



FOLLOW THE JOURNEY

American Craftsmen Who Inspire The Balvenie

Andy and Nicholas, Brand Ambassadors for The Balvenie, have a nose for the subtleties in a well-crafted glass of single malt. Apparently, they also have a nose for sniffing out craftsmen in the urban pockets and remote back roads of America. Read about their finds in Florida and New Orleans as they continue on their journey to seek out outstanding individuals keeping the handcrafted spirit alive. The Balvenie, with its tradition of rare craftsmanship, continues to be inspired by them.



[Hammering It Down] A BLACKSMITH'S ARTISTIC PROCESS

Growing up in Maryland, Rachel first encountered metalworking in seventh grade shop class. After attending Oberlin College and The Evergreen State College, she resumed the craft in 2001. A devoted blacksmith ever since, she now works in her shop and garden in the 9th Ward of New Orleans, sweating and dreaming.



Rachel David is an artist blacksmith. In her work she forges connections to find balance. She combines ancient techniques with contemporary needs. She addresses today's problems through timeless shapes.

Just as it is important to our coppersmiths and their craft at The Balvenie, it is important to Rachel to be in tune to the precision, skill and magic that is blacksmithing, as she finds the metallurgy and traditional techniques help determine her process. Therefore, her work is indebted to the nature of her material and reflects the "life" of the steel she works with: the ground from which it derives, its genesis in rock form, singularity as refined ore, organic fluidity as molten metal, and its historical context as a revolutionary substance. She believes that an awareness for the past, while working to create something in the present, implicitly enhances the product as well as the artistic experience.

Living and working in New Orleans, where opposites coexist in a unique harmony, has provided Rachel with endless inspiration. From the abandoned wharves, dilapidated and overgrown and now demolished, to the beautiful uptown houses, she is grateful for it all.

Nominate a
CRAFTSMAN ➔

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Photograph by Eric van den Brulle



[Hope Floats] MAN MAKES BEAUTIFUL BOATS FOR A RECOVERING COAST

Curt Morse grew up along the banks of the Mississippi River, hunting, fishing and boating, or, as he calls it, "Huck Finn style." After witnessing the damage of two hurricanes, Curt relied on his faith in the water and love of boats to create custom sea skiffs out of his studio in Pensacola, Florida that remind a tried coast what beauty looks like on water.

In 2004, Curt once again felt the pull of life on the water and along with his wife and three daughters, walked away from their life in Atlanta for the sandy beaches of Pensacola, Florida. Only two months later, hurricane Ivan slammed into their new home.

Uprooted once again, the Morse family sought the solace of the sea. They bought a boat and began exploring the hundreds of miles of beaches and estuaries along the coast. It was on one of these day trips that Curt spied his first Caribiana Sea Skiff. He continued to lust after these beautiful boats – the high slender bow, graceful sheer, sleek lapstrake hull – from afar for the next three years.

In that time, the coast was once again ravaged by hurricane Katrina, and in its wake the Caribiana manufacturing company was in the process of folding. Curt seized this opportunity to salvage some beauty amidst the wreckage. He approached the manufacturer and within a year consummated a purchase agreement in the spring of 2007.

Now Curt spends his days in his studios in Pensacola, building authentic custom-made models of the same Caribiana Sea Skiffs he fell in love with years ago. He takes extreme pride in creating such elegant, heirloom works of traditional American craftsmanship for clients around the country, and strives to share with them his lust for life on the water. Andy and Nicholas can't wait to hit the high seas in one of Curt's skiffs and drink in what his passion is all about.

[Daddy Knows Best] TWO DADS BOND OVER DAUGHTERS, DIVORCES, AND DESIGN

Matt O'Connell and Rey Mendez of Nothingman Foto and Design are committed to bringing sustainable design to the forefront.

Like many before them, Matt O'Connell and Rey Mendez relocated to Florida searching for something better. Matt was escaping the cold weather of New York to photograph his favorite subjects in the Florida sunshine. For Rey, it was fleeing Castro's regime, bringing with him Cuba's fabled Old World aesthetic. Yet it was only when they met each other, as divorced dads picking up their daughters from pre-school, that they realized just how much better it could be.

Together they founded Nothingman Foto and Design. The combination of each man's passions, Nothingman believes in expanding the ideas of environmentally agreeable design without compromising a signature artistic flair. Using reclaimed woods, words, metals and glass, clean air stains and paints, and Old World building techniques, Nothingman keeps it simple, smart and strong, just as our venerable craftsmen have been doing at The Balvenie since 1893.

