

b RILLIANT

MAY 2007

wells made

Wells Mason combines the skills of blacksmith, carpenter and artist in his custom furniture pieces for his 10-year old company, Ironwood Industries. Each site-specific installation presents an unexpected surprise – whether it is organic hardwood coupled with forged steel, an edgy collection of abandoned trampoline parts, fallen trees, used telephone poles or a salvaged ship mast. Mason's studio resides in a 100-year-old brick building in the small Texas town of Coupland, 30 miles east of Austin. He attests to the startling quality of his latest endeavor, The Umasi Collection. "It's a shotgun marriage of materials," Mason says. "The result is jarring, but I think it's beautiful. It doesn't ask to be understood." Mason uses only recycled, discarded and leftover materials in the creation of Umasi tables, chairs, beds and benches that feature geometric panels colliding with organic elements in an aesthetic tug of war. Mason's pieces balance all the tranquility and excitement of a Rietveld chair, while blurring the line between furniture and sculpture, like the designs of Noguchi. The former English major taught himself the art of furniture making. His clients include The Austin Children's Museum, Louis Vuitton and the *Wall Street Journal*. Whether using recycled materials or making sculpture useful in everyday life, Mason does his best to make the environment more beautiful, one chair at a time. ... *Mandy Osterhout*

