

CHICAGO JOURNAL

Thursday, November 9, 2006

Volume 6, No. 51

IN THE JOURNAL



From flutist to furniture maker

By YOLANDA PERDOMO

Staff Writer

On the website for West Loop furniture designer S. Lloyd Natof, there are no clues of his family heritage. There's nothing written about the fact he's the great grandson of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Natof,

WEST LOOP says he'll talk about it, if asked. But he thinks it has very little to do with his own work as a furniture designer, a profession he embraced accidentally after an early

Chicago craftsman with famous relative carves out his own legacy

interest in music.

"I'm very comfortable with that relationship. I don't feel like it's an important part of my business though. So it's not included for that reason,"

says Natof.

Even though Wright himself was also a furniture designer, that's where the similarities end, according to Natof, because of their different points of view.

"Obviously he was a giant in design in general. I'm sort of a specialist in comparison. He's working with issues that I'm not working with," says Natof, who's father was an engineer. "I'm much more interested in the aesthetics of the finished objects as a kind of work of art. He was kind of building

See 18TH STREET on Page 10

Wayne's World in Ukrainian

At UZIR TV, pals mingle on homemade channel
Metropolis, 21

Taste of Colombia

A new choice for Pilsen diners
4

Blotter

The cleanest teeth in prison
12

Diner rebirth



The Mysteries of Diabetes

Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2006

Outpatient Care Center
First Floor Lobby
1801 W. Taylor Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612

Blood Sugar Screenings
9am - 3pm

Chicago professional football player
signing autographs 11am - 1pm

Center, at the University of Illinois Medical
Diabetes Management Classes developed to
ries of Diabetes." The following classes, which
your insurance, are designed to help patients
stfully self-manage their diabetes.

- Understanding Insulin
- Diabetes and Pregnancy
- Exercise and Diabetes Class
- Diabetes and Your Emotions
- Insulin Pump Initiation and Education

All classes are also taught in Spanish.

Please call 1-866-600-CARE to learn more
about our Diabetes Management Classes

Meet a Mystery Chicago Professional Football Player!

University of
Illinois
Medical Center
at Chicago

1-866-600-CARE (2273)

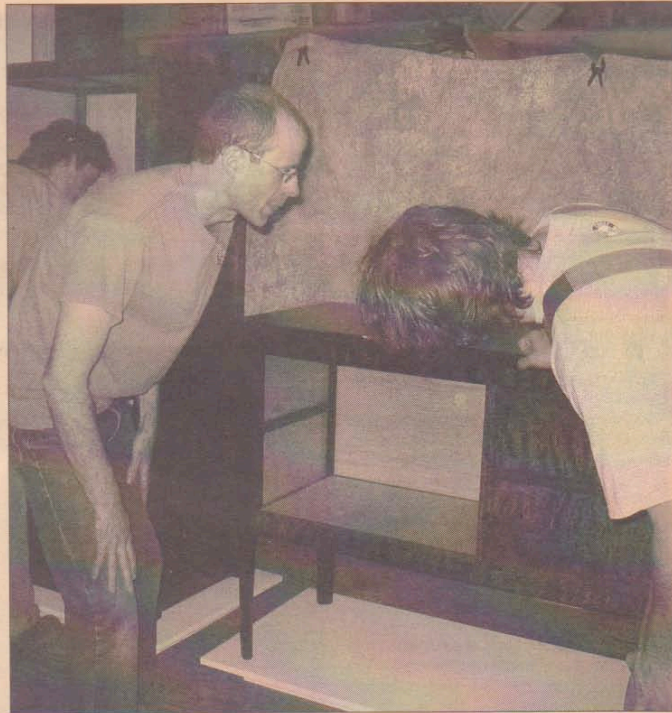


Photo by Yolanda Perdomo

S. Lloyd Natof inspects a furniture piece to be showcased at his West Loop studio.

NATOF

Continued from page 1

furniture to fill a finished work of art."

For almost twenty years, Natof, 41, has worked strictly as a designer and craftsman for hire, making customized furniture and built-ins for living areas, bathrooms, and kitchens. Now, Natof is hosting a solo showcase in his studio at 1217 W. Monroe, his first show in five years. Natof describes the stand alone pieces (tables, cabinets, chests, frames, and other items) as furniture for "apartment living," ranging in price from \$400 to \$6,000.

"I have a small apartment, and all of my friends have small apartments. So I thought about what are the needs of that space. Simple bookcases that still look elegant," says Natof. "It's a real challenge to find simple, beautiful stuff to serve these storage needs that aren't disposable, that aren't going to fall apart in a couple of moves, that sort of thing."

As Natof and three assistants are dusting and moving the pieces onto white platforms for the show, he describes one dining room table that looks as if it was made with the bumpy skin of a dark greenish-brown crocodile. It's actually a laurel veneer, and he says working with unusual woods is inspiring.

"For me, it's that they're non-linear. They swirl and I don't feel like I'm working with planks."

Natof grew up in Virginia and later went to DePaul's music school to study jazz flute. He

says it was then that he decided to make his own furniture. "My dad gave me a drill and circular saw one Christmas because I needed things," says Natof. "I needed a futon and bookcases. I was a starving music student so I thought I'd build some things for myself. And my friends were interest in similar stuff."

Over time, Natof slowly switched disciplines, getting more calls for his furniture than he for music gigs. Through his friends, Natof's clientele grew from a word-of-mouth experience. Because he had no formal training as a craftsman, Natof says he's just only beginning to develop his own vision.

"I feel like I've only started to mature my artistic language in the last five to eight years," says Natof. "Up to that point, I feel like it's been a lot of learning the trade. Mastering the skills."

After the show, Natof says he'll go back to designing and building custom pieces. He describes his clients as people in their forties and fifties with families. Natof says he travels several times a year to his great grandfather's Wisconsin home and compound Taliesin to assist with ongoing preservation efforts there. Looking back, he credits his lack of formal training as the catalyst for his experiments with different types of woods, textures, designs and shapes.

"The last three quarters of a decade, I've had more complex ideas, more seductive kinds of pairings and shapes," notes Natof. "Perhaps being self taught has forced me to go in directions that I wouldn't have otherwise, and I'm kind of thankful for it."