

HILTON FURNITURE DESIGNS: FOR FURNITURE THAT'S MORE THAN JUST FUNCTIONAL!

BY DEBBIE DALTON

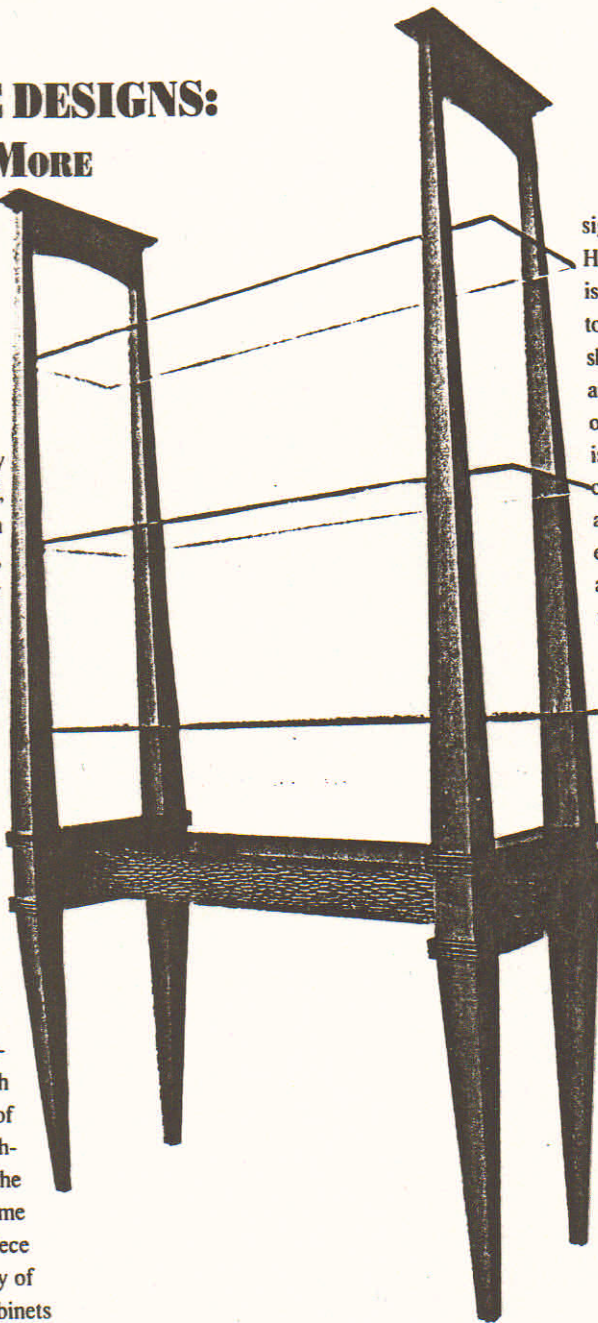
If you see furniture as merely functional, quit reading now. If, however, you see furniture as an expression of your personality, as the visual focal point of your home, or even as art, you will absolutely love Thomas J. Hilton of Hilton Furniture Designs! His unique designs can only be called "originals." He melds exceptional creativity with incomparable style and high quality craftsmanship to produce exciting pieces that are attractive, versatile, functional and distinctive!

"We're More of a think tank than a production shop," Hilton explains. "We don't mass-produce anything. We use cutting-edge manufacturing techniques which, in themselves, produce original looks."

The "Flame" is an excellent example of a manufacturing technique which turns an ordinary chair or table into a work of art. Hilton says he 'stumbled' across this technique years ago and it has since become the signature style for his designs. The Flame technique produces a spiral-like or curved piece which makes an attractive addition to many of Hilton's pieces including chairs, tables, cabinets and mirrors. The technique starts with a square piece of wood, medium density fiberboard or other material. Using one of several options, Hilton cuts the piece into separate units (the original length) using a curved cutting pattern. By separating the pieces and realigning them in different formations, Hilton creates a unique and beautiful structure which he can use functionally as legs for a table or chair, or creatively as a stylish adornment to any of his pieces. By utilizing the same components in a variety of ways.

Hilton has created a new technique which evolves from the Flame. By slipping any sheet material between two pieces of wood cut in the original Flame curved pattern, the sheet takes the form of the cut. The corrugated result turns the sheet into a structural element which can be used in a variety of ways.

The Assemblage method is another manufacturing technique unique to Hilton's work. Used primarily to create tables and shelving units, it centers around a central structural element which can change its look entirely depending on the leg assembly used. By contrasting materials or changing the sizes of the different elements, Hilton creates original designs which are not only beautiful, but highly versatile.



Although Hilton is a serious designer, he is not without a sense of humor. His "Bullwinkle Bar Stool" (see photo) is a whimsical, tongue-in-cheek tribute to a certain moose. It features deer shaped legs in front (complete with hoofs) and horns atop the chair back. Another of his designs inspired by a t.v. character is the "Hoss Cartwright" chair. As you can imagine, this arm-chair is very large and sturdy with a country feel. "It's big enough to handle Hoss," Hilton says. It's also very comfortable, even for those of us who don't quite measure up to Hoss!

The Carlisle Wingback is a beautiful classic design which pays homage to Hilton's grandparents, the Carlises. "My grandfather was a carpenter," Hilton says. "He was my inspiration in a lot of ways. I wanted to do something in tribute to his workmanship, skill and perseverance in his craft."

Hilton actually began his career as an architect. "Furniture design parallels architecture," he said. "You start out with a need, a client and a budget. The difference is the time-frame is much shorter from conception to finished product in furniture design (4-6 weeks) so there is a more immediate gratification for my work. I also have more freedom to be

creative, as well as more in control of my designs."

Hilton will be displaying several samples of his original designs at the 1991 House Beautiful Show including a new line of tables with pecan legs, metal wrap skirts and a variety of stone tops. "The three elements, stone, metal and wood, work together to create an exciting sculptural look," Hilton says.

Hilton designs furniture according to your own ideas or needs, or you can select one of his current designs to add an exciting look to your home that says "I am an original!" For more information on Hilton Furniture Designs, call 713-974-5177 or visit the design studio/factory at 9420A Harwin, Houston, Texas 77036. ☺

Above: This shelving unit designed by Hilton is an example of the Assemblage technique. It has a light and airy architectural feel, yet is extremely sturdy. By adjusting the sizes of the center pieces, this piece can change widths if needed.