

Bruce Gray: The Wellspring of Nature

“Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does nature because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Science and art come together in the creative genius of Bruce Gray. While nature provides the inspiration, it is the application of the laws of science that ultimately shapes his designs. In Gray’s handcrafted tables, chairs and cabinets, we discover a seamless blend of the aesthetic with the practical and the functional.

Bruce Gray has devoted more than a quarter of a century creating objects made from natural materials. Wood has been the canvas upon which Gray has made his mark. Each piece is informed by the unique natural qualities of the wood itself, then milled, dried and worked by Bruce Gray’s own meticulous hand. Vagaries in the organic structure of wood are not seen as flaws but rather focal points of design. It is his knowledge of the species, its origin, its characteristics, along with his sensitivity to colour, texture, grain and edge that gives these objects their unique and extraordinary beauty.

The technical elegance of Bruce Gray’s functional pieces fulfills the tenets of good design by balancing form and function, expressing the inherent qualities of the materials used and the structural integrity of the piece itself. However, it is his sensitivity to the natural character of his materials, his discovery of the truth within each piece of wood, and the simple elegance of his designs, that elevate his work above and beyond good design.

His earlier pieces reinterpret traditional forms of cabinetry and joinery and issue from a concern for structure: engineering a chair with two legs, cantilevering a table top or tapering the legs of a table to an impossibly thin stiletto. Each piece is innovative, fully functional and absolutely ergonomic, designed with the human shape in mind. More recently, however, he has pushed past the bounds of form and function to create works that reflect an increasing concern with the

environment and the nature of geological time. No longer focusing solely on wood he has begun to include glass, sand, stone, and fossils into his creations. While, these new materials present their own technical challenges and require the quality of craftsmanship that Bruce Gray has brought to all of his pieces, they nevertheless have freed him from the bounds of his own industry.

Becoming more concerned with the idea behind each piece and less with the craft, has allowed him to explore thematic currents suggested by the very nature and source of the materials he uses. The arc of his development has called into question mass production and consumerism with each unique and idiosyncratic piece. However, now this has become more overt. The fossil slabs and rocks that are being incorporated into table tops render the table impractical. This loss of functionality allows Gray to imbed into each piece a commentary on the state of our society, its insatiable consumption of natural resources and ultimately traces the trajectory of its demise.

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