

Creative Living

Mario McGee editor/591-2300



Thursday, August 31, 1989 O&E

(F1E)



Mary Rose DuPrie, shown using a router in her workshop, says buying tools is much more fun than buying clothes or shoes.

Skilled carpenter/artist builds a booming career

By Corinne Abell
staff writer

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT that Mary Rose DuPrie, growing up in Garden City, a true tomboy in a family of three brothers, would someday be one of the hot young furniture designers in the metropolitan area?

Not Mary Rose, that's for sure. She never even had an art class until she was 25. Of course, once she had that first taste, there was no stopping her.

"My background interest is architecture and fine art," she said in the well-equipped workshop of her Bloomfield Hills home. "I took every art class imaginable and I loved it all."

Her quest for art courses took her to Oakland Community College, Wayne State University, Center for Creative Studies and finally for hands-on carpentry to adult education classes at Berkshire Middle School and Ferndale High School. Name it, she's had it. She worked for Futura Custom Kitchens for six years and still does part-time.

It was the carpentry classes that turned her life around. "Until I took the class at Berkshire Middle School (Birmingham school district), I had never worked with a drill or anything. I loved that class. It was all hands-on. Then, I took the class at Ferndale. The air tools we used there were geared more for me."

THE ELEGANT JEWELRY boxes, price range \$650-\$1,600, which she builds to order incorporate all of her wide ranging of skills. She began to make them when she couldn't find one for herself.

"I build everything on them, everything you see," she said. "The drawers are lined in velvet. The

cabinets are 10 inches wide by 12 inches deep. Radius cabinets are 25 inches wide. The customer can choose the number and depth of drawers and black or gray velvet lining.

DuPrie cuts the tops from half-inch Avonite, an expensive, but durable material that comes in many colors and finishes. After she completes the log, tedious steps of polishing and buffing, the Avonite has the look of marble. The sides are laminate in a variety of colors or are done in other custom treatments such as wood veneer which she is just now getting into. There is a choice of four counter top edges — bullnose, square, bevel or stepped. She makes the tables to match.

"The design concept it totally unique," she said. "I didn't steal anything." She smiled and added, "I've replaced my shoes and clothes buying impulses with buying tools — there's always another tool. I'm just so amazed I do it, but it's a lot of work."

BACK ORDERS are such that she's in her workshop about 10 hours a day. But, the response she's had from the public from the shows she does and the lifestyle she's building for herself make those long hours infinitely worthwhile. And besides, her father, Neal DuPrie of Garden City, is so proud of her.

She remembers that she used to apply to be in art shows and occasionally get rejected. Now she gets invited. She will be one of 10 artists in "Art on the Green" in Franklin Village which is part of the Labor Day Round-Up. She will be one of the featured guests at a trunk showing at Roz and Sherrin's of Bloomfield Township in October.

She described her successes of the past year and said with an engaging smile, "I'm just amazed."



Mary Rose DuPrie opens the door of a jewelry box she just finished. It is tool and black laminate with matching table.

Franklin throws party

The 45th annual Labor Day Round-Up in Franklin Village will feature 74 artists and artisans in "Art on the Green," a horse show, a midway and food.

Mary Rose DuPrie will be showing her custom made jewelry cabinets in a variety of colors and styles. Other artists will show their

with pottery, ceramics, photography, baskets, weaving, watercolors, woodcarving, bronze and brass sculpture and blown glass.

"Art on the Green" sweatshirts and T-shirts will be available. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. No admission charge.

Staff photos by Jerry Zolynsky

Orchestra going home in style

Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall plans a festive homecoming parade 12:02 p.m. Friday, Sept. 15, to symbolize the orchestra's move from Ford Auditorium to its new home, Orchestra Hall.

Flourishes, marching bands, cheerleaders, clowns and dignitaries will join members of the orchestra in a procession north on Woodward Avenue to Orchestra Hall, where the orchestra will perform a short concert in front of the hall.

During the 1940s Orchestra Hall, under the name of Paradise Theatre, was the site of performances by the

finest jazz and vaudeville artists in the country.

A GALA concert, "A Salute to Paradise Theatre," will celebrate that great heritage at 8 p.m. Sept. 15 at Orchestra Hall.

A special appearance by dancer/actor Gregory Hines will headline the event, which will feature the Detroit Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mitch Miller.

Joining Maestro Miller and the orchestra will be soprano Gail Nelson, performing songs by George Gershwin and Harold Arlen, and The

Chairs — art vs. function

By Joan Doram
special writer

Sitting isn't a scholarly subject. Anthropologists may squabble over bones and shards and ashes of ancient fires, but they never quibble over who sat down first.

And even the most ethnocentric group never claims that one of their own invented sitting.

It's safe to say, however, that the first man who stood upright for any length of time wanted to take a load off his feet, and sat down.

Could chairs have been far behind?

Ape, fish, or angel, when our progenitor developed a backside that sat on a log and leaned against a tree, the chair was invented.

Period. Form followed function. That's what you think.

Claudia F. Brown recently hosted a special showing of "cutting edge" furniture in her Michigan Design Center showroom. The chairs were presented by Internia Designs of Chicago, an importer and licensee manufacturer of contemporary furniture. Included in the exhibit were several new models by internationally renowned designers Philippe Starck and Richard Penney.

Starck is an architect, whose short squat chairs have a strong architectural quality reminiscent of the tall, skinny chairs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, also an architect.

Like Mackintosh's chairs they are stark black. Each man also frequently designed for restaurants. But where the Scotsman's designs were Nouveau/Deco, the Frenchman's are vaguely surreal — a soupcon of Rene Magritte. In some instances, they are better looked at than sat on.

The first designs that earned Starck important attention were for a Paris cafe. The chairs for that commission were named "Costas," (Starck names his furniture designs after friends). Like all of Starck's designs, Costas is smaller than most people we know.

The cafe must have served nouvelle cuisine — much more than two string beans and a lamb chop and you just wouldn't fit the furniture.

According to Bruce Reinhart, spokesman for Internia Designs, "Next" chair represent the opposite of Starck's design methodology. Starck's furniture is often derived from sketches that he made as a child. Penney spent a year and a half designing "Next."

After making a thorough study of the evolution of chair design and surveying everything available on the current market, Penney decided that anything that could be done has been. Then he designed "Next."

"Next" doesn't exactly radiate perceived ergonomics. People tend to walk right past it. But it is very comfortable and has been a great commercial success. Unlike Starck's chairs, "Next" isn't site-specific, it is adaptable to any situation.

"A New York restaurant has 200 of these chairs," said Reinhart, "and it is widely used in offices. There are many "Nexts" in residential situations as well."

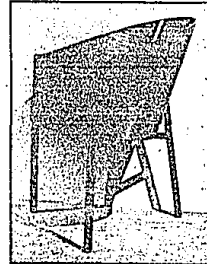
In appearance, "Next" is best described as utilitarian. It has four wooden legs, a padded seat that rests on an exposed wooden platform and a gracefully curved back with four decorative open squiggles in the lower half.

"The curve of the back was both a visual nicety and an ergonomic necessity," said Reinhart. "But he found the same back in a Chinese chair from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It proved his theory that, chair-wise, there's nothing new under the sun."

These chairs have no sides and are less reminiscent than "Costas."

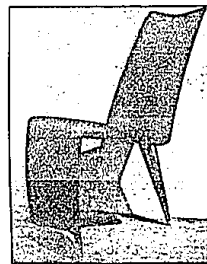
As Brownlie put it, "You can just ooze over the sides."

A prolific designer, Starck works for leading manufacturers worldwide. He designs furniture for Spanish, Italian, French and Japanese companies. Other projects include



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Phillippe Starck named his chair designs after his friends. Above is Ed Archer which has the designer's trademark fin in the back. Below is Costas, whose good looks are the seat of its attraction.



boats, luggage, china, vases, computers, fabrics and pasta. In his role as architect, he has buildings in the United States, France, and Japan.

Starck's designs are not generic; they are calculated to fit a specific environment and are seldom adaptable to another milieu.

AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL DESIGNER Richard Penney and his "Next" chair represent the opposite of Starck's design methodology. Starck's furniture is often derived from sketches that he made as a child. Penney spent a year and a half designing "Next."

After making a thorough study of the evolution of chair design and surveying everything available on the current market, Penney decided that anything that could be done has been. Then he designed "Next."

"Next" doesn't exactly radiate perceived ergonomics. People tend to walk right past it. But it is very comfortable and has been a great commercial success. Unlike Starck's chairs, "Next" isn't site-specific, it is adaptable to any situation.

"A New York restaurant has 200 of these chairs," said Reinhart, "and it is widely used in offices. There are many "Nexts" in residential situations as well."

In appearance, "Next" is best described as utilitarian. It has four wooden legs, a padded seat that rests on an exposed wooden platform and a gracefully curved back with four decorative open squiggles in the lower half.

"The curve of the back was both a visual nicety and an ergonomic necessity," said Reinhart. "But he found the same back in a Chinese chair from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It proved his theory that, chair-wise, there's nothing new under the sun."

These chairs and others in the collection, are available through Claudia F. Brownlie & Co. For information, call 649-4775.

Sultans, Detroit tap-dance legends, who will dance to the music of Duke Ellington.

Ellington. As a young oboist just graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1934, he toured the country with Gershwin and the George Gershwin Orchestra.

In 1933 he played in the orchestra of the original production of "Porgy and Bess." During this time, he studied the remarks and performances of Gershwin. The skills he learned make Miller one of today's finest interpreters of works by Gershwin and

director with orchestras across the country.

As a young oboist just graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1934, he toured the country with Gershwin and the George Gershwin Orchestra.

In 1933 he played in the orchestra of the original production of "Porgy and Bess." During this time, he studied the remarks and performances of Gershwin. The skills he learned make Miller one of today's finest interpreters of works by Gershwin and