

MORE THAN DÉCOR



PAUL REIBER
SCULPTOR

ARTIST'S INSIGHT:

When choosing art for your home, think long-term. "Think in terms of what your grandkids are going to think about it," Paul suggests. "We live in a throw-away world. Think about artwork you want to have in your home for generations."

Paul Reiber hopes his clients see his sculptures and hand-carved furniture as more than just decoration.

"I like creating objects that have a narrative content as opposed to just making something functional or pretty," he says. "I enjoy making pieces that resonate with people so it's something they want to have in their homes."

As Paul sees it, his duty is to create objects of beauty that speak directly to each client.

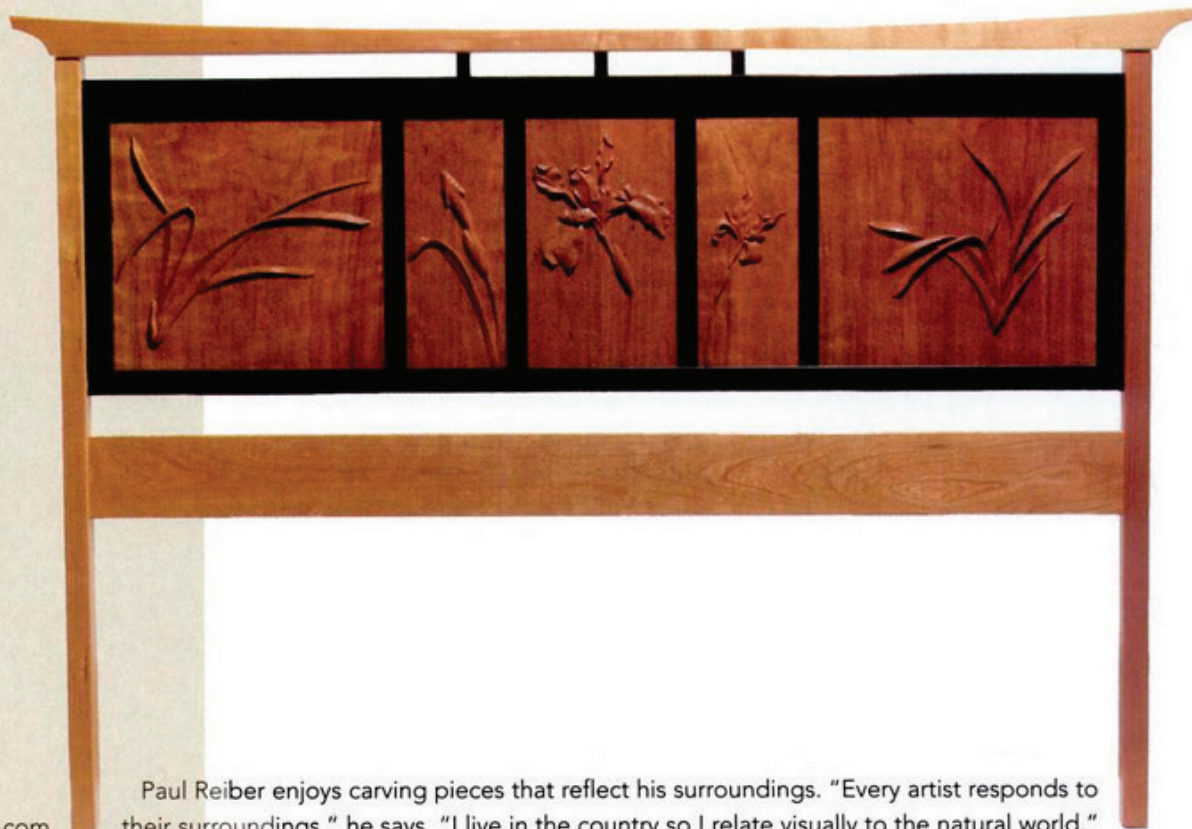
"The feedback that means the most to me is when clients talk to me about a piece as if they have a relationship with it," Paul says, "a relationship that gets deeper and grows each time they

look at it." He takes the collaborative process very seriously.

"Commissions are this wonderful dialogue where the artist has the opportunity to fulfill the client's vision and make something they love," Paul says. "That's the blessing of custom furniture. The client gets exactly what they want." And Paul gets something out of it too.

"It gives me the opportunity to do things I never would have thought to do," he says. "But I also need to do my own thing once in a while. I like that balance."

Paul worked hard to develop a proficiency that allows him to freely express himself.



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Paul Reiber enjoys carving pieces that reflect his surroundings. "Every artist responds to their surroundings," he says. "I live in the country so I relate visually to the natural world."



Paul Reiber tries to break new ground with every piece he sculpts. "The challenge is to always come at it feeling fresh and new," he says. "You can't be bored or indifferent." For this reason, he always has a couple projects going at the same time. Typically he works on one that is purely sculptural, like "3 Figures" (left), and one that is functional, like the "Day and Night" chairs (middle) or "Love Seat" (right). The day chair is carved from cherry; the night chair and love seat are carved from claro walnut.



"At first it's about learning the techniques," he says. "You have to be comfortable with the techniques before you can be expressive. With furniture it's a slow process because it can take a couple months to complete one piece."

After 20 years of wood sculpting, Paul has reached his comfort level. "I've gotten nervier," he says. "I'm more expressive."

He owes much of his success to teacher and mentor James Krenov, a renowned studio furniture artist who has written several woodworking books. Paul studied under Krenov at the College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg, California.

"I think my furniture is very influenced by Krenov — that Scandinavian look with straight lines and not much ornamentation," Paul says. "Melded into that is my sculptor's sense of wanting

to add objects of beauty like animals, plants and humans."

Human forms are Paul's favorite subject, mostly because of their expressive potential.

"I'm not working with color, so I have to find other ways to express art," Paul says. "I enjoy carving the human form. It's beautiful in terms of expressiveness. Every nuance of expression and body shape elicits a response. You look at a flower and say, 'That's pretty,' but you look at a human form and there's much more to read into and respond to."

Paul primarily uses "carvable" woods like cherry, walnut and basswood. "If it's too hard or too stringy it doesn't cut well," he says. "And if it has a coarse texture, it's difficult to carve intricate detail into."

He cares a great deal how a piece will fit into its environment, so whenever

possible, he makes a point of seeing a client's home before he carves for them.

"What seems most important to me is to have pieces in people's homes that are everyday reminders of natural beauty that reflect the world around them," Paul says.

He uses some power tools, but prefers European-style gauges.

"I'd rather be working with a chisel than a buzzing rotary tool," he says. "Plus, the chisel leaves a better surface quality finish than a rotary cut."

Then all that's left is a hand-rubbed oil finish and his favorite part of the process — one last look before he hands it over to the client.

"I enjoy finishing a piece, standing back and saying, 'That's beautiful,'" Paul says. "I like making things that are breathtaking." 