

Profile: Paul Reiber



Paul Reiber with his stylized human figures, recently shown at William Zimmer Gallery in Mendocino, CA.

"I enjoy the process of working with clients to develop images that contain personal meaning to them and can be incorporated into formats that fit their lifestyle and domestic environment. They help push me in directions that I would not have found on my own."

Paul Reiber of Caspar, CA approaches woodworking from a spiritual perspective. Drawing upon his undergraduate studies in Greek and comparative mythology, the former seminary student uses his artistic pieces to address issues of the human condition.

"As an adult living the rural life on the northern California coast, I have been part of the developing movement of environmental spiritualism, and my work as a sculptor and furniture maker speaks of the need for the spiritual reunification of humanity and the natural world," explains Paul. "In my choice of subject matter, I draw upon sacred images—from ancient and tribal origins to European traditions—and interpret them with a contemporary sensibility."

His interest in carving was ignited when his mother took him to Rome in his early teens. "I was blown away with the sculpture that I saw, but it was not until I was in graduate school studying for the Unitarian ministry that I had the opportunity to actually make a sculpture. It was a class on totems taught by a Jesuit who was also a European trained woodcarver. As part of this academic class, we shared carving a large figure in the round. From that point, I knew I wanted to work in wood."

He went on to work as a carpenter, but wanting more, he applied and was accepted in **James Krenov's** first woodworking class at College of the Redwoods. "Besides learning fine woodworking techniques, I found myself becoming part of the ancient hand to hand tradition that is woodworking."

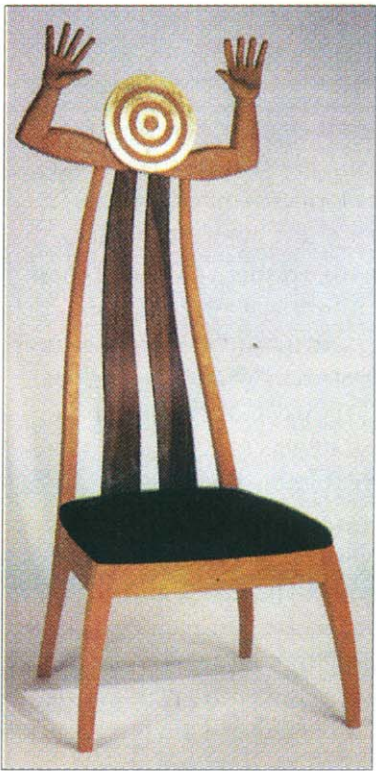
From the start, his desire was to craft furniture embellished with carvings, and his early pieces were "naturalistic" in style, adorned with floral design done in high relief. Though his work has encompassed all types of furniture, his primary focus has been the chair form. "I was drawn to the design potential inherent in its curves, angles, and negative space. The visual and spatial complexity of chairs provides a canvas with room to play."

Over time, his work evolved from traditional chairs with carved floral patterns to more sensual human forms, but he felt restricted in that carvings could be no deeper than $\frac{3}{8}$ " on the back to remain comfortable. After seeing an exhibit of high-back and sculpted chairs by **Alphonse Mattia**, he realized that he could extend the height of the back and sculpt the area above the head, such as *Mask Chair #3* and *The Sun's Hands* (above right).

Today, Paul has moved from the functional to solely sculptural, working in both wood and stone. "I find this work has given me the freedom to follow my visions without any constraints of functionality." Such a piece



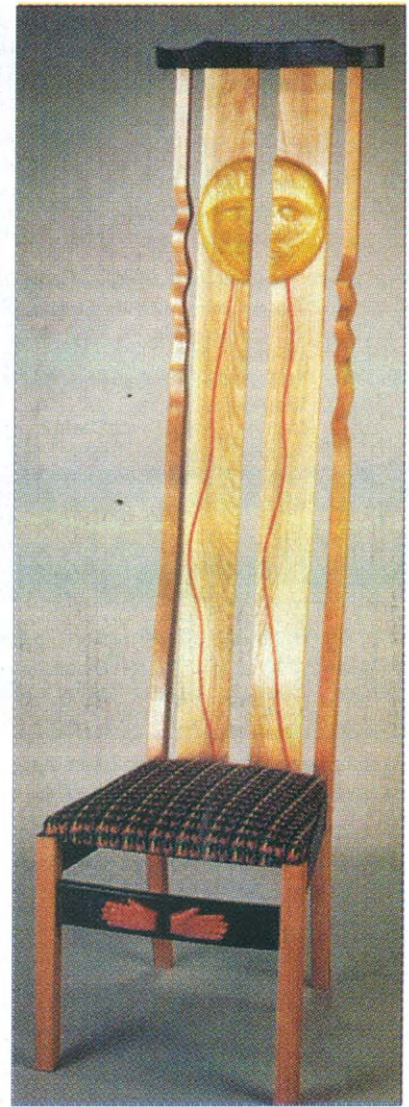
Iris Head Board
Cherry, black lacquer
(48" h, 64" w, 2" d)



The Sun's Hands
Cherry, Walnut, gold leaf,
upholstery
(64" h, 21" w, 18" d)

Mask Chair #3
Ash, Cherry, ebonized Cherry,
Reed, upholstery
(72" h, 18" w, 20" d)

*"People don't buy my chairs
because they need a place to sit, they
buy my chairs because they want
something more. There is a rich
history of the use of the human form
in domestic art."*

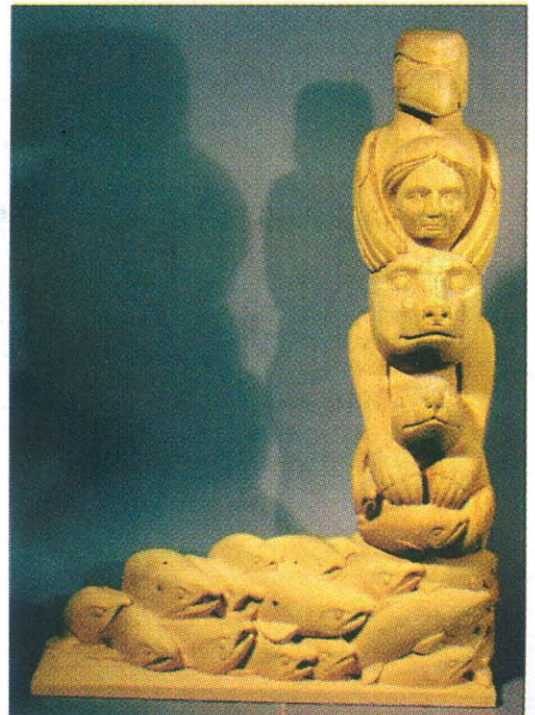


is *Where We Live*, which won *Best of Show* at the 2006 California State Fair. "For a client with an interest in Northwest Indian sculpture, it addresses the variety of life and chain of dependency between humans and animals." In contrast, more stylized human forms (as shown with Paul, upper left) were displayed last Fall at the William Zimmer Gallery in Mendocino, CA.

More of Paul's work can be seen at his web site: www.mendocinofurniture.com/artists/17/. In addition, Paul will be teaching *Representational Carving for Sculptors & Furnituremakers*, Aug. 21-31, at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass, CO. "It will begin with an intense introduction to woodcarving, and then we will see how adventurous people can be."



Love Seat
Claro Walnut
(35" h, 31" w, 18" d)



Where We Live
Nutmeg
(42" h, 32" w, 10" d)