

New Notions

IN WOOD AND GLASS

Thauston, the Eidos Design Studio signature coffee table, made of steam-bent ash, Macassar ebony and glass, is carried by fine art galleries in Alberta and Wisconsin.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALTER FRANCYK

BELOW: Precision is key to Glenn Ward's success as a custom furniture maker.



Glenn Ward enjoys bringing ideas to life.

A custom furniture maker for a dozen years, Glenn helps people put their thoughts into form. "They may know what they want, but don't know how to get there," says Ward, creative director of Eidos Design Studio, his furniture design and production company.

In Greek, 'eidōs' means form, or something seen. To Ward, eidōs represents metamorphosis. He helps people visualize their ideas in sculpted wood and glass and sees himself as a problem solver. "People will come to me and say, 'Glenn, I want this built. This is where it's located. This is its function and these are the aesthetics.' I take those ideas and define them into something functional and pleasing to the eye."



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people

As examples, he cites a bookcase and a dining room table, crafted for different clients. A couple of audiophiles wanted a wall unit for their books, CDs and audio equipment. Over a period of two months, Ward took his clients' ideas, organized them and gave them form. The result was a custom cabinet with bookshelves, CD drawers and storage space for audio components. He enhanced the customers' concept by cooping the solid cherry doors of the cabinet, giving it softer, curved lines, thus avoiding the appearance of a big box at the end of a room.

In the case of the dining room table, a client needed a large table for a confined area. A dark, solid wood tabletop would have seemingly filled the available space, so Ward used translucent glass, supported by cherry legs with fine ebony detail, and beautifully crafted, dovetailed bridal joints to create a table that doesn't dominate the room. "Visually and conceptually you have a table that's there, but not there. Yet, you can seat 10 people," he says.

While Glenn will work with any material, he uses wood with interesting grain, much the same way as a painter uses colour. For one client's shelf unit, he augmented the wood's natural beauty by first applying a dye to allow the stain to penetrate more deeply. "I did this in bird's eye cherry and it looked exquisite," Ward says. "It's almost as though you could look into the wood."

Ward crafts with cherry when he wants a piece to gradually turn a dark, rich red over the years. He trims furniture with ebony to accentuate the soft, curving lines he often employs in his work. Those curves lead to pleasant surprises in pieces like his entrance desk with curved legs. Its drawers pull out on a round trajectory, revealing circular shapes where rectangles are expected.

"I just think curves are more interesting. My wife, Kathy, says I don't know what a straight line is," Ward laughs. "Straight lines tend to be static, whereas, with curves, your eye tends to be more engaged. I try to engage the eye to make my furniture visually interesting because that's what makes it beautiful."

One of the best examples of this approach is Thaston, his coffee table made of steam bent ash, Macassar ebony and glass. Its unique design and sweeping, gentle lines make it a sculpture as much as it is furniture. The table originated as a simple drawing scribbled on a piece of paper. Turning that idea into reality took 16 different jigs and Ward built each one of them. "It was a challenge in conceptual thinking," he says.

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Graceful arches of laminated ash support the glass top of the Donum table.

BELOW: Fine inlays define the tapered legs of this Eidos stool.

LEFT: Cooped cherry doors soften the lines of a custom-made cabinet for books, CDs and audio equipment. (Photo courtesy of Glenn Ward)





A custom-made coffee table can be extended in any direction to suit available space. (Location courtesy of Evanco Homes)

RIGHT: Glenn Ward crafts his creations in a home workshop. (Photo by Kathy Ward)

MIDDLE: Pie-shaped slices of curly maple veneer comprise this table top.



He used a similar style in his signature piece, the Donum glass table, which stands on three intersecting arches, crafted of laminated ash with dyed pear veneer detailing. "It took two months to build the first one," Ward said. "I can build them a lot faster now."

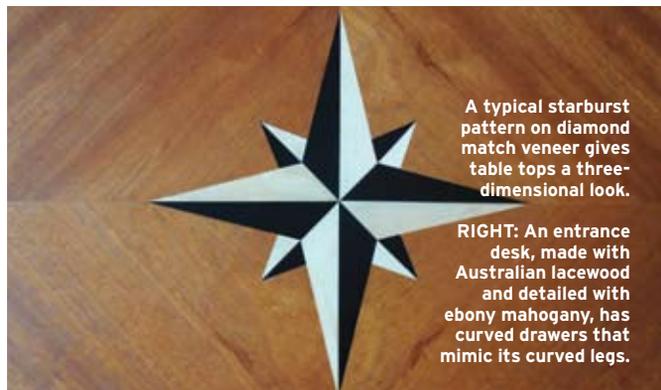
Ward began his furniture making career as an apprentice upholsterer. He restored and refinished antiques before studying furniture design at Toronto's Sheridan College, where he aced the course. When a friend moved west in 1996 and left him to care for his woodworking shop in Kitchener for four years, Ward remade and sold the prototypes he built at college, and started his own custom furniture venture.

His work is carried by the TU Gallery in Edmonton, Alberta and The Guild Gallery in Madison, Wisconsin, where offerings are juried by a former curator of the Smithsonian Institute. Ward's furniture stirred considerable interest when it made its local debut at a Haliburton Art Festival this summer. "I think wood has an intrigue for everyone," Ward explains. "It's tactile. People can feel it. Touch it. I think there's a fascination with it."

While he found local reaction to his work very encouraging, Ward wants to meet more people with furniture problems to solve, as well as clients who want his style of custom furniture - and who welcome the chance to be involved in making it.

In the future, Ward would like to develop a line of furniture he could reproduce, as well as do custom work for clients. "I want to be able to create beautiful work for people," Ward says.

For more information, visit www.eidosdesignstudio.com, or call 1.866.690.1270 OH



A typical starburst pattern on diamond match veneer gives table tops a three-dimensional look.

RIGHT: An entrance desk, made with Australian lacewood and detailed with ebony mahogany, has curved drawers that mimic its curved legs.

