

WHY HE'S THE ROSS TAYLOR WE WANT TO TALK TO

As Ross Taylor goes onto Facebook to show me a picture of his car, a true hot rod, he points out “there are a lot of Ross Taylors.” And yes, there’s a professional cricket player in New Zealand and an actor — in porn. But we’re interested in Ross Taylor, owner of Gabriel Ross, a man considered to be the arbiter of good design, not just in Victoria but across Canada.

An upholsterer by trade, Taylor has spent two decades building Gabriel Ross into the “go-to” spot for contemporary furniture, showcasing authentic designs by icons like Herman Miller and Fritz Hansen. As testament to Taylor’s good taste, many of the furnishings carried by Gabriel Ross, such as Eero Saarinen’s Womb Chair and the Eames Lounge Chair, can also be found in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). As for sharing his name (and possible Google hits) with someone in the adult film industry? “It’s only a matter of time before he gets too old,” quips Taylor.

HOW HE FOUND HIS CALLING

Taylor’s path to finding his passion for contemporary design wasn’t a typical one. “Back in high school, I was definitely *not* the most likely to succeed,” he laughs. He found his way in through the upholstery trade, but it was more out of necessity than desire. Then he discovered he not only had a talent for it — he actually liked it.

“For me, it was probably the opposite of what most people would experience. They go to school in some capacity in this business and are super passionate about it. They maybe even lose that passion over time. I’ve actually grown *more* passionate, and to this day I love the business.”

WHY HE HASN'T READ MUCH LATELY

Big changes and many hours of work over the past year have Taylor joking that he’s “married to the business.” Looking to put some real estate into the Gabriel Ross mix, in November 2011 he bought an old metal fabrication shop on Rock Bay Avenue, across the street from his former location. “The crazy thing is that in the 15-plus years we were across the street, I’d been looking at this Harjim building and never once considered that it would be a cool showroom,” he says. But in true Taylor-style, he has turned the building into a showpiece, gutting the interior and restoring no less than 480 windows.

As if the big reno and move weren’t enough, he then decided the manufacturing side of his company needed its own identity. So Fawcett Manufacturing was born to create furniture that is environmentally conscious, right down to the organic wool padding and fair-trade botanical rubber foam. “Sustainable furniture without compromise is our mantra,” he says.

HOW HE GETS HIS ADRENALIN FIX

Pushing Victoria’s traditional furniture market towards a more modern aesthetic is not the only way Taylor likes to challenge himself. Two to three times a week you’ll find him mountain biking on Island trails.

“I like to get out and push my limits physically and push my skill level as well,” he says. “My current life is one of challenging myself on a daily basis in all aspects of my life, whether it be personal, business or physically.”

WHY HE LOVES THE LOCAL SCENE

For all his international-level flair for what’s stylish, Taylor is a local boy. He’s

been in the city since moving here from Ontario as a child, and he went through school and trades college locally. Along with the lifestyle Victoria offers (“being able to ride a bike one moment and skiing in the mountains the next”), he believes there are some amazing design projects happening locally, citing Rock Bay’s collection of artisans, from leathersmiths to carvers and brewers.

“I think people are starting to get it. Why buy your beer from some brewery in Ontario or bring it from Europe, when they’re making amazing beer here?” he says. “There’s just something to be said about having something made locally and sustainably.”

HOW THE BIG APPLE GIVES HIM BIG IDEAS

But it’s good to get off the Island now and then for new ideas. Every year, Taylor heads to New York for the Contemporary Furniture Fair to see what other people are doing. “I hang out in SoHo. Everybody is down there, all the showrooms. It’s a great place to get out and do more than look at furniture. When I’m in Victoria, I don’t get out much. So when I travel, I actually get out and look around.”

WHY HE KEEPS IT CASUAL

Taylor acknowledges that a sleek showroom with contemporary designs can be seen as intimidating by many shoppers. That’s why he tries to put out an inviting atmosphere with his laidback approach and casual wardrobe. “Every once in awhile I love to throw on a suit, as everyone does, but this is who I am,” he says as he gestures to his jeans. And, admittedly, it makes a stylish contrast with an Eames Lounge Chair. ::



PIECE OF FURNITURE HE WISHES HE'D DESIGNED

Vitra's Cité Chair
by Jean Prouvé

“The fact that it is 83 years old, nobody would look at it and guess that. It’s brilliant and it sits beautifully.”



MUST-HAVE HOME ACCENT

Tom Dixon Cast Shoe

“It’s actually a cast of Tom Dixon’s shoe and it’s a doorstop. It comes in a black or copper finish. It’s the coolest doorstop.”



IN THE DRIVEWAY

His restored
1965 Ford Falcon

“It’s a showpiece, but I built it to drive it. There’s something about driving a car that you built. I literally did everything but the body and paint work.”



TIM HURSELEY

PLACE OF INSPIRATION

Herman Miller's
GreenHouse factory

“They’re an all but zero-waste facility. I’d say I aspire to do a lot of the things that they do.”