



Buying Customized Wood Furniture...

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAIL

By: Pamela Halverson

Ever heard the saying, the devil's in the detail? Well, in my industry, it's the truth! Being in the business of custom furniture design, I have to be able to spot quality before it is even created. Customers can't be fooled, especially the ones that come into my business in Houston, Texas. Questions arise from all angles, especially questions about wood quality and purchasing the table of their dreams in either the Veneer piece or the Solid Wood one.

I always educate my clients first and explain that it is a preference of taste, appearance and budget. It is important that a buyer knows the history of the piece, so they can decide for themselves the level of attraction. When discussing veneer, I always mention how

veneer refers to thin slices of wood, usually thinner than 1/8 inch, that are typically glued onto core panels of particle board or a fiberboard. It is commonly used for producing flat panels such as doors, tops and panels for cabinets, floors or parts for furniture. Veneer has a fascinating history. Veneering is an ancient art, dating back to the ancient Egyptians who used veneers on their furniture and sarcophagi. Today veneers are used in furniture making for economic reasons.

You can get several table tops from one hardwood log if you cut the log thin. The thin sheets of hardwood are then placed on a particle board, to give the look of solid wood. So the furniture manufacturer can produce more furniture from one log, making the furniture piece affordable to the consumer. There are a varying degree of quality with veneers related to the wood species and more importantly the workmanship in making the furniture.

Some advantages to using veneer include saving money, minimizing the use of our natural resources and a flexibility with design. Many furniture pieces built using wood veneer would not be possible to construct using solid lumber. Due to expansion and contraction (common to all wood products), caused by changes in humidity many of the patterns and designs possible with veneers would self destruct, if attempted with solid lumber. Solid wood furniture is becoming more and more popular as many consumers want quality hardwood furniture. Since many governments have implemented regulations on the cutting of live trees and the export of lumber, it has made mature trees hard to get and expensive to purchase if available. A more recent trend in furniture making is the use of plantation raised trees. Fast growing trees are being planted and harvested to keep up with the demands of making solid wood furniture available and affordable. Now, keep in mind, that a mature hardwood tree is hard



because it matured. A hardwood tree that did not reach maturity did not have the opportunity to actually become 'hardwood'.

There are the few furniture makers who specialize in repurposing of woods. This is salvaging mature, fallen trees that would otherwise be burned or forgotten in the bottoms of rivers and lakes. This method also includes salvaging wood from old forgotten objects like bridges made of wood or shipwrecks dated back to when the hull of ships were made of wood. Furniture made from these types of hardwood are the new generation of 'Fine Furniture'. The 'fineness' coming from the quality of the wood itself. This type of furniture is the ultimate for those lucky enough to find the shops specializing in this art of furniture making.

PAMELA HALVERSON

Is the founder and designer of Texas Tuscan Furniture Designs. She first began designing furniture in 1994, and on to interior designs in 1996. She has extensive experience in both residential and commercial interior design projects. Her projects span all over the globe. Pamela's work has garnered attention from numerous US publications including: Paper City Magazine, Texas Monthly Magazine, Arts, Antiques and Designers magazine, The Houston Business Journal, and Houston Lifestyle magazine. Visit: <http://www.texasuscantuscanfurniture.com>

