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FAIR and Merida's newly opened showroom at the New York Design Center.
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NEWSROOM

FAIR and Merida Open Joint Showroom at the New York Design Center

Brad Ford partners with the carpet company in a space twice the size of FAIR's last home

"To be honest, this was not ever really in my thought process," confesses Brad Ford as he gestures around the sizable new space of [FAIR](#), his furniture showroom in the New York Design Center. "Jim Druckman was the one who really encouraged me to have a space."

And thank goodness for that. Some three years later, FAIR is a go-to spot for in-the-know designers looking to source something with a little extra soul. Stephen Sills, Robert Stiller, Madeline Stuart, and Shawn Henderson are among the many loyal buyers of Ford's carefully selected offering of handcrafted furniture and decor. When it started to become clear that the outfit had outgrown its beloved sixth-floor space, though, Ford was apprehensive about "expanding too big too soon."

He recalls: "The opportunity came for this space that I thought was probably too much of an undertaking, so I thought, 'Is there someone else I could reach out to to share the space with?'" Enter Merida, the rug purveyor who had long been supporters of [Field + Supply](#), Ford's craft fair.



Brad Ford's manner of displaying offerings in a gallery-like style lends the rugs by Merida a certain measure of (comfortable) gravitas.

William Geddes

"Catherine [Connolly, Merida's CEO] and I have a similar disposition, which is helpful," Ford explains. "We respect each other a lot. One of the things I admire about Merida is that a lot of their work is done here in the U.S., up in Fall River, Massachusetts, and there's such an emphasis on things being made by hand. We have a very similar ethos."

They also have a similar—or, rather, complementary—aesthetic: Merida's carpets give some context to FAIR's furniture, while Ford's manner of displaying offerings in a gallery-like style lends the rugs a certain measure of (comfortable) gravitas.

"It has been a very creative process as we talked through how to make space for both our brands," Connolly tells AD PRO. "Our goal is always giving the rugs the space so that designers can really appreciate the spirit and essence of them, and Brad is all about doing the same thing for the furniture."



The space serves as a setting for some new designers, like midcentury master Finn Juhl, to join FAIR's roster, and a showcase for Merida's newest collections.

William Geddes

Plus, as both point out, having the shared space allows for overlap in the companies' respective clienteles. "One of my beliefs is that teams get farther than individuals and there is power in numbers," Connolly says. "Sharing a space with FAIR seemed like another way to add value to the designers' experience when they come in to work with us on rugs."

The new showroom also serves as a setting for some new designers to FAIR's roster. One that Ford is particularly excited about is midcentury master Finn Juhl. "It was exciting to me to also be able to incorporate some of the really iconic makers from the past, to show that these pieces can work together," Ford says of the icons and the contemporary designers. "These makers' furniture can stand right up to a chair by Juhl."

Ford adds, "People want to stand out, so they're looking for things that are idiosyncratic and personal. Whether it's mixing master craftsmen with current craftsmen, or vintage and contemporary, high and low—it makes for a more interesting story."



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Indeed, that longing for something unique is likely a big part of what's made FAIR so successful over the past few years. Ford has always prioritized what he calls "a sense of discovery" in the showroom, even eschewing traditional marketing and advertising in order to preserve the in-store experience.

"I think because of social media, things can be so beaten into the ground before you even have a chance to really get into them," Ford says. "So it's been nice to have people come in and say, 'I didn't even know you were here,' let it evolve organically that way."

That's part of what appealed to Connolly, too. "The role of the showroom has changed dramatically in the last five years, largely with the accessibility of product through online platforms," she opines. "It is good for brands like Merida and FAIR, as we are all about creating an experience and being more of a destination than a means to an end. For us it is about inspiring and evoking curiosity in how things are made and how that creates a difference in a room. The bar is much higher for showrooms now—they have to be compelling and provocative and yet personal and high-touch." Mission, in this case, accomplished.

FAIR and Merida's new showroom is now open in Suite 1601 at the New York Design Center.
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