But their conversation was so engaging, they lost track of time, and those flights were inevitably missed. Instead of boarding as they should have, Rockwell and Romanoff lingered at the conference room table and laid the groundwork for the 2007 release of *Stitched*. An evolution of Maya Romanoff's beloved *Weathered Walls* design, it showcased elegant horizontal and vertical stitching on hand-dyed paper.

It was a thrilling process for Rockwell, who at this time was best known for his dramatic restaurant and hotel interiors. While he had dreamed up goods for the customers frequenting *Monkey Bar*, *Vong*, and *Nobu*—all buzzy New York restaurants he designed—to bring home as eye-catching remembrances of their night savored at a hotspot, a full-fledged product launch was something entirely different for him. Quickly, he discovered these creations were another way for him to embrace texture and forge meaningful connections, elements that were also crucial in bringing to life his hospitality projects.



Splash Salmon for the Rug Company captures soft brushstrokes of water in motion

That same year, Rockwell Group joined forces with Italian lighting producer Leucos, conceiving the *Stacking* collection of floor lamps that referenced Japanese lacquered stacking cups. The handblown cylinders of glass, in juxtaposing hues of amber, tobacco, white, fume, and orange, were bolstered by shimmering gold and silver mirror finishes. Most importantly, they could be stacked in multiple permutations as users saw fit. “The idea was that you could customize it. So much of my work is about flexibility,” Rockwell says.

Nearly 20 years later, Rockwell's ideas for Maya Romanoff still flourish, manifesting in collections like Porto, a range of geometric patterns composed of thin die-cut cork veneers handlaid over metallic foil released in 2022 and 2023.



Casa Cork by Rockwell Group was an immersive living laboratory that debuted clad in cork at Salone del Mobile in Milan