



Design, then function

SENSUOUS CURVES FIND PURPOSE IN GLENN WARD'S FURNITURE ART

By Carol Jankowski

Photography • David Bebee

GLENN WARD wasn't happy when, at 13, he was steered into a technical program at his Toronto school because he was struggling academically. It sparked a dislike of putting people in boxes and labelling them that he holds to this day.

However, tech training taught him to conceptualize and showed him he can think three-dimensionally. It proved to be the foundation for his ability today to design and make beautifully sculpted, contemporary furniture art.

His first job after school was in upholstery, and he learned a lot working with fabric patterns. Then, in the 1980s, he took the three-year wood design program at Sheridan College in Oakville "and I just started to take off."

It's not easy to be the maker of one-of-a-kind furniture, and he has experimented with marketing his work. For a time he had a studio in Hall's Lane in downtown Kitchener, and he has tried several other locations in that city and in Waterloo.

However, renting studio space is costly. Today he makes furniture in the bright, white double garage of his home, where strips of wood are stacked neatly around the walls, and pieces of steam-bent wood are lined up on a table, waiting to become the legs of slender, glass-topped end tables.

In 1997, he had an exhibit in the rotunda of Kitchener City Hall, and orders for a piano bench, wall unit and

dining room table grew out of that.

In the summer of 2003, The Guild, a Wisconsin-based organization which acts as an agent for producers of fine furniture and decor items, approached him about featuring his work on its website.

Then in 2006, the Guild invited him to submit photos of his work to its Artful Home catalogue, which is distributed to 1.5 million people, including interior decorators and architects.

Furniture artists like Ward find they have to be educators as well as fine craftsmen.

"People look at it, but don't realize the hundreds of hours of work that's gone into it," he says.

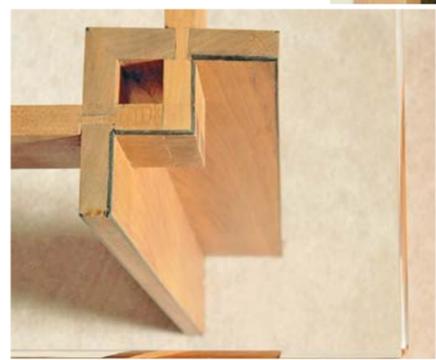
He signs each piece of furniture he makes and is confident that what he creates will increase in value as his name becomes better known. "They get art furniture from me," he says. "It can't be mass-produced."

One of his U.S. clients, who has a career in the high-tech field, says that because of the virtual world in which he works, he particularly appreciates the handwork that goes into Ward's furniture.

There's a humanity to it that machine-made pieces lack, he says.

Ward chose a Greek word, Eidos, for his business name. It means form, and Ward thinks of it as a "metamorphosis from an idea to actuality."

Clients bring him photos or ideas, or nothing but desire for a certain piece of furniture, and he goes to work, first sketching in pencil, "playing with shapes and the movement of a line to find cohe-



Glenn Ward likes glass tops, such as the one on his dining room table, because they draw the eye down into the structure of the furniture.



A piece of handmade furniture may take months of work, from design and planning through to construction.



This lacewood desk has shallow drawers that pull out on a curve matching the elliptical shape of the legs. The handles on the drawers are ebony.

sion." Finally, he draws the piece to scale as he calculates how elements will fit together.

"I'm not letting function define the shape. In my head, I turn objects around, trying to build connections, asking 'what happens if I bend it this way or bend it that way.' "



THE ART OF FURNITURE

Glenn Ward holds a set of legs which will go into a table like the finished version shown below.

Design can't be rushed; from concept development to making the jigs (his favourite part of the process) may take as long as four months.

Although Ward makes wood tops if that's what clients want, he prefers glass tops because instead of stopping the eye, as wood does, they invite the viewer to look deeper into the furniture. When wood joints are as precise and pleasing to the eye as Ward's are, that's a pleasure to do.

He chooses woods for their function and esthetics. Ash works well for the steam-bent strips of wood. He also likes its light colour because of its contemporary look.

He also uses a lot of cherry and is partial to lacewood, a neatly grained wood he

buys from a lumberyard in Woodstock.

If a stain is required, Ward turns to a finisher for Steinway pianos to do the work.

However, "because the finish is there to accentuate the wood, not cover it up," he prefers to use a light tung oil, which he heats to help it penetrate the pores of the wood. Ward reapplies thin coats of the oil until he has brought out the desired depth of colour in the wood.

Currently Ward's furniture is represented by the Bayfield Gallery and TU Gallery in Edmonton, as well as The Guild. [G](#)

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