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My interests have always been split between nature and craft. Dad introduced me to both woodworking and nature, but the lure of nature won the first battle (I dropped civil engineering and earned a Ph.D. in computational biology). This wasn't a very practical decision, as engineering would have made a more secure career. But, at least in my young mind, it was a decision not to destroy the nature I loved.



One of my early pieces, a console table, expressed this duality in me between the built and the natural, the top of the table having a “live edge” component and the base just the antithesis (Figure 1).

I am largely self-taught when it comes to woodworking, learning bit by bit since I was about 13 while making a variety of functional furniture for my family. I just had a native love for the materials, as many do. Then, in my late 40's, I discovered the studio-furniture movement and the artistic and contemplative interpretation of wood and woodworking through the writings of people like George Nakashima (*The Soul of a Tree*) and James Krenov (*The Impractical Cabinetmaker*). I found the beauty of the designs, materials and craftsmanship immensely appealing. My “discovery” also set me on a personal journey to explore my own creative impulses to see if I could make art rather than function a primary feature of my furniture. And it also partly resolved for me, because of the beauty and soul evident in this art form, my personal tug-of-war between the built and the natural.

My work often attempts to put these two elements together as a contrast, hopefully to engender some thought or conversation. In order to increase my ability to explore this artistic direction, I taught myself the techniques of inlay and marquetry. An example of the result is the series of Ginkgo tables I've made -- a non-traditional use of marquetry in which Ginkgo leaves are scattered just randomly across the top of an elegant table of figured wood (Figure 2). Another example is the series of tables and cabinets based on elements of an Asian garden, a type of garden showing plants in a faux natural way but set among built structures (Figures 3 and 4).

To be sure, the variety and beauty of wood has played a big part of my interest in the craft of woodworking. It often plays a big part in what I choose to make and how I design. Many of my pieces feature “figured wood,” which could be likened to gems in the world of rocks. Wood offers not only a wide variety of color and visual textures but also some dramatic tactile textures, such as in my burl pieces (Figure 5). The materials themselves have sometimes been the whole point of what I make.

But I have also found furniture to be a powerful way to express ideas and feelings. There is a strong, shared understanding of what a table or cabinet should be, so altering that form can make a strong visual impression. An example is “Scenic Drive” (Figure 6), a cabinet with doors that form a curvaceous opening and begs the viewer for an interpretation (I won't give away my favorite).

Admittedly, sometimes the ideas behind my pieces have been too esoteric or subtle. An example is my Rosette Table (Figure 7), which is actually based on a logarithmic curve, and was created to celebrate so much beautiful nature based on this geometry (nautilus shells, sunflowers, pine cones, cyclones,

galaxies). Another is my Natural Edge Spalted Cabinet (Figure 8) which features a spalted (figure created by fungi) door front on a “live edge” case, which I created to represent nutrient recycling in nature or renewal of life. Most people didn’t “get” the idea behind these pieces, but I was happy with the results, which were visually pleasing. This misreading of my intent made me realize the value of having drama or surprises in my woodworking to communicate a metaphorical component of the art.

The piece that was juried into this show, *Angst* (Figure 9), is an example of how a feeling can be expressed strongly using furniture forms. I think the knot in the table is striking just because there is a common understanding of what a table is, and that normative concept is being broken. And that is interesting to me because it is so representative of our times.

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Figure 1: Console table. Cedar burl top with live edge. Maple and ebonized Maple base.

Figure 2: Ginkgo console table in figured Walnut. Leaf inlays of Cascara Buckthorn.

Figure 3: Asian styled occasional table in Sapele and figured Maple. Marquetry of Walnut and Pink Ivory wood.

Figure 4: Plum Blossom Cabinet in Sapele and figured Maple. Marquetry of Walnut and Pink Ivory wood.

Figure 5: Tree of Harmony. Maple burl top and Black Walnut base.

Figure 6: "Scenic Route" wall cabinet in Lacewood with Walnut trim.

Figure 7: Occasional table with inlaid rosette on top. Table and inlay in Black Walnut and figured Maple.

Figure 8: Wall cabinet in spalted and live edge Maple.

Figure 9: "Angst" console table in Black Walnut.

