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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012

Woodcrafting grad holds exhibit

From staff reports

MORGANTON

James Ellis, a fall 2011 graduate of Western Piedmont Community College's Professional Crafts: Wood program, will exhibit his graduate woodworking show from 6-8 p.m. Friday in Kala Gallery, 100 W. Union St.

Ellis's exhibition, "Wood & You Know It, New Works by James Ellis," is a collection of handmade furniture and wood accessories created to complement modern living while paying homage to early 20th century arts and crafts ideals. Ellis uses traditional fine woodworking hand tools; however, modern machinery usage is incorporated for relative affordability. Ellis showcases his objects' joinery as decorative elements and finds inspiration in nature, such as occurring spirals in trees.

Ellis seeks to showcase the wood's natural grain and color, juxtaposing both domestic and exotic woods finished in natural oil or clear finishes.

His choices of wood species are personal, such as the use of maple and cherry symbolic of his personal growth. "Historically, the cherry tree symbolizes death, rebirth and new awakenings while maple symbolizes balance, promise and practicality," Ellis said. "When I look at where I was five years ago, I see a completely different person. My life has direction; I am passionate about my work."

As a professional crafts wood



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A chair by James Ellis, a graduate of Western Piedmont Community College's Professional Crafts: Wood program. He will be exhibiting his work at the Kala Gallery.

student, Ellis received a strong foundation in fine woodworking theory and skills, craft marketing and craft

enterprise knowledge. Ellis recently received scholarships to Appalachian State University's industrial design program where he will ultimately become a designer craftsman.

"Western Piedmont's professional crafts wood program revolves around the mastery of woodworking," explained Blaine Johnston, wood instructor. "Ellis's furniture pieces are exemplary examples of the program's high standards, supportive learning environment and his dedication to becoming a master woodworker."

The college's professional crafts: wood program is one of only two available in North Carolina's 58 community colleges. The program, which trains students in both traditional and modern woodworking skills using a variety of wood species, several machines and hand tools, encourages students to develop their own personal aesthetics while developing computer, marketing and business skills.

"All instructors are actively exhibiting artisans and business owners which strengthen the professional crafts programs," said Courtney Long, professional crafts coordinator. "Sharing firsthand knowledge and experiences of creative industries helps prepare graduates for success."

Ellis's graduate exhibition will remain open at Kala Gallery through February. To learn more about the college's professional crafts program, contact Long at 448-3552 or clong@wpcc.edu.