Gerard Furbershaw: From Industrial Design to Art Furniture

For Gerard Furbershaw, the transition from industrial design to art furniture has
been a journey that intertwines his passion for self-expression, technology, and
craftsmanship. In 1984, he cofounded the acclaimed design firm Lunar. The
company’s work was showcased in renowned museum exhibitions and garnered
over 300 design awards, including the 2014 Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design
Museum National Design Award.

However, as his tenure at Lunar neared its end, he felt a growing urge

to break away from the constraints of commercial design, leading to his exploration of furniture as a form of art—pieces that serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. This transition paved the way for Furbershaworks, his solo venture into art furniture founded in 2019.

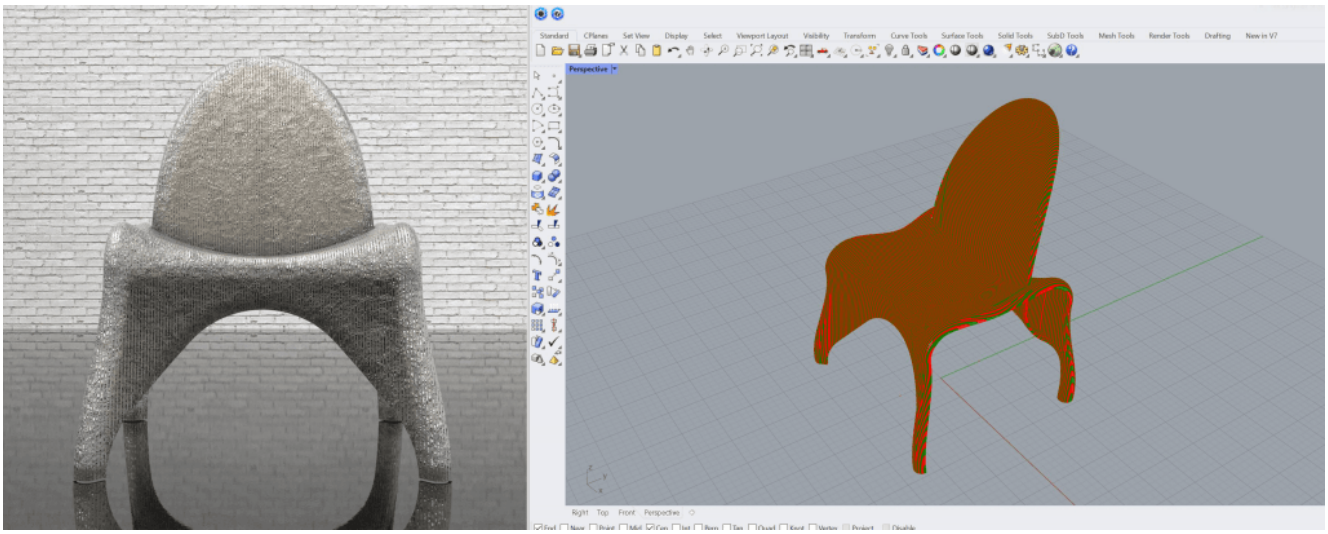
Through Furbershaworks, Gerard brought his love of art, craftsmanship, and technology to the forefront, using digital tools and CNC machining to craft high-end maple and bamboo plywood pieces. The designs use negative/positive space to create forms that appear solid visually but are in fact about half plywood and half empty space.

Unlike mass-produced furniture, Furbershaworks pieces are made one at a time and reflect his philosophy that his furniture is "art you can sit on." His focus is on creating quality pieces meant to endure through generations.
His artist's signature consists of marking the Furbershaworks name on each piece with a branding iron.

See Also

THE CREATIVE PROCESS: FROM CAD TO CNC

Central to Furbershaw's process is his use of Rhino and, for some projects, SubD modeling. SubD, a tool within Rhino, allows him to create intricate, organic shapes that would be challenging to achieve with traditional CAD modeling. He first discovered the potential of SubD modeling while experimenting with conceptual pieces like the Egg Chair and the Piercing Chair, which he envisioned for 3D metal printing.



In the Piercing Chair, the backrest peels away from the back legs and pierces through the seating surface. The model's slices are divided across two layers, allowing the use of two materials to simulate a 3D metal-printed texture.

One of Furbershaw's first tangible applications of SubD modeling was the ChaTat Bench, a modern interpretation of the two-century-old loveseat concept. The design encourages two people to converse face-to-face by seating them on opposite sides of the bench. The seating surfaces at both ends are angled off the horizontal plane in opposing directions. The bench began as a SubD model, which Furbershaw exported

as an STP file for CNC machining.

Using CNC technology, a polyurethane foam core was carved out and then covered with a fiberglass and carbon fiber skin. This combination of SubD modeling and CNC machining gave Furbershaw precise control over every curve and contour, resulting in a piece that is both functional and sculptural.

THE ROLE OF LAYERED PLYWOOD IN ART FURNITURE

While experimenting with different materials, Furbershaw developed a deep
interest in plywood as a medium for his art furniture, particularly for its potential
with precision alignment and complex joinery which is enabled by CNC routing.
The WannaBe Couch, the Hover Bench, and the Semillipse Coffee Table feature

repeating layers of parts that have to align precisely to create visually integrated
profiles that stay true to the digital designs while the Ying & Yang Bench
showcases complex joinery.

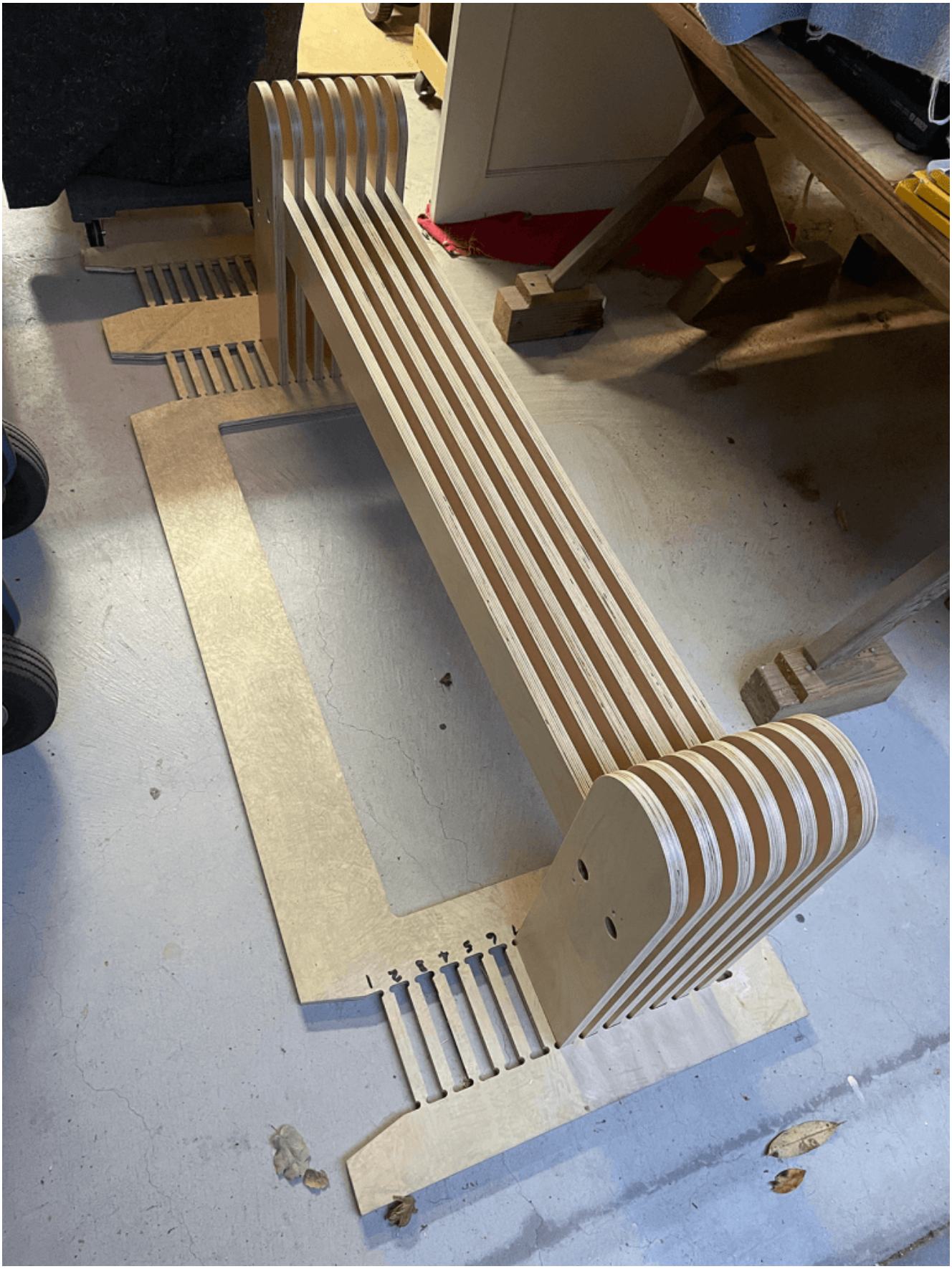
The **WannaBe Couch** humorously mimics the form of a cushy overstuffed couch
with a spartan framework, while the **Hover Bench** creates the illusion that its seating surface floats by using diagonal braces to connect the legs to the horizontal members.

VISUALIZING & REFINING THE PROCESS

To visualize his ideas before committing them to CNC machining, Furbershaw
initially constructs 1/6 scale laser-cut models. These miniature prototypes allow
him to experiment with forms and refine the design before production.
Additionally, he uses KeyShot to generate renderings to visualize the

designs in
the actual materials.

This process—starting from a Rhino model, refining through KeyShot, and prototyping with laser-cut models—highlights Furbershaw’s meticulous approach to crafting. His pieces go through multiple phases of iteration, ensuring that the final product meets his vision and achieves the precision that defines his work.



A LEGACY IN THE MAKING

For Furbershaw, creating art furniture is more than a profession; it’s a journey to
create a legacy. His work has already gained recognition in museum settings,
where audiences appreciate the combination of art, craft, and technology in each
piece.

Each Furbershaworks creation is a testament to his evolution from industrial design to art, blending the precision of CAD and CNC with the creative freedom of SubD modeling. With every piece he brands, Furbershaw continues to build a legacy of art furniture that celebrates both form and function, and ultimately, leaves a lasting impression on future generations.

CREDITS

Gerard Furbershaw