

## Island inspiration

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### F3

Two weeks ago, I attended IDS 11, the latest iteration of the Interior Design Show held annually in Toronto. The event can turn anyone into a card-carrying designista. In-depth coverage on IDS will follow in next week's Salon, but this week I want to focus on a particular designer whose work I came across in Studio North, an IDS showcase for emerging design talent within Canada.

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Judith Mackin

Designer Jody Racicot stands beside 'Writing Desk,' one of several new works in his series.

Jody Racicot is a lively, self-deprecating, young(ish) designer residing in Canoe Cove, Prince Edward Island. Racicot moved to P.E.I. from Toronto, after a 10-year stint in Vancouver. Still smarting from a real estate misadventure, Racicot and his wife sought respite in a visit to P.E.I. Within a few hours of arriving, they'd made a decision to relocate permanently.

Racicot promptly set up his studio to create stylish, one-of-a-kind products with advanced and traditional furniture-making techniques. His work features a blend of new and recycled plastic, aluminum and steel in addition to solid wood, plywood and veneers. Racicot wants to render the line between new and old indistinguishable.

Q: Do you call yourself an industrial designer, designer or artist?

A: Yes.

Q: Why Prince Edward Island?

A: Quality of life.

Q: Do you have a community of designers with whom you collaborate or discuss your projects with?

A: My wife has to hate the idea first - then I know it's worth pursuing. I continue to harass her throughout the process until she finally relents with something like, "I'm sure someone out there will like it."

Q: Describe your work.

A: I began by designing and building traditional wood furniture based on tried-and-true design and construction techniques. Now, using those developed skills, I am bending and breaking the rules. I've been turning to unconventional combinations of materials and styles. An example is my latest plastic, aluminum and steel writing desks that are made entirely of salvage.

Q: How many pieces a year?

A: Only four last year. I'll do between half to double that this year.

Q: Where did you learn your love for design and/or building?

A: I've always made things out of things. I think my strongest abilities are: imagination, creativity and resourcefulness.

Q: Do you live off your art?

A: I've been a professional artist my entire adult life. My first career was in television. TV viewers can see me as Dr. Zarkov on Flash Gordon. Whenever work in that field slowed, I directed my creative energy to building furniture. The creative fire in me doesn't care where it is aimed. It just needs to be run regularly. The steady nature of working on my furniture led to more creative satisfaction than what

I was getting from acting. Sadly, the pay is worse. Yes, worse than acting in Canada. I joke about my wife's involvement, but she really is the backbone. She works to pay our bills and encourages me in times of doubt.

Q: What's the best thing about being on the island in terms of your work?

A: Working alone in my little workshop on the island with little pressure from commercialism allows me to be at my absolute, creative best. I'll redo a piece several times over until I'm satisfied. The work is done when it's done. I get time to smell the roses here, and I golf more than any non-retiree should.

Q: This was your first year showing at IDS. How was the experience?

A: I was terrified the night before IDS, making my debut at such a big show with an experimental piece. I had no idea if anyone would 'get it.' Luckily, most did. It was amazing to see the relationship that people would have with those old plastic laminate tables. I heard so many stories from people about their own kitchen tables. All the happy memories flooded back as they would rub their hands over the top of that little writing desk pieced together from old scraps of metal and plastic that I got from the Charlottetown Habitat ReStore.

Learn more about Jody Racicot, at his website: [www.modernrevision.com](http://www.modernrevision.com).

Judith Mackin is a freelance journalist in Saint John New Brunswick. She also runs her own design, marketing and public relations firm, PUNCH Productions, and recently launched punch inside, an interior design branch of PUNCH. You can follow her blog at [punchinside.com](http://punchinside.com) or reach her at [judithm@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:judithm@nbnet.nb.ca).

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