



CELESKI STUDIOS:

Thoughtfully Designed Furniture for Outside

BY DAVID KRAMER

HOW MANY ARTS AND CRAFTS furniture designers can you think of off the top of your head? The Stickley brothers, Charles Limbert, and Charles and Henry Greene all quickly come to mind, but how many of them designed furniture specifically to be used *outdoors*? Virtually none.

Tim Celeski, the master craftsman behind Celeski Studios in Indianola, Washington, recognized this gap in the Arts and Crafts furniture continuum and set out to fill the void. “I felt that people who live in Arts and Crafts homes would appreciate outdoor furniture that was on the same level, in terms of design and craftsmanship, as the furniture they have inside,” says Tim.

Schooled as an architect and designer, Tim spent years working as a graphic designer before following his heart and embarking on a career as a furniture designer and woodworker. “I was in business as a graphic designer for 35 years,” he says. “I see myself first as a

designer, and I use wood-working as my canvas.”

Tim’s woodworking journey began in 1996, when he started making furniture as a hobby. “The first project I built was a workbench, and that got me pretty excited about woodworking,” Tim says. His skills grew over the years, and now he designs a full line of outdoor furniture inspired by many of the iconic designers of classic Arts and Crafts furniture. His Elliott Bay Collection comprises six distinct styles that take their names from neighborhoods around Puget Sound, where Tim has lived since 1973.

Casual seating, dining sets, benches and stools are available in each of the six styles, all of which were inspired by Tim’s interpretation of classic Arts and Crafts forms. In between his Adirondack-inspired *Bainbridge* line and the Modern-leaning *Alki* line are the *Leschi*, a Limbert-derived style with slotted details; the *Wallingford*, a Stickley-inspired pure Arts and Crafts line; and the *Medina* and the *Blacker*, two styles based on Greene & Greene motifs.

Tim has built furniture for multiple Greene & Greene homes in Pasadena, but when he was approached to design pieces for the iconic Blacker House, a new line was born. “I love the detailing and the Asian motifs in Greene & Greene designs, and I wanted to design pieces that reflect that. I had an existing Greene & Greene line, the *Medina*, but





I ended up creating a new, more subtle design that I felt fit in better with that particular home.”

From a woodworking perspective, there are unique challenges that come with building quality outdoor furniture. “You have to design things that will last a long time, and you have to make them more rugged,” Tim says. “There are certain issues that are endemic to having furniture outdoors, and I enjoy the journey of overcoming those challenges.”

On most of his pieces, Tim uses high-quality sustainably harvested African mahogany, but he also uses an Australian red-brown hardwood called jarrah, from the eucalyptus family. “Because my pieces are designed for outdoor use and exposure to the elements, those woods are very good choices. I then apply deep-penetrating Brazilian rosewood oil that protects the wood and also provides UV protection from the sun. The worst enemy of wood furniture, whether used indoors or out, is UV damage. Sunlight dries out the natural tannin oils on the surface of the wood. The result is that the wood fades in color and deteriorates.”

In 2008, Tim and his wife moved to Indianola, a small community across Puget Sound from Seattle. There he designed a new workshop where he and his assistant, Reid Anderson, produce the lines. “We have acreage here, and the workshop is a standalone building on the property. It’s beautiful where we live, and yet I can take a ferry and in 30 minutes be in downtown Seattle. I had a difficult commute to my previous shop, so it’s nice to now live 50 feet away from where I work.”



Tim is also an avid beekeeper. Each year he raises around a dozen colonies, each of which can contain upwards of 50,000 bees. “As odd as it may sound,” Tim says, “beekeeping is very meditative, and I feel that woodworking is the same way for me. There’s a certain kind of relaxation and calm that both things bring.”

Tim says that the project he’s most proud of is always the one that he’s currently working on. “I like to take a hands-on approach to working with customers,” he explains. “I really appreciate the connection with the customer and I enjoy those relationships immensely. Although my background is in design, it’s actually working with the wood and creating the pieces that I get the most satisfaction from.”

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