

Tom's Personal Profile



Working with beautiful raw materials has the habit of giving each of us a special appreciation for nature. I can't explain it, but like many of my colleagues here we share an increased appreciation for the great outdoors. Perhaps it's because there's a certain amount of pride and satisfaction in our work, creating something beautiful that will last for many, many years. But whilst we can never match the 'old lady' herself, our ability to make wood look good does mean we always get incredibly close.

Getting close to nature through one of the many extreme sports I participate in, is how I spend a large part of my time: rock climbing, caving, mountain biking, gorge walking and hiking, but there are always bigger challenges. The opportunity one day to be involved in a climbing expedition, perhaps even somewhere as beautiful as the Dolomites in Northern Italy, would be tremendous. That's a place where unlike the Alps, their impressive sheer vertical rock faces rise up, often above 3000 metres like ancient sentinels, and they do so from miles upon miles of grassy meadows. I don't believe there's anywhere else quite like it.

But that's something for the future, for now my focus is on making the most of my education and the opportunities that lay before me at work. Having graduated from Northumbria University in 2005 with a BA honours degree I embarked as 'designer in residence', a programme introduced by the university to support newly qualified designers with, amongst other things, workshop access and funding. It helped bring the commercial aspect of what we do into sharp focus. So often have we heard stories of designers who make pieces to suit themselves and then wonder why pieces fail to sell, it was a 'toe-in-the-water' moment but still not the experience I would gain from an employed position.

Thankfully, an early opportunity did come along as I was appointed to work for an eco-friendly furniture design company who specialised in using cork. No longer just used for pin boards and bathroom scales, this is a product that's going through a bit of a renaissance, so to have been involved with that was particularly satisfying.

You never know, perhaps I may even learn enough to design my own house and its interiors one day. But like the Dolomites, crampons and crevasses, it'll have to wait for now because there's plenty of work to get through so I really should be getting on with it.

Thanks for reading

Tom