



## Decoration vs. Desecration

On the artistic fringe of cabinetmaking, craftsmen sometimes run hard against the question of decoration. Here you've labored many hours to produce a flawless surface, pristine, more than perfect—suddenly, it seems too precious, untouchable. Yet it's just like everyone else's sanded wood, so where is the individuality of the maker? Where in the usual cabinetmaker's vocabulary is a way to put your own mark on the work?

Wendy Maruyama of Rochester, N.Y., built this maple writing table (5 ft. long) during her master's degree work at the School for American Craftsmen, in which she'd concentrated on the relationships between structure and function, technique and decoration. After blind-tenoning the two vertical planes into the top, she painted purple images of the tenon ends where they'd be if she had taken them through (photo, above). Then, the piece assembled but not yet finished, she added the squiggly line in green crayon to decorate the white wood and at the same time graphically express its function: a writing table. Photos: Ron Sauter.

On the other side of the question, Garry Bennett of Oakland, Calif., made this showcase cabinet (photo, left) in order to desecrate it. The case is padauk, 6 ft. high, with a lighted panel behind the curved glass and an intricate system of catches and locks hidden inside. Bennett came to furniture making by way of sculpture and metalwork, and most of his pieces are rather gaudy. He designed this one to be a refined comment on crafts processes and router-bit aesthetics, and from the start planned to make the precious thing less precious by driving a nail into it. When the cabinet was finished, however, Bennett admits he didn't want to follow through. "I liked it too much," he says, "but I had to stay with my plan." So he hammered a few practice nails into padauk scrap, took a deep breath, and whacked the nail you see into the cabinet door. Photo: Schopplein Studio.