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HOWARD WERNER

Raw grain

Wood sculptor Howard Werner finds inspiration for his functional and decorative works of art directly from the trees themselves. Not only does Werner hand-select the pieces of wood for his designs, but he also consciously preserves elements including the bark or the tree's outer layer. Through February 28 a selection of past and current furniture by the artist will be on display at Wexler Gallery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the show *Howard Werner: Raw Grain*.

Werner—who divides his time between his New York home in the Catskills and Scottsdale, Arizona—usually will design a group of works, and then find the appropriate material for the series. The wood varies depending on which region he is in, as he will select local types from tree services, such as oak and pine on the East Coast and palm and palo verde on the West Coast. After choosing the wood, Werner will do further studies of his designs.

"There is not that much feeling my way through my work," Werner explains. "I design an entire series at a time. I do it on paper and then I often do full-scale drawings and templates to transfer the



design onto the logs...I'm really most comfortable with having a complete idea that I'm going to carve before I start carving. I find the whole process goes much more smoothly and quickly for me... When I'm carving, I like to know what I'm doing and I'm just executing on the mental image and the drawings and templates."

When the carving begins, Werner works with a chainsaw and a chalk drawing on the log. It is a very direct and natural process, and it is the approach he has taken with his pieces for decades. Werner does note, though, that collectors may notice more

texture on the surfaces of fresh pieces that will be on view at Wexler Gallery.

"I'm a little bit more prone now to leave more of the chainsaw and surface," says Werner, whose newer furnishings in the show include *Eucalyptus Table*, *Pine 3 Seater*, and four wood and steel benches that were a collaboration with blacksmith Maurice Hamburger.

Collectors will notice a direct update of the artist's work with a set of three palo verde benches that are also part of *Raw Grain*. "One of the newer pieces there is a set of three palo verde benches. Those pieces I revisited and gave more of a feel of my current work," Werner explains. "I used a little bit more chainsaw and texture on the pieces, so they are a combination of polished and texture. When I did them in 1996, the legs were a little more polished. Re-presenting them, I had the opportunity to update them and present them more like I would have done today."

Lewis Wexler, owner of Wexler Gallery, adds, "Howard's deep respect for the tree and his strong understanding of the artistic process result in wonderful sculptural pieces that highlight the beauty of the wood, but also showcase the artist's hand...Like the trees he honors, Howard's sculptural objects and furniture are at once graceful and commanding. We can all look forward to his continued contributions to the worlds of craft, art and design." ●

1

Pine 3 Seater, 2014, pine, 136 x 24 x 32". Photo by Kenny Ek. Courtesy Wexler Gallery.

2

Ash Stack, 2005, ash, 38 x 16 x 45". Photo by Kenny Ek. Courtesy Wexler Gallery.

3

Howard Werner begins work on a new eucalyptus chair at his Arizona studio.

4

Eucalyptus Chair, 1997, eucalyptus, 45 x 48 x 45". Photo by John Carlano. Courtesy Wexler Gallery.



