

Cascade

Constraints would seem to be the foe of self-expression. But for Hank Gilpin, they're an essential spur to creativity—a thumb over the end of a garden hose turning a lazy stream into a geyser. Gilpin designed this waterfall armchair in 1983 when a customer came to him with an unusual request: a chair less for sitting in than for looking at. It would fit just partway under a desk in the entrance hall and be seen in side view from across the living room.

Gilpin began thinking. It was early in his career, and he was steeped in all sorts of furniture—English Arts and Crafts, Queen Anne, Greene and Greene, Classical Chinese, Mackintosh, Duncan Phyfe. As he made sketch after sketch for the chair, focusing on the side elevation, all those influences were blending and percolating on the page. Somewhat magically, as the design came together and all those inspiring furniture forms squeezed through the narrows of one customer's request, what cascaded forth was a pure expression of Gilpin's own distinctive style.

—Jonathan Binzen



Photo: Jonathan Binzen

How They Did It Turn to p. 90 to see how Gilpin's waterfall armchair has evolved through the years.

Audio Slide Show To see a range of Gilpin's work and hear him discuss it, go to FineWoodworking.com/extras.

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