

Twisted and Textured



Even before he learned to walk, John Lee was a constant presence in his father's woodshop, where he would stand for hours in a playpen and watch his father work. By age 3 or 4, he had projects of his own under way. Four decades on, working full time in a shop he built behind his father's house in County Meath, Ireland, Lee uses traditional techniques to create extremely innovative furniture. His chest of drawers in solid European white oak not only curves but also twists and tapers, requiring that each of its 20 hand-dovetailed limewood drawer boxes be joined at a different angle and fitted with a uniquely shaped

applied front. Inspired by driftwood and erosion, Lee textured the chest with routed coves that taper as they wind across the top, and with rough, routed striations on the face of the cabinet that are etched right across the dividers as well as the drawer fronts. To increase the appearance of natural weathering, he sandblasted the exterior of the piece. Still boyish in his enthusiasm for woodworking, Lee now walks his own path through the craft.

—Jonathan Binzen

Photos: Roland Paschhoff

How They Did It Turn to p. 89 to see how Lee crafted the curved framework of this cabinet and used a big jig to add the texture.

Slide Show To see an audio slide show with more of Lee's extraordinary furniture, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.