



A Workshop with No Walls

Adrian McCurdy makes furniture from riven wood. No commercial lumber, no jointer, no planer, no dust collector. And for the most critical parts of the process, he works in a shop with no walls. Out on the grass behind his house, in a small Scottish farming village south of Edinburgh, he splits out whole logs of local oak. Cleaving along the medullary rays, McCurdy wallops the wood apart with ranks of wedges made from elm or steel, producing planks so perfectly quartersawn that the ray fleck flashes all the way across the surface. He dresses some boards at this point with an adze or a spokeshave—"they cut the green wood like cheese," he says—and stacks them in a shed for several years of drying. When the wood is ready to work, he brings it in and shapes it (primarily with hand tools but also the occasional machine), usually retaining the quirky lines of the natural splits. Originally trained as a sculptor, McCurdy builds reproductions of furniture from the 15th and 16th centuries (inset above), much of it for historical houses and museums. But he also builds original pieces, like those at right, which marry modern simplicity with medieval woodcraft.

—Jonathan Binzen



Photos: Adrian McCurdy

How They Did It Turn to p. 98 to see how McCurdy splits and rives massive logs to make his furniture.

Pro Portfolio For an audio slide show featuring more of McCurdy's work and techniques, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

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