

The Furniture of R. Thomas Tedrowe Combines Beauty and Functionality

When R. Thomas Tedrowe, Jr. returned to Brown County from a recent visit to Machu Picchu, he went straight to work in his studio.

“I was inspired by the Inca construction and the way they carved stones so precisely for a perfect fit,” he says.

This exactness in construction is important to Tedrowe, who designs and builds fine contemporary furniture in the same precise manner in his studio in Brown County.

“I am now developing ideas for sculptural objects in wood incorporating Inca-inspired shapes,” he adds.

Tedrowe has plenty of academic training in art, including a BFA in Sculpture from the Herron School of Art at IU and an MFA in Furniture Design from the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design. Yet he is still constantly learning, visiting museums, antique malls, historic homes, art and craft galleries and stores with contemporary furnishings whenever he travels.

“I continue to develop my repertoire,” he says, “to include a broader base of both traditional and modern stylistic expression and technique.”

Tedrowe’s studio is filled with art books and his own drawings and sketchbooks. He finds inspiration from a broad range of source, including the work of Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi, Romanian sculptor Constantine Brancusi, and even recently an Asian form of embroidery known as “bluework.” This dedication to constant growth has paid off. Tedrowe’s work has been honored with best of show and merit awards at furniture shows across the country, and he has received several state grants to pursue his artistic goals.

His furniture pieces, including tables, chests, uniquely constructed boxes and trays, combine beauty and functionality seamlessly. All of his work is his own design, and



he is constantly pushing his ideas.

“I often incorporate a sense of humor, such as visual puns or ironic titles,” he says. “Or I interpret architectural motifs in wood and play with proportion, geometric pattern and contrasting materials.”

Some of his pieces feel very industrial, while others have a polished, almost dreamy feel to them.

Tedrowe always knew he wanted to pursue an art career, and he remembers exactly when he decided to focus on making studio furniture.

“I worked at the Indianapolis Children’s Museum, building new exhibits,” he recalls. “I really enjoyed making functional pieces, cabinetry and furniture. After seeing a show of handmade contemporary furniture in Denver, I knew that designing and making furniture was what I wanted to do.”

And, thirty years later, he is still doing it full time, in addition to teaching furniture design at the Herron School of Art and Design at IUPUI. For the last several years, he’s worked in a large studio building on the same property where he lives.

“My wife Martha and I moved to Brown County from the Chicago area to be closer to our families and for a radical change of environment from living in a big metropolitan area,” he says.

Tedrowe’s work can be seen at the Sherrie Gallery in Columbus, Ohio and at the Philadelphia Furniture Show in March. His work is also on display in the gallery located at his studio, which is a part of the Brown County Studio and Garden Tour the last weekend of June, as well as the Back Roads Studio Tour during the month of October.

For more information on R. Thomas Tedrowe, Jr. and his work, visit www.tedrowfurniture.com or www.BrownCountyStudioTour.com.



by Michele Heather Pollock