

# HARTMANN & FORBES®

## FEATURED IN



Publication: Window Fashion Vision

Date: January-February 2019

Article: Hartmann&Forbes:

A Corporate Culture of Going Green | p58-61

Products Shown:  
pg 58: Interbraid Series

pg 60: Roman Shade: LE1960 Interbraid - Heather

pg 61: LE2121 Mesa - Adobe

Order no-charge memos online at  
hartmannforbes.com or contact your  
local representative showroom.

INSPIRATION Hartmann&Forbes

## HARTMANN & FORBES

A Corporate Culture of Going Green

BY GAIL GUTSCHE

Michael Jones was on a business trip in Southeast Asia more than 20 years ago when he first witnessed local people hand-weaving textiles from natural fibers. Captivated by the interesting patterns and textures, and inspired by the craftsmanship of these talented artists, an idea struck: Why couldn't these weavings be used to make one-of-a-kind window treatments and wall coverings and distributed throughout the western world?

That moment of inspiration grew into Hartmann&Forbes, a Tualatin, OR-based company committed to providing luxurious natural window coverings, wall coverings and textiles handcrafted with sustainable materials.

The latter part has always been a key part of the company's mission. "I founded Hartmann&Forbes to refashion how window coverings were being designed, crafted and consumed by the marketplace," says Jones. "At the time, most window treatments being made were harmful to people and the environment. Massive amounts of waste were filling up the landfills. I couldn't fathom why. Over the past 20 years, we have worked hard to influence industry change in terms of environmental practices."

Hartmann&Forbes has also institutionalized being green. From the way the company manufactures its all-natural window and wall coverings, to its external and internal reduce/reuse/recycling programs, every process is designed to lessen the impact on the environment.

"Sustainability has always been a core value for Hartmann&Forbes, from our craftsmanship to our products," says marketing and communications coordinator Michaela Fujita-Connors. "That's how we do business. We are intricately intertwined with the natural world and we are very conscious of how we impact that world."

Hartmann&Forbes is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, and its commitment to being an environmentally conscious company has only grown over that time. In 2018, the company was ranked 48th in the 100 Best Green Workplaces in Oregon, up from 64th in 2017. They are striving to move up in the rankings again in 2019. Given the many ways environmentally-friendly practices are woven into the company's fabric, it seems likely that they'll continue to find new ways to green their operations—and serve as an



58 | wf-vision.com | Jan + Feb 2019



### Natural Fibers, Naturally

All Hartmann&Forbes textiles are made from natural materials that are either cultivated or harvested from forests or waterways. They are picked, dyed and sun-dried, then cut to accommodate the length of the weave. All of the work is done by hand. The plants grow all over the world, from the South Seas to Europe to Asia.

"We use water hyacinth, which is an invasive species that clogs up waterways in the South Seas," says Rebecca Welch, the company's director of product development. "Arrowroot grows like a vine in the South Seas forests—it is one of our more popular fibers. We use palm and bamboo and banana fibers. All of these plants grow easily and readily where they come from, so we're not depleting anything in harvesting them."

Linen comes from flax grown in Belgium. Some crops, like ramie, are cultivated by farmers who own the land. Hartmann&Forbes partners with overseas farmers and weavers to produce the majority of their products. The weaving facilities are located close to where raw products are grown to minimize the impacts of moving people and product long distances. Some weavers work from their homes, while others travel to facilities located in their communities.

"We've created hundreds of jobs in small villages in other countries," says Fujita-Connors. "Generation after generation, families continue to work there. We're proud that our partners own a living wage."

Window Fashion Vision | 59

INSPIRATION Hartmann&Forbes



### Customized Window Coverings Tailored to Taste

"We like to say we have no competition," says Welch. "When a customer places an order, we weave it to the size of their windows, specifically. That's what we specialize in and that's what makes our company different than any other company out there. We make shades up to 180 inches wide—no one else can go that wide. (Industry standard is between 124 inches and 160 inches.) And no one else has as many natural fiber patterns as we have."

It takes two to three days to weave a shade. Each piece is woven to size, which eliminates significant waste. "It's a very simple process. A weaver sits at a loom, which is not using any electricity, and makes a beautiful, natural product," says Fujita-Connors. "Even what they use to make the web is hand turned."

Hartmann&Forbes keeps its processes simple in another way too. The company only makes three window coverings: roman shades, roller shades and draperies. Window coverings woven overseas are finished in the Portland-area facility. Since each shade is custom-made, specialty orders and requests are easily accommodated.

"We have lots of custom options," says Fujita-Connors. "If a designer wants a different color of thread in the web, we can do that."

In addition to being highly customizable, the products are certified child-safe. Conds on their shades are enclosed by a sheath that ensures a child cannot become entangled in them. Automated shades are also available.

60 | wf-vision.com | Jan + Feb 2019



### Environmentally Conscious Inside and Out

Hartmann&Forbes minimizes waste and recycles, repurposes and recycles everything they can.

"When Michael started the company, he worked with the University of Oregon, which helped him form their take-back initiative," says Welch. "If a customer is installing more shades, they can send their used ones back to us. We then recycle, repurpose or donate them. Those that still have life in them are donated to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore."

The company meets the water-quality recycling standards set by the countries in which they have partnerships. Because each part of the shade is made to size, there is very little waste generated. "We are careful to use as much of the fiber as possible," says Welch.

Internally, a company-wide recycling effort is spearheaded by the Project Green Committee, which started in 2005.

Employees compost all eligible food scraps and recycle batteries, computers, phones and light bulbs. "We recycle all our soda cans and donate to Cans for Kids," says Fujita-Connors.

As customers demand more green products for their homes and businesses, she and Welch agree that the window coverings industry is getting more conscious about the environmental impact of its products. In addition, everyone at the company sees transparent processes and open communication with designers as key to nudging the industry toward manufacturing processes and products that are more sustainable in every sense of the word.

"Moving forward, companies will need to prioritize how they care for human beings, and measure success not by financials exclusively, but by the way they improve the lives they touch and the environment we all share," says Jones. "This human-centered approach, over time, will revolutionize the definition of sustainability, and help to build a better world."

Window Fashion Vision | 61