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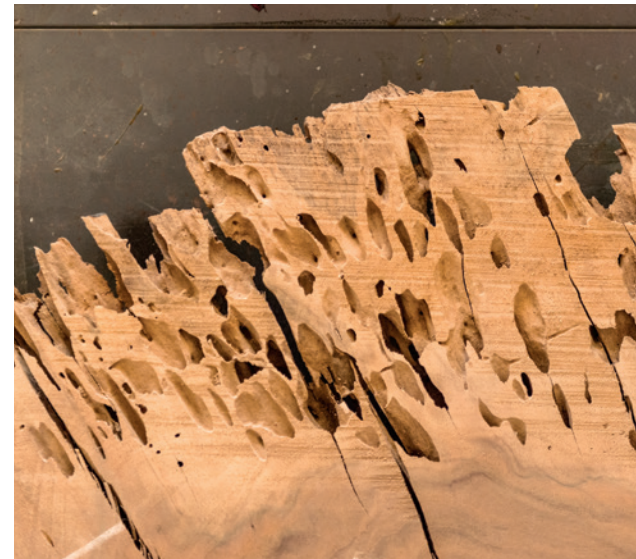
A BROOKLYN
FURNITURE MAKER
COMBINES CLASSIC
AND UNCOMMON
MATERIALS IN
ARTISTIC FASHION.

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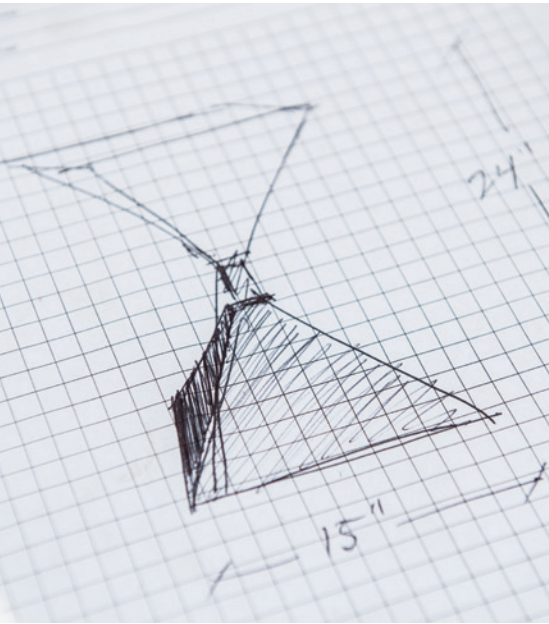
Brooklyn furniture designer Ben Erickson (right) inspects the top of a custom ebonized-walnut table for an interior design client. Walnut (below) is one of the many woods and other materials he uses to craft pieces; more woods can be seen on a wall of samples in his studio (bottom). Sunlight streams into his work space, alighting a prototype of his mini Halo table (opposite).



Ben Erickson is driven by pushing limits—and that becomes apparent immediately upon entering his Brooklyn workshop: Among the sawdust, smooth leather hides, planks of wood and antique tools are flairs of neon. Although the furniture maker uses traditional materials for his elegant sculptural pieces, he also isn't afraid to experiment with a plethora of unexpected elements. Think: dichroic film, fiberglass, color-shift enamels and electroplated metals. "I love pairing odd or eclectic materials and having seemingly incongruous pieces aside one another in the collection," Erickson says. "There's a sharp energy in the space between a hot-pink coffee table, a charred-black chair and a mirror-chrome blob."

Erickson's disposition is one of boyish nonchalance; he exudes a humility and an earnestness found only in those genuinely excited to create for the sake of creating. This passion has been with him since he was a child, instilled in him by his father, an artist and musician. "One of my father's pieces from art school hung above the record player in our house," he recalls. "I couldn't believe he drew by hand this gorgeous photorealistic depiction of an old birdhouse, complete with sun coming through the trees and a blurry lens flare." His father's talents with his hands enamored Erickson, who watched with fascination as he rebuilt engines of old Volkswagens and crafted banjos in his basement workshop.

Erickson's EÆ lounge chair (right and opposite) is available in a variety of materials; here, it's shown in black-matte buffalo hyde, black walnut and raw copper. A sketch of one of his Pyramid tables (below) and a cabinet of tools (bottom) can be found in the designer's studio.



Erickson fostered his own creative curiosity at Hartford Art School and the School of Visual Arts, where he experimented with everything from sound to steel in performance art, installations, conceptual photography and found-object assemblage. In 2003, while working on an array of projects—including art installations, architectural restorations, millwork and custom furniture—he founded Erickson Æsthetics as a way to simplify and identify his designs. By 2012, he had focused his attention on his collection of sculptural furniture pieces.

Today, Erickson Æsthetics continues to encompass the full-service nature of its name, with the designer exploring materials and forms. And his school days still play a role in his work. “The brass wormhole table in my collection came from a 5-foot-long blackened-steel model of a wormhole diagram I pulled out of an old physics textbook,” he explains. He no longer sketches his designs but rather jumps right into the process, prototyping pieces that evolve in his imagination. The tangible results of this process has led to a boutique on 1stdibs, an Instagram account with 4,100 followers and representation at three local showrooms—Colony, Maison Gerard and Modern Living Supplies.

Now, it's Erickson's turn to pass on his artistic passion to another generation. His 6-year-old son, August, visits the studio every day after school and creates inventions, sculptures and paintings at his own workbench. “Auggie is a force of nature,” he says. “He is already smarter than me.” Whether August later follows the path of his father and grandfather or veers down another road, Erickson is confident his son's life will be just as inspiring. **L**

