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Dream Space

Gallery Lombardi fills a fantasy apartment with 'Secret Furniture'

Thursday, February 13, 2003

Maybe you can always get what you want. Maybe you just have to let go of a few secrets in order to do so.

Fulfilling the heart's desire is what's behind "Secret Furniture," an exhibit at the warehouse cum art space Gallery Lombardi. Curators Rachel Koper, Mark Macek and Mike Stewart have set up something of an ideal loft apartment filled with one-of-a-kind furniture by 40 local and national designers, artisans and artists, configured into a kitchen, dining room, living room, study and bedroom. And though the designs may be somewhat disparate, they share a common attention to detail. And a little wildness.

"Everybody has a little secret something they ask for when they commission a piece of furniture," explains Koper. And that might be a hidden drawer in a bed, a cabinet with a light that pops on when you open it or a secret latch on a dresser drawer.

So what's your heart's desire? How about a metal folding chair by Clay Dillard. Its secret? When folded, it looks like a tulip.

Wishing for a little whimsy? How about a pair of steel chairs by Patty Cater that seem to boogie with their fluidly shaped arms and legs.

Or do you wish for something that makes good use of recycled materials? Designers Jean Goehring and John Garza of Chopshop crafted a chandelier from an old, slightly dented satellite dish, and designer Todd Campbell made a rug and a trash can out of wine corks.

Stewart, himself an artist and designer, says that Austin's design scene is burgeoning with talent and on the verge of really coming into its own. "I see Austin really reaching out (design-wise)," he says. "There's a wide range of visions here and a great blend of both craft and concept here."

His own work might be the best example of that. Working in collaboration with Los Angeles-based designer Jonas Hauptman, Stewart has produced a dining table and two prototypes of sleek, modernist chairs, all of which are made "of oriented strand board," a particle board-like material made from the chips left over when lumber is milled. "It's (an environmentally) green material," Stewart explains.

And that's both clever and crafty.

(continued...)



Deborah Cannon photos

A room with a varied view: From left along wall, 'Wall Cabinet with Concrete Doors,' Dick Hedgepeth; MDF, steel, concrete; \$900. 'T Drawers'... 'Desk,' Rachel Koper; mahogany, maple, walnut, pine, cedar, metal files; \$2,500. 'MMU Cabinet,' Craig Nasso; longleaf pine; \$2,700. Foreground, 'Couch,' Todd Campbell; steel, cloth, recycled stuffing, \$2,500. 'Cork Rug,' Campbell; cork, copper wire, \$1,800. 'Icarus Table,' Daniel Kagay; walnut, ash lacquer finish; \$1,100. 'Lounge Chairs,' Cognito Projects... Between chairs, 'Futon Table,' Ryah Christensen and Sun McColgin; steel and concrete; \$200. On table, 'Wavelamp,' Christensen and McColgin; steel; \$600.

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