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## Frankly Speaking

Interior designer Frank Ponterio debuts new classics with Avrett.

| By Barri Leiner Grant |



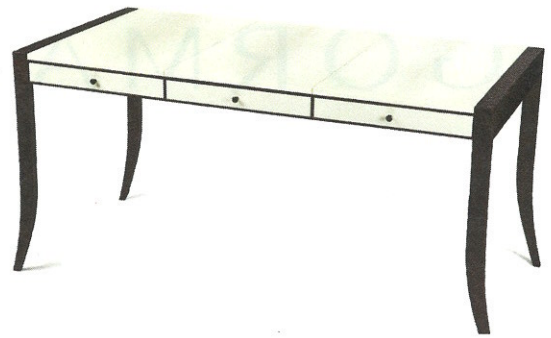
An expression of historic preservation within a contemporary lifestyle has been signature to Frank Ponterio Interior Design ([frankponterio.com](http://frankponterio.com)) projects for nearly two decades. Known in the industry for his traditional hand and handsome modernity, Frank Ponterio used his lifelong passion for travel, artistry and authenticity as inspiration for his new 11-piece furniture and furnishings collection.

With dual offices in Lake Forest and Chicago, numerous design awards to his credit and a busy roster of projects filled with custom pieces, why embark upon this particular collaboration and namesake collection now? “I’ve literally been filling sketchbooks with designs for years—it’s cathartic,” shares Ponterio. “Avrett offered me unlimited parameters and the kind of craftsmanship and heart that I felt was needed to bring them to life—as well as a life outside of our firm.”

Family-owned Avrett has been creating one-of-a-kind heirloom-quality furniture and lighting in its hometown of Charleston, S.C., since 1980. Avrett and Ponterio were connected through a mutual friend at John Rosselli and Associates’ showroom in the

### COLLECTION ENVY

Clockwise from left: Frank Ponterio; the MJ desk; the Francesco C 1909 fixture.



Merchandise Mart, where Ponterio has shopped for years. The Avrett meeting quickly proved a significant partnership in the making.

From sconces adorned with ironmade pineapple leaves fitted with or without electricity, to ornate bedframes and headboards, a sleekly finished desk and artful entry table—each fixture and furnishing in the line is intricately and masterfully forged in all-natural materials, including hand-hammered metalwork, unlacquered brass, rich wrought iron and steel that are complemented by dark woods, hand-matched shagreen and modern velum finishes.

Avrett, known for its expert artisans, old-world blacksmithing and proprietary innovations, served as partner and sounding board in scaling and crafting the prototypes for the made-to-order collection. Each bespoke item can be fine-tuned and specified to meet the needs and desires of each client and project. This endeavor will give the trade access to Ponterio’s work outside of his personal interior design projects for the first time. All the pieces in the collection are bench-made (crafted at the firm’s work table by hand) and, not surprisingly, named to honor Ponterio’s dear friends. Like time-honored furniture designers before him, the collection is hand-stamped with a specially forged crest to seal its authenticity and heirloom status. In fact, the Greg sconces are currently being considered for a historic Beverly Hills hotel suite that’s primed for a face-lift.

Walking the halls of the Mart with Ponterio is like walking a red carpet with a beloved celebrity. The “Hello” and “How-have-you-been?” greetings are as genuine as the man himself. One young designer stops to reintroduce herself and remind him of a coffee talk they’d had years back and how meaningful it had proven in her career. They make a promise to reconnect in the near future.

Ponterio’s easy demeanor and humility make the new collection seem just like a fun undertaking—but we know it’s hard work to make something so inventive and salable in this marketplace. And there is more to come. His notebook is filled with ideas and inspiration for possible additions to the line—pieces ranging from lamps to elegant shelving—a few named for family! Also, he gives a hint that drapery hardware and andirons are on tap, along with, of course, whatever void he feels he can fill with modernism and his own hint of history.