

DAILY BREEZE

Business soars for El Segundo airplane furniture maker MotoArt

January 14, 2015

By: Jordan England-Nelson



In a desert graveyard for decommissioned airliners, two men saw off a chunk of airplane wing they will turn into a \$20,000 desk. “These were the good old days,” Dave Hall says, as he scrolls through old photos of him and his partner, Donovan Fell, [cutting apart scrapped airplanes](#) in the Mojave Desert for their boutique furniture company, MotoArt in El Segundo.

Hall and Fell rarely go out in the field to find parts these days. Their company has grown so large that a team of employees now is available to scavenge airplane parts.

MotoArt, which started in Hall’s garage in Torrance, has exploded into an international brand with showrooms in China, Australia, Italy, Maryland and El Segundo. Now, the company has started renting out its El Segundo showroom and workspace for corporate and nonprofit events.

“We always wanted to open a bar, but then we realized, we’ve already built one!” Hall said. “People love it because it’s like Disneyland. And we love it because it helps pay the rent.”

The showroom features couches, tables and light fixtures made with airplane parts and a light-up bar built out of a commercial fuselage. In the downstairs garage, where hundreds of salvaged wing parts and a World War I biplane replica hang from the ceiling, most of the heavy equipment is on wheels.

The entire space can be cleared in 90 minutes, Hall said. Rent runs from \$1,750 to \$9,500 depending on the day and how much space is needed.

During the holidays, MotoArt was booking two events a week. Northrop Grumman, one of its first clients, already has booked a half-dozen events. Activision has reserved the entire facility for an event later this month.

Fairfax High School held its winter formal inside the main garage, which Hall was apprehensive about at first.

“I was so stressed about it. This is a museum — you don’t want people beating it up,” Hall said. “But they were the best kids ever.”

The garage has the nose of a C-47 mounted high on the wall like a big-game trophy. Hall said they wired it so a DJ can perform inside it.

The company does several million dollars in annual revenue, mainly selling to corporations and wealthy creative types that can afford \$30,000 conference rooms desks and \$8,000 coffee tables. They get 20 to 30 calls a day from interested buyers, Hall said, and year-over-year growth has always been in the double digits, even during the recession.

“Rich people make money whether the economy’s up or down,” Fell said. “So we have customers no matter what.”

The most prized items are built with parts from old military planes, but those parts are getting harder to find. After the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the government banned the sale of retired military planes.

MotoArt used to get most of its supply from airplane “bone yards,” as Hall describes them, in Mojave, Victorville and Goodyear, Ariz., but he mostly looks internationally now, or uses civilian aircraft.

The goal is to acquire at least a dozen of any one part, so that several copies can be made for each design.

The company, which has about 18 employees, has 130 lines of furniture that come and go based on the availability of parts.

While Boeing, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin are MotoArt clients, Hall estimated that 90 percent of the company's clients have no relation to aerospace.

"I think flight is in all of us, ever since you're a little kid," he said. "And that's who we cater to — big kids."

<http://www.dailybreeze.com/business/20150114/business-soars-for-el-segundo-airplane-furniture-maker-motoart>