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**NEST IN LINE**  
 Left, made out of maple, Cruce's 'Nest' is a modern take on the classic bird house  
 Above right, the 'Gc04' chair is made out of a single steel 'ribbon' and a wooden seat  
 Below, the origami-style 'Cg05' chair



After graduating, the economic realities of Seattle's small design community compelled Cruce to take jobs with local architecture firms designing interiors for shops, airports and exhibition spaces. Yet during his down time, Cruce began to develop what are today his signature pieces - including 'Nest', his 21st-century take on the classic all-weather bird house. Developed as a present for his wife, Cruce designed 'Nest' in less than an hour and its sheer simplicity is at once facile and elegant. Constructed entirely from maple, 'Nest' conforms to Cruce's notion that the execution of design should be both accessible and understandable. 'I want people to think, "I could do that", ' Cruce says of 'Nest', which he intends to sell across international design stores.

Cruce's key chairs and stools are also products that he feels have mass applications. Like 'Nest', they're beguilingly straightforward. 'Gc01', for instance, is a conventional café chair whose legs, base and back are constructed from a single steel 'ribbon' topped by a wooden seat. 'Gc04', meanwhile, is simply folded pieces of sheet metal cut to form a chair back, base and legs. Even the Alvar Aalto-influenced 'Cg05' - a shiny red chair of laminated maple with an origami-style, cut-to-fit seat - was produced in Cruce's garage. 'These pieces are low-tech, or even no-tech in their execution,' says Cruce, who also works on prototypes for local manufacturing giant, Boeing. 'I often use a kind of uncomplicated process people have forgotten about, but that anyone could replicate.'

With his 'Nests' currently on sale in Seattle and San Francisco and a trio of new chair concepts on the horizon, Cruce's obscurity could soon come to an end. Yet even if we see him doing the rounds at fairs in Milan and Manhattan next year, it's unlikely Cruce will ever abandon either his Seattle spirit, or his ever-evolving quest to produce the perfect chair. ★

**CONTACT**

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**STYLE**

Simple, sturdy and easy to assemble

**INFLUENCES**

The organic ease of his native Seattle's Scandinavian immigrants and the craft-like precision of Eames

**CLIENTS**

Limited to family, friends and smart-eyed shoppers at select West Coast stores

# Nesting instinct

Epitomised by his artfully simple bird house, Seattle furniture maker Gary Cruce's pieces never stray from the basics of low-tech design

Writer David Kaufman



Like generations of West Coast designers before him, Gary Cruce's clean-lined, fuss-free and effortlessly comfortable creations reflect the easy-living lifestyle of the Pacific Northwest. Born, raised and based in Seattle, Cruce has been tinkering with wood and metal since his 1980s high-school days, though only now is he embracing the commercial as well as aesthetic potential of his craft. Armed with just a handful of designs and practically unexposed to the trade, Cruce's oeuvre of chairs, stools, benches and cabinets are conceived as low-tech, old-fashioned furniture solutions for office and home.

Cruce comes to furniture design as the logical progression of an early adulthood interest in drafting and drawing motorcycles and cars. Initially interested in the mechanics of vehicles, thinking he would become an engineer, he soon realised that he was far more excited by form and function than spokes and spark plugs. Enrolment at the University of Washington's industrial design programme followed soon after.

It was at the university, in the early 1990s, that Cruce first contended with furniture, architecture and the wide range of design world luminaries who would come to influence his style. Chief among them was Ralph Ball, an English industrial designer who served as Cruce's professor and mentor. 'Suddenly furniture became very interesting, as I began to understand how its engineering, aesthetics and function directly impacted one another,' explains Cruce.