



The
Difference Makers

30 Contemporary Makers, 30 Remarkable Stories

By Marc Adams

The Difference Makers



The Difference Makers

The Fourth Generation

Marc Adams

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Preface

From the beginning of time, men and women have had three natural resources: water, rock and wood. Although necessary for human survival, water and rock weren't very comfortable to sleep on, nor easy to transport. However, wood was different. In Genesis 2:9 the Bible says "And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food." It goes on to say, "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." It's clear that God intended for trees to become the substance of "life" and "knowledge" throughout all of our existence.

Often referred to as the "lungs of the planet," trees are one of the largest living organisms in the world. Trees provide temperature control, are a natural filtration system and they provide a habitat for wildlife. Trees not only provide food and shelter but are an enormous source of fresh oxygen while removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The wood, leaves and sap serve as fuel, medicines and pulp for paper. Trees are excellent at controlling erosion, their majesty helps identify seasons, and when harvested responsibly, trees are a great renewable resource. Among the countless other benefits trees provide are logs, timber and boards that allow us to make things – beautiful things.

Making things with wood, particularly furniture, has been a noble profession for more than 5,000 years. The remarkable history of furniture and furniture making is well documented and spans volumes from classical to contemporary. Our craft has given us names that are recognized like rock stars; Bezalel, Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Stickley, Eames, Morris, Greene & Greene, Ruhlmann, Roentgen, Mackintosh, Miller and Maloof, to name just a few. Their works have become immortalized and their names are synonymous with craftsmanship. Everyone who has ever been seriously bitten by the woodworking bug has dreams of making a cabinet or chair that will someday bear their name or forever be displayed in a museum.

When we think about inspired work, we typically think about ordinary people who make extraordinary things. This is the level of craftsmanship in which the description of the work

changes from "furniture" to "masterpiece." Most who work in wood today have been inspired by the work or skill of someone who has mastered the craft – like the rock stars just mentioned.

What makes someone a "master" craftsman? You can't tell by outward impressions as they appear to be just like everyone else. Some did not finish high school, while others have Ph.D.s. They are scattered across the globe and come from both very humble beginnings and affluent roots.

All of the difference makers featured in this book have, at one point, taught at the Marc Adams School of Woodworking (MASW). During my years of running the school I have observed that some of the makers have great religious faith and others have no faith at all. Some use power tools exclusively, while some only work with hand tools. Some design their own work and others are specific to a historical period. Most have faced great adversity or criticism throughout their careers. Nearly all dislike being called "artists," simply preferring to be known as a "craftsman," "craftswoman," "woodworker" or "furniture maker." Most are authentic, humble and generous. None are rich in treasury, but all are content and live fulfilling lives. These people who inspire us through their memorable work are really no different than everybody else. Yet there is still something that connects them, making them unlike others. Their hands are more skilled, their eyes can see into the fibers of the wood, they can create dynamic movement from static material. They are driven by an insatiable passion to create. As Leonardo da Vinci said: "People of accomplishment rarely sit back and let things happen to them. They go out and happen to things."

This book is dedicated to those in our generation who have that special ability to take humankind's greatest gift and do uncommon work. They are the people who will be remembered in perpetuity for their creative spirit and their good works, and quite possibly their name may be used to describe the matter of their work. One thing is for sure: The type of wood they use most likely comes from two different types of trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge.

— Marc Adams



*"The Tree of Life" published
by Currier & Ives, 1892,
Library of Congress Prints
and Photographs Division,
LC-DIG-pga-03638.*

Introduction

The story of making fine objects with wood in the New World started more than 350 years ago and has become a rich part of America's history.

Pioneers who arrived in the early 1600s brought little furniture with them, but they did bring basic carpenters' tools along with a knowledge of how to use them. As meeting the basic needs for survival became less of a distraction to daily life, these early Americans started to build houses, barns, churches and every other kind of structure. There was more wood than anyone ever could have imagined. They used it for heating, cooking, making utensils, carts, wagons, primitive furniture, shelter, wooden-gear clocks and even turned some of it into syrup.

There were coopers, carpenters, wheelwrights, turners, shipwrights and joiners. At times they would pitch in to do each others' work. Nearly all tradespeople worked with the same tools – hammers, saws, chisels, planes, augers, compasses and various measuring tools. Mortise-and-tenon joinery was

widely used and was common to all trades. Over the next few decades, as more immigrants came to America, the trades started to become more defined and refined, and certainly less dependent on each other.

By the 1700s, the colonies became well established and settlements were growing from villages to cities. The workforce was changing and industries were starting to develop. Furniture making was one of the first trades to evolve in the new century. There was a need for tables, chairs, cabinets, doors, moulding and other household furnishings. Patrons were eager to display their wealth and amenities for a more comfortable lifestyle. For the first time in America, there seemed to be a market for the professional woodworker to show his expert skills, which in turn separated him from the ranks of village carpenter. By the time the U.S. emerged from the American Revolutionary War and into the Federal period, our new nation was starting to fashion the best of European furniture design and detail into furniture that would become distinctly our own.

Arguably, this is where our first generation of woodworking forefathers made a name for themselves as brilliant makers such as Job Townsend, Christopher Townsend, John Townsend, John Goddard, Thomas Johnston, William Savery, Benjamin Randolph, Samuel McIntire, John Seymour, Thomas Seymour, Thomas Elfe and Duncan Phyfe to name just a few, whose work was so fine that it has been compared to the Golden Age in Greece or the height of the Renaissance in Italy. Their works are held in the highest regard both from a perspective of value and American history, and although they were successful in their day, they could never have imagined the value of their works 200 years later. These talented makers, who worked without electricity, started the American tradition of making furniture with elegance, detail and extraordinary skill, and today their historical works are priceless. These makers are truly the forefathers of American furniture and are now considered the first generation of difference makers.

By the early to mid 1800s, the world changed dramatically. The Industrial Revolution transitioned work from hand production methods to machine manufacturing, resulting in

**INTERIOR SETTING:
CARPENTER AT WORK
WITH FAMILY** (from *Cropsey
Album*). Attributed to Constant
Mayer (1829-1911), 1856, *The
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York, Purchase, Charles
and Anita Blatt Gift, 1970,
www.metmuseum.org.*





CHEST-ON-CHEST. *Thomas Townsend (1742-1827), 1772, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of the American Wing Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Goelet Gift, Sansbury-Mills Fund, and Leigh Keno and The Hohmann Foundation Gifts, 2005, www.metmuseum.org.*



CYLINDER DESK AND BOOKCASE. *Attributed to Duncan Phyfe (1770-1854), 1815-20, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Gift, in memory of Berry B. Tracy, 1985, www.metmuseum.org.*

improved efficiency and increased productivity. The average income and population began to show signs of unprecedented growth, and almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way because of this shift in production. As the population grew, so did the need for common everyday household items such as furniture, cabinets, casework and even appliances. Although the Industrial Revolution didn't make everyone rich, it did allow a middle class to develop.

It was during this time that the work of furniture making began to transition from individual artisans who typically made one piece at a time to a shop production setting where

multiples could be produced more efficiently. In some cases, hand skills were easily replicated by machine, and in most cases, production became much faster.

Although traditional apprenticeships started to decline during this period, the woodworking industry started to grow. Census figures from the late 1800s reported that there were just more than 5,200 furniture/chair factories in America that employed 58,302 men, women and children (a child was considered anyone under the age of 15). In a typical year these businesses would generate \$77.8 million-worth of furniture that was being sold in America as well as being exported around the

world. Technology, industrialization and production changed the face of our craft during the 19th century. Mass production changed woodworking to an assembly-line format. No one individual needed the expertise required to make an entire piece. Now any piece could be made by many hands, possibly even in different states or regions. This new woodworking process involved someone who would design the piece while someone else made ready all the stock. Then, a joiner fashioned the piece into shape and then handed it off to someone skilled in detailing or carving. Lastly, someone put on the desired color and the protective film finish. Once completed, the finished work was shipped to stores throughout the land. Lots of hands worked together to make just one item – but that one item on an assembly line could quickly turn into hundreds or even thousands of finished works.

The Industrial Revolution turned the world upside down. A new social order was forming and as rural life started to decline, the pace of life started to accelerate. Work was no longer ruled by seasons or the setting of the sun. Prosperity

was about forward thinking and all of a sudden America found itself in a second Industrial Revolution with advancements in technology, science, transportation, manufacturing and communication, to name but a few. The world pace was spinning faster and faster.

William Morris, father of the Arts and Crafts Movement, desired to bring back the simplicity and craftsmanship of ages gone by. Morris rejected the idea of production and championed the idea of traditional craftsmanship and with value toward individually crafted wares. Morris believed that mechanical production lowered the standard of furniture making. Handcrafted furniture, often based on traditional or historical vernacular, would become the hallmark of the Arts and Crafts Movement. His philosophy quickly spread to all crafts including glass, textiles, ceramics and even architecture. It was during this time that the second generation of difference makers continued and broadened the craft, developing new, artistic styles. In addition to Morris, there were makers and designers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries who – in a variety of styles – attempted to move furniture beyond the decorative arts and into the fine art realm.

These included Frank Lloyd Wright, Gustav Stickley, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Charles Greene, Henry Greene, Charles Limbert, Charles Rohlf and Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann. These makers and designers gave new life to their designs by exposing joinery, defining details and working with some of the best materials available. It is this group, the second-generation difference makers, that revived the making of beautiful and functional wares.

The New Age or Modern Period spanned the early 1900s through WWI and extended into the Great Depression of 1929. Although most of the world was scarred by WWI, there were radical cultural shifts taking the world by storm. Hollywood, automobiles, air travel, electricity, plastics and skyscrapers provided new luxuries. The changing world impacted how people lived during these years and, in my opinion, American furniture design, based on tradition and foundation, was at zenith. Art Deco evolved out of Art Nouveau and designers used Bakelite, aluminum, leather, glass, chrome and high-end burl veneers. High-end furniture during this period was elegant and glamorous. These boom years, however, turned to bust when the stock market crashed and thousands of people lost everything. Unemployment and soup lines became widespread. The American Depression had a ripple effect throughout the world and, within a decade, another world war would consume every facet of life.

LINEN PRESS. Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts Colony (American, 1902-1915), ca. 1904, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Friends of the American Wing Fund and Mr. and Mrs. Mark Willcox Jr. Gift, 1991, www.metmuseum.org.



After WWII, the U.S. experienced phenomenal economic growth. With the only intact manufacturing base on the planet, America became the world's richest country. More and more Americans considered themselves middle class, living the good life. The G.I. Bill allowed veterans to build new homes and start their own businesses. Schools, hospitals, shopping malls, industrial parks and new government builds required lots of wooden products. The entire wood industry was bursting at the seams. New products were developed such as polyurethane, melamine, epoxies, PVAs, fiberboards, carbide cutters, pneumatic tools, HVLP spray equipment, fir plywood, portable power tools, cyanoacrylate (super glue), coated abrasives and bigger and faster stationary machines that could do it all. Induction and universal motors were making power more efficient.

These early post-war years have been dubbed the Industrial Art Age because most schools offered, and sometimes required, young men (and, in time, women, too) to take some kind of shop class between grades 7 to 12. Woodworking was being taught to nearly every kid in America as both a career and hobby.

This Industrial Art Age created an amateur woodworking movement. For the first time, terms such as “handyman” and “home craftsman” were used to describe anyone who worked with wood as a recreation. America was ripe for tool companies to target this new market. Companies such as Shopsmith, Sears, Rockwell, Delta, Powermatic, Black & Decker, Milwaukee, Parks and DeWALT started making tools for the home do-it-yourselfer. Clubs and guilds were being formed and magazines such as *Popular Mechanics*, *Woodworker*, *Popular Homecraft*, *Delta*gram and *Handyman* were sharing woodworking projects, processes and ideas with woodworkers throughout the land. In 1949, Walt Durbahn, dubbed the dean of workshop craftsmen, aired the first TV shows aimed at the how-to-do-it audience. His award-winning series ran for 9 years. Woodworking throughout these years was taking root and was to become one of America's best hobbies.

During the 1960s, most woodworking enthusiast projects were simple home items that relied more on power tools than hand tools, with very little effort in design or imagination. The Industrial Art Age inspired millions of young men and women to work with wood but it took brilliant craftspeople like Wharton Esherick to apply the aesthetics of contemporary art and creative design to woodworking.

Esherick is widely recognized as the grandfather of contemporary (or studio) work in America. Esherick opened the door for others to follow – both professionally and as a pastime. Furniture design programs from Rhode Island School of Design,



“In the woodwork vocational training class, at the FSA (Farm Security Administration) farmworkers community, Eleven Mile Corner, Arizona” Russell Lee (1903-1986), 1942, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USF33-013249-M2.

Rochester Institute of Technology, School for American Craftsmen, Kansas University and Boston University produced outstanding craftsmen and craftswomen who brought back the romance of working wood with a nod to skill, art and function.

From the late 1950s to the 1980s, woodworking was influenced by brilliant craftspeople such as Sam Maloof, James Krenov, Tage Frid, Bob Stocksdale, Wendell Castle, George Nakashima, Dale Nish, Art Espenet Carpenter, Jere Osgood, Rosanne Somerson, Rude Osolnik, Judy Kensley McKie, Garry Knox Bennett, Thos. Moser, Wendy Maruyama, Alphonse Mattia, Richard Scott Newman and countless others. This contemporary group of woodworkers, often referred to as the Woodcraft movement, used sculpture, lamination, color, asymmetry, exposed joinery and sometimes humor to define their skills. They belonged to the Post Modern family of craftspeople who revived the Arts and Craft movement that had virtually come to a halt during the Great Depression and World War II.

OAK PAGODA. *James Krenov.*
*Various oaks with curly western
maple door panels. Completed
in May of 1988.*



Photo by David Welter, courtesy of www.thekrenovarchive.org.

This third generation of difference makers was recognized for their works by a growing community of woodworkers as well as a growing means of mass communication. It was during these years that a black-and-white magazine called *Fine Woodworking* was taking woodworking from the “handyman” ranks to the “highly skilled” ranks. Our craft was forever changed by this group of creative, talented and sometimes contentious virtuosos. The brilliant craftsmen and craftswomen of this third generation were directly responsible for setting a new bar in skill and expertise, with a focus on the beauty of the wood, fine joinery, function, creativity and self-expression, all of which greatly affected the baby boomer generation. Their work had an impact on woodworking as both a vocation and avocation.

Fast forward almost 40 years and we can see the direct

impact all three previous generations of difference makers had in the work now being made. Today’s woodworking generation has continued to take what’s been learned from our predecessors and pushed the limits with continued enthusiasm coupled with new technology. The new millennium has opened doors that our forebears never had. We have access to lasers, CNCs, 3-D printers, water jets, vacuum presses, cordless tools, CAD software, table saws with blades that stop automatically, helical cutter heads, computer held routers, ceramic tooling, smart glues, unlimited styles of functional hardware and cutter profiles that offer more shapes and details than any other generation could ever have imagined. Today we have access to instant global sharing of information, a variety of woodworking magazines, TV programs, professional and consumer wood shows, symposia, craft schools, tool catalogues, furniture exhibitions, woodworking books galore, videos, blogs, YouTube® videos and stores in nearly every major city dedicated to selling woodworking-specific tools.

The craft of woodworking is growing, regardless of the fall of the Industrial Art Age in America’s school system. A survey conducted by National Family Opinion on behalf of *Wood* magazine in 2002 found that approximately 5.5 million Americans actively participate in some kind of woodworking as a hobby. Nearly 15 years later, thanks to big box stores, DIY TV shows and the internet, the number of woodworking participants has grown several-fold.

The demographics of today’s woodworking enthusiast are about 85 percent men to 15 percent women. Most are homeowners in their mid 50s, married with comfortable lifestyles. The average woodworker in America is a hobbyist with better skills than the hobbyist from the mid 1950s to 1970s. This is partly due to access to so much information. There is an interest in traditional crafts today despite our access to computerized technology, though that doesn’t mean working with wood can’t be in harmony with both machines and hand skills.

It has become clear that the fourth generation of difference makers is emerging. This remarkable group of furniture makers, turners, carvers, luthiers, engravers, tool makers, cabinetmakers and sculptors are forward thinking, innovative, creative, and have inspired new generations through their remarkable works. These modern-day masters work at the same level of workmanship as their ancestors. They have found their niche and steadfastly continue to produce the finest quality of workmanship possible and do it all with humble confidence. From the uniquely designed tools of John Economaki and Thomas Lie-Nielsen, to the segmented work of Malcolm Tib-

betts, inspiration abounds. From the sound of a perfectly made guitar at the hands of William “Grit” Laskin to the precision of Christopher White’s prayerfully fluid sculptures, we are given insight to what is possible from the hands of the skilled. Wood can also be used as a medium for artistic statements as seen in the playful works of Michael Cooper, Po Shun Leong, Scott Grove and Michael Hosaluk, who combine color, humor and animation in ways that have never been seen.

This generation has produced remarkable woodworking technicians such as Chris Gochnour and Garrett Hack who use mostly hand tools to produce some of the finest furniture made within the last century. Stephen Proctor came to America in the mid 1970s to work for the Wendell Castle School, and became dean there in 1981. He also taught at RIT. Woodworker extraordinaire Garry Knox Bennett drove a nail into a beautifully made padauk display cabinet and singlehandedly started the world of contemporary studio furniture. Thomas Stangeland and Darrell Peart are both from Seattle and make the best Greene and Greene-inspired work since the Greene brothers themselves, while Steve Latta makes the best Federal-inspired furniture since the Declaration of Independence was signed. Speaking of history, Jeff Headley and Steve Hamilton are responsible for making more than 30 pieces of furniture that are in the White House. Michael Fortune, David Lamb and Alf Sharp are among the best furniture makers of modern time; their works, style and innovations will bear their name in the next century. Frank Pollaro, Silas Kopf, Paul Schürch and Patrick Edwards all work with veneer and make furniture that exposes the potential of woodworking’s most resourceful and elegant material; their veneered furniture represents the best work ever done with that material. David Marks spent years learning and developing his craft, and thanks to his 90-plus episodes as host of his DIY woodworking show, “WoodWorks,” he has inspired an entire generation of woodworkers.

Binh Pho incorporated both beauty and strife in his pierced and painted vessels that tell the story of his attempt to escape on one of the last American choppers from South Vietnam. David Franklin exquisitely carves the life stories of the indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest. Michael Dubber has proven himself to be the best metal engraver who has left his mark on all kinds of media and is a living treasure in his home state of Indiana. Julie Bender has changed the way we view pyrography from folk art to fine art, and Kathy Wise has brought back the grandeur of intarsia that has been missing since the Renaissance.

In all occupations, in every generation, there seem to be those who have a true calling for their vocation; people who do extraordinary work in ordinary environments. There are millions of people in North America who work with wood and metal. From those millions, there are well over a hundred thousand who are good enough to earn a living making objects with those materials. Of those hundred thousand or so there are hundreds whose work is far and away better than the others. These are the “masters” of our generation who became well known for their works, not because of talent, but thanks to hard work, drive and persistence. In the woodworking or craft community, they no longer need to introduce themselves. They are the legends of today’s craftspeople, whose spirit will inspire for centuries to come. This book is dedicated to those, in our time, who are part of the fourth generation of difference makers.

Sharing the Inspiration

Over the last 26 years, I have had the blessing of running the Marc Adams School of Woodworking (MASW), which is located in the middle of an Indiana corn field. MASW is a hands-on school dedicated to perpetuating the craft of woodworking with the best instructors of modern time. To date, we have offered more than 2,500 workshops attended by nearly

In this traditional woodworking class at Marc Adams School of Woodworking, Chris Gouchner teaches students how to use hand planes, chisels, backsaws, scrapers, moulding planes and more. The school’s facility, located 12 miles south of Indianapolis, provides more than 40,000 square feet of space. The summer 2019 schedule included 230 classes covering a wide range of topics.



30,000 students from all over the world. Thanks to more than 300 educators, artists, authors, specialists, makers and masters who have given their time to share their expertise, the woodworking craft in North America has grown and diversified.

The seeds for this book were planted almost the day the school opened. Every week at MASW instructors are invited to show slides of their work and share their woodworking story. Ironically, in one of those first years, I had scheduled both Stephen Proctor and Paul Schürch for workshops. For me it seemed to be another routine week, until the evening they showed their slides. I was blown away! As each slide popped on the screen I realized that my life as a woodworker had never been better than mediocre. Their work opened my eyes to the type and quality of work that is possible in the hands of a highly skilled craftsman.

More than anything, I wanted to be that good. Because of that one evening slide show, my outlook as a furniture maker completely changed. Twenty-six years later, those weekly slide presentations continue not only to inspire me, but everyone else who sees them. The diversity of skills, and the wildly creative ways these people apply their craft cannot be anything other than transformative for those who love working with wood. I've been a woodworking student for the past 35 years and I'm still moved by their great work.

Choosing the Difference Makers

To put together a collection of remarkable work is a very complicated task. There are hundreds of people from around the world who could easily be selected. Making the job more complex is the fact that woodworking encompasses different skills, divisions or branches (pun intended). This book could be specific to just one type of woodworking, such as turning, carving, finishing, veneering and so on, or to a category, such as studio makers, luthiers, cabinetmakers, architectural millworkers or furniture makers, but this would limit the book to only one leaf on the tree. Instead, it's more important to show the type of work currently being done by a variety of makers.

"The Difference Makers" features those today who are making a difference in the lives of others and have taught at MASW over the years, changing, shaping and inspiring our craft with leadership and enthusiasm. Fortunately, for me, they have woven their way into the story of my life, and hope-

fully as you read their biographies, woodworking experiences and personal stories, the tapestry they weave will become a part of your story, too.

Special Thanks

Books such as this are not the product of one person's efforts, but a collaboration by many people. At the top of that list is John Economaki, who encouraged me from the beginning. He read my first draft, made critical suggestions and convinced me to change the original title to the current title, a brilliant move he might add. Christopher Schwarz has always supported my writing endeavors, no matter how crazy. He is the perfect publisher, editor and mentor. I am thankful for his trust and leadership.

Gathering information and writing is a slow process for me. All told, this project took nearly three years to complete. During that time the staff at MASW did an excellent job covering my occasional disappearance. I am indebted to my entire staff but without Paula Bueno, Zane Powell and Doug Dale, this project would have never been completed.

The staff at Lost Art Press are wonderful people. Together they combine talents in editing, design, layout, graphics and marketing the final project. Kara Gebhart Uhl was involved from the beginning to the end. She worked diligently with everyone featured in the book and verified all the content. Linda Watts did an excellent job with the design, from cover to cover, and Nancy Hiller took time from her busy schedule to proof the final pages. Thanks to the entire team at LAP.

(And a very special thanks to Vi Pho and Kevin Wallace for assisting in the accuracy of Binh Pho's section.)

My wife Susie is my inspiration. She has always supported me in my endeavors. Together we live a complete life. We are faithful and grateful for the tremendous blessings Jesus Christ has given us. Our children, Markee and John, along with Markee's husband, Patrick, and their daughter Evelyn, complete our lives.

And finally, this book is possible because of the awe-inspiring talent that exists in our generation. It has been my honor to share their stories, spotlight their work and show how this unique group of "Difference Makers" is changing the landscape of our craft.



Photo courtesy of *Fine Woodworking*

Garrett Hack

GARRETT HACK is a furniture maker, author and woodworking teacher from Thetford Center, Vermont, where he also runs a small homestead farm. His earliest memories were of sawing and hammering, so naturally he became a furniture maker after first pursuing civil engineering and architecture at Princeton University in the early 1970s. Later study at Boston University's Program in Artistry influenced his style of contemporary designs based on classic forms. Internationally known, his work and Federal-inspired brick workshop have been featured in numerous books and magazines including *Architectural Digest*, *The New York Times* and *Preservation* magazine. He is a contributing editor at *Fine Woodworking*, former chairman of the New Hampshire Furniture Masters and teaches throughout the country as well as in Canada, England, Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain, Australia and Japan. Hand tools are integral to Garrett's work; he wrote "The Handplane Book" and "Classic Hand Tools" (both Taunton Press).

On the Professional Side

As a kid growing up in the early 1960s Garrett did what most other kids his age did – tear things apart to see how they worked. It was also during this time that he learned how to repair things. His mother and father were active in his young

life. Garrett remembers family travels that were often centered on museum visits. His mother took the time to teach Garrett about art and design, while his father took the time to show him how to use his hands. It was his parents who instilled the desire to make beautiful things.

Garrett attended the renowned Deerfield Academy, which carries the words "Be Worthy of Your Heritage" at the center of the school's 200-year-old crest. While there, Garrett was active in American studies but also developed a special interest in learning about the local artists of the New England area. By the time he entered college, Garrett had developed a great appreciation of design, art, American history and craft.

While at Princeton, he combined his passions into two areas of study: civil engineering and architecture. In 1974, after graduating from one of America's premier high schools, then on to the halls of an Ivy League university, Garrett chose to become a carpenter. He moved to New Hampshire, where his first real project was to dismantle a barn, then rebuild it into a house – his house.

Building homes involved learning multiple skills. But the area of building that most interested Garrett was the detail of woodworking that went on the inside of the house. It was during those early years as a carpenter that he learned about the



OUTSIDE IN (2017). Douglas fir, cherry, ebony, flame birch, curly maple, holly, bone, turquoise, pear, dogwood, aspen, sassafras, locust, walnut, Engelmann spruce, aromatic cedar and more than a dozen more native species. "OUTSIDE IN was a commission to build the most amazing piece I could imagine, with no limits," Garrett says. "What evolved is a cabinet more about entertainment than function and meant to be explored from all sides, with many secrets and surprises (22 drawers and hidden compartments), asymmetric swelling and ripple, and three wavy drawers that work as a mechanical lock of the door below. The colorful vitality of Carolyn's painted surfaces adds pop and surprise, and contrast nicely with the earthy hues and grain of beautiful woods."

Photos by Bill Truslow



Photo by John Sherman

SHAKER SIDE TABLE

(1987). *Curly and birdseye maple, pear drawers and secondary woods for drawers. "An early piece, pretty close to Shaker ideas of symmetry, various sizes of drawers, turned legs, beads," Garrett says.*

furniture program at Boston University. In 1978, he applied and was accepted to one of the finest furniture programs in America under the direction of legendary Jere Osgood. While there, Garrett was exposed to creative people working in a variety of materials as well as the technical skills necessary to survive as a furniture maker. But it was the introduction to hand tools and how to use them properly that had the biggest impact on Garrett's approach to working with wood.

After completing the two-year program at Boston University, Garrett sold the house that he had built and moved across the river to Vermont. He purchased a small farm with about 13 acres of productive forest area. From those timbers he built his home, two barns and one amazing workshop. For the first decade or more, architectural work paid the bills. He made fancy windows, doors, stairs, cupolas and even a set of kitchen cabinets or two. Slowly furniture commissions led him away from the architectural side of woodworking and into the high-end one-of-a-kind furniture world.



Photo by Bill Truslow

HUNTBOARD (2006).

Cherry, curly birch, ebony, rosewood, brass wire and secondary woods. Brass spiral inlaid into the knobs. "A genteel southern form, a sideboard or high table with storage, with Vermont details, an exceptional wide board top, and plenty of sparkle and spirals," Garrett says.

Some time in the late 1980s Garrett was approached to write for *Fine Woodworking* magazine, which ultimately led to the writing of two books: “Classic Hand Tools” and “The Handplane Book.” In his second book Garrett said, “Learning about hand tools and how to use them is part of the joy and pleasure of working wood. I understand wood on a most intimate level – in a way I might easily miss working with machines alone.”

Through the years Garrett has expanded his teaching of woodworking to classes all over the world. He continues to write and make furniture that is eloquent but ever evolving. He has no need for a clock; his world revolves more around

the seasons than the rigor of a 9-to-5 work day. When he isn’t working in his shop he is out in the field with his Belgian workhorse named Jazz. His Abundance Farm provides all his family’s needs. He cares for two milk cows, a small flock of chickens, extensive gardens, orchards, hay fields and manages his wood forest.

The balance of all those elements in his life has not changed in more than 40 years. Garrett plans to live out his life in the middle of his own slice of heaven. It’s a world where he builds one piece of furniture at a time, mostly on commission, each one with some new techniques or challenges that keep the work interesting and exciting.



Photo by Bill Truslow

TAKIN’ A SHINE (2007). Macassar ebony, rosewood (legs), amboyna burl, Gabon ebony, holly, silver and secondary woods. “A new direction of boldly curved pieces – three legs,

playful drawers within drawers (both independent), silver “socks” on the legs and silver inlaid knobs,” Garrett says.



Photo by Bill Truslow

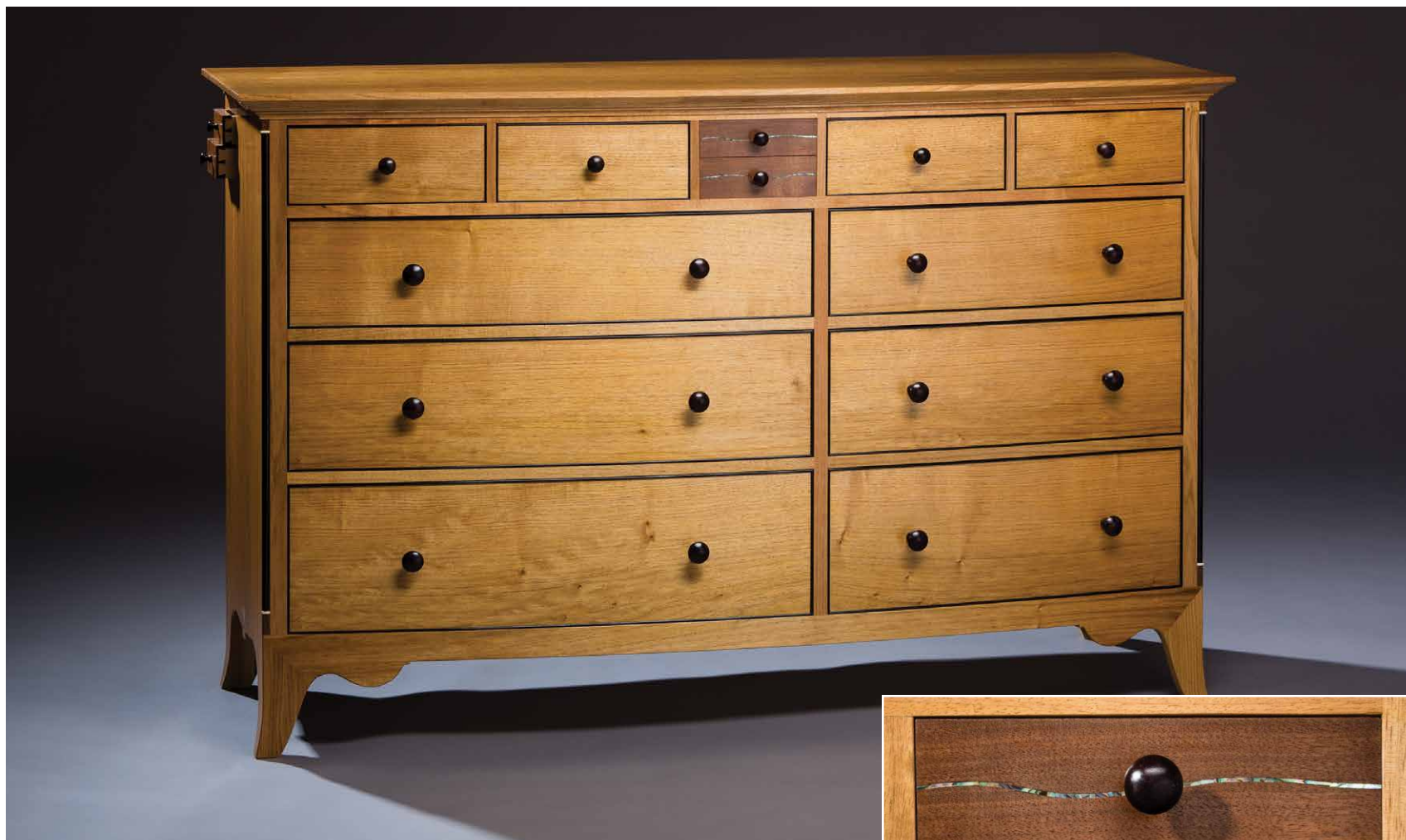
WEKIWA SHIMMERING (2008). Flame birch, rosewood, Mun ebony, gold feet and details, ivory, abalone and secondary woods. “The next iteration of three-legged pieces,

playing with curves and watery waves, with the sunlight (abalone highlights) glittering off of them,” Garrett says. “As I often do, I made the hinges and all of the metal work.”

On the Personal Side

If Clement Clarke Moore, author of “The Night Before Christmas,” had written that famous poem for woodworkers, there would have been a line that said, “Young woodworkers were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of growing up to be just like Garrett Hack danced in their heads.” Garrett lives the woodworker’s dream life.

He holds degrees in civil engineering, architecture and furniture design. He is internationally known and sells out workshops wherever he goes. He has authored two great woodworking books and is *Fine Woodworking* magazine’s poster boy. Garrett works wood in the same way an inspired poet weaves words together. His Federal-inspired brick workshop is a masterpiece, just like his furniture. He is never pressured



CHARLESTON CHEST
(2013). Butternut, walnut, ebony, rosewood, abalone, ivory and various secondary woods. “Designed for a lady, this elliptical asymmetric chest puts some fun in functional, from a playful variety of drawers

to the patterns of knobs and dark beads highlighting each drawer, to small drawers that pop out unexpectedly,” Garrett says. “Fourteen drawers – one for every need – sliding sweetly through generations. Two small walnut drawers are inlaid with

the abalone waves reflecting the seaside of Charleston, S.C., where this chest lives. Well-engineered and made of warm golden butternut, it is both light and strong.”



Photo by Bill Truslow

to get the job done, enjoys every moment of the day, lives the simple life and has a horse named Jazz. Life for a woodworker just doesn't get better.

We have a pond behind the school in the middle of our woods. When Garrett first started teaching at MASW he would get away for a few minutes to just be with nature. One day when he returned from his walk, I mentioned that we had

a pond that had fish and said that if he wanted to take a fishing pole on his next trip, he could. In passing he said he would just rather swim than fish. Swim? It's an Indiana rain-filled pond with big fish, snapping turtles and moss. Nobody in their right mind would swim in it. But he assured me he did. It seemed strange that he never took a beach towel to dry off, but what really hit me was that he didn't take a bathing suit either.



Photo by John Sheldon

7% CHAIR (1979). White ash and Danish cord. "Steam-bent parts, trying to make the lightest yet strongest chair I

could," Garrett says. "Working from my background as a civil engineer. I recently remade this chair in 2017."



Photo by John Sheldon

PEAR CHAIR (1995). Pear and ebony.

VA VA VIENNA (2011).

Macassar ebony, satinwood, cherry, pear, mother of pearl, silver (feet) painted and gold leafed facade by Carolyn Enz Hack. "Inspired by a trip to Vienna, once a frenzy of artistic creativity at the turn of the last century," Garrett says. "The cool elegance of precious dark woods, silver details, the warm radiance of gold leaf and pearl hark back to this Gilded Age. This complex form challenged my love of building curved pieces. Heightening the drama is the bold painting by Carolyn Enz Hack."

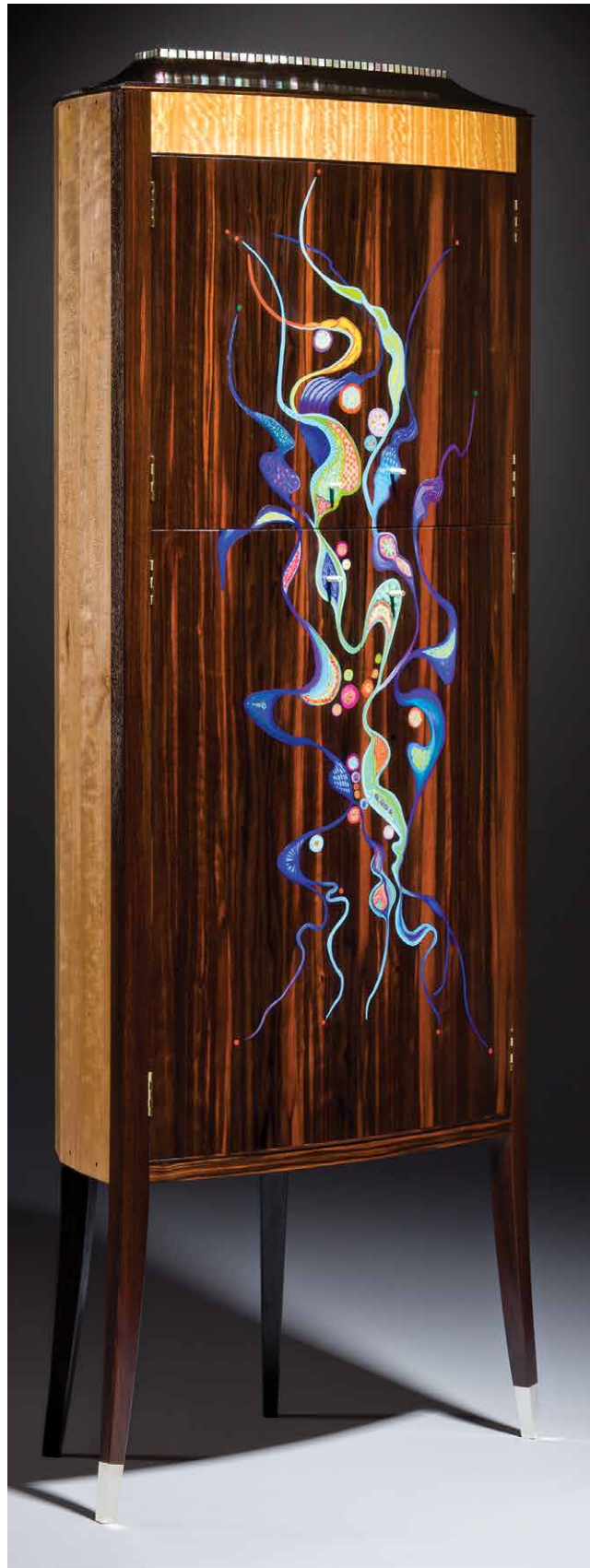


Photo by Bill Truslow

For years I would question if he really did swim in my pond and he always said, "I sure do." I usually have a good sense of when someone is pulling my leg, but with Garrett, I'm not always quite sure. One summer I asked him how the water was, and he said he saw an alligator that must have been five or six feet long and decided not to risk it. I just blew him off and told him that even the zoos in Indiana didn't have alligators. A few days went by and he casually mentioned to me again that I should probably call animal control.

"It's by the dock so now would be a good time to catch it," he said.

Yeah, right! But then I did remember as a kid going to the circus where it was possible to buy baby lizards and baby alligators. It could be that someone let one go and it found its way to my pond. So without Garrett knowing, I went to check it out. I was shocked when I saw an alligator submerged partly in the mud exactly where Garrett said it would be.

It's not every day in the Midwest you get to see an alligator up close. I ran back to get my wife and tell the shop staff. Excited, we all raced to get a look. It had moved from the dock to the other side of the pond. Like a dummy I picked up a rock and got as close as I dared, threw the rock and hit the gator on the forehead. The rock hitting the skin made a sound more like drum than gator skin. About that time, I heard Garrett laughing in the distance. Seems Garrett and a student placed the "Hollywood-quality reproduction" gator around the pond and then schemed a way to make the story seem real. I had been duped – big time.

Revenge usually isn't my thing, but the battle lines had been drawn. The next year Garrett made a comment to his students that an edge-glue joint between two boards always holds better when the mating surfaces are hand jointed instead of machine jointed. So I volunteered to get Garrett four boards: two that he would hand joint, and two that I would machine joint. After the edges were joined and glued, they were to sit for 24 hours to have plenty of time for the glue to cure. A day or so later, Garrett was to demonstrate to everyone in the building the superiority of hand work over machine work, especially along a glue line. However, when he wasn't looking I also doweled my joints together to make it impossible to break them apart.

It was a great day in my life to see poor Garrett, in front of his class, snap his joint easily in half while my machined joint withstood his entire jumping weight, while he desperately tried to break my joint. I just looked at him and told him that my machines are perfectly tuned. I never told him the truth; I just hope he doesn't read this book.



PEARL (2010). *Cherry, apple, pear, mother of pearl, crotch birch, paint, ebony and holly details. "Water, with its many personalities, has been inspiring me forever," Garrett says. "It ripples, splashes, sparkles, and shimmers; it's rarely quiet. And it carves and makes intriguing patterns upon the landscape. The tight curly waves of the pear top, iridescence of the cherry apron, mother-of-pearl details, wavy shaped edges, gouged and colored accents on the top, evoke images of water. I especially love the central detail on the apron, which I see as a marsh with a waterline of pearl dots."*



Photos by Bill Truslow

Garrett Hack

BIRTH

August 13, 1952, Bronxville, N.Y.

EDUCATION

Deerfield Academy, 1970

B.Sc. Civil Engineer & Architecture,

Princeton University, 1974

Boston University Program in Artistry,

1978-1980

FAMILY

Married Carolyn (Enz) Hack;

children: Zoe, Jett, Matisse, Kipling, India

HOBBIES

Farming, skiing

CRAFTSMANSHIP STATEMENT

"It's all about warmth, detail, shape, usefulness and impeccable craftsmanship."

WEBSITE

www.garretthack.com

HANDED

Right-handed

WHO INSPIRES YOU

Martin Puryear, David and Abraham Roentgen,

Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, Jere Osgood.