

Under Jane Sieberts' leadership, Summit continues to be a premium source of handcrafted teak furniture



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and brings with her an understanding of how a product needs to work in its environment.

Bill's decision to investigate more ecologically responsible solutions was revolutionary at the time, back before sustainability was a worldwide concern. But then Jane describes him as someone who was always a trailblazer. “He was elegant, always with a pocket square and handmade shoes,” Sieberts says. “He had an eye for design, for creating new businesses and styles that didn't exist before.” His father had run a department store in the US and Bill had grown up around furniture. When the opportunity came to work with a factory in Asia, he grew the company from there.

It wasn't until 1996, though, that he wrote down a brand mission statement. In a short missive circulated to his team, he talked about designing furniture to the highest-possible standards, with a lifetime guarantee, and to be thought of as only the very best. He was committed to making superlative products and to work with people who wanted to make this vision a reality. What does that mean to Sieberts in 2022? “To continue being green,” she says. “And this isn't just about where we source our teak from. We have got each design down to a fine art, so there is very little waste. And because our designs are not trend-led, they stand the test of time, lasting a lifetime. This is the true measure of sustainability.”

The ageing of Summit's work is a subject close to Sieberts' heart. “The thing about teak is that it's

Soft impact

For more than 30 years, Summit Furniture has created forever pieces that are kinder to the planet. By *Pip Rich*

Gentle curves, rounded edges and an attention to detail that sees the underside as smooth and tactile as the top, Summit's furniture designs are created with elegance in mind. “Our pieces have gravitas,” says Jane Sieberts, wife of the company's late founder Bill and head of the board since 2001. “They have substance. You can see them on an estate or a superyacht. Nothing

we create is sharp in any way; it all settles comfortably into its surroundings. And it has to be a good fit. We want you to sit in any of our chairs and feel at home.”

This is a simple and committed brand ethos that has been realised in countless ways, through collaborations with big-name designers and design brands such as Linley, Winch Design and John Munford Design. “They come to us,” says Sieberts, humbly grateful. “They think we have the best designers and use the best teak. It's wonderful to get that recognition.”

Ah yes, the teak. One of the elephants in the room when it comes to yachting furniture, but Summit made strides soon after its founding in 1979, by moving away from Myanmar (then called Burma). “The Burmese couldn't guarantee they weren't using illegally harvested teak, which Bill really didn't like. So he moved his production line to Indonesia almost right from the start,” says Sieberts, who trained as a designer at UCLA

Summit's adjustable chaises and lounge chairs adorn the deck of 88.5-metre Oceanco Nirvana



Left and above: lounge chairs from Summit's Linley collection. Below: a chaise from the Gatsby collection

not perfect," she says. "It's a natural product, so that comes with a few irregularities, which I actually find very charming. But one of the many things that is great about it is how it bleaches in the sun. After a little time spent out in the light it takes on a wonderful new warmth."

This ability to withstand the elements is one of the reasons why Summit is synonymous with superyachts. But the brand wasn't conceived with boats in mind. Anastasia, the 75.5-metre Oceanco designed by Sam Sorgiovanni in 2008, was the first, Sieberts thinks, to include Summit furniture – the Sundeck range by John Munford. The products have been at home on ships ever since, appearing on countless other superyachts such as *Gallant Lady*, *Coral Island* and *Lady Anne*. "The look of teak is perfect for a yacht," Sieberts says. "And since Kipp Stewart created the Charter range for us, his director's chair has been selling like hot cakes." Teak has a weightiness and solidity needed for life on deck, and because each piece is handmade it is put together sturdily enough to withstand adverse weather conditions. "The joinery is created using the principles of the old way of making furniture," Sieberts says. "Very few screws, and only the best quality glue."

Summit has created timeless pieces in collaboration with a string of top designers including Andrew Winch, John Munford and Glyn Peter Machin



Lounge chairs from Summit's Picket collection on board 88.5m Oceano Barbara

You can tell in the way the curves and angles come together – it could only ever be handmade.”

The big focus for Summit now is extending dining tables “because everyone wants bigger tables,” Sieberts says, while reimagining some of the brand’s classic designs for today. The L.A. Mod collection, designed by Alwy Visschedyk, will be produced in a new matt black. These are subtle tweaks that fit with Bill’s original plan to not – in Sieberts’ words – be iconic, but to be pieces that owners want to keep forever. As for the last part of his mission statement, to find people wanting to make the Summit vision a reality, that’s an ongoing endeavour. “I’m always looking for good designers, and exciting designs that will last,” Sieberts says, when asked about future collaborations. But one thing is certain: what comes next will be made with sustainable practices, and will be the last word in modern, understated luxury. summitfurniture.com ■

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Summit's 1930s Art Moderne-inspired Smoothie collection was designed by Los Angeles-based Alwy Visschedyk

