



Philip's journey

Forget about awards and accolades – this craftsman is more interested in the relationship he builds with both his clients and the materials he works with, as **Blythe Seinor** reports

PHILIP Boorman is what you might call a tall drink of water.

You get the impression he's also quite an elusive character who doesn't like talking about the past.

Which makes it very difficult to find out exactly which awards he's been given for his furniture and home designs.

I know he's won "a lot" of accolades in Sydney and Melbourne, and I know they were a pretty big deal – but exactly which ones?

I couldn't tell you, even after spending an hour chatting to him in his Mapleton Gallery.

For Philip, what's really important is the here, the now and the road ahead – not the path he's left behind.

Stepping into his gallery on Obi Obi Road, the first thing that hits me is the woody smell, a combination of timber, cedar, maple and stain.

It's effectively a furniture gallery, but such a description sells the place short, and it's easy to see how much love has gone in to every piece on display.

Philip isn't there when I arrive, and his gallery manager, Jaci, is on the phone, so I take a few moments to wander around and look at the

beautifully constructed tables.

They each have names, and the one I'm here to talk to Philip about is called The Relationship Journey – a coffee table constructed of maple and cedar.

You could look at the table as a place to rest a newspaper or a cup of hot tea, but a sign on the wall tells me it really is much more than that.

Each piece of wood has been put in its place to serve a particular purpose, and has its own story to tell.

There is a hinge at one end, which "signifies the uniting element, the coming together of people and ideas", according to Phillip's description.

Two cedar wings extend out from the hinge, and they're moveable, just like two people in a relationship.

A maple shelf is in the centre of the table, representing the achievements two people can make when they come together.

And most of the structure is covered by a piece of glass on top.

"At this point I ask you to please note that the transparent glass does not cover the hinge and part of the shelf unit. Why is this so?" is the



Philip Boorman's amazing coffee table designs will raise money to save hinterland parcels of land from development.

PHOTO: NICHOLAS FALCONER/165640

question posed at the end of the description.

Jaci walks over to meet me with a big smile, as I'm pondering why the glass doesn't cover the whole table.

"Think about it. That's the bit you keep to yourself," she tells me matter of factly.

"There are always bits we don't reveal in a relationship."

There's also another story to tell about the table, because Philip won't be making a cent from any sales.

Only five of the limited edition tables will be made and sold through a slow auction, with every dollar raised going straight into the Boorman Eco Environmental Trust Fund.

Philip and his wife Denise established the fund last year, and any cash they raise from The Relationship Journey will go towards the purchase of parcels of land in the hinterland to keep it safe from development.

Philip walks in to meet me, and for a man who's clearly very self assured in his work, he seems to be nervous at the thought of being interviewed.

I tell him Jaci has already filled me in on some of the background of his latest work.

"Oh good, you don't need me, I can go!" he says

with a nervous laugh. But a passion for what he does soon overrides any interview jitters, and Philip quickly launches into the philosophies behind his work.

"With all the furniture I do, there's always an emotional side to it. We work more towards the emotions here," he says.

"From the very first time someone comes in to see me, the relationship is forming. It's the most important part of the job I do."

Speaking to Philip, it quickly becomes clear that he's a man of strong ideals.

The main part of his business is designing homes, but he tells me he won't design a house for someone who's building it simply as an investment property.

"I tell them, no thanks."

When Philip designs a home, he does so with the future owners in mind.

He'll even go and simply sit on the property where the home is to be built, so he can decide which direction it should face.

He's always pushing himself to be better, and firmly believes he is only as good as the last home he's designed, or the last table he's constructed.

"Where you come from, what you did, what architectural university you went to - it's too far

away to matter now," he tells me.

"There are too many people putting too much emphasis on what they have done.

"But it's what they're doing now that's important. You can get too heavily hooked on your past."

The people he designs homes for often become friends, and he tells me only one home he's ever designed has been put on the market.

"Just last weekend actually, one of them went up for sale," he says.

"Most people come to me when they're building their last homes.

"They say they really want it done right, they want to have a good time with it."

He clearly puts a lot of himself into his designs, so I ask Philip if he's sometimes sad to make a sale.

"Sometimes, I do (get sad)," he tells me.

"The whole coffee table range in particular is very special."

But he knows that all of his work goes to people who love it as much as he does, and he expects The Relationship Journey series to be no different.

The series is currently being slow auctioned in Gallery 9 Mapleton on Obi Obi Road, with 100% of the purchase price going straight to the Boorman Eco Environmental Trust Fund. Phone 5445 7020.