

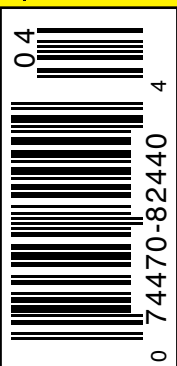
July-August, 2013

# Woodworker WEST

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- **AWFS® Vegas Fair Returns to Las Vegas**
- **2013 'Design in Wood' Winners Pictorial**
- **'Woodworking Artist of the Year' Selected**
- **Answering Readers' Questions with David Marks**
- **Kickstarting Your Business or Special Project**
- **20 Ways Not to Turn a Bowl by Nick Cook**
- **Profile: Ken Richards, furnituremaker**

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### Ken Richards

**Ken Richard** of Maple Valley, WA designed his *Lakeside Dining Set* to bring the overlooking view of the lake into the clients home, by using intarsia designs of water iris, cattails, and geese. The table (30" h, 108" l, 36" w) and chairs (43" h, 19" w, 21" d) are made of figured Narra, with other woods for details and inlays. Learn more about Ken in a *Profile* on Pages 54-55.

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# Profile: Ken Richards



*Secretary*  
Figured European Pear, Ebony, sterling silver  
(104" h, 44" w, 25" d)

Ken Richards takes pleasure in the solitude of working with hand tools.



*Ken Richards of Maple Valley, WA makes an art of fine furniture. His exquisite handcrafted detailed pieces feature classical elements, with a contemporary flare. Meet Ken, in his own words:*

Woodworking was a hobby that turned into a profession. I have been working with my hands for as long as I can remember—from building little Balsa wood airplanes to working with tools in my father's modest shop. What I learned most from my father was attitude. He didn't make a lot, but whatever he made was to the highest quality.

In high school, I took a lot of drafting classes, which lead to a job at Boeing after graduation. In my early 20's, I purchased a shop full of power and hand tools for a song from a friend of a friend moving away, and I started making little boxes, frames, spice racks, and other knick-knacks to give to people or sell at craft fairs. Though I enjoyed drafting by hand, I saw my position at Boeing transitioning to CAD, and I did not relish a future of sitting in front of a computer.

I decided to try to make my living woodworking. I found construction work for 2-3 days a week to support myself and spent the rest of the week working in my shop. I had expected to be doing a lot of cabinets, but I was pleasantly surprised to find people trusting me with furniture projects from the beginning. As I got enough business, I was able to shift to full-time.

My initial work was along traditional lines, utilizing such domestic woods as Eastern Walnut, Cherry, and Oak. As I was able to make more contemporary spec pieces, I began showing work at *Northwest Fine Woodworking* (now the *Northwest Woodworkers Gallery*) in Seattle, which exposed me to a clientele with a broader spectrum of tastes. This allowed me to follow my heart and start experimenting with contemporary forms in exotic woods.

I consider my current work to be classically-inspired contemporary, offering new interpretations to give a more modern presentation. My pieces are highly detailed, using fine accent woods, ridge lines, shaped surfaces, my own hand-created hardware, and recently, more extensive use of intarsia inlay work (as seen in the *Lakeside Dining Set* on the cover). Most of my work is one-of-a-kind, but for some speculative projects I've done small sets of 2-4 pieces of the same design. This helps to make the hands-on work more efficient and allows me to devote more time to design, as this investment is distributed over several pieces. For such sets, I usually make each piece out of a different wood. It's amazing what distinct personalities can be achieved when the only difference is the woods.

Most of my early technique lessons came from books and magazines, and being self-taught, I learned by doing a number of things wrong. A benefit to this approach is that it teaches you how to problem solve, which has given me confidence over the years to tackle things that are above my head.

I work with solid, thick stock; the thicker the better. Not all the spectacular trees end up in the veneer mills. I have a weakness for beautiful lumber, and I'm willing to devote considerable effort to finding



*Demilune Entry Table*  
 Figured Imbuaya, Figured Maple  
 (31" h, 42" w, 14" d)



*Bombé Chest*  
 Figured Bubinga, Ebony  
 (32" h, 42" w, 22" d)

it. Over the years, I've stashed away quite a collection. I love working with hand tools. From joinery to fine details to flowing curved surfaces. Hand tool work puts me in a place where I am completely focused and involved in the moment. The time flies by. I do a lot of work with spokeshaves, chisels, gouges, and rasps. There are many days that not a machine is turned on. As my skills with hand tools have grown, they have opened up exciting design directions that I would not otherwise have pursued.

When I bought my 5-acres in Maple Valley, WA, I converted the barn into my woodshop. In 1991, I had a

fire and lost that building, my tools, and a big project that was just ready to deliver. It was a fairly traumatic thing to go through, but it gave me the opportunity to construct a building that was specifically-designed to be an efficient woodworking shop, which turned out to be a real blessing. I feel very spoiled.

In the future, I look forward to finding more time to undertake speculative work. I want to explore creating more organic forms, and I'm exited about pursuing projects that are purely sculptural. You can see more of my work and details at my website: [www.kenrichardsfurniture.com](http://www.kenrichardsfurniture.com).



*Breakfront Showcase*  
 Figured Ceylon Satinwood, Ebony, brass  
 (74" h, 42" w, 17" d)



*Collectors Stand*  
 Cocobolo, Holly, Ebony, sterling silver  
 (92" h, 52" w, 46" d)