

Santa Barbara

MAGAZINE

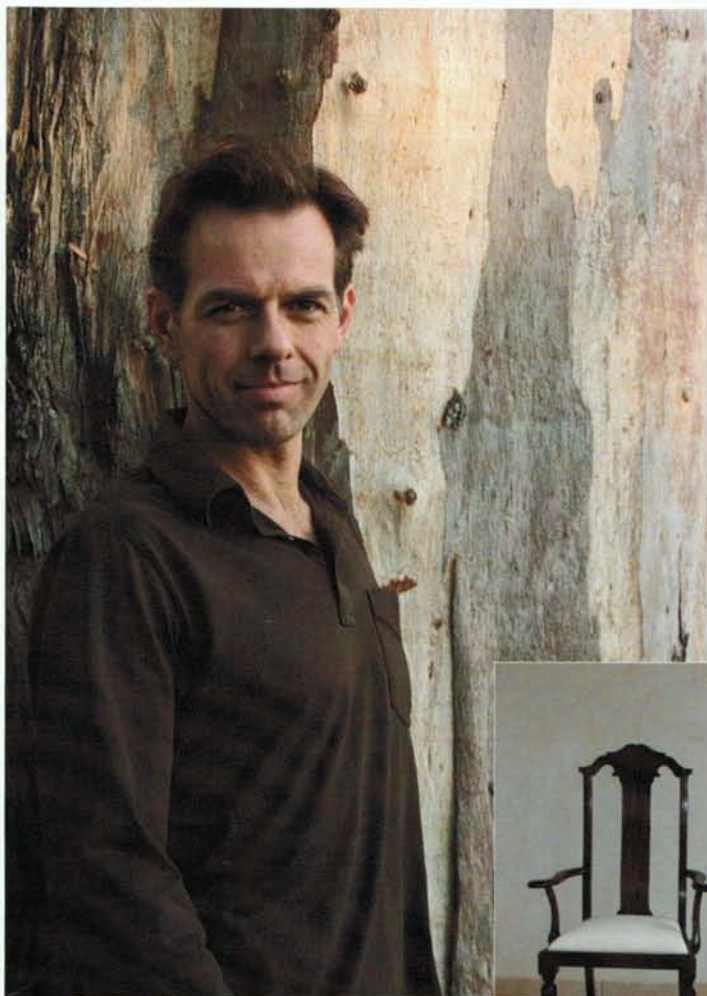
HOMES &
GARDENS



Interior design
Amanda Masters at home

FEB/MARCH 2008 \$4.95





TOP TO BOTTOM: Taylor's feats include period-style chairs that completed an existing 18th-century early American set and a Louis XVI-style chaise.

Blaine Taylor

FURNITURE CRAFTSMAN

In a world gone gaga for the rail-thin lines of midcentury modern, Santa Barbara furniture maker Blaine Taylor takes his inspiration from an earlier time—300 to 900 years earlier. “I like anything from the 12th through the 18th century,” he says. His taste begins with Middle Ages Gothic, finds its latter-day echo in American arts and crafts, and continues on through the Baroque period.

“I like to combine Gothic shapes with more modern lines,” Taylor adds. “Arts and crafts furniture is kind of a blend of those.” Indeed, such period details as hand-carved rosettes often adorn his pieces, which otherwise embody a distinctly European sensibility reflecting Taylor’s training as an *ébéniste* (a maker of fine furniture) at the Abbé Boisard trade school in Lyon, France.

In his east side shop, Taylor’s training is evident in a stalwart flame mahogany corner cabinet with hand-carved spiral corner columns, as well as a reinterpreted salon armchair and a coffee table featuring turned legs typical of Portuguese 17th-century pieces and “chip carving” inspired by a Spanish cabinet of similar vintage.

A Northern California native, Taylor put himself through Brooks Institute as a cabinetmaker and spent a few years as a photographer before returning to the craft that had hooked him in junior high school. He moved to Lyon in

1993, earned his diploma, then ran his own furniture workshop near Aix-en-Provence before returning to Santa Barbara in 1999. After several years of doing production pieces, he now works exclusively on custom furniture for individual clients. “My focus is on taking a project from concept to finished piece—layout, drawings, cutting, carving, wood turning, veneering, and finishing,” he says. Working in walnut, cherry, rose, and other fine woods, he uses traditional dovetail and mortise and tenon joints, employs the best hardware available, and marks each finished piece with a branding iron. He’s also the rare furniture maker trained in the art of French polish, which involves applying hundreds of thin layers of shellac to obtain the richest, deepest, most lustrous finish possible. —JAMES BADHAM

