

He nods, smiling: 'There's a saying that you make a small fortune by starting with a large one.'

The furniture around us is graceful rather than flamboyant. 'We don't want pieces to shout at people,' explains Mr Scott. 'We look for subtlety, harmony and functional design that will endure.' He quotes an American client who's bought several pieces over the years: 'He told me that he likes them better now than when he first had them. That makes our hearts leap.'

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We're joined by senior designer Clive Brooks, who says he derives most enjoyment out of making a piece for someone who's scrimped and saved to afford it: 'The enthusiasm they give back to you is fantastic.' Mr Scott agrees: 'I wish we could make things more cheaply so that more people could enjoy them: it's where the Arts-and-Crafts ideal comes unstitched.'

In what is a pioneering move for a small bespoke maker, Waywood has invested in a large computer-controlled router that performs many of the cutting and shaping tasks that would otherwise be done with hand tools. Do purists disapprove? 'When you're working by hand, you're getting feedback from the wood,' admits Mr Scott, 'feeling your way. It's natural and rewarding, but the compensations of computerised control are huge: you can play around on screen without wasting wood and realise an amazing idea that would otherwise be uneconomic. The quality of our work hasn't changed.'

He shows me a table with gorgeous sinuous legs. 'Each is carved out of one piece of timber,' he says. 'It would be long, hard labour done by hand in the workshop.'

A few miles west into the dips and folds of the Cotswolds, cabinet-maker Derek Elliott has abandoned the workshop floor for good: 'I don't like the noise and dust.' For a successful and highly regarded designer, Mr Elliott appears reclusive, his pre-

mises set behind the high walls of Sherborne Gardens among the plant pots and glasshouses of a commercial nursery, the only clue a faded green sign hung on a shed reading 'Derek Elliott, carpentry and joinery'. His office is a small attic at the top of narrow stairs—'mind your head,' he advises.

He started making furniture as a young man in London, with no formal training. 'I learnt by looking at things,' he says. 'If you want to do something badly enough, you work it out.' Application paid off and Mr Elliott has been delivering exquisite, one-off pieces from the Sherborne workshop for 35 years. These days, half the commissions are



A bespoke-designed hand-crafted cabinet by Elliott & Co's Out of the Wood

for fitted furniture. 'Done-up Cotswold houses, libraries in London,' he waves a hand, 'you have to make the money.'

Down in the workshop, he shows me a racking system destined for a client with a serious wine cellar: 'There's 70 cubic feet of oak in this. A cellar is a very male domain as is the home media centre—we do quite a few of them.'

Mr Elliott doesn't have a showroom, preferring to exhibit instead. 'My show pieces are quite flash,' he smiles, 'a bit adventurous for most people.' Like *haute couture* on the catwalk? He nods: 'Would you like to see?'

We drive a mile or two to a private estate where he rents a lock-up in a stable yard. The door opens to a room crammed with furniture: a huge curved sideboard was a star turn in the British pavilion at an American show; a tall cabinet with a row of buttons down its puffed-out chest seems about to sashay across the floor. 'That's Puck—he's a medicine cabinet with attitude.'

Next to it is an asymmetric chest of drawers designed to hold musical scores. 'This required all the maker's art,' he confides. 'When I took the design to John, our senior maker, he said "Don't you know how to draw a straight line?"'

A secretaire in an intricate burr-walnut veneer opens to an interior in palest bird's-eye maple: it's so beautiful, why hasn't someone got it in their house? He shrugs: 'I don't know. You add up all the money sitting here, then it ceases to have value because no one's bought it, then, whatever you can get for it feels like a bonus.' We start giggling: is he not a very good businessman? 'I'm not a disaster,' he says equably. 'I've survived so far. If I could just design lovely pieces, that would be fine.'

Plane sailing

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