

ISSUE
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Gray

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ART-LOVING
DEVELOPER
IAN GILLESPIE:
NO TIME FOR
HATERS



WHO TO KNOW

PROMOTION



-IN CONVERSATION WITH-

Blake Garfield

Bedrooms & More has been a staple in Seattle's Wallingford neighborhood since 1972. From its exclusive custom-designed mattresses, to made-to-last textiles, bedding, and furniture, the family-owned business has been operating for two generations. GRAY's Tamar Leveson sat down with Blake Garfield, the company's general manager and treasurer, whose goal is to sell you your last bed, and to keep mattress waste out of landfills.

Bedrooms & More is dedicated to production transparency of sustainable and ethically sourced products. Shouldn't we expect this from all retailers?

It needs to be happening more. Unfortunately, I don't see it happening on a particularly large scale. I think [production transparency] is more of a grassroots effort that many small retailers are pursuing. A large portion of the market share is controlled by big-box stores, which make you feel warm and fuzzy about "organic" cotton pillows or a perception that they're doing something renewable. [These] larger companies merely make you feel like you're doing something good—it's the smaller companies that are really doing

it from top-to-bottom. There's just not a lot of money to be made that way for bigger companies.

Your company's ethics in production seem to go hand-in-hand with your dedication to community outreach. Tell us about one of your favorite non-profits you work with.

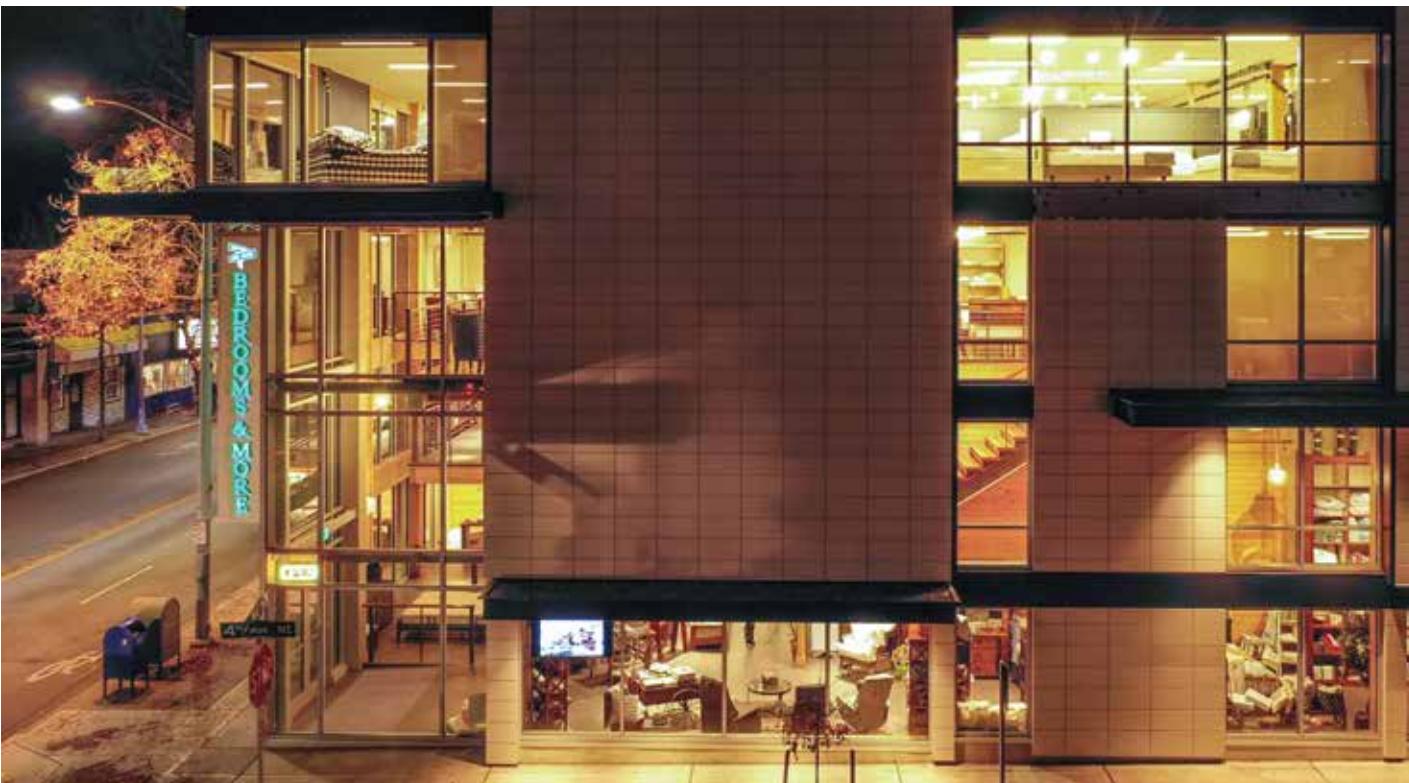
I really like the [Seattle women's and children's shelter] Mary's Place. It's a really big deal to be able to provide a step forward for people. You can try to go through government services, but Mary's Place has picked up a lot of the slack where it lacks, and I'm excited to be a part of it. They tell us how many beds they need, and we provide them. We're a small company—we can't give tens

of millions of dollars like a big corporation—but we can have a significant impact.

Your family has owned its company for 20 years. How has working with your kin shaped your approach to business?

I think it's more about running a company by feel. It's strange that we've been, to a degree, successful because of my parents' integrity. They've seen a lot of trends in the marketplace in the course of nearly 50 years, and along the way, they made sure they offered products they could be proud of and a level of service that represented our family name. Because our family and our business are inextricably linked





in our minds, we make sure we're doing things along the way that we won't feel bad about later. It's informed many of our decisions over the years: If we wouldn't want it in our home, why would we sell it to someone else? It also adds a degree of difficulty because we have to make sure we're on the same page about every decision. Those choices don't just represent ourselves; they represent the entire family.

How has that effected your brand philosophy?

If you asked each family member that question, we'd each pull a slightly different angle from our mission statement, which we worked on together. For me, our company is

about being able to offer value and quality regardless of [someone's] budget. Mattresses, seating, upholstery, bedding, it doesn't matter—I want to offer the best bang for your buck. And I pair that with using as natural and sustainable elements as possible within the available budget. I want to make sure that every purchase will last.

What does the company have planned for this spring?

I do a lot of our product design, and one of the exciting things we have coming up is a total upgrade to a lot of our mattresses: They will now have zippers. Usually, a mattress is only as durable as its least durable component, but if you have access to

the inside of the bed, you can switch from one coil system to another, to a layer of foam to a natural latex, or you can replace the cover. The goal is for it to be the last bed you ever have to buy, and for it to stay out of a landfill. The average ton of mattress garbage takes up nineteen times the volume of the average ton of regular garbage, you know.

Last, we recently launched a program for interior designers, who can work with clients in-store and borrow samples. We also created a designer rewards program, where we extend our legendary support to them. As with any customer, we make the process seamless. *