

20 minutes with... Brian Tyirin

F&C speaks to this furniture maker who specialises in decorative masterpieces and including a range of elegant boxes

Brian Tyirin describes himself as being an aspiring woodworker and student of the craft. Having felt the need to express himself since being a child, Brian has finally found his niche in artistic woodworking. With 17 years of self taught experience in carpentry and woodworking, he now focuses on making stunning decorative boxes and one of a kind furniture. His journey has only just begun and he is looking forward to discovering where it takes him. His business is based in Cincinnati, USA.

F&C: What are you working on at the moment?

Brian Tyirin: I'm on a continuous journey with my curved dovetail spline boxes. Three new boxes are in the works. Each with removable lids and velvet lined chambers; two black walnut (*Juglans nigra*), and one curly maple (*Acer campestre*) and walnut (*Juglans spp.*).

F&C: What's the tool you can't do without?

BT: I can't live without the router. Routers are definitely the most versatile tools I have in my line up. I reach for them constantly.

F&C: What's the last piece of equipment you bought?

BT: The last piece of equipment I bought was a compact plunge router

by DeWalt. The next purchase I will make will be flex shaft tools for the smaller inlays I am doing.

F&C: Classic piece – nominate a classic piece of furniture from any period – bespoke, mass produced, studio furniture and tell us why it's so special?

BT: I would have to say a Sam Maloof rocker. I'm not sure if this is considered a 'classic' piece of furniture but I've been looking at it for 18 years and it still blows me away. I really can't describe how much his work has affected me.

F&C: Why did you become a furniture maker?

BT: I actually started off as a carpenter. One thing in life led to another. To put it simply, I needed some furniture for myself so it was born out of necessity. I quickly realised that I loved working with wood and most of the furniture – that I could afford – had no soul. It was cheap and boring. I figured I might as well give it a try and see what happens. Those beginning years hold some great memories... and a long list of impressive woodworking mistakes.

F&C: What inspires you?

BT: People and nature are huge inspirations for me. But to be honest, everything and anything can be an inspiration. It's all random.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BRIAN TYIRIN

F&C: If your furniture were music, what kind of music would it be?

BT: Being a musician long before I touched a piece of wood I would have to say fingerstyle acoustic guitar. Michael Hedges' guitar solo entitled *Aerial Boundaries* comes to mind.

F&C: What do you admire in the craft at the moment?

BT: I really admire people that are combining different methods and styles of woodworking and bringing life to new works of art.

F&C: Who has been your greatest mentor/role model?

BT: I have been extremely impressed by Sam Maloof, both the man and his work. I still look at his rockers and am in awe. I plan to visit his shop in California at some point just to get a glimpse of his work first hand.

F&C: What comes first, design or technique?

BT: Design. Technique can be figured out later. I don't like to go into a project with limitations. New

designs give birth to new techniques. I guess the same could be said about techniques. But the piece being made should always be the focus.



Walnut handles on yellow pine nightstand

F&C: Are we too obsessed with outdated modes of work?

BT: I don't think so. You can never have too many tools in your arsenal.

F&C: How or where do you exhibit your work?

BT: To date, I have only displayed my work online. I do plan to show some pieces in a few local shops and galleries in the upcoming year.

F&C: How comfortable are you with working to someone else's design?

BT: Other than working together with my customers I wouldn't know. I enjoy doing custom work because new ideas are born and it is fun, both for customer and myself.

F&C: What's your creative process like?

BT: It is totally random and I've learned that I need to write or sketch

things down as quickly as I can before they poof away. Once I get a rough idea on paper I fire up 'SketchUp 8' and start refining it. Using CAD is a relatively new tool for me. It's proven to be indispensable. It's great for refining something that has been sketched out. I usually take a long walk with some music and just reflect and see what happens. Most of the time, I can grab a few ideas and sketch them out before they float away. I always keep a little sketch pad with me. But being able to create them in a 3D environment is what really lets me see what is going on in my head.

F&C: Do you consider yourself an artist or a craftsman?

BT: I think of myself as an aspiring woodworker who is looking forward to wearing out all his tools on this journey. I'd like to say I'm an artist, but I don't feel like one. I just like to work with wood and express myself through it to the best of my abilities.

F&C: What's the practical process you undergo when moving through the stages of a project?

BT: Once the design is set, it's all about the wood. I spend a lot of time studying whatever slab of wood I am going to use so I can showcase its best features and let nature shine. I still have first cut phobia on new projects. Once I get past the first few cuts I start to relax out and get down to business.

F&C: Do you think furniture making is in danger of disappearing?

BT: I certainly hope not! I don't even want to think about that happening. I don't feel that machine manufactured furniture has the same soul. It lacks the artistic flare and can't be passed down generation to generation like furniture of the past. It just isn't the same quality.

F&C: What advice would you give to someone starting out?

BT: Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Expect to make them. Learn from them. Think outside the box. Stay open minded. Woodworking and furniture making is not easy. It takes a long time and patience. Mistakes lead to new things and techniques. The only real mistake is giving up. Some of my mistakes – and resulting solutions – have completely changed the way I do things. Mistakes are all part of the journey so expect to make them, and embrace them.

F&C: What irritates you about the industry?

BT: I can't think of anything that irritates me about the industry. Of course, I generally stay in my quiet little shop by myself and play with my tools. *F&C*

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Sapele and walnut keepsake curve box



Black walnut curved dovetail urn