

## Refined Over Time



A few years after dropping out of college, John Reed Fox was working as an auto mechanic in Boston and spending his lunch hours browsing in a bookstore. That's where he stumbled across James Krenov's *A Cabinetmaker's Notebook*, with its beautifully crafted furniture and its message about the deep pleasure of handwork in an industrial age. Krenov's book "lit the fuse," Fox says, and before long he had begun building furniture in his own distinctive style, with undertones of Krenov, Arts and Crafts furniture, and Japanese architecture. Fox, whose mother's family is from Japan, builds his pieces with Japanese

hand tools and western machines. "I use machines to get me to the bench quicker," he says. Traveling in Japan, Fox was deeply impressed by the steadfastness of craftsmen who make the same thing again and again. Likewise, his own furniture style—distilled in this cabinet in cherry with Port Orford cedar latticework—has remained remarkably constant without losing its freshness. "I've been criticized for making the same thing for 30 years," Fox says. "I'm working with one aesthetic idea and trying to make it better and better. For me, a tiny little change is a huge thing." Here's to more of the same.

—Jonathan Binzen

Photo: Dean Powell



**How They Did It** Turn to p. 97 to see how Fox makes the latticework on this cabinet, with its traditional Japanese hemp-leaf pattern.

**Audio Slide Show** For more of Fox's furniture and a taste of the philosophy behind it, go to [FineWoodworking.com/extras](http://FineWoodworking.com/extras).

Copyright 2012 by The Taunton Press, Inc. Copying and distribution of this article is not permitted.