

Tom Stepp

Born 1949



Since he graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 1979, [Tom Stepp's] work has clearly demonstrated that the man has his finger on the pulse when it comes to design. In the last 20 years, he's produced a steady stream of popular designs ranging from chairs, tables, chests and sofas to lamps, watches and rugs. Not only has his work been exhibited all over the world, he's won quite a few prestigious design awards such as the Scandinavian Furniture Award in 1992 for his G. Bus chairs, a series of interlocking chairs that, when connected, give the impression of seats on a bus.

"In the new Millennium," says Stepp, "people are also going to want furniture made out of natural materials and natural fabrics. Again because natural materials give off a much more peaceful and harmonious feeling than metals, plastics and synthetic fabrics do. Metal and plastic just don't create the sense of peace and belonging that wood does."

"And there's even more to it," he continues. "You must remember, that every piece of wood is an individual, living thing. Each piece is alive with its own history, character and life. And that's another thing I think people are going to value more and more as our world becomes more and more streamlined and high-tech. Because with today's massive globalization, everyone and everything is becoming more and more homogenous. In this brave new world, wood will offer that idiosyncratic quality, that personal feeling that people will long for."

Most certainly, Stepp's affinity for the organic look and feel of wood has something to do with his background. Before studying at the Academy, he worked as a carpenter and learned to love wood. "Back in those days," says Stepp, "my heroes were the Great Danes: Hans Wegner, Børge Mogensen and Mogens Koch. I learned to love wood from studying their designs." Even a brief look at his furniture makes it clear that Stepp has deep roots in the organic simplicity and meticulous craftsmanship of Scandinavian Design.

A good example of the meticulous balance Stepp achieves between his Scandinavian roots, his love of wood - and his understanding of the "modern" look that people want today is the popular series of chairs and tables he designed for Kvist, the Danish Furniture Manufacturer.

All the chairs and tables in the series have musical names such as "Funk" and "Swing", which is very appropriate because there's a freshness, a funkiness about his design that's unmistakable. Obviously the series is the work of a gifted craftsman who's added his own special modern twist to the no-nonsense ideals of his Danish predecessors.

"Even though my roots can be found in the old Danish traditions of craftsmanship and simplicity," explains Stepp, "I get much of my inspiration from contemporary sources such as MTV, pop music, advertising, a walk by McDonald's and the latest fashion trends. I follow them all closely and somehow all these influences are funneled into my designs. I don't think I would be able to do good work as a designer if I wasn't acutely aware of everything that's going on around me. I have to absorb it all to make my design relevant, fresh and personal."

Edited extract from "In Stepp with the Future" by Barbara Berger, published in *Design Directions* (USA), 1999, pages 22 to 25.

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