

NEW LEAF

A newsletter by Philip Koomen Furniture | AUTUMN 2023 | *Community. Craftmanship. Commissions.*



I look forward to seeing you during our workshop open days in 2024.

I AM DELIGHTED to send you *New Leaf*, a newsletter to bring you up to date on a new stage in my creative practice. I now enjoy making furniture to commission as a solo designer-maker. This has injected fresh energy into my work, allowing me to create pieces that embody passion, precision, and a unique creative vision.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A WORKSHOP



In 2024 I will celebrate forty years at Wheelers Barn with a series of workshop open days. These events will tell the story of the commissions, the community, the creative practice and philosophy that has inspired me over this period. I hope that you can join me for one of these celebratory open days. Dates to be confirmed but I'm aiming to host them in September 2024.



A coin collector's box in highly-figured birdseye maple; a gift from father to son.

RECENT COMMISSIONS

In early 2020, as the world faced the uncertainties brought by the pandemic, I was uncertain about the sustainability of my workshop due to a slowdown in commissions. However, just as the first COVID lockdown was announced in March, one of my most loyal clients commissioned a series of furniture projects that enabled the workshop to remain viable. I am deeply grateful to my clients for the ongoing trust and confidence that has allowed me to continue to enjoy designing and making bespoke commissioned furniture.

*Work is
love made
visible*

KAHLIL GIBRAN

The images included in this newsletter provide a glimpse into the diversity of commissions I have made since March 2020. Highlights include the semi-circular bench, designed and made for Merton College, and a communion table commissioned by a Northamptonshire church.

FOSTERING COMMUNITY

From 1984 to 2018, Wheelers Barn has been a hub for over twenty aspiring craftspeople, forming a community motivated by a shared passion for creativity and excellence. While I am now working as a



Dancing Seagrass Table: this design captures the dynamic movement of dance in a moment of time.

solo practitioner, I remain actively involved in various local community arts projects. One particularly exciting endeavour is *Henge*, a project inspired by the Neolithic wooden henge that once stood in Dorchester on Thames. With the invaluable assistance of several volunteers, I have designed and made a *Pentangle* structure to provide a captivating setting for storytelling about our collective past and future (see images). It will be exhibited as part of the upcoming *Henge* exhibition at the Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot, 4th–26th November 2023.

EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

Following the departure of my last full-time assistant in 2018, I embarked on a year-long sabbatical from commissions to explore new ideas and fresh sources

of inspiration. I studied and drew dancers, translating their gestures and fluid movements into sculptural forms and innovative furniture designs. The image of the dining table, *Dancing Seagrass*, showcases this innovative approach. I will exhibit more new designs during my open days in 2024.

EMBRACING EXCELLENCE, ETHICS, AND COMMUNITY

Craftsmanship encompasses values that are vital to nurture in today's society including excellence, ethics, and a strong sense of community.

Professor Simon Olding, Director of the Crafts Study Centre in Farnham, noted the following: "The organic vitality of his designs reveals the oneness and humanity of his [Philip's] creative approach".

*Arts,
crafts and
sciences
uplift the
world of
being*

BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS



This Dansen club chair is inspired by Philip's interest in calligraphy and his study of dancers (nb dansen is Dutch for dancing).



Detail of a chest of drawers in ripple sycamore and pearwood. The thistle inlay references the client's Scottish heritage.



Communion Table with the inscription DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME made in English oak for a church in Northamptonshire.



Occasional table in beautifully figured oak; a surprise Christmas gift from a husband to his wife.

AN INVITATION!

I invite you to join me in 2024 to celebrate a shared journey that first began in 1984. Together, let's celebrate the enduring power of craftsmanship and its ability to inspire and connect us all.

*In our world and in our
time we are deeply in need of
the values that come under the
heading of craftsmanship*

CHARLES EAMES



This bench sits in one of Oxford's ancient bastions and replaces the original 'Tolkien' bench in Merton College. The bastion is located on the south side in the original medieval Oxford town's wall which runs alongside a path known as 'Deadman's Walk' between Merton College and Christ Church meadows.

Detail image (Right) shows the carved Merton College shield on the bastion bench.





The Pentangle structure – a space for storytelling. It was made in collaboration with volunteers and first shown at the Henge Festival, Dorchester on Thames at the autumn equinox in September 2022.

The Pentangle will be exhibited at Cornerstone Arts Centre, Didcot, 4th–26th November 2023.

*Beautiful local woods
Fine craftsmanship
Thoughtful design*



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