

# Austin American-Statesman

Glossy DOSSIER

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## Building the perfect project

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When it comes to furniture, sometimes custom is the only way to go. And when you need a special bench for your inglenook, a cabinet for your library or a piece for any other area inside or outside the house, you don't have to look far. Austin is teeming with furniture makers specializing in styles from traditional to modern and everything in between. Just ask your interior designer or decorator, or simply pick up the phone book.

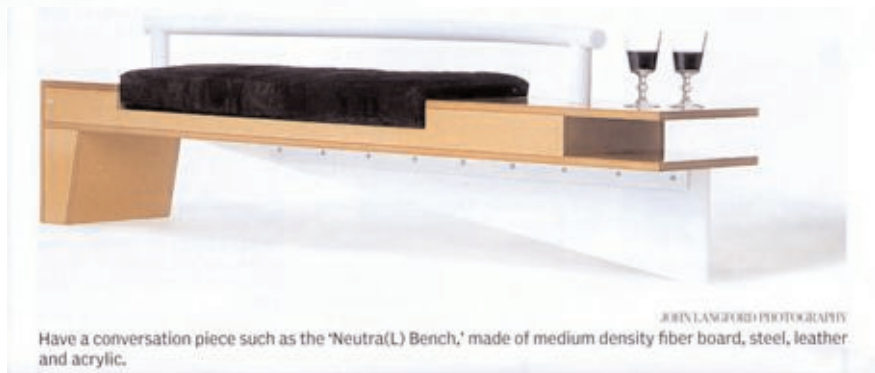
This month, we've asked Ironwood Industries owner and craftsman Wells Mason to give us his 'Top Five tips for buying custom, handcrafted furniture.'

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Wells Mason

If it looks good by the tracks, imagine the longleaf pine, aluminum and glass 'Lubbock Table' in your home.



JENN LAMFORD PHOTOGRAPHY

Have a conversation piece such as the 'Neutra(L) Bench,' made of medium density fiber board, steel, leather and acrylic.



Wells Mason

'Chest of Drawers' of ebonized walnut and lacewood veneer stands out from ordinary clothes storage.

### INTERVIEW DIFFERENT PEOPLE FOR YOUR PROJECT

Some furniture makers specialize in traditional furniture, while others specialize in contemporary furniture. Fortunately, most have a portfolio of their work, and they're happy to show it to you. Don't be afraid to ask for references, and don't be afraid to ask for ballpark estimates.

### THINK OF IT AS A SHORT-TERM PARTNERSHIP

Because of this, you'll want to work with someone who behaves like a businessperson. What's the price? What are the terms? What's the lead time? What's included and not included in the original estimate?

### BUT, ALSO THINK OF IT AS A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE

Because you're commissioning something that doesn't exist, remember that it can be anything

you want. It could be extra-small or super big. It could be pink. Whatever you want, it should be an exciting experience every step of the way.

### COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Whether you communicate by phone, by e-mail, by fax or in person, make sure that there's plenty of communication. This is the best way to avoid problems and surprises later on. If the person you're working with prefers to communicate by carrier pigeon, well, that's unusual — and quite interesting — but ultimately counterproductive.

### ORDERING CUSTOM FURNITURE SHOULDN'T HURT

If you've selected the right person for your project; and if you've been involved in the different stages of the project; and if your furniture maker keeps you updated as to the status of your project; and if it gets built to your complete satisfaction, then you'll want to do it again. I promise.