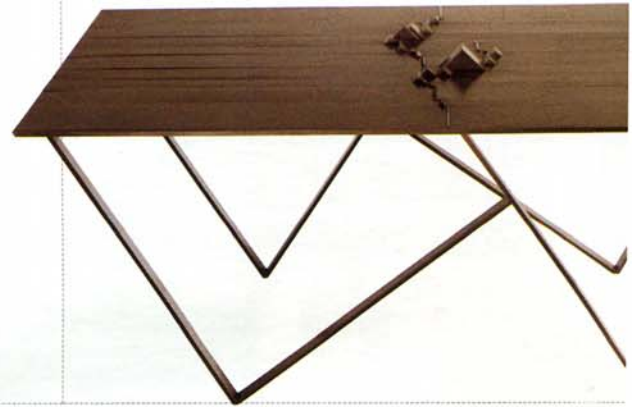




Ross Fiersten and Elizabeth Hayes in their Chicago studio. *Opposite:* Carlo Scarpa's Tomba Brion. The Italian architect's work is of particular interest to Fiersten and Hayes, who often look to his use of metals to inform and inspire their own craft.

A shared interest in metallurgy brought design duo Ross Fiersten and Elizabeth Hayes together. "Our first date was a welding lesson," Hayes says, adding that it wasn't long before she and her future husband were carrying torches for each other. Today at metal+works, the Chicago-based couple creates one-of-a-kind and limited-edition pieces that straddle the thin line between furniture and art. "We chose metal as our medium because it's strong and flexible," Fiersten says. "You can construct so many interesting forms with it." Their work features clean and thoughtful fabrication, fine details, smooth surfaces, patinated finishes and crisply defined intersections. "Our inspiration comes from joining different metals together," Hayes says. Each piece is a collaboration, with Hayes leaning toward a more aesthetic focus and Fiersten adding engineering to the design mix. "We get a lot of pleasure from our work," Fiersten says. "And from sharing it with others." rfmetalworks.com; 312.563.9620

Delicate, sculptural and engaging, metal+works' Jemez Coffee Table is crafted of steel with a patinated finish, and serves as an homage to its namesake mountain range in Santa Fe. "I grew up there," says Hayes, who often watched the sun set over the ridge's peaks.



TORCH SONG

ROSS FIERSTEN & ELIZABETH HAYES



On Our Nightstand:

EH: *Moby Dick*. It's been there three years. Ross picks it up every few months and tries to read it. We also have *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture*, which we're both reading.

Influences:

EH: Natural processes, like the growth of plants, and the industrial landscape. We try to find their meeting point.

Collection:

RF: Animal bones and skeletons; it includes a goat skull and a snapping turtle skull.

Design Icon:

RF: Architect Carlo Scarpa. We often study his use of materials, especially his incorporation of metalwork.

Up Next:

RF: Making our shop a more active part of the community. We're planning to make the space more permeable, so that people can see the work in progress and the finished product.

Philosophy:

RF: Use the art of creating things to empower yourself, and take pleasure in the process.