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ROBERT WRIGHT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

DESIGN NOTEBOOK

Going With the Grain

Midcentury style takes a back seat to craft at the furniture fair.

By JULIE LASKY

ANDREW MAU had a man bun — or rather, two of them. “A bun and a thing,” Mr. Mau said, referring to the stylish knot of hair perched high on his scalp and the smaller tuft gathered near his collar. If it’s not the coiffure you associate with the ancient vocation of woodworking, you clearly did not spend time at the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, which on Tuesday ended its annual four-day run at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

Mr. Mau, 25, a founder of Studio Dunn, a two-year-old furniture company in Providence, R.I., was part of an army of youthful exhibitors who were rocking on the heels of their pointy-toed leather shoes or fuzzy polka-dot sneakers as they introduced updated versions of such hoary designs as Shaker chairs and gentlemen’s valets.

Studio Dunn’s Corliss chair, for instance, was a supple handmade fusion of cast-aluminum back and maple seat and legs that paid tribute to George Henry Corliss, the inventor who improved the steam engine.

“All of our new pieces are named after game-changers in industrial design and transportation design,” Mr. Mau said.

At Richard Watson’s booth, one looked in vain for the wrinkly codger who produced an 18th-century-style highboy and accompanying stool. But it turned out that Richard Watson wasn’t elderly. In fact, Richard Watson isn’t a person at all, but a New England furniture brand that

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THE ART OF CRAFT Examples of handmade modern interpretations of traditional pieces at the fair include Lindsey Adelman’s Curiosity Vessels, top left, the Piazza highboy by Richard Watson, right, and the Corliss chair by Studio Dunn.

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WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

Bringing new life to old chairs.

By Andrew Wagner