

Silver River Center for Chair Caning, the US's only chair caning school and museum, has recently opened in CURVE Studios & Garden, a cornerstone of Asheville's River Arts District. Along with classes and exhibits, Silver River offers caning restorations and chairs for purchase.

Silver River proprietors, Brandy Clements and Dave Klingler, operated Go Chair Repair for five years at a different location in the RAD. As more and more of their time was spent educating visitors and teaching classes, the idea for Silver River Center for Chair Caning was born.

A fourth generation chair caner and active member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild, Clements learned the art from her aunt Linda. She and Klingler have more than 20 years combined experience and collaborate with local furniture makers Scott Woody and Brian Boggs. The duo has restored a multitude of family heirlooms and many notable chairs including works by Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann, late 18th century chairs at The Island Farm in Manteo, mid-century classics from Hans Wegner, and the infamous "Beast" which took 400 hours to restore.

"People tend to think of chair caning as a quaint craft of the mountains, but it is an ancient and global tradition. Kings and queens have sat on caned chairs, and caning is featured in modern art as well," notes Clements. "People say chair caning is a dying art. I say it's thriving."

Recently, Clements and Klingler attended the 2014 SeatWeaver's Guild Conference in Sturbridge, Massachusetts and the Art of Seating Exhibit, hosted by the Reynolda House and MESDA, to further their education, meet fellow caners and research the contemporary state of chair caning in America. Their experience at the SeatWeaver's Guild Conference was so beneficial, they decided to host the 2016 conference at the Folk Art Center in Asheville.

"I am a total chair nerd," says Clements with sincerity. "The chairs never cease to surprise me with their stories and their technical nuances. Social media has really exposed the current state of chair caning. I share chair photos with fellow caners in Europe, South America, Australia and Asia. It is very exciting."

Klingler adds, "The chairs are a beautiful rabbit hole and we've been falling for 10 years." With the new museum and school, they hope to make Asheville a flagship for chair caning in America and the world.

Silver River Center for Chair Caning is located in Curve Studios upstairs at 9 Riverside Dr. For more information, call 828-707-4553 or email SilverRiverChairs@gmail.com. For daily updates, visit www.facebook.com/silverrivercenterforchaircaning or the new website at www.SilverRiverChairs.com.