

A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark blue t-shirt, is shown in profile, looking down intently at his work. He is using a chisel to shape a piece of wood held in a vise. The background is a workshop filled with various tools and wooden furniture, creating a warm, rustic atmosphere.

Meet the Maker

CHARLIE CAFFYN

*Reflecting the undulating hills and calm
waters that surround his Wiltshire workshop,
Charlie Caffyn's solid-wood furniture is built to last*

INTERVIEW SOPHIE HANNAM
PHOTOGRAPHS JESSE WILD

A designer with flair:
Charlie's furniture and
homewares have a
unique, sculptural quality.



roud moments have come at various stages throughout my career,' explains Charlie Caffyn, who started out in his professional life creating nursery furniture for a big-name pram brand.

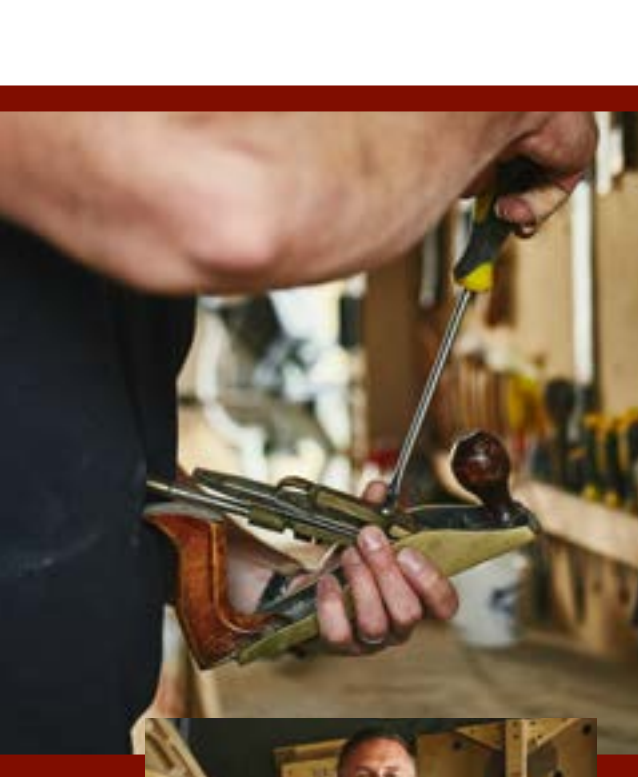
'The first moment was seeing one of my designs roll off the production line, and the second was seeing it for sale in a shop.'

After several years of working overseas, around 15 years ago Charlie settled in the West Country and began making his own furniture. A far cry from the production line, each of his current designs is unique, with strong silhouettes that channel his passion for architecture. 'Now a proud moment comes every time I launch a new piece,' he smiles.

Tell us about your background

From the age of about 10 I was pulling old pallets apart and making shelves for my *Beano* comics. In my teenage years I would dismantle my skateboard and make it a new plywood deck with my dad's jigsaw. My passion for making slowly escalated as I went through school, and by the time I had finished my A-levels I knew that designing furniture was the path for me.

While I was training, my early work focused on 3D design and life drawing. However, a placement at renowned Swedish design house Stenebyskolan gave me a real ▶



'In a moment I can be walking in the woods, along the River Avon, or on the train to Bath. The local area infiltrates my work on every level.'



'The aim is to design something that is relevant now, but will also be appreciated in the future,' says Charlie, seen left with The Farleigh magazine rack, from £149.



ABOVE The Turleigh bookends (from £69) and The Wellow side table (from £375).

taste for simple and elegant Scandinavian designs. I also worked as a designer for Cosatto, where I created nursery furniture and spent a lot of time visiting manufacturers all over the world. After a period living and working in Hong Kong, I decided to move back to the UK, ending up in Bradford on Avon in Wiltshire with my family, where I have now had my furniture workshop for around 15 years.

What inspires you?

I have always been influenced by architecture and structures

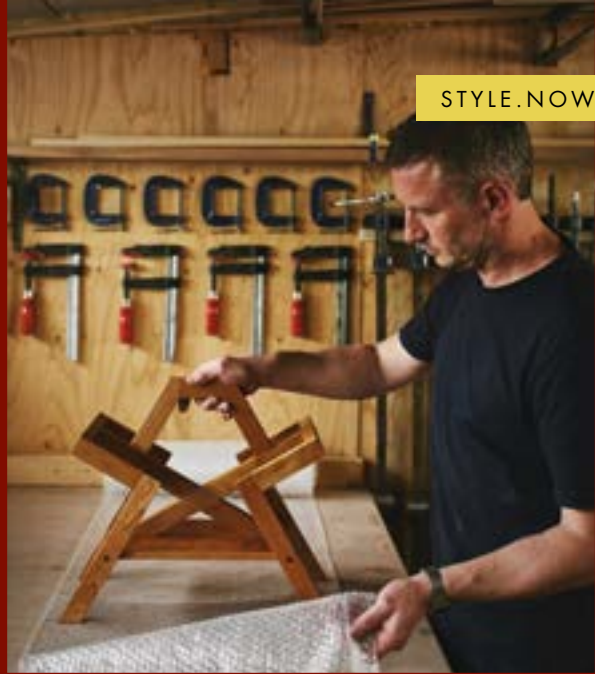
– whether it's the wrought-iron roof of a Victorian railway station or a classic Mies van der Rohe building. I believe a piece of furniture can be really special if you question how the structure works, and then push it in a different direction. I want my designs to be not only practical, but mini pieces of architecture.

I try not to take inspiration from the work of other designers, as they have their own style and I have mine. But I'm often motivated by their ideals and commitment to producing a great item of furniture. For example, when

Charles Eames was working on a new chair, he would leave it upside down in the studio in order to see it from a different angle, which I now do with all of my new designs.

Talk us through your process

I first let an idea develop in my head – I can wait weeks before I start sketching something out. However, no sketch or computer rendering will truly show how a product will feel, so I move quickly to the prototyping stage. The first few prototypes are easy, as you're basically knocking obvious chunks off the design. It's



THIS PAGE Charlie puts the finishing touches to The Farleigh magazine rack and The Chantry oval coffee table (from £1,119).



when you're approaching the finished product that this gets tricky, as you start to focus on perfecting everything. At times I walk away from a design at this stage, and re-question its purpose and the original concept, which then gives me the focus I need. The whole process can take up to six months.

Describe your studio for us
I am very fortunate to have a workshop in my back garden. It's not the largest, but I have fine-tuned it to work beautifully for me. In a moment I can be walking in

the woods, along the River Avon, or on the train into Bath. The local area infiltrates my work on every level – my furniture collection is named after places that I have developed an affinity for, usually while on family walks with my border collie, Jack!

What are you working on at the moment?

After launching my Turleigh bookends earlier this year, I'm currently in the final stages of creating a desk lamp. I have spent months on the design and have been working alongside lighting designer

Deb Wythe from Design In Progress. The light takes inspiration from cast-iron structures, but has evolved into a standout piece.

What are your plans for the future?

I would like to build a workshop around a range of furniture and increase the number of makers. This would allow us to always be focused on great design and beautiful craftsmanship. 📸

To browse and buy Charlie's designs, visit charliecaffynfurniture.co.uk

BELOW The Iford library step chair. Prices start from £885.

