



Perfectly Irregular

Michael Cullen studied woodworking in the 1980s under David Powell, an English furniture maker obsessed with exacting craftsmanship. Cullen, of Petaluma, Calif., has gone on to make many technically challenging pieces, but over the past decade he's been exploring a far looser way of working. Eschewing the elaborate veneering and impeccable surfaces of his earlier days, he's working in solid wood and simple forms, patterning his pieces with vibrant

carvings that range from the whimsical to the primitive. Cullen embraces irregularity in the carvings, working from freehand layout lines or none at all. He often contrasts his allover carvings with carcasses, frames, or trim untouched by the gouge. He usually carves in mahogany and then applies milk paint—three or four coats in various shades, some wiped off with a rag—to achieve variegated colors and an impression of age right out of the shop.

—Jonathan Binzen

For more of Cullen's work, visit our Web site at www.FineWoodworking.com/MichaelCullen.

