



OPEN AND SHUT Coleman's designs include (from left): Yew and Me, Fall Front, and Root and Crown. Below: Inside Fall Front.

DESIGNING

Carving Out a Niche

HANDMADE CABINETS AND TABLES COME ALIVE IN THEIR DETAILS. BY JEREMY MILLER

Furniture maker Timothy Coleman's signature cabinets – which juxtapose straightforward forms with highly decorative hand-carved veneers and tool-stamped surfaces – take between eight and 12 weeks to complete and typically use three or more kinds of wood. They're also small, Coleman says, holding a hand out at mid-chest level. "That's about the average height of my cabinets," which, he says, he wants buyers to "literally be able to wrap their arms around."

Coleman, who is 46, lives and works among apple orchards and maple-syrup stands on a rough road on the outskirts of Shelburne. In the early '80s, he entered a woodworking program at the College of the Redwoods in Northern California. He had worked as a home builder and apprentice furniture maker in Seattle, but it was in school that he began to develop his own style, which, Coleman says, borrows heavily from Asian design. Then there are the local influences. His work space, a former manufacturing site in

Greenfield, was littered with cast-off steel stamps when Coleman moved in. He picked up a few of the stamps and gave them to his daughter, Tess,



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to play with (he has a son, too, named Tyler) and noticed a striking pattern she'd created on a piece of scrap. He has been stamping ever since. Today, he makes his own stamps and accentuates the depressions with a painstaking coloring process.

His new workshop is tidy. There is no sawdust on the table saws, no cast-off cutters littering the floor. A multiview plan sits on a workbench beside a pair of calipers and four delicately carved legs of a table he's working on. It's a design he's used before – and one he says he's quite proud of. When Coleman slips the legs into place, you can see their subtle curves, bowing out and coming to rest on beveled tip-toes. Each leg appears energized. "Tension," he says. "The thing I'm most proud of about this piece is that its curves are alive. There are dead curves, you know. Curves that just sit there." Not in Coleman's workshop.

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