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A FRESH ANGLE

It is mathematically complex, but what makes Julian Mayor's furniture special is the touch of the hand

English designer Julian Mayor lives near London's Brick Lane, in a house with a bright orange facade and an extremely narrow staircase. In the bathroom, over the course of 2004, he built the wood prototype of what would become his General Dynamic chair, sanding down its individual triangles and gluing them together with car-body filler. The result bears a striking resemblance to a giant piece of crumpled paper.

Since then, Mayor's furniture creations have been exhibited at New York City's Museum of Arts and Design and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. His sculptural Regency benches form a permanent installation in a park behind London's Tate Britain Gallery. "Julian forces us to reimagine the boundaries between fine art and industrial design," says Mark Stephens, chairman of the British Contemporary Art Society. "His work is instantly recognizable, with its own lexicon of design and execution."

Although Mayor's largely angular forms are developed on a computer, he fabricates the majority of the pieces himself, purposely leaving them a little rough around the edges. "I don't like things that look too sleek," Mayor says. One of his most labor-intensive creations is the Clone chair, which resembles a pixelated version of a traditional Queen Anne chair and is composed of 100 pieces of plywood. "I was looking at the amazing period rooms in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York," he says, "and I thought, How would a computer see this craftsmanship?"

Ask Mayor about his inspirations and he'll mention Ron Arad, one of his teachers at the Royal College of Art; artists Franz West and Richard Deacon; and the natural world. (He grew up in a rural Yorkshire village.) While he recently developed his first tables in tandem with his Parisian dealer, Armet Soyer, he seems to have a predilection for creating seating from welded or bent steel. Mayor insists he makes each piece as comfortable as possible. His jagged-edge Burnout bench stands in Stephens's London garden and is used on a regular basis. "It was derived from a fallen tree Julian saw in a park that people would stand and sit on," notes its proud owner. "That's how we live with Burnout—the kids play on it, we take tea casually lounging on it, all while appreciating its beauty." **IAN PHILLIPS**

