

I am a maker of functional art: useful, practical objects that evoke multi-level responses. I use a warm, versatile plant material to create symbols of tradition and anti-tradition. I mimic the creative tension of nature. I follow no school or mentor in my work. I have no 'line' of reproducible pieces. Each one is unique.

I come from a family of artists, musicians, masons, chefs, and and poets. I was exposed to the process of artistic creation as a small child and have not been far from it since. My father was a fine artist who for most of his career focused on murals and trompe l'oeil in churches, public buildings, and residences. He didn't make art to hang on a wall but rather made the wall art. I believe in challenging people's assumptions about what furniture should look like, and by extension, challenging the essence of the way that they make any of life's assumptions. Personally, the act of creation is as important to me as the object created. Each one gives me the confidence and the wherewithal to do the next one, and the next one is always the best one.

My metaphors are from nature. I try to bring a sculptural dimension to what is most often a static art form. I want my pieces to look like they grew that way and are ready to walk away.

Most furniture is a collection of component or design elements. I look for a monolithic unity.

The inspiration for the tete-a-tete is mitosis (cell division), as if it were a single chair metamorphosing into a mirror image attached twin. At first glance it seems that you look away from your seat mate but the geometry of it forces you to focus on the one you are sitting with. This is an anti-television chair.

European furniture makers made this type of bench for centuries. In Italian they are called 'sociabile' (to be sociable); in French 'tete-a-tete' (head to head) and in Spanish 'tu y yo' (you and I). You can't ignore the person you are sitting with.

In 2004 I made one of these for a woman in practice as a couples mediator. After she meets with the clients alone, she puts them together on the bench and they either work it out or assault each other. Like I said, you can't ignore the person you are sitting with.

In 1998 I received an invitation from the White House to make an ornament for the Blue Room Christmas Tree. The theme was the Nutcracker. I made a miniature tete-a-tete bench and carved two sitting Nutcracker soldiers fist bumping, looking starry eyed at each other, and named it "Don't Ask Don't Tell".