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This table is a reproduction of a table from Greene and Greene's famous Gamble House, with original elements added by woodworker Darrell Peart.

Finding Inspiration

Darrell Peart finds inspiration in the works of Greene & Greene, master woodworker James Krenov and beyond.

by Brad Walseth

Darrell Peart finds inspiration for furniture designs in some unusual places. For example, a few years ago, the woodworker found himself standing in line in a grocery store in Seattle when inspiration struck.

"I was standing in line at the store and staring out of the window with time to kill," Peart relates. "If you look up, you see the Aurora Bridge taking up the whole window. I looked at those arches and said, 'that's what I need to do is put some arches in my stuff. I liked the way the arch continues through the uprights, so I thought that was kind of neat and started toying around with the idea.'"

As a result of Peart's delay in the checkout line, an entire line of furniture, called the "Aurora" line, was born.

A lifelong resident of the Puget Sound area near Seattle, WA, Peart found early success building small plant holders and medicine cabinets for sale at Seattle's Pike Street Market. Although he was making a nice living doing this, Peart wanted to learn more about his trade and took jobs at various woodworking businesses in order to acquire different skills. He also attended seminars with the legendary woodworker, James Krenov, whose work had a profound effect on Peart.

"You can see Krenov all over in my stuff," Peart says. "There are poles I use that are Krenov poles, and if you look at my media cabinet, the top rail and the bottom rail go through. That's a definite Krenov influence. And the use of grain, too. If you have an arch, you try to find grain that will follow that arch."

Peart also says gothic style influences his work. But it is perhaps Peart's dedication to the works of famed Arts-and-Crafts designers Greene and Greene that

has brought him the most attention.

Brothers Henry and Charles Greene were architects who made a name for themselves around 1900 with their "ultimate bungalows," which emphasize the visual importance of the aesthetic nature of the joints, pegs and complex woodwork of the structures. Two of the most famous of the Greene and Greene houses are the Blacker House and the Gamble House, both of which are located in Pasadena, CA, where they continue to draw interest to this day. Peart has utilized furniture designs from both houses as the basis for his own work.

Peart even wrote a book on the subject: *Greene & Greene: Design Elements for the Workshop* (with another in the works) and is one of the featured speakers at an upcoming festival in Pasadena. Although much of his work exhibits a strong Greene and Greene influence, he doesn't feel obliged to copy the masters completely and often adds touches of Krenov or his own. "I feel free to draw as much or as little inspiration as I want from the source," he explains.

Peart recently moved himself and two employees into a new 2,500-square-foot workshop and has plans to add a CNC machine within a couple years, to save space now being taken up by templates and jigs. He also hopes to spend more time on actual design in the future.

The woodworker gets much of his business from his Web site and says he sees a growing interest in high-quality Greene and Greene-style furniture.

"When I first started doing shows 10 or 11 years ago," Peart says, "I spent a lot of time explaining who Greene and Greene were. I don't do as much of that now. Now people recognize pieces like the Gamble table by name when they see it." ❄



This rocking chair was originally a reproduction of a chair from the Greene and Greene "Blacker House," which Peart modified into a rocker at the client's request.



Peart found inspiration for this media cabinet from an unusual source: Seattle's Aurora Bridge.