

## **Anton Gerner in detail.**

### ***Where was I born?***

I was born in Melbourne in 1970, and have lived there all my life.

### ***Where was I educated?***

I was educated at Preshil in Kew, where I was first introduced to Woodwork in year 7. I found this the most interesting subject at school and spent more time doing woodwork than I should have.

### ***How did I become interested in furniture design?***

My interest in furniture design was a natural progression from making small objects out of wood at school. I enjoy not only the design process but also the actual crafting of an object.

### ***How did I learn my craft?***

I completed a course at the Melbourne School of Woodcraft in Fitzroy in 1989 and then worked for several furniture makers early in my career. I spent many hours reading books and magazines on woodwork and design, and learnt by making mistakes as I went along.

### ***How did I start my business?***

Starting my own business was not planned. It happened because there was simply nowhere in Melbourne doing the sort of work that interested me. At first, I completed basic commissions for family and friends; however, a clientele gradually developed who appreciated my work.

I exhibited extensively to show what I could do, and as the business increased I built up my collection of tools and machinery, which enabled me to become more efficient and complete a wider range of designs and projects. Eventually, after working as a sole trader for many years, I incorporated and as Anton Gerner Furniture Pty Ltd I employ a small team of skilled craftspeople.

### ***Where do I work?***

I work from a small, but highly efficient workshop in Hawthorn East. Situated close to the railway line, off busy Auburn Road, my showroom is also attached to my workshop. The building is an old dairy, and it even has the original tiled floor and walls.

### ***What tools and machinery do I have?***

I use a range of both hand and machine tools. The workshop is fully equipped with the standard woodwork machinery, as well as some specialised machines, such as an edgebander and vacuum veneer pressing equipment. Hand tools are frequently used for one-off designs when setting up a machine is just not practical.

### ***What timbers do I use?***

I use a huge range of timbers from around the world, both solid and veneer. Indeed, many of the more rare timber species I use are only available in veneer. The choice of which timber to use for a project depends on a number of factors, such as the client's budget or availability in the required size and the desired colour or grain. I like to combine different timbers in contrasting colour and grain, and I have a personal preference for darker timbers such as Walnut, Blackwood and Ebony.

### ***What inspires my design?***

Designs in everyday life inspire me. I notice architectural details and any beautifully crafted product, from cars to dinner plates – if they are made well and look good, they interest me. I am not inspired by any one particular designer; however, I am very fond of all things Art Deco.

***Do I follow a particular style or trend?***

No. However, I do keep my eye on what's going on by reading the latest design magazines from Europe and the States.

***How do I develop my ideas?***

Many ideas take a long period of time to develop. I have a huge database of designs that I plan to complete and I often sketch my ideas on paper. Some designs develop easily on paper, while others need full-size prototypes before being made. I have a photographic memory for my ideas and designs and draw on them as needed.

***How do I control quality?***

Simple – I am obsessed about it. No piece leaves the workshop until I am happy with it, even if that means running late. I monitor daily the work completed by my assistants and constantly discuss the quality we produce. It is the quality of our furniture that sets us apart.

***What constraints do I have when designing for a client?***

Clients often have a particular style in mind, a certain type of wood, and at an unrealistic price. It is my job to work within these constraints and come up with a design that suits their requirements. Sometimes this is very easy, but at other times it is not always possible and a compromise must be reached. With years of experience, I now work through these constraints to design a piece that both the client and I are happy with.

***How do I cost my work?***

My work is costed like any other product. There is the cost of materials, labour, workshop overheads, a profit margin and GST. Based on experience, I estimate the time a piece will take to make and accurately calculate the cost of materials. The formal quotation includes the total cost, the deposit required, the balance due on delivery and the terms of the sale.

***Does design affect how a piece of furniture is constructed?***

Any design can be built, it's just a matter of how long you want to spend on it. For standard commissions, I design pieces that are more straightforward to construct, so that the cost is not more than the client is prepared to pay.

In order to construct pieces that will last, I use traditional furniture-making practices. Traditional joints, which are very strong, can become a design feature in the overall look of a piece. I often design more complex pieces for exhibition, when time and cost is not such a consideration.

***Do I take work experience students?***

For a number of years, students came into my workshop for work experience, and many were inspired to pursue creative studies as a result. Unfortunately, I am no longer able to take students on work experience; however, students are welcome to phone and make an appointment to visit my showroom.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anton Gerner', with a stylized star-like symbol above the first few letters.

Anton Gerner