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Architecture Lays the Foundation for Furniture Design

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Wells Mason's Umasi Collection for Ironwood Industries represents a pleasant collision of contemporary sculpture and art in furniture. It's available in chairs, benches, tables, and beds; desks and dressers are on the drawing board. [below right] Umasi bench detail, from Ironwood Industries, feature panels that seem to collide into organic elements. Photography courtesy of John Langford.



The Umasi Collection of tables, chairs, benches, and beds being produced by Wells Mason of Ironwood Industries is designed to blur the lines among furniture, sculpture, and architecture. Panels of Mason's contemporary pieces collide into organic elements with jarring though beautiful results.

While his small company specializes in high-end metal and wood furnishings, Mason's fascination with architecture has led him to experiment. He combines materials to create pieces that tend to define their own space. He says that the work of architects such as I.M. Pei, Philip Johnson, Eric Owen Moss, and Samuel Mockbee have influenced his approach to furniture design.

"Architecture is all about line, form, texture, and detail," says Wells. "But it's also about light and shadow. It's about composition. All of these are tantamount to the design of furniture, whether it's a heavily upholstered chair or a complete bedroom suite."

In the end, furniture seems to be about much more than form following function. But it's also art in the footsteps of architecture. **FFI**