

OTHER PASSIONS...

Addressing a shed habit

When the vagaries of the law get too much for barrister Richard Bruxner he heads for his shed.

The compact but useful set-up is the venue for Richard to indulge in his "other passion" – working with wood.

"I wouldn't call it woodworking in the sense of a craftsman working with handtools," he said somewhat self-consciously. "I've never learned to use them (handtools) and the puritans would be dismissive because I only use machines for my work."

"Put a chisel in my hand and I'll just mangle a piece of wood."

self-taught

Still, the self-taught "worker of wood" has managed to make some pretty solid and fine looking furniture.

A walk through his Fannie Bay residence reveals a talent which has been eight years in the making.

"Before the kids came along, and when Jack (Richard's son) was young, I got plenty of time in the shed and I developed a collection of tools," Richard said.

"My justification was that if I made something that we could use that would save money then I could go and use *that* money to buy more tools. So we quickly acquired lots of furniture and I quickly acquired lots of tools."

"Sonja (his partner) likes some of the stuff I do and she encourages me whether it's for a bookshelf or a cabinet for the stereo."

"When I look around the house now I quite often surprise myself with how many things I've made. It's very satisfying."

"I like having something concrete to look at when it's all over. That's the good thing about having lots of tools, you can have any ordinary piece of wood and turn it into something."

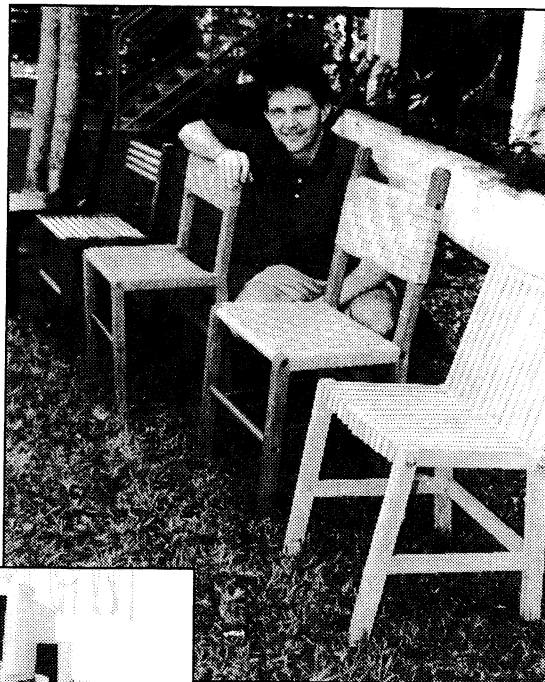
His real passion (or rather obsession) though is THE chair.

"I'd like to develop some sort of *Darwin* chair that you can sit in no matter what time of the year and be comfortable and not sweat, not have your clothes sticking to you," he said enthusiastically.

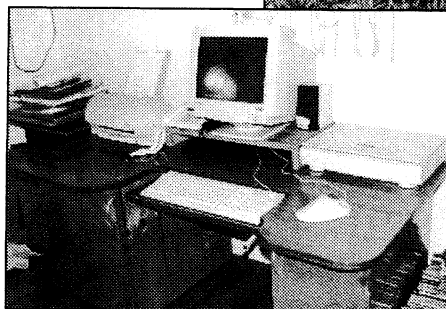
"I've built many prototypes (which, apart from the recently deceased 'Mark III', are used daily) but I've been stuck for the last few years at 'Mark V'. In my head, where most of my woodwork tends to happen at the moment, I'm probably up to VII."

"The good thing about the current version, even though it's not really apparent, is that it's got a curve built into it to make it more comfortable."

"I've got a pile of cedar from (barrister friend) Ben O'Loughlin that may end up as the next version."

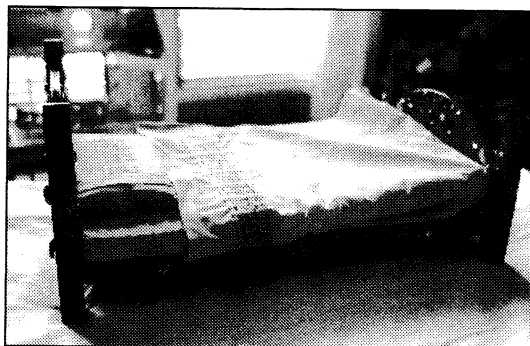


Above: Richard with chair prototypes one to five.



Left: A computer console built by Richard.

Below: His daughter's doll's bed.



Using offcuts and anything he finds at garage and lawn sales, Richard says his "shed habit" is very much a recycling hobby.

"I don't usually use new wood. Everything is reused which creates its own compromise. You're making everything to a certain size because you haven't got a big piece of wood," he said.

"You get a lot of satisfaction out of that side of it as well."

Rummaging through joineries and cabinet maker's shops does have its minor hazards though.

"I had a case once against a local cabinet maker and it was a little bit weird because in the courtroom he kept on looking at me as if he recognised me," Richard said laughing.

"Of course he did because I'd visited his workshop many times at weekends to scrounge bits of plywood and that sort of stuff. I eventually 'fessed up and he was quite amused." ①