

St. Boniface-based designer drawing on his passions

ST. BONIFACE

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It's been an exciting couple of weeks for James Culleton.

On Nov. 1, the St. Boniface resident celebrated the first year of running his own business — James Culleton Designs.

And on Oct. 19, Culleton won the Pinnacle Award for Motion Upholstery for the M1 series, which he designed for Palliser Furniture. The 41-year-old was among 16 furniture designers honoured by the American Society of Furniture Designers at an event held in High Point, N.C. It was the 20th anniversary of the celebrated furniture awards.

"They are kind of like the Academy Awards for furniture designers," Culleton said, noting it was the first Pinnacle Award that Palliser has received.

"The category I won in is for upholstery that moves and has some kind of mechanism inside it. In this case, it's an Italian mechanism that powers both the headrest and footrest, which operate independently with motors."

Culleton, who has a fine arts degree from the University of Manitoba and majored in drawing and painting, worked for several years at Palliser's design director. The local furniture giant is now among the clients he freelances for, along with companies in Montreal and the U.S.

Whether he's designing furniture, sculpting pieces of art or writing and recording music (his fifth album is due out next year), Culleton's passion for drawing is still a common theme that connects all of his interests.

"First and foremost, I use drawing with every interest of mine. I think the biggest thing I bring to the table as a visual communicator is being able to get ideas on paper and help realize their full potential. People can have such great ideas, but may not be able to communicate exactly what they are thinking. I love collaborating with people and hearing their ideas and problem-solving on paper," Culleton said.

Among his numerous furniture creations, Culleton is particularly proud of the "James rocker" rocking chair he designed for furniture company EQ3.

"It's shaped like a heart and has chrome tubing on the back that it rolls on. It actually started out as a design for a



Supplied photo

James Culleton recently won a Pinnacle Award from the American Society of Furniture Designers.

footstool. There are actually bricks in the chair to counter-balance the weight so its sits back upright," he said.

As he moves forward with his freelance career, and in light of his recent award, Culleton is grateful for the support he has received in the furniture community down the years.

"Palliser has supported me throughout my career, as has Art DeFehr, who I've always seen as a visionary. He's always had faith in me and my work," he said.

One of Culleton's most visible design commissions is the recognizable façade of the West End Cultural Centre.

"I looked at sculptures and did sculptures using a high-pressure waterjet to cut through sheets of steel. At the time, I was amazed at how precise and accurate this waterjet system was," he said.

For more information, visit jamesculleton.com

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