

Schürch Woodwork

"Design in art is a recognition of the relation between various things, various elements in the creative flux. You can't invent a design. You recognize it, in the fourth dimension. That is, with your blood and your bones, as well as with your eyes."

D.H. Lawrence

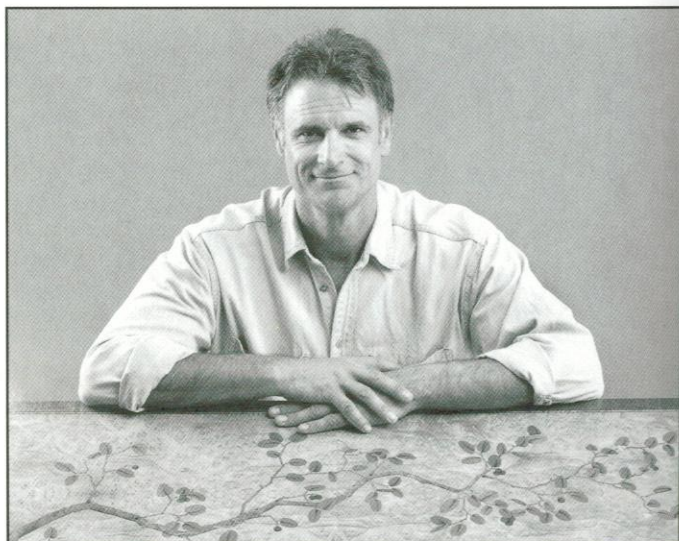
For craftsman and teacher Paul Schürch, leaving the States is how he gained experience and discovered his lifelong passion. At the age of 16 he traveled to Switzerland to learn how to build church organs and pianos. While there, he was introduced to veneering, and now, over 30 years later, he is one of America's leading marquetry experts.

In Switzerland his formal education consisted of mechanical engineering and aesthetical design in wood-working. He also sharpened his skills in working with wood, metal, leather, and fabric while considering how all these media play a role in creating musical instruments. While there he learned the importance of discipline and attention to detail, which have been major factors in shaping him into a fine craftsman.

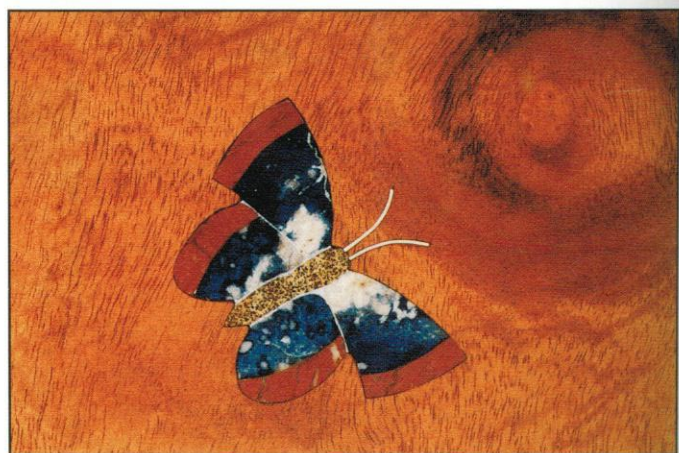
His first trip to Europe would not be his last. He has returned many times and with each visit is rewarded with renewed creative energy and honed skills. On one of those trips he spent 1000 hours on a single piece of furniture, which involved keeping track of, sorting, handling, and assembling thousands of minute and fragile pieces. Concerning furniture design, he says, "Aesthetically, it is a balancing act where many aspects of design and diverse materials culminate into a vibrant work of art."¹ He now returns to Europe two to eight weeks per year to produce new projects involving wood and stone inlay.

In addition to wood and stone, Paul uses gems, shells, and metal to "take the art of marquetry beyond its former confines." He strives to be the best craftsman he can be, "no cutting corners, no compromises," maintaining that he constantly challenges himself to create works of art that will hopefully become the antiques of the future.

Like many craftspeople, he looks to nature for his furniture design, using the skills he learned in Europe to bring the elements of classically influenced styles, contemporary shapes, playful imagery, and exotic materials together in a balanced way. In this way, says Paul, he is



Paul Schürch (b. 1955). Photographer: Wayne McCall.



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"creating a strong visual story that works in form, function, and aesthetics."

One way in which his furniture tells a story is in the "fair curve." Paul learned this technique on another visit to Europe when he studied traditional boat building in England. Fairing a curve is the ability to reproduce the curves found in nature. Paul describes these curves as graceful and pure, "without kinks, unnatural shapes, or



Shop chaos. Photographer: Wayne McCall.

flat spots.”² He explains that you may not notice them, but when they are absent they are “surely missed.” He says you may not see it with your eyes, but you will feel it in your heart.

It’s true. Paul’s pieces do have a powerful ability to impact you in the center of your being. It is the hours of labor that play out so effortlessly in each piece, drawing your eye, mind, and heart. Paul feels strongly about passing on this tradition to others. Today he teaches his

techniques (some traditional Italian veneering and others he has invented) to any who are willing. He does this with videos, workshops, lectures, and apprenticeships.

Whether he is passing on his legacy through teaching or designing, it is the process that he finds most satisfying. Paul describes the task of rendering an idea into something moving and vibrant as an adventure. The reward, he says, is “immeasurable.”