

Furniture Masters: Our Stories



Furniture Masters: Our Stories

The New Hampshire Furniture Masters is a diverse group of more than two dozen fine furniture makers, each with stories to tell. Working out of studios and workshops in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, and Vermont, these gifted artisans create contemporary masterpieces for patrons and collectors from across the United States.

Like the Furniture Masters, every piece in this 2015 design book has a story to tell. Many are unique works that were commissioned by clients, while others are speculative pieces created by the masters to demonstrate their creativity and exceptional skill in the art of fine furniture making. Some pieces have already been purchased by private collectors, while others are available for sale. Every piece is as unique as its maker. As one patron observed, “Every time I look at a piece, I see not only its beauty and exceptional design, but also the individual who made it—personality, background, experience, and inspirations.”

We invite you to explore this book to get a sense for these makers. If a piece’s introductory description speaks to you, please visit our website at furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/ for the rest of the story. And if you would like to make a piece part of your story, please contact the creator. If this particular item is no longer available, ask this Furniture Master about creating a new work just for you.

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All photos are by Bill Truslow, except where noted.

Cover: “X and Why” by Brian Sargent
 Opposite page: detail of Boston Table by Ted Blachly
 This page: “Lindsay Maple” by Greg Brown

Meet the Masters



Ted Blachly

pages inside front and back covers, 10

"I've had a long-term relationship working with wood and its seemingly infinite variety of characteristics. It continues to be a love."

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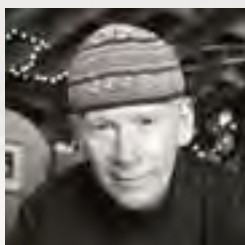


Aurelio Bolognesi

page 19

"My work is all the source of entertainment that I need!"

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Jon Brooks

pages 15, 19, 24

"My art is about collaborating with the tree shapes I find, creating a balance of form, function, and craftsmanship. Color and surface design are an important part of my expression."

Portrait by Gary Samson

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Timothy Coleman

page 12

"Nature is my best teacher."

Portrait by Gary Samson

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Meet the Masters

pages 8, 9, 14

Jeffrey Cooper

"I am a big admirer of Judy McKie and I study her work, but when I go to carve something, it always comes out looking like I did it."



Portrait by Gary Samson

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page 17

Garrett Hack

"It's all about dazzling design and delightful details."



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pages 13, 17

David Lamb

"One of the great benefits of maple sugarin' is being in the woods so much. I am continually inspired by what's around me."



Portrait by Gary Samson

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pages 11, 21

Tom McLaughlin

"What's the point of art if it doesn't make you feel something?"



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Background photo by Carolyn Enz Hack

Meet the Masters



Sam Norris

page 16

"Texture is a fascination—it draws my imagination and drives my hand."

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Richard Oedel

page 16

"Distilling the simplicity of form from complex desires."

Portrait by Matt Wynne

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Jere Osgood

page 20

"I aim to produce a unique piece that hasn't been seen before."

Portrait by Gary Samson

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Jeffrey Roberts

page 15

"The best inspiration is when a client truly appreciates what I do."

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Meet the Masters

pages cover, 20

Brian Sargent

"Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before
which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish."

– John Quincy Adams

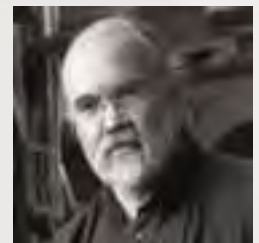


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page 18

William Thomas

"Doing custom work means never getting stuck in a rut."



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page 11

A. Thomas Walsh

"It's all about the artistry and creativity of the design process."



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From the Chairman



Have you ever sat with a blank piece of paper wishing to write or draw something but had no idea what?

We have, and it's hard. When we sit down to design a new piece of furniture, we, too, need some sort of spark that grows into a design. What is the piece's function? Who is it for? Where will it go? Asking and answering such questions about the work is the beginning of the story, and bringing the finished piece to its new home is the next chapter. The piece's story continues to evolve as people use and enjoy it. We have called this 2015 yearbook "Our Stories" and have asked the participating Furniture Masters to tell us something about those original sparks that spawned the ideas and how these ideas became the pieces they are showing this year. We hope to give you insight into the creative process as we experience it and perhaps spark some new ideas for future furniture works as well.

This yearbook is also a 20-year retrospective of the Furniture Masters. Believe it or not, we have reached that milestone, and I have had the honor of being a member for 17 of those years. At the beginning we were a small cadre of makers, all from New Hampshire, with an idea and a collection of supporters who believed in us. Great thanks go to Tony Hartigan, Nancy Sununu, Mary McLaughlin, and the late John Frisbee. Without their support, advice, and cajoling, we wouldn't have reached this milestone.

We have since grown to a couple dozen members, attracted some great furniture makers from neighboring states, expanded our calendar to include both our annual exhibitions and some more intimately scaled events, produced a collector's quality yearbook and an informative website with the help of our graphic designer Jacqueline Stahle, and expanded our reputation to a national scale with the help of our marketing team of Lori Ferguson and Sheri Keniston.

Thanks to the generosity of Steve Duprey, the Furniture Masters also now have a permanent gallery in Concord, NH. Here, under the direction of Gallery Liaison Ted Blachly, we host four or five exhibitions a year, providing visitors an ongoing opportunity to view examples of our work and learn more about our organization and individual members. Our educational program in the NH State Prison system also continues to grow and has been so successful that we have expanded to Maine as well, thanks to the dedication of Terry Moore, Tom McLaughlin, and Brian Reid. We feel that's a good start and hope you do, too.

Thank you for your continued support.

Jeffrey Cooper, Chairman
New Hampshire Furniture Masters

"This yearbook is also a 20-year retrospective of the Furniture Masters. Believe it or not, we have reached that milestone... ."



Photo on left: Detail of "Dining with Vivaldi" by Jeffrey Cooper
Photo on right: Detail of "Judy's Impulse" by Jeffrey Cooper



Master Works

The New Hampshire Furniture Masters are full-time, professional furniture makers who exhibit the highest degree of excellence as designers and craftspeople. This design book displays a rich cross section of their works, grouped under four descriptive headings that capture the essence of each collection: Figure, Carve, Line, and Curve.

Figure

All woods have grain—the unique patterns of yearly growth—but some also have stunning figure, ripples, shimmer, or bold feathery plumes growing around big limbs. Woodworkers love to show off the best that wood can offer.



figure



Ted Blachly

'Boston Table'

Claro walnut, Gabon ebony, quartersawn white oak
17-1/2" deep x 47-1/2" wide x 31" high

Making this piece was, in part, a reflection on my 20-year association with NHFMA. I was invited to join this group in 1995, its inaugural year. A letter from David Lamb put forth the idea of promoting, exhibiting and, ultimately, selling "stellar" handmade furniture. "Masterworks!" It was a bit intimidating, but also a challenge. The first year was a great success; both of my pieces (a sideboard and blanket chest) sold, which was rewarding and gave me confidence that there was interest in this level of work.

For this anniversary year, I introduce the "Boston Table." It was made very slowly from luscious Claro walnut. The process of developing and making a piece like this is both demanding and enjoyable.

For Ted's full story about his "Boston Table," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Photo by Kevin Sprague

A. Thomas Walsh

'Sleigh Endings' Daybed

*African khaya crotch veneer, solid mahogany base, hand-rubbed poly-oil finish,
Stroheim and Romann tapestry upholstery
28" deep x 86" wide x 22" high, 16" seat height*

I consider this award-winning design my signature piece. The design originated with a commission from a New York City client who was a fine art dealer and lived in a Park Avenue penthouse apartment.

For Thom's full story about "Sleigh Endings" Daybed, visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

figure



Tom McLaughlin

'Ascension'

*mahogany, Cuban mahogany, crotch Makore,
Amboyna burl, ebony, quartersawn white oak,
hard maple, poplar, white pine, ebonized brass
22" deep x 42" wide x 66" high*

The timing could not have been better. For months I had been playing with ideas and sketches for a new chest-of-drawers design that I really wanted to make, but could not afford to build on spec due to the complexity.

Then, as if he had read my mind, a great client emailed a request for a contemporary chest of drawers to relate to a bed design I had made for him a year earlier in the very contemporary style I had been developing. My idea had a patron!

For Tom's full story about "Ascension," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Timothy Coleman

'Tree Spirit'

East Indian rosewood, tiger maple, poplar
16" deep x 45" wide x 32" high

I live surrounded by trees. I see them change through the seasons and watch as the sun and the moon shine through their branches, creating shifting patterns of light and shadow. I make sketches and snap photos to capture the feeling, and from here the "Tree Spirit" tables emerged.

For Tim's full story about "Tree Spirit," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

figure



Photos by Dean Powell



Carve

Carving demands the eye and deft hand of a sculptor to wield dozens of different shaped tools. It is a way to create complex three-dimensional shapes, micro-to-macro textures, unusual details, and smooth transitions.

carve



David Lamb

Griffith Mantelpiece

mahogany, birch, ebony, brass, glass

7" deep x 72" wide x 43" high

detail top: an inspired floral bouquet with daylilies and morning glories, carved in the round. 4" deep x 14" wide x 14" high

detail right: scrolls, drawers, ebony basket weave and leaves



From the initial request of making a mirror to its final developed design, this mantelpiece was a rather significant change in concept from the start.

For David's full story about the Griffith Mantelpiece, visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Jeffrey Cooper

'Judy's Impulse'

*English elm, walnut base
25" deep x 25" wide x 21" high*

Surfing the web, Judy happened across the Berkshire Products website, where she saw this wide slab of English elm with a crotch and flame pattern down the center. She had a brilliant idea. Impulsively, she snuck off with the pickup truck, drove to western Massachusetts, bought the English elm, and showed up with it that evening. To Tony she said, "Surprise!" He said, "What are we going to do with it?"

For Jeffrey's full story about "Judy's Impulse," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

carve



Jeffrey Cooper

'More from the Menagerie'

*maple, various wood veneers
table: 21" deep x 21" wide x 20" high
chairs: 25-28" high, 13-3/4" seat height*

When our daughter was a toddler, I made the first batch of animal chairs. They won a prize at Living with Craft, and when I placed one, an elephant, on a page in The Guild Sourcebook, I got a call from Texas Children's Hospital in Houston. They placed a large order and followed up with another.

For Jeffrey's full story about "More from the Menagerie," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Jeffrey Roberts

Swooning Sofa

mahogany, upholstery

70" deep x 36" wide x 33" high

Impressions from youth form lasting attractions. My client approached me with the desire for a custom chaise lounge to fit a specific place in her breakfast nook overlooking Essex Bay.

For Jeffrey's full story about Swooning Sofa, visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

carve



Jon Brooks

'Torus Chair'

pine, varnish

18" deep x 24" wide x 26" high

At the local mill I found a log that was 30" in diameter at the base, including the bark. Tom Wilkins would sell it to me at four feet long only, due to his sawn log lengths. So, with the chainsaw I carved a 28" diameter Ball Chair, leaving a 20" piece at 28" in diameter for "Torus Chair."

For Jon's full story about "Torus Chair," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

Line

Squint at a piece to see its lines, its essential gesture. Be it rectilinear or a flow of curves, similar lines are echoed by the grain or dominant elements of the piece.

Richard Oedel

'Susan's Stand'

mahogany, maple

19" deep x 24" wide x 44" high

This bookstand is designed for a very specific purpose: to serve as a standup reading surface either for books or for electronic media.

For Richard's full story about "Susan's Stand," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



line



Sam Norris

Liquor Cabinet

Madrone, big leaf maple, redwood burl, hand-shaped brass drawer pulls

12" deep x 25" wide x 35" high

Texture has always intrigued me; it can create interest in an otherwise plain piece of pottery; it can add depth to a flat piece of metalwork or building façade; it can turn even a simple leaf into a fascinating story of life if we look closely enough at its structure and tiny veins.

For Sam's full story about Liquor Cabinet, visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

Photos by Seth Janofsky

Garrett Hack

'Duet'

*Engelmann spruce, bird's-eye and curly maple,
aspen, ebony, holly, bone, paint*
14" deep x 21" wide x 42" high

Boy meets girl at a canoeing workshop and really likes her. Girl is brilliant, talented, and has even built her own sea kayak, but...is she interested?

For Garrett's full story about "Duet," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



line



David Lamb

Black Ice Table

mahogany, dyed birch
16" deep x 45" wide x 32" high

It has been several years now that I have used birch crotchwood to simulate the look of frost. My personal challenge this year was to capture the look of black ice, newly formed ice found on puddles and ponds in early winter.

For David's full story about Black Ice Table, visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Curve

Curves are fluid and change as our viewpoint changes. Be they the natural bend of a tree limb or a perfect ellipse, curves are alive and alluring.

curve



William Thomas

Homage À Richard Serra Desk with Desktop Organizer

African mahogany veneer, poplar, white oak, glass
59-1/2" deep x 48" wide x 30" high

I built this desk as a study of the form that Serra used in the series of sculptures he called "Torqued Ellipses." I wanted to see if I could reduce the form to furniture scale and still have it follow the sense of his original idea. For this reason, I made it an open form with a glass top so the interior is visible. The desktop organizer is my original prototype. After I built the full-size form, I realized that I could include the small version by adding drawers.

For Bill's full story about "Homage À Richard Serra," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Aurelio Bognesi

'Tubular!'

Wall-Hanging, Revolving Cabinet

*teak, tiger maple, stainless steel, aluminum, oil and wax finish
20" deep x 24" wide x 48" high*

This piece came as a sequel to the "Speakeasy." Once again I tried to develop an unusual way of opening a cabinet; once again rotation is involved...bearings...metal...headaches!

For Bolo's full story about "Tubular!," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.

curve

Jon Brooks

'Bruce'

*cherry, maple, acrylic, varnish
20" deep x 28" wide x 20" high*

My good friend painter Bruce McColl and I have admired each other's work for years. We both also gravitate towards a similar passion for landscape and color.

For Jon's full story about "Bruce," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.





Jere Osgood

Tables 2015

crotch walnut, ash

31" deep x 17" wide x 22" high

My first idea was a piece to go with a sofa, either in front of or at the ends. It wasn't apparent right away, but when I saw the tops together, the figured wood suggested a photo of our galaxy. Usually I design a piece and then try to select a wood to carry out the concept.

curve

Brian Sargent

'X and Why'

mottled Anigre, Swiss pear, hard maple

30" deep x 17" wide x 19" high

The seed of design for this piece was planted 20 years ago at the Philadelphia Fine Furniture Show, where an elliptical chest of drawers intrigued me. This two-drawer table with its tapered elliptical form is the result of watering that seed.

For Brian's full story about "X and Why," visit furnituremasters.org/2015ourstories/.



Photo on right: detail of "Ascension" by Tom McLaughlin



Education

Education plays a vital role in both preserving and furthering the tradition of fine furniture making. The Furniture Masters continue to foster the New Hampshire Institute of Furniture Making's Studio-Based Learning Program and further their involvement with the Prison Outreach Program.

New Hampshire Institute of Furniture Making

The Next Generation



The New Hampshire Institute of Furniture Making (NHIFM) strives to perpetuate a three-centuries-old tradition of fine furniture making in the Granite State by training the next generation of furniture makers. This initiative takes several forms: the Studio-Based Learning Program, the Prison Outreach Program, and a mentoring program for emerging makers that allows younger artists to work side-by-side with an established master, addressing topics of design, technique, client interaction, and the like.

Studio-Based Learning Program

NHIFM's Studio-Based Learning Program is the exciting result of a long-held desire to educate serious furniture designers and craftsmen, offering participants unique insight into the activities and workings of the thriving studios and shops of the New Hampshire Furniture Masters. The intensive three-year program brings students from foundational structural studies to personal design expression. Apprentices have the flexibility to explore specific areas of interest by working within NHFMA shops that specialize in certain areas.

The environment not only allows for skill development, but also offers an opportunity to be closely exposed to each master's current work and to witness firsthand the day-to-day structure of a working studio. Current students enthusiastically endorse this unique environment, with its opportunities to work one-on-one with a master and have access to the secrets of this timeless art form.



Coffee Table by student Alicia Dietz. Photo by Amanda Lass.

New Hampshire Institute of Furniture Making

Prison Outreach Program

The New Hampshire Furniture Masters' mission of teaching others the art of furniture making is not confined to individual masters' studios; it also has extended to the interior of the New Hampshire and Maine prison systems. The Furniture Masters' Prison Outreach Program began in New Hampshire in 1999, a result of an invitation from Superior Court Judge Kathleen McGuire. It is a complementary effort with the correctional system's Hobby Craft Woodworking Program, a long-established rehabilitative initiative.

Led by Terry Moore and Tom McLaughlin, several members of the NH Furniture Masters Association (NHFMA) go inside the prison nearly every month to offer instruction to creative and motivated inmates wishing to improve their furniture-making skills.

To participate in the Hobby Craft and NHFMA Prison Outreach programs, inmates must have a positive attitude and clean disciplinary record. Once admitted, inmates are taught through a series of tutorials designed to illustrate more advanced techniques and the finer aspects of woodworking.

The results speak for themselves. In recent years, numerous inmates involved in the Prison Outreach Program have been released and are now thriving as creative woodworkers. Additionally, dozens of beautiful inmate-created pieces have been included in annual Furniture Masters exhibits and catalogs, reflecting the amazing abilities and potential of these men.

The program has realized such success in New Hampshire that it sparked the development of a companion program at the Maine State Prison in Warren. Almost weekly, Maine-based Furniture Master Brian Reid offers a full day of instruction to the participants in the prison's Industries Program. Furniture Master Howard Hatch also provides monthly instruction, with a focus on drawing, planning, and design.

Response to the prison programs has been overwhelmingly positive. In addition to having an opportunity to build their character and confidence, participating inmates who have contributed works to the Furniture Masters' annual auction have donated the net proceeds of their sales to many worthy charities. The success of NHIFM's educational programs is due in no small part to the hard work and support of the prisons' administration, as well as the vision and generous financial gifts of so many. To learn more about these initiatives, visit furnituremasters.org/education/.



“Like the flower that springs up through a crack in the pavement against all odds, these men are bringing beauty from the most unexpected places. These objects are full of vibrancy and light. They reflect the maker’s love for the material, respect for the tradition, and newfound esteem for themselves.”

– Tom McLaughlin, NHFMA member, NHIFM Instructor

Contributors

The Furniture Masters could not exist without the generous support of many individuals and organizations. Due to their continued sponsorship and patronage, we are able to carry forward the rich tradition of fine furniture making to the next generation. We are forever grateful.

Acknowledgments

This year, the Furniture Masters arrive at a 20-year milestone, and upon such an anniversary, it seems only fitting that we reflect on our past.

Looking back at the acknowledgments page of our inaugural catalogue, the first name is Tony Hartigan. Today, some two decades later, Tony's name still appears at the top of any list of Furniture Masters supporters. Over the past two decades, Tony has been our biggest champion, working tirelessly to make the connections necessary to keep our organization strong and relevant. We are forever grateful.

Next on that page is a list of the original Furniture Masters, many of whom are still members: Ted Blachly, Jon Brooks, Howard Hatch, David Lamb, Wayne Marcoux, Tom McLaughlin, Terry Moore, Jere Osgood, and Bill Thomas. These makers have given countless hours to our organization. Howard, David, Terry, Tom, and Bill have all served as chairman of the organization. Ted has spearheaded the development of our new permanent gallery in Concord, together with its exhibition schedule; Jon has shepherded our fruitful collaborations with the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester; and Jere has been a mentor and guide to us all. Thank you to all for your dedication and perseverance.

Also mentioned on that first acknowledgment page is Mary McLaughlin. Mary has been with us all these years as well and has been instrumental in guiding and facilitating the educational efforts that constitute a critical part of our mission. Thank you, Mary, for your unerring guidance.

Nor can we fail to mention Governor and Mrs. John Sununu and their family, who began their now extensive collection of works by the NH Furniture Masters at the very first auction. Their support has been steadfast year after year. To the Governor, Nancy, and the entire Sununu family—thank you! We are all incredibly appreciative.

We also are very grateful to Steve Duprey, who so graciously provided us with a bright and airy permanent exhibition space on Main Street in Concord, and to Tim Sink and his team at the Concord Chamber of Commerce, who have generously permitted us to use the Chamber's conference room as a meeting space this year.

Although the Furniture Masters bring their artistry to the table, we rely heavily on our Advisory Board members

for their business acumen. Many members of this board also serve on the board of directors of the NH Institute of Furniture Making (our 501(c) 3 affiliate), which oversees the educational part of our mission. Thank you to Mary McLaughlin, Pauline Ikawa, Bob Larsen, Scott Lawson, Sy Mahfuz, Van McLeod, Roger Myers, Bill Siroty, GERALYN Smariga, Gerry Ward, and Maura Weston for their support and guidance.

We also would like to express our thanks to Arthur Clarke and Susan Sloan, Tom Silvia and Shannon Chandley, Hunt and Lucy Breed, John and Joan Henderson, Ted and Mary Shasta, Merv and Geraldine Stevens, Pamela Diamantis, Robert and Jill Wilson, Chris Dwyer and Mike Huxtable, Diane Griffith, and many, many others. Not only are they longtime friends of the Furniture Masters, they are also collectors of our work. We cannot overstate how important that is to our continued success.

Thank you to Lori Ferguson of Scribo Consulting, our public relations and marketing consultant, whose knowledge and attention to detail keep the Furniture Masters in the public eye. And thank you to Sheri Keniston, our executive assistant, who keeps our database in tip-top shape, creates our stunning e-newsletter, and helps Lori in managing our social media presence.

Thank you to Jacqueline Stahle of Think Design, our graphic designer, whose creativity, persistence, and attention to detail keep our visual identity fresh and exciting. Thanks as well to Joan Bennett of The Write Connection, whose superior copyediting skills keep our print content precise and accurate.

Hearty thanks to our photographer Bill Truslow, whose seasoned professional eye creates arresting photographs of our pieces and their makers.

We also would like to thank the Currier Museum of Art for continuing to add works by the Furniture Masters to its growing collection, and Director and CEO Susan Strickler and Director of Collections and Exhibitions Andrew Spahr, who have supported our work and juried our pieces over many years.

And, finally, we extend heartfelt thanks to our many stalwart patrons and sponsors—without you, none of this would be possible.

Thank you for 20 years of support!

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Photo on right: detail of Low Table by Ted Blachly



NHFMA is a group of professional furniture artisans committed to preserving the centuries-long tradition of fine furniture making. The association promotes the growth of fine furniture making, as well as the sale of fine furniture made by its members, by hosting exhibitions; engaging in collaborative marketing and educational activities; and partnering with museums, art organizations, and galleries. The organization strives to uphold the highest standards of quality craftsmanship through a peer-reviewed jury system.



"Adagio" by Brad Wolcott

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