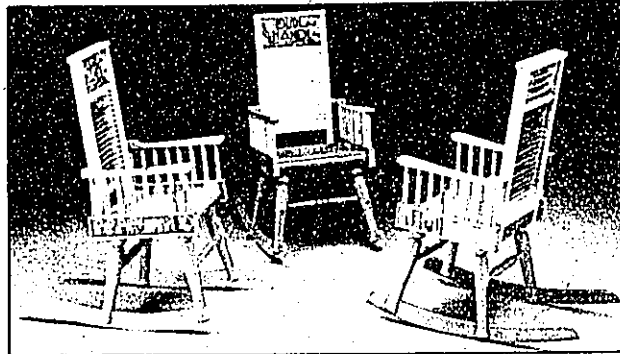
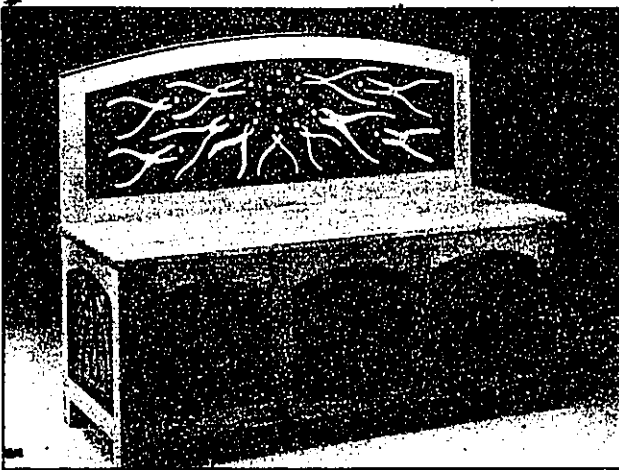


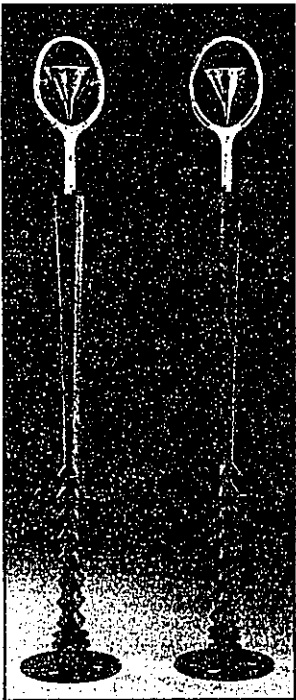


## cover story

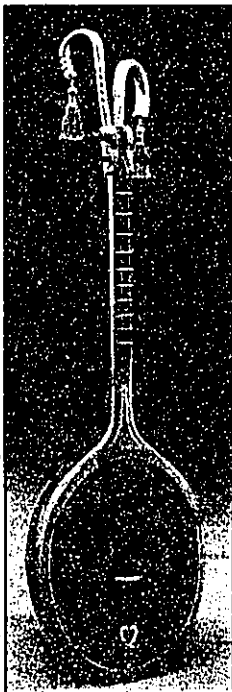


**Artistic accessories:** Pliers appear to gobble nuts in Mitch Ryerson's "Hungry Tool Chest" (left). Washboards, panels from detergent boxes and clothespin shapes are in his children's rockers (above).

# Furniture artist gives eclectic pieces new life



**Upstrung:** Tennis rackets are among the components in Ryerson's lamps (above) and musical instrument (right).



BY MARY KLEMIC  
At Home Editor

"Furniture artist" isn't a paradox when applied to Mitch Ryerson.

Ryerson transforms found objects into sophisticated and graceful furniture pieces that are whimsical yet serious, fascinating yet functional.

Their components strike familiar chords, and at the same time the viewer delights in making new associations with them. By putting something inside or using the furniture, the owner makes them part of his or her own story.

"He has such a wonderful sense of irony," said Linda Ross, one of the gallery directors at the Sybaris Gallery, 202 E. Third in Royal Oak, where an exhibit by Ryerson continues through July 12.

"It's basically being an artist," Ryerson said recently about the term "furniture artist" when he was in the gallery for the opening of the display. "The furniture angle... makes it approachable for people."

"I'm making it something... to touch and feel."

Machinery, crates and boxes and tennis rackets are among the items that Ryerson incorporates in a variety of furnishings, including tables, cabinets and chests, and lamps. He has hollowed out a wooden roller to make a canister, with a cluster of nails forming the handle of the lid.

Ryerson may take parts of furniture

pieces and use them in other ways. For example, he has removed the back of a chair, cut it in half and fastened the two backs together to form a curve that he placed in another furnishing. He has made a bench that looks like three chairs fused together.

His furniture art combines the technological and the natural, the hard and the soft. In his hands the everyday becomes elegant.

### Combinations

A small wall cabinet of curly maple and beefwood features wing nuts arranged in a pattern on the door. A wooden oil can form is placed like a crest above the door. Curving screw thread imprints are burned into the sides, bolt imprints into the angled top. Inside, fingerpainted swirls make softer echoes of the screw thread shapes.

Ryerson's "Post-Industrial Cuckoo Clock" is made of parts from the old factory building in which he makes his furniture. A numbered metal rack that once held time cards stretches down the center; giant screws are weights; a 12-sprocketed gear is the face of the clock. Walnut, copper, pressed tin and diamond plate make up other elements. A small bird pops out to announce the hour and half hour.

Another cuckoo clock by the artist, not in the show, that was made from a pair of wooden skis ("elegant in their own right") has an alpine motif.

A child's cherry rocker was inspired by Ryerson's new responsibility as a father and dealing with expanded piles of laundry. The