

Rockland craftsman honored for fine furniture making

By Aislinn Sarnacki, BDN Staff

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The oldest craft organization in America, [the Society of Arts & Crafts](#), has honored Rockland furniture maker [Brian Reid](#) with their 2012 Artist Award. Reid is one of the three artists who received this biennial award, and his work will be shown in an exhibition through June 30 at the Society of Arts & Crafts gallery at 175 Newbury St. in Boston.

“This was a real feather in my cap, so to speak,” Reid said. “I’m the fifth or sixth furniture maker to get the award in 20 years.”

Along with the free 10-week show, Reid received a cash award of \$3,000.

Reid, originally from Seattle, left an artist residency in Colorado to move to Maine with his wife, Monica Chau, six years ago. In addition to creating high-end furniture, he teaches a 12-week intensive course for beginning furniture makers at the [Center for Furniture Craftmanship](#) in Rockport.

Reid, influenced by both ancient and modern furniture designs, creates detailed, high-end furniture with an emphasis on pattern.

“My work is not that traditional, so it does much better in an urban environment,” Reid said. “In fact, I sell most of my work between Boston and North Carolina. I sell very little in Maine.

“For me, I’m a craftsman. I make functional furniture. I don’t consider myself an artist,” he said. “My furniture does reflect my personality, but I have a conceptual understanding of my pieces. I’m just trying to find my own sense of peace, and some people might say that’s art.”

Many of his chairs, tables, chests and beds — priced from \$4,000 to \$18,000 — are more like three-dimensional geometric compositions, covered in tiny squares and triangles.

“For people who have a lot of money, paying \$12,000 for a piece of furniture isn’t a big deal,” he said. “I don’t live in that world. I always tell people, and they always kind of find it funny, what I prefer to live with and what I prefer to make are two different things. I like simple, junky furniture that I can live with and throw around.”

Early in life, Reid worked as a mechanical engineer and began building furniture as a hobby. At age 30, he decided to pursue the craft in earnest and traveled overseas to study furniture making under renowned designer John Makepeace at Parnham College in Dorset in the United Kingdom.

Reid is a member of the [New Hampshire Furniture Masters](#), a group of 25 furniture makers whose goal is to preserve and extend New England’s tradition of fine furniture making. While his work has been exhibited and published worldwide, this will be his first Boston show.

Reid’s “Hourglass,” a platform bed featuring 9,440 parquetry veneers, was commissioned for “Finding Balance,” an exhibition curated by artist James Surls for the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.

“That bed came about when I was just getting into doing this patterning stuff,” Reid said. “A friend of mine gave me a book on quilting and it made me realize what I was doing, in a way, is much like quilting.”

Soon after, Reid purchased an antique quilt from the Depression era. This quilt, made of 6,500 triangles, became the canopy of “Hourglass,” which is covered with more than 10,000 wood triangles. The piece is priced at \$16,000 and currently is in storage.

The Boston show includes five pieces of Reid’s furniture — a jewelry cabinet, a pair of stella tables, a tartan console, a blanket chest and a three-panel screen room divider. The pieces are influenced by a variety of furniture designs, from a stool recovered from King Tut’s tomb to mid-century modern furniture.

Reid’s work will be shown in the Center for Furniture Craftmanship faculty show this summer and at the Gallery at Frenchman Bay in Somesville.

To learn about Reid, visit brianreidfurniture.com or [facebook.com/brianreidfurniture](https://www.facebook.com/brianreidfurniture), or call 319-3621. For information about *The Society of Arts & Crafts*, founded in 1897, visit societyofcrafts.org.

CORRECTION:

An early version of this story misspelled Brian Reid’s wife’s last name. Her name is Monica Chau, not Chow.

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Photo courtesy of Brian Reid

“Tartan Console” by Brian Reid of Rockland is on display through June 30 at the Society of Arts & Crafts gallery at 175 Newbury St. in Boston in an exhibition for the society’s three 2012 Artist Award winners.



Photo courtesy of Bill Truslow

“Stella Tables” by Brian Reid of Rockland is on display through June 30 at the Society of Arts & Crafts gallery at 175 Newbury St. in Boston in an exhibition for the society’s three 2012 Artist Award winners.