

INTERIOR DESIGN

Furniture as fine art

Palos Heights native Todd Hase, a star in design, coming to lecture series

By Michelle Mullins
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Palos Heights native and world-renowned furniture designer Todd Hase will be the featured guest speaker at the Governors' Forum Lecture Series in honor of Harrington College of Design's 75th anniversary.

The lecture series will be hosted by Harrington at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Merchandise Mart Conference Center in Chicago.

Hase, a Harrington graduate who built his empire beginning with five pieces of furniture that he designed, has gone on to design furniture for celebrities such as

Bruce Willis, Cameron Diaz, Clive Davis, Kevin Spacey and Donald Trump.

His living room furniture — the Carmen chairs and the Gerard sofa — were featured in the Fifth Avenue apartment for the 1998 movie "A Perfect Murder" starring Michael Douglas and Gwyneth Paltrow.



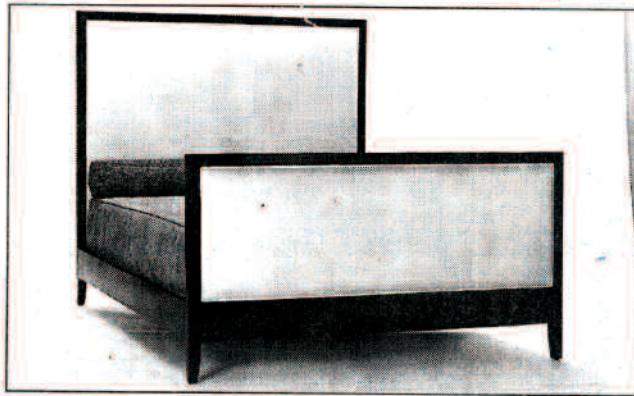
Todd Hase

Hase also designed Tom Hanks' character's bedroom, which included the Louvre headboard and the Michel side table, for the 1993 movie "Sleepless in Seattle."

Consumers still can buy those pieces, as he does not retire any of his designs.

Hase's furniture business has expanded into five national locations, including one at the Merchandise Mart and a showroom in London, and includes more than 200 pieces of upholstery, tables, case goods and accessories, and more than 200 different textile designs.

"There isn't a day (wife) Amy or I don't pinch ourselves on how far we've traveled," said the 37-year-old Hase, a 1986 graduate



The Master Louvre Bed from Todd Hase Furniture Inc. is available in twin, full, queen (shown) and king sizes.

Photo courtesy of Todd Hase Furniture Inc.

of Shepard High School in Palos Heights.

Todd Hase Furniture Inc. began 10 years ago as Hase tried to fill a void in the furniture market, which he began researching as a 12-year-old attending antique auctions and bidding on furniture and collectibles.

Working as a freelance interior designer in Chicago and New York City, he couldn't find the mix of old and new, current but livable furnishings, and so he created new designs for his clients.

He wanted to create furniture that could blend with any decor. He describes his work as ultimately modern 21st century furniture that is completely handcrafted and made like fine art.

Hase, who studied art history, uses a French deco feel, with his inspiration coming from the late 18th century to early 19th century France and also the Chinese Ming and Ching dynasties. Many of the antiques he sells are Chinese or French.

None of his furniture is commercially made.

"I want (to create) a perfect backdrop to whatever anyone collects," said Hase, who now lives in New York and France. "I

wanted furniture to be easily integrated."

Hase's first piece, the Amelia settee, was well received, and the New York press loved it. From there he opened his first showroom, and cautiously began his business.

The Amelia settee, which is armless and meant to "float in a room," is Hase's favorite work. He also enjoys working with macassar ebony, a special exotic wood that uses dark and light contrasts to form a pattern. Some of Hase's cocktail tables use the wood and create handmade sunburst effects on the tabletops.

Hase, who plans to speak about the success of his company, said his experience at Harrington, a four-year college for fine arts in Chicago, helped launch his career.

"There's no better way for us to kick off our 75th year than by celebrating the work of a famous alum," said Harrington president Erik Parks. "It validates so much of what we are doing. It's exciting for our current students. It lets the students know the journey is worth the trip."

Admission to the lecture is \$20 for the general public and \$10 for design students. To register, call (312) 464-9660.