

# Designer makes predictions for the '80s

Story: CORINNE ABATT  
Photos: STEPHEN CANTRELL

his chosen field of furniture design. His studio in Franklin Village, 32751 Franklin Road, is called Atelier Armondi.

"Atelier, in the strict sense, means artist's studio. I picked Armondi because I liked it — I liked the syllabic compatibility."

FRANCIS DESIGNS furniture for clients and also sells European furniture. But his studio is clearly a design studio and not a furniture showroom. Once a client approves a design, the piece is fabricated elsewhere.

"I have a real fascination with furniture," Francis said.

He speaks of line and form and space in relation to furniture much

as artists do to painting and sculpture. He approaches furniture as a functional art form. His special challenge is to make it comfortable, durable, and aesthetically pleasing.

"Europeans have a much greater appreciation for design than Americans do . . . In Australia, there is a more visible influence of European design than here . . . Italy is steeped in art and architectural history and we've borrowed from that culture. We're seeing today much more pervasive European influence, in American cars, for instance."

Francis said he would like to see here an indigenous American design developed by borrowing certain principles from the European designers and adapting them to an American lifestyle.

Furniture design, like fashion, borrows and mirrors social and economic values, he said. "I think we're going to see big changes in home life."

Among the things he mentioned that would influence these changes were energy, computers in the home, and working wives.

WITH THE RISING importance of the home as a central focal point, he said, "there's a general consensus that color's going to be more important — and I think it will be the primary colors — red, blue, yellow and green."

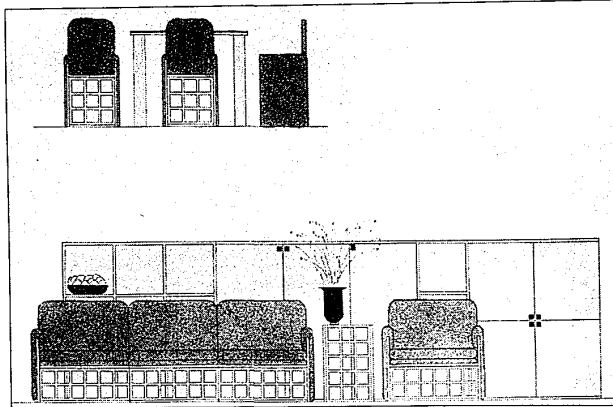
Francis uses color regularly in his furniture designs — polychrome lacquer on wood. On paper, his designs look very much like contemporary geometric graphics.

Included in his predictions was a statement that American life can now accommodate and support many different design styles. It's a trend that is also showing in the fashion world — there is a lessening of the rigidity of what's in and what's out. Good design is always acceptable.

Among the furniture movements he mentioned were: post modernism; neo-modernism, high tech ("short lived") methodism; eclecticism; and minimalism ("a vague trend reducing everything to essentials").

Because of the energy crisis and costs of maintaining great homes, Francis said, "the scale of a lot of traditional furniture is a bit incongruous."

He said, "Now, there's a fascination with clean line."



Design above shows the designer's concern with a clean line and pleasing, timeless style. He likes to use natural fabrics, wool and cotton. In that design, the wood is left natural. At right, design for a cabinet, "Halcyon," is predominantly gray with the trim in bright yellow and blue. The rectangular figure at the right side is a side view of the cabinet.

Another prediction is that furniture will take on a new meaning in the American way of life — people will be willing to spend more money on it if they feel it's a lasting, quality piece they are buying.

He is also working with craftsmen in New York on his own signature collection. Francis strongly believes that in the '80s, there will be more signed furniture just as the '70s saw the rise of signed fashion collections. Francis, however, smiled as he commented on where some of the fashion signatures are placed. Nothing, so blatant for the furniture designers, he agreed.

Francis is in his Franklin Village studio from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on all working days. Those who wish to contact him may call the studio, 626-0911.



"People today are concerned with quality, and they are irritated with planned obsolescence. I don't think that the public is hesitant about spending dollars if it's for quality." — Kenneth Francis

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