



Ignacy Grzybala carves original design

Furniture 'Hand-Made' —With Machine Assist

Hand-made furniture is made by machine these days, but it's still "hand-made"—and expensive.

Polish-born Ignacy Grzybala, who has been designing and executing woodwork since he came to Canada in 1930, explains the apparent contradiction this way:

"Perhaps, if all the legs of this table were done by hand, as the first one was," he says, indicating a newly-finished article, "there would be merit in the claim that a hand-made table is of more worth. But we do one leg by hand, and all the others are copies turned out by machine.

"We save time, our own and the client's and, since we must finish by hand, all the legs look alike

and are called hand-made when we are done. The cost of labor and time today to handmake these items is impractical. As it is these pieces, when complete, are out of the reach of the average buyer."

Much of Mr Grzybala's handwork is in Montreal churches and monasteries. He specializes in the intricate grape and armorial designs, altar freizes and ornate carvings characteristic of such institutions.

But he has created heads for puppets, figurines, portraits in bas relief, and intricate copies of such native art as Balinese heads and Peruvian tribal symbols.

In his workshop are sets of Louis XV chairs ready for upholstery and magnificent French Provincial chiffonniers, buffets and console tables so close in design to the originals it would take an expert to ferret out the difference.

Among the pieces are original designs, such as cellarettes and coffee tables, night stands and lamp bases, executed in birch mainly, by Mr Grzybala and his assistant, 22-year-old Marian Bondyra.

Birch is used in woodworking of this sort because of its strength and flexibility and because of its availability. But Mr. Grzybala also uses rosewood and mahogany on occasion.

His assistant, Bondyra, is a new Canadian he brought out from Poland following the Second World War. In serving an apprenticeship under Mr. Grzybala, Bondyra is as close to the old Polish skills of wood-carving as he might ever be in his native land.