

GEORGE ABIAD

After moving from Beirut, Lebanon, to Madison County, Indiana, to attend college 30 years ago, George Abiad studied a variety of furniture craftsmen and designs. To hone the styles he appreciated most, he spent time with internationally noted furniture maker Sam Maloof and outstanding woodworkers such as David Ebner, Wharton Esherick and Wendell Castle.



A full-time graphic designer and professional photographer since 1990, George said, “I always have had a passion for woodworking. As a young child in Beirut, I used to sneak into my neighbor’s woodshop. It was a family owned operation, and I loved to spend time watching them at their craft.”

Today, most of the hardwoods used in George’s pieces are Indiana-harvested woods such as walnut, cherry, ash, and red and white oak. His furniture style is organically shaped and semi-sculptural, featuring intersecting curves flowing from one piece of wood to another. Depending on the client, he also builds more traditional furniture featuring tapered legs and raised panel construction, giving it an Arts and Crafts feel.

“From start to finish, the woodworking process is a lengthy one,” he says. “I design each piece individually, and I select the materials with great care, paying close attention to the color and grain of the wood.

“It is important to me that my pieces are both beautiful and functional,” he says; and in most of his work George blends contrasting colors of wood, giving each piece uniqueness, as well as a distinct artistic appeal.

He begins the design process by laying out the basic shape in full scale. “I then plan where every joint has to be and the specific type of joint that is needed,” he says. “Then I give the basic shape life and organic character by turning straight lines into curves and square corners into rounded ones.”



The materials are then chosen, and the different parts of wood are surfaced, dimensioned and cut to size. The parts are put together using interlocking or wedged joints that give each piece its solid construction to withstand the test of time. He uses either mortise and tenon or wedged joinery, and the long process then involves shaping, rasping and sanding before the final finishing. Depending on the functionality of the piece, the finishing process entails either hand-rubbed oils and wax or lacquer spraying.

“I design and build tables, benches, desks, music stands, footstools and more,” he says. “So do other woodworking artisans and craftsmen. What differentiates my pieces is my interpretation and idea of what that particular piece of art should look like. I work very hard at mastering this. My style of design and construction, as well as the combination of woods, curves and eye-catching inlays used, give my pieces unique characteristics that identify them as my own.”