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Furniture with Soul: Master Woodworkers and Their Craft

David Savage
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Do we think of the psyche when we see a piece of furniture? Generally not, but perhaps we should. Looking beyond obvious skill and technical finesse, *Furniture with Soul: Master Woodworkers and Their Craft* offers a more organic perspective of the pieces created by the twenty woodworkers featured within. Their expertise is undeniable, but the concept of *soul* comes from the design and production of furniture that somehow manages to glide, flow, balance delicately, captivate, amuse, or provoke. Conjuring up images of fresh-cut planks, sawdust, and varnish, author and fellow artisan David Savage takes us into the studio workshops of these craftsmen and craftswomen—and in addition to their creative spaces, we are offered a glimpse into the minds and lives of the furniture makers, as well.

From Boston to Philadelphia, California to the United Kingdom, all of these master woodworkers have varying personal reasons which led them to their present realm. Whether it was dissatisfaction with the effete visual art scene of the time, a longstanding love of wood and its possibilities, or simply a desire to make a guitar, the first steps down winding paths led to stunning expressions in walnut, Douglas fir, mulberry, ash, cherry, mahogany, and more. Inspirations run the gamut, from old Popeye cartoons to nature and the animal kingdom to the simple wish of a client who wanted a nice day bed to lounge on while watching television and drinking a gin and tonic.

As established professionals, each woodworker has developed a unique method and style, along with a particular fondness for complementary materials like stainless steel, synthetic rice paper, glass, or copper. Color and black-and-white photographs provide fine visuals for pieces such as Tom Hucker's *Illuminated Cabinet*, Michael Hurwitz's *Lattice Table*, Judy Kensley McKie's sleek *Monkey Chair,* and Rupert Williamson's *Tummel Bookcase*, which somehow manages to be a fixed and functioning structure while yearning upward. John Makepeace challenges Joyce Kilmer's classic verse on never seeing a poem as lovely as a tree with his beautiful *Mulberry Table*, while Jack Larimore teases us with designs bearing surrealistic titles like *The Queen is Trapped by Her Own Obsessions*.

Furniture with Soul's twenty profiles (ten artists of prominence and ten up-and-comers) will no doubt prove fascinating for woodworkers, yet those who know little about the field will also be intrigued and ultimately far better informed. Savage's accompanying narrative is as smooth and compelling as his own furniture, and reflective of his many years of experience and passion for his soulful craft.
MEG NOLA (August 30, 2011)

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