



Re-enter the Iron Age

Robert Erickson had been working exclusively in wood for 15 years in his off-the-grid shop in Nevada City, Calif., building chairs from beautiful local timbers, when he was invited in the mid-1980s to collaborate on a metal and wood table with Berkeley blacksmith Daniel Dole. Excited by the challenge but stumped at the prospect of designing ironwork and mating it with wood, Erickson sought inspiration from the California Arts and Crafts-era designers Charles and Henry Greene. At their 1909 Thorsen House, Erickson saw beams artfully bound with iron strapping, and that was the spark he needed. He soon had his trestle-table design, with strapped steel uprights clinching a wooden stretcher and with steel fingers seeming to grip the edges of the table. Since that first collaboration, Erickson and Dole have built a number of other tables in the same vein. And for Erickson, wrought steel has opened the door to many other metals. These days he and his son, Tor, who has joined him in the shop, combine brass, aluminum, bronze, copper, or stainless steel with wood in their furniture. For more examples of furniture makers mixing materials, see “Marriage of Metal and Wood,” pp. 58–65.

—Jonathan Binzen

Photo: Sugar Pine Studios

How They Did It Turn to p. 90 to see how the Ericksons craft strong and beautiful joints where metal and wood meet.

Audio Slide Show To see a wide range of contemporary work that combines metal with wood, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

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