



## Just a handful of pieces emerge from his workshop each year

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For bespoke furniture to be worth the price tag, it's tempting to make a statement, the finished piece possessing a look-at-me sense of originality to its often highly focused purpose (especially true of furniture commissioned to fill an awkward or extraordinary space). Strong, original design, while not always to everybody's taste, is the hallmark of some of the most collectable work, such as that by Dorset-based John Makepeace. Likewise James Verner, whose new 120sq m showroom is located just around the corner from Makepeace's Beaminster studio. Fittingly for a man who makes everything from trees, you will find Verner's work at Tempest, an impressive Arts and Crafts house located in Charmouth Forest, much of the woodland managed by Verner himself.

Browse here (appointment only) and you can sit on Verner's signature Tribas three-legged chair (second picture), which looks as if it might topple but is as stable as rock. Because it is all bespoke, the work on show is constantly changing, with new commissions coming and going en route to private homes, boardrooms and hotels stretching from Dorset to Cap Ferret and **St Barths**. From dining tables to gun cabinets, four-poster beds to jewellery boxes, Verner's output is an eclectic combination of classic techniques, strong form and a pared-down aesthetic; while not ferociously modern, his work sits comfortably within a contemporary space. Responsibly sourced material is central to his approach (this is a man who never gets on planes) with single pieces costing from £1,500 to £75,000.

Current highlights include Sound (first picture). This low table in stack laminated oak has a surface of back-painted, laser-engraved glass laid on a piece of mirror glass, which creates the effect of rippling water. At 150cm long, 90cm wide and 45cm high, Sound is intended to reflect (literally and metaphorically) the client's position overlooking Plymouth Sound, the piece designed for a glass extension to his home.

Verner's rigorous belief in the value of bespoke means he keeps his studio small: "The number of commissions I take on each year can be counted on two hands."