



## Sam Maloof, Woodworker

*By Sam Maloof*

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### **Sam Maloof, Woodworker** By Sam Maloof

What if Picasso had been a chair maker and Stravinsky a designer of tables? What would have been the impact of such intense creative talent on twentieth-century furniture? Today there is a man with this quality of profound artistic vision and talent who has devoted his life to making furniture. His name is Sam Maloof, and this book is his life and work told in his own words.

Sam Maloof started making furniture immediately after World War II, when there was very little demand for hand-made objects. His perseverance through 'years of difficulty is a testament to the depth of his love for wood and for working with it. Since childhood, Sam has also been in love with technique and has constantly developed his precise sense of form and design. These three loves—of wood, of making things, and of design—brought him to the world of furniture and eventually to an honored place among America's leading artistcraftsmen.

As with true great art, everything Sam Maloof makes seems simple. His furniture has a clear rhythm and flow, a bright vitality that eludes analysis. All his furniture is functional: chairs are comfortable; tables, while sculptural, are still tables to be used; desks are custom-designed to meet the needs of each user. Though Maloof furniture designs are all intensely his own, they remain unassuming and natural. His work has the calm, sure quality that comes from technical mastery combined with a creative joy in finding ways to let wood speak. A first encounter with a piece of Maloof furniture is like meeting a friend from the past—the warmth of relationship is immediate and delightful. This warmth never pales.

The qualities of his work are mirrored in the artist. Sam is open, direct, and gracious. He projects a feeling of affable dignity and goodwill, and he works with the ease and clarity seen in his furniture. Work for him is not drudgery. It is a renewal, an affirmation.

He and his wife, Alfreda, live in a meandering house that nestles in a lemon orchard at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains, near San Bernardino, California. Sam has been building and expanding the house for thirty years. It unfolds as a series of surprises, from Sam's workshop at one end to the new guestroom at the other. Every room contains the ceramics, woodwork, textiles, baskets, Pictures, and other beautiful things that nourish the Maloofs and give

them pleasure.

Sam Maloof's technical mastery of woodworking is coupled with mature, strongly personal artistic expression. He has set a standard for his craft in North America and the world. Future generations of craftsmen will see him as one of the major artistic lights of this century.

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## **Sam Maloof, Woodworker** By Sam Maloof Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #551103 in Books
- Published on: 2013-02-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1

- Dimensions: 8.90" h x 1.00" w x 11.70" l, 2.85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 228 pages

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"... handles prose with the same clear, natural manner with which he applies a chisel to a walnut board." -*The New York Times*

"It is hard to imagine a book more representative of Maloof's work than this exquisitely crafted volume." -*Los Angeles Times*

"An inviting, visual, intellectual and emotional experience." -*American Craft*

"Sam Maloof, one of the best of them." -*Time*

### About the Author

**SAM MALOOF** was born in Chino, California, of Lebanese parents. He embarked on his career in furniture in 1948 and in 1959 and 1963 was sent to Iran, Lebanon, and El Salvador as a woodworking design consultant. He has exhibited actively and widely throughout the United States and also in the Vatican. His pieces are in numerous American museum collections and in the Vice President's house and the White House. He has received many awards, given workshops, and has been a consultant and exhibition juror. He has been featured in articles and books and is the subject of the films *Sam Maloof: Woodworker*, by Maynard Orme, and *Sam Maloof The Rocking Chair*, by Bob Smith. He is now a National Trustee and Chairman of the Academy of Fellows of the American Craft Council and a member of the Board of Directors of the World, Craft Congress.

**JONATHAN FAIRBANKS** is a former associate curator of the Winterthur Museum and a cofounder of the American Prints Conference. He has been Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, since 1971.

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