



# My profession: Will McGown, furniture design

By Lesley Young  
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While most of his buddies were outdoors playing ball or hide-and-seek, young Will McGown kept himself entertained rearranging furniture.

"I would rearrange my room every six months," said the Memphis native. "I enjoyed how you could define space by rearranging the furniture. It could have a completely different feel to it."

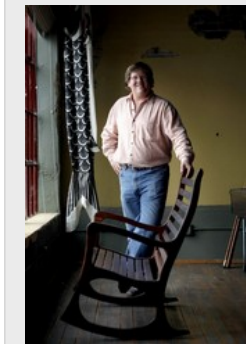


Photo by Nikki Boertman

Will McGown, owner of custom furniture design shop McGown Inc., shows one of his pieces, a bench rocker in exotic padauk wood.

He never quite shook his interest in spatial content and design, and now the 40-year-old busies himself playing with space and objects by creating furniture with his custom woodworking business, McGown Inc.

"I enjoy how you move around a piece of furniture, how you get to a piece of furniture," he said.

Dog kennels, cat perches, backgammon tables and laptop desks, McGown designs and custom-builds commissioned furniture pieces out of his nine-year-old shop on Monroe near the Continental Baking Co.

"I approach my commissioned pieces like an architect," he said. "Me and the client talk about how the piece will be used, where it will sit in the room, what other pieces of furniture are there. Everything about the piece relates back to a single idea."

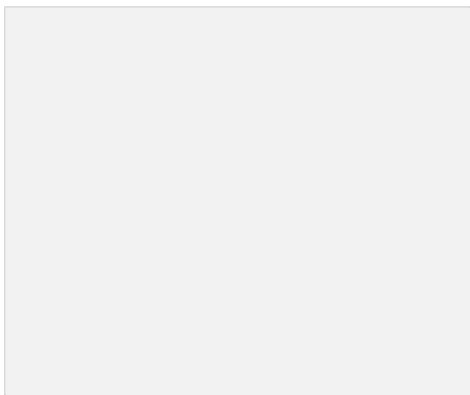
McGown's architectural approach to furniture design is no accident. His grandfather and father were architects, and McGown even gave architecture school a shot for a period of time.

"There's some kind of design gene there," he said.

When he took a furniture design course in college and had access to the woodworking shop, however, there was no looking back.

"It was an open door," he said. "I just really enjoyed drawing things up and then learning how to build them."

After he changed his major and earned a degree in general studies, McGown got a job working with a woodworker for a while, where he honed his skills even more.



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A speaker company job and a stint woodworking and living in his grandmother's garage later, McGown was able to buy some machinery and a shop and McGown Inc. on Monroe was born.

He works with every type of wood, from purple heart to walnut, from mahogany to local pecan, but he has one design to which he keeps returning – the rocking chair.

"I love everything about a rocking chair. I love walking around it, rocking in it, what it means to be in a rocking chair – relaxing, talking, conversing, reflecting," McGown said.

He has come up with his own small-batch production line, called the Memphis Rocker, and is now tweaking the third generation of the design.

"It's one of the more difficult pieces to build," he said. "People tend to abuse chairs, and add that it rocks, creating movement, so you have to make sure it stays together. It needs to be comfortable without needing pillows, and I like smooth flowing lines associated with rocking motion."

"I love reinventing the wheel on all my pieces," McGown said. "I enjoy painting myself in a corner and figuring out how to get out, learning how all the pieces fit together and why."

## Will McGown

**Age:** 40

**Profession:** Owner of custom furniture design shop McGown Inc.

**Address:** 413 Monroe

**Phone:** 528-9663

**Education:** B.A. in general studies from Tulane University

**Family:** Wife, Gigi McGown, and sons Ryan, 5, and Thomas, 1.

**Hobbies:** Camping; working on old cars, such as his International Harvester Travelall and his '65 Buick convertible; and going to see live music.

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A Few Clouds  
Wind: NE 6mph

Today  
**66°**  
**44°**

Thu  
10:00 PM



Mostly Clear  
Temp: 47°

Feels Like: 47°  
Humidity: 73%  
Precip: 0%

Fri  
10:00 AM



Mostly Sunny  
Temp: 67°

Feels Like: 67°  
Humidity: 39%  
Precip: 0%

Fri  
10:00 PM

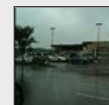


Mostly Clear  
Temp: 53°

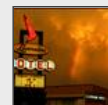
Feels Like: 53°  
Humidity: 71%  
Precip: 0%



Untitled  
9/28/09  
9:51 a.m.



Storm damage to the Kohl's on Germantown Parkway  
7/30/09  
10:59 p.m.



Lorraine Rainbow  
6/15/09  
11:35 p.m.



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