

>> AT THE GALLERIES

# Exhibitions in Chicago, Wyoming, Mass.

The annual Western Design Conference showcases the spirit of the West

By Brian Caldwell STAFF WRITER

Studio furniture maker S. Lloyd Natof is presenting his biennial exhibition the weekends of Nov. 4-5 and Nov. 11-12 at his Chicago shop. He began his furniture career in 1989 when he formed his own custom woodworking design and fabrication shop, SL Natof Furniture. Natof is a great-grandson of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright and describes his own furniture as veneered free-standing casework, buffets, tables, beds and various types of cabinets.

"I've been doing these self-promoted shows since 1989 and every couple of years I'll build a couple of speculative pieces on the side and they'll accumulate and then I'll do another show," said Natof. "Primarily they have been one-day events where I've invited friends and clients and family. But this year I took off most of the summer to work on pieces for the show, some more elaborate stuff as well as a much larger mailing list. I'm going to do it over two weekends.

"I'll have at least 15 pieces; it will prob-

ably be closer to 20 but a lot of those final five or seven will be smaller things. There will be a couple of mirror frames and a handful of my simpler pieces that I call my J-line. There will be about 10 substantive, complex pieces. They'll range from a buffet, sideboard, console table, bed, dining room table and three tansus. They're kind of modern iterations of tansus where I've lifted some of the basic design elements and then started using modern materials or modern ideas."

Natof's work is mostly residential; he takes on a commercial job about once every two years, usually store fixture projects on Oak Street in Chicago. His residential work is primarily through commissions where he works directly with the client.

"I'm really preoccupied with the relationship between the veneer and the structure," Natof said. "Most people use veneer like they are taking a painting and stretching it over a piece of furniture and I've come up with waves of patterning the veneer, not just the reverse diamond matches or bookmatching. I try to come up with patterns and help to integrate it more with the volume of the box and the shape."

Has the work of his great-grandfather influenced his own?

"I did grow up with a lot of his furniture so I think that my early impressions of what an interior should look like were very different from everybody else," he said.

"I'm very seduced by his work but there are funny similarities and differences between furniture and architecture. I know he did a lot of furniture but it is very idiomatic. There hasn't been much I've been able to take from his furniture to assist me. I look at his buildings all the time and because of my relationship to the family, I've probably had a lot more access and spent a lot more time around his buildings than the average person. I find them to be very inspirational. The inspiration is that these are really transformational spaces. It would be nice to think that I could work towards furniture that is similarly transformational."

## Western Design Conference

The 2006 Western Design Conference, a prominent exhibition of western furniture, fashion and accessories, is scheduled for Sept. 20-23 in Cody, Wyo. Founded over a decade ago by western enthusiasts, the conference was established to perpetuate the best traditions of western design and craft.

The conference includes an "Exhibition + Sale," whose participating artists are selected by a jury of design experts. The "Exhibition + Sale" celebrates those who have chosen to forgo mass production in order to create one-of-a-



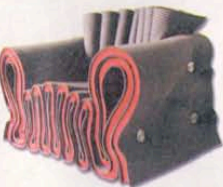
Lloyd Natof used crotch mahogany and ebony veneers with solid woods for his "B/K Console Table."



"Amarelo Buffet" features laurel veneer, ebony pulls and mahogany legs. Natof's 16" x 64" x 36" cabinet has sliding doors with shelves behind them.



James Schriber's painted pine "Magazine Table Model" and spalted apple "Magazine Table" are on display at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Mass., as part of the "Scale of Things to Come" exhibition.



Lothar Windels built his "Joseph Felt Chair Model" out of felt and steel. The 1/4-scale models were used to test different densities of felt and variations of layering techniques before building the chair in full-scale.

kind, museum-quality functional art pieces that bring the spirit of the West into the mainstream marketplace.

The "Exhibition + Sale" will take place at the Victor J. Riley Arena and showcase contemporary crafts, highlighting artistic traditions including Western, Adirondack, Rustic, Lodge, Asian, Southwestern, Hispanic, Native American and modern influences. All products juried into the show will be displayed in a gallery setting on pedestals. All products must be handmade in the United States or Canada.

## "Scale of Things to Come"

Studio furniture artists are known for making large one-of-a-kind benches, beds, dining tables and other furniture for your home. It's a lesser-known secret that many of these artists also work in miniature — designing scale models, or maquettes — as part of the creative process. "The Scale of Things to Come" exhibit at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Mass., which runs through Nov. 19, features studio furniture models by master makers John Everdell, Fo Wilson, Judy McKie and others.

Models allow artists to explore technical problems, such as how to join two

curves, which would be difficult on paper, according to exhibit curator Mark Del Guidice. They also allow artists to test ideas and communicate them to clients, affording an opportunity to make changes before the wood is cut or the metal cast.

The exhibit will feature furniture models in various stages of completion, along with three full-size pieces and photographs of other finished works.

## Contacts:

Fuller Craft Museum, 455 Oak St., Brockton, MA 02301. Tel: 508-588-6000. [www.fullercraft.org](http://www.fullercraft.org)

SL Natof Furniture, 1217 W. Monroe, Chicago, IL 60607. Tel: 312-733-4205. [www.slratof.com](http://www.slratof.com)

Western Design Conference, 70 S. Willow Lane, P.O. Box 2979, Jackson Hole, WY 83001. Tel: 888-685-0574. [www.westerndesignconference.com](http://www.westerndesignconference.com)

■ Gallery announcements of exhibitions, with photos or slides, should be sent to: Brian Caldwell, Woodshop News, 10 Bokum Rd., Essex, CT 06426.

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