

DALLAS + FORT WORTH

luxe.

interiors + design®

INTERIORS / ARCHITECTURE / INSPIRATION

DESIGN 2018

\$ 9.95 A SANDOW PUBLICATION | LUXE SOURCE®



0 74470-03227-4
JAN/FEB 2018 | DISPLAY UNTIL 03/05/18

**GOLD
LIST**

A FLOURISHING VENTURE

IN DALLAS, A HISTORIC PLASTERWORKS STUDIO ENTERS THE MODERN ERA WHILE MAINTAINING ITS OLD-WORLD CHARM.

WRITTEN BY MAILE PINGEL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN CLEMONS





"We are constantly thinking of how to improve or do things better," says Mark Marynick (top, left), who is breathing new life into Dallas plasterworks studio Casci; a side space in the studio (top, right) is where his team experiments with new designs. A capital (above) is being molded for a historic Colonial-style Connecticut home, while a silicon mold (opposite) forms rosettes ideal for a decorative ceiling. Samples on display in the studio include a French-motif crown molding (right).



In late 2016, rumors began to circulate among local architects and builders that Casci, Dallas' beloved plasterworks studio now owned by Mark Marynick, was going on the market—or, worse, closing. Founded in 1930 by Italian immigrant Giovanni Primo Casci, the company transferred in 1972 to Jan and Royce Renfro, who lovingly maintained it over the decades, garnering clients nationwide, and were considering retirement. Encouraged by friend Porter Fuqua—whose father, architect Wilson Fuqua, had worked with Casci for years—Marynick visited the Renfros. "We hit it off immediately," he recalls, yet notes the couple weren't eager to sell. But with a Master of Business Administration from Southern Methodist University and a certificate from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Marynick had a passion for art, commerce, people, architecture and manufacturing that aligned with theirs. So by early 2017, he and Fuqua found themselves in the plaster business.

Casci's studio is a complex of adjoined warehouses and an early 20th-century red-brick building Marynick is converting into a showroom. Under the Renfros' careful watch, the company has retained "mountains of photographs and drawings of its productions and almost an acre of molds," he says. These molds were originally made from animal rendering and could produce only three or four castings. But 30 years ago, the Renfros switched to silicone and urethane molds, which they used to make copies of Casci's vast inventory of crown moldings, mantels, wainscoting, columns, medallions and more. "If our archives don't contain the original piece, we at least have the molds," Marynick notes. Commissions—of which Casci receives one to two a day—typically begin with samples rather than drawings, which "allows us to work through things and problem solve," he adds. This involves carving a positive—usually wood, plaster or clay—to make a mold and then mixing

"IT'S NICE TO BE INVOLVED WITH A COMPANY CELEBRATING DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP WHILE OFFERING SO MUCH VALUE."



and slowly pouring in the plaster, which reveals the design when dry.

Now running the studio solo—Fuqua is focusing on his family’s architecture firm—Marynick has set his sights on both classical restoration and contemporary endeavors. He put in a bid for the University of North Texas’ restoration of the Dallas Municipal Courts building and is in discussions with the Highland Park Independent School District board about donating plaster designs to the planned John S. Bradfield Elementary School library. Marynick also answers calls from clients with modernist homes—a new sector helping to sustain his firm, which is one of just a handful of plaster specialists nationwide operating at its scale and quality of work. “People want to soften modern interiors with ornament that doesn’t conflict with the design,” he says. “We can do

stripped-down versions of historical pieces or simple geometrics. Plaster is the punctuation, not the language.”

What hasn’t changed at Casci is its recipe for plaster, of which the studio goes through roughly 70 tons a year. “We still use good-old USG Gypsum molding plaster, as we have since the beginning,” Marynick notes. “It’s incredibly stable—lasting 25 years or more before needing work.” The company also remains very much a close-knit business. The son of veteran foreman Jesus Garcia recently joined the team, as has noted woodcarver Paul J. Labadie. Marynick’s brother and nieces are also pitching in. And the Renfros still like to drop by. “I’ve had so much support and encouragement,” Marynick says. “It’s nice to be involved with something so much bigger than myself: a company celebrating design and craftsmanship while offering so much value.” ■



The Casci warehouse is a trove of plaster, rubber and fiberglass molds (opposite). A craftsman (above) mixes hemp, plaster and water to form a mixture that’s applied as a second or third layer on a mold, giving a cast more rigidity. While most items are custom-made, the company keeps an inventory of medallions on-hand (left). A Moorish design for a Highland Park project (above, left) reflects current tastes for simplified ornamental designs.