

## PROFILE

# A made-in-Canada solution

If you can't find the fabrics and styles you want, make them yourself

**HEATHER M. O'CONNOR**  
Special to Sun Media

They say necessity is the mother of invention. That's certainly the case with the Warman Hood collection, a new line of Canadian-made fine furniture that debuted this spring.

Designer Marnie Warman had carved out a sterling reputation in her two decades heading Burlington's Interior Design House. Her interior design service and retail store was known for delivering high quality paired with classic style. So when existing suppliers couldn't provide the fabrics and styles she wanted for her clients, the seasoned business owner designed her own.

Warman sketched out the idea with partner Andrew Hood, then took their plans to Future Fine Furniture of Weston, Ontario, an established Canadian manufacturer. From those discussions sprang the Warman Hood collection.

"This was a great opportunity to collaborate, to have Canadian designers working with Canadian manufacturers to create 100% Canadian-made goods. It was a Canadian good news story," says Warman.

The design team chose Future Fine Furniture for the manufacturer's time-honoured commitment to quality and attention to detail. Each piece is produced individually. The hand-made solid maple frames are double-dowelled, glued, screwed and corner-blocked.

"It's a hands-on process from start to finish — very rare these days," notes Warman.

The talented design duo also plays a hands-on role from start to finish, from preparing the initial concepts and original sketches to selecting a rainbow of chic fabric selections right through to the finished product. One important decision they made was using an eco-friendly foam called BioPlush.

"It's all about making responsible choices these days," Warman says. "Look at old sofas at the side of the curb and imagine that in the dump — all that foam that never breaks down."

BioPlush is made from natural seed-based oils, like soybean, rather than fossil fuels. No poor cousin to traditional foam, Warman says the biodegradable product is actually better quality, with a luxurious hand-feel, a more stable consistency and density and exceptional durability.

"It's far superior. Everybody should be switching to it, but it's more expensive. That can become an issue for manufacturers who are perhaps trying to cut costs. For us, we're spending a little more money on it because it's a better product for the consumer and it's better for the planet. This is just our way of helping the environment in a small way."

The Warman Hood collection debuted with 60 pieces, including several different styles of sofas; all come with a matching chair, demi sofa and loveseat. Cognizant of the trend to condo-scale furniture and the renaissance of sectionals, Warman and Hood included these pieces in their new line. "As people's lifestyle change, the furniture has to change with it."

The collection is distinctive in both design and fabric. "We didn't want run-of-the-mill fabrics," she says. Over 300 stylish upholstery choices open up almost limitless permutations, assuring clients that their settings won't be duplicated in infinite homes.

But sometimes too much choice can be overwhelming. So Warman and Hood have put together a series of eight poster-sized storyboards. Themed by colour palette, each storyboard showcases several complementary groupings of fabric swatches accompanied by a few coordinating Benjamin Moore paint colours.

"The client usually can't visualize how fabrics look paired together. That's why it's great to work with a designer — but people don't always have the luxury of doing that, and some furniture stores don't have design staff on board."

The storyboards make it easy. The groupings express moods from subtle to flashy, from bold to traditional.

"Customers can see really interesting combinations they wouldn't think of — and they all work," Warman says. "Instantly they get a designer look."

The two designers' necessity has invented a whole new way to achieve designer dash. Attractive, comfortable, built to last — and it even comes in "green." Sounds like a true Canadian success story.

*Fine furniture retailers across Canada carry the Warman Hood collection. Look for it in the GTA at Decorium, Direct Interiors and Interior Design House of Burlington.*



Above: Marnie Warman admits this smaller-scale sofa upholstered in a natural-looking cream linen is one of her favourite pieces. Silver nailheads follow the line of the squared-off arm — detail repeated in the matching oversized ottoman. Top: More pieces from the Warman Hood line and some of the storyboards that coordinate fabric swatches and paint colours.