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# THE ANTIQUES OF TOMORROW

BY *Elizabeth Ferry*

When you hear the word master, you think of old — old masters.

The members of the New Hampshire Furniture Masters Association have one thing in common with the old masters: they are creating works of art that may very well stop you in your tracks, magnify your senses and leave you speechless. They create works of art that inspire awe. The relationship between maker and material is almost palpable in the finished piece.

These are not “old” masters — the master furniture makers of New Hampshire tend towards the middle age. They are alive and well and living in small towns, including Newport, Wilmot and Warner. But they, like all great masters, will be

remembered and admired long into the future: they are creating the antiques of tomorrow.

For its small population, New Hampshire has an inordinate number of woodworkers — second in the United States only to the Seattle, Wa., area. Several organizations in the state promote craftsmanship and woodworking. This particular group — New Hampshire Furniture Masters Association (NHFMA) — was formed in 1993 specifically for the recognition and advancement of furniture making. The annual auction, held each year in October in Wentworth-by-the-Sea, attracts bidders from around the country. As Ted Blachly of Warner says, “Wood has a pull on people.”



courtesy of Ted Blachly; photo by Dean Powell

*A detail of Ted Blachly's loveseat made of curly maple*



courtesy of Terry Moore; photo by Dean Powell

*Terry Moore's chest of drawers made of figured makore, satinwood and rosewood.*



courtesy of Jon Siegel; photograph by Dean Powell

*A detail of Jon Siegel's "Elliptori" wood-turned mahogany contemporary table*



courtesy of Terry Moore; all photos by Gary Samson

## TERRY MOORE

### Balance and Symmetry, Refinement and Restraint

Ask Terry Moore how he became a furniture maker and he says with a laugh, “That’s a story for a soap opera!” Or maybe he means rock opera.

Moore sits in his Newport studio with a recently completed piece, *Ebony Harlequin*, commissioned by the League of N.H. Craftsmen for their permanent collection. The meticulously matched points of interlocking diamond shapes — cut from tiger maple and ebony veneer — embellish the front, side and back panels of this custom piece.

You would never guess that the original sketch was drawn on a napkin, or that there are no blueprints for the intricate design, which includes gently bowed door profiles and a lift-off top that reveals an additional compartment. A self-taught craftsman, Moore began his woodworking career building kitchens in Newport. Thirty years later, his peers and his patrons recognize him as a master of proportions, design and workmanship.



*Lectern in Brazilian rosewood and Vermont curly maple*

It all began in Wales with the dream of becoming a musician. “I was born in a family of eight children,” Moore says. He left school early, figuring that musicians don’t need a college education. He still recalls the boredom of working in jobs such as coal mining and as a tire fitter. After work, he would pursue his musical interests — guitar and vocals.

In 1973, he traveled to London to see a rock opera called “*Lonesome Stone*.” Moore joined the international cast shortly afterwards as “a pinch-hit musician playing bass, lead guitar, keyboards, singing and with a little acting part.” The show toured Europe successfully for a year and a half, including three months at the Rainbow Theater in London. (The Rainbow has a special place in the hearts of rock lovers; Eric Clapton recorded his live album there.)

Promoters brought the show and its cast to the United States, where its reception was a different tune, so to speak. The show went bankrupt in Kansas City, Mo. Moore was married to an American member of the cast at the time, and the couple made short-term plans to spend Christmas with her family in Newport. And he’s been in the area ever since.

While waiting for his legal papers to be processed in 1975, Moore started doing repairs on his in-laws’ rental apartments. One needed a new kitchen,



*Demi-Lune Commode in fiddleback mahogany and rosewood*

which Moore constructed after reading a library book. “Six kitchens later I said, ‘I’m going to hang out my own shingle.’ You have to love America — I never could have done that in England or Wales,” he says.

Moore points to three very different influences for his early work: Korean furniture design, the French Art Deco movement and Edward Barnsley, a 20th century English craftsman who reinterpreted Georgian period furniture. Moore describes his work as a distillation of these influences. Korean design influences the balance and symmetry in Moore’s design. French Art Deco is echoed in his use of fine veneer. Barnsley inspires refinement and restraint.

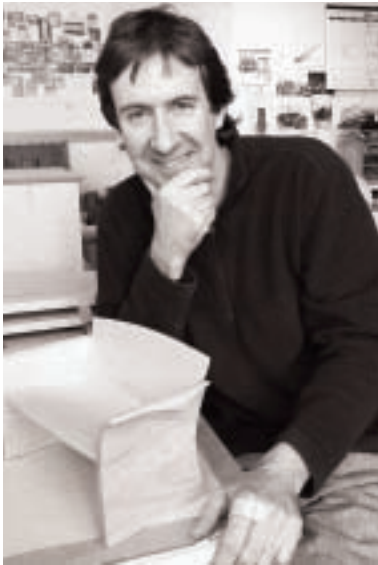
Moore builds his forms in hardwood, such as cherry, and he decorates in exotic — but not endangered — patterned wood veneers. And he creates the design of the veneer inlays as he builds the piece. “It’s like writing music,” Moore says. “It evolves and changes as you are working.”

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*Harlequin Desk, inspired by Picasso’s Harlequin series, in curly maple and dyed tupelo.*

courtesy of Ted Blachly; photo by Gary Samson



## TED BLACHLY

### Freshness of Design

The town of Warner was incorporated in 1774. Warner's colonial history is still in evidence in the form of old houses and barns.

Two hundred years later there was another migration — the back-to-the-land movement. Ted Blachly was part of it.

After studying art and philosophy at New England College in Henniker, Blachly landed in Warner. He reopened old fields, then designed, built and finished the interior of his house and studio on Birch Hill. He points to kitchen and living room furniture, then out the window: "The wood for that table came from this land; the wood for those cabinets from the hill over there," he says.

Recently, a landowner in New London cut down a large butternut tree. Knowing that Blachly was a furniture maker, he gave him a call. The tree, now sawn into planks, is drying under cover outside Blachly's shop. "I try to select really good wood based on natural color and figuring for my furniture design," he says. "People often ask if I have a favorite

courtesy of Ted Blachly; photo by Dean Powell



*This Demi-Lune table made of bubinga and rosewood has a single drawer in the center.*

wood to work in. Each species has its own characteristics. Their differences are interesting to me."

That's not to say that all of the wood he uses is from local sources; Blachly often acquires wood from wood dealers. One is in Pennsylvania, another in Oregon whom he communicates with via the Internet.

"When he has something he thinks might interest me, he e-mails photos. He wets down the wood so I can see the grain. I sit here at the computer and scroll through the pictures with a mouse," he says.

Before he became a furniture maker, Blachly worked in "the old house trade." He is, by nature, a person of patience and one who pays close attention to detail. Deconstructing and reconstructing old houses "where nothing is square" provided a good environment for honing his problem-solving skills.

In the late 1980s, the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers ([www.gnhw.org](http://www.gnhw.org)) formed in Warner. Blachly went to all of the meetings. "I had this interest; I was just soaking it up. I didn't have any qualms about

knocking on a fellow woodworker's door and asking, 'What do you think of this dovetail joint?'" he says.

A love of trees — the whole tree — is characteristic of Blachly's work. He explains the term "fitch sawn" — "when a tree or a log is sawn up and the pieces are kept together." The resulting



courtesy of Ted Blachly; photo by Dean Powell

*The natural patterns of the wood are unified with the flowing form of this love seat made of curly sugar maple.*

collection naturally contains wood of similar color and grain figuring. Blachly prizes the relatedness — not the sameness — of fitch-sawn boards. He uses it to its advantage in single items as well as in sets of multiple furniture pieces.

New England furniture design caught Blachly's attention as a child. Later, the clean, minimalist lines of Danish and Japanese styles influenced his work. But he notes "after you make a few pieces, those exact references aren't there anymore. The pieces are coming out of you."

"It can be a whole range of things that influence the work," he says, including nonvisual inspiration, such as feelings and even gesture. The inspiration for a recent chest of drawers was the stance of a person standing casually with arms folded.

"I did a loose sketch of it and wrote beside it 'don't change.' When a design pops out of my sketchbook, I try to retain, through all the building stages, the freshness of the original design," Blachly says.

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## JON SIEGEL Wood Turning Specialist

Jon Siegel is passionate about the history of New England as the cradle of the American Revolution. “I’m originally from the Midwest,” he says. “I never felt there the sense of history that is here among the stone walls and old mills in New Hampshire.”



Steve Booth

In the general field of woodworking and within the smaller field of furniture making, Siegel has carved his niche as a woodturner.

Turning wood involves a machine called a lathe. (A lathe can turn wood or metal; Siegel uses both types in his shop.) The wood stock — sometimes a single piece of wood, sometimes several pieces glued together to create the appropriate mass — rotates on the lathe. Holding the chisel in his hands and bracing it on the tool rest, Siegel applies the tool to the rotating wood, carving it into the shape he desires. This rotation contributes to the high degree of symmetry characteristic of turned wood.



courtesy of Jon Siegel, photograph by Dean Powell

*For a queen size cherry bed, Siegel turned each post and the headboard from a single piece of cherry wood.*

Though he’s had a number of jobs over the years — including 10 years of teaching industrial arts at Proctor Academy in Andover — Siegel remembers being mesmerized the first time he saw a lathe in use. His father, also a woodworker, responded by buying his 14-year-old son a lathe from Sears, Roebuck and Company. “I grabbed on to wood turning like a bulldog and didn’t let go,” he says.

Siegel’s portfolio includes furniture such as a trumpet-shaped coffee table, a glass-topped rosette dining room table and a rush-seat chair. His designs include early colonial recreations as well as his own contemporary style.

The scale of Siegel’s woodturning, from porches to pool cues, is amazing. One machine, which he restored, is a 5,000-pound, 120-year-old pattern maker’s lathe made in Fitchburg, Mass. This lathe can hold wood up to 4 feet in diameter or 12 feet in length and weighing hundreds of pounds. “The people who made it wouldn’t be the least bit surprised to know that it’s being used a century later, because that’s what they intended,” he says. “Not all of my machines are ancient, but the ones that work the best are.”

Besides furniture, Siegel makes turned parts for stairways, such as balusters and newel posts, porch posts and architectural columns. In many older homes, the original pieces were made by hand. When parts or pieces get broken, it is unlikely that the homeowner can find matching replacement parts.

That’s when a woodturner like Siegel has irreplaceable knowledge and skill. He always turns an extra piece for every job because, as he puts it, “stairway collisions involving vacuum cleaners or kids keep on happening.”



photo by Jon Siegel

*Siegel created reproduction turnings of classic columns for a porch restoration at Highland Lake Farm in Andover.*

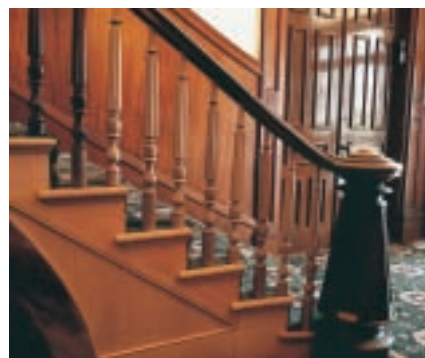



photo by Jon Siegel

*At the Tilton Mansion, Siegel created eight new replacement balusters to match the existing ones of this Victorian stairway.*

Perhaps the most unusual placement of Siegel’s work is at Belmont Park on Long Island, home to the third leg of horse racing’s venerable Triple Crown trophy. A finial — made of mahogany and covered in gold leaf — marks each furlong and half-furlong on the racetrack. After 100 years of outdoor exposure, the original finials decayed. Siegel turned the replacements, each measuring 2 feet in diameter, in his shop.

In addition to architectural and furniture turning, Siegel is an inventor. “A lot of old books have photos of tools that were used historically but are no longer available,” he says. That prompted him to start making and inventing wood lathe accessories, which led to a whole new business. One of his inventions is patented. He sells his products to woodturners around the country. **K**

*While writing this article, Elizabeth Ferry noticed a delightful correspondence between working with wood and with words: words are flitch sawn (taken from a single dictionary), turned (to create literary symmetry), and cut and pasted (like veneer).*



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