When Aled Lewis hatched the idea for his innovative "Wish Desk" in solid walnut—with legs that become part of the desktop and keep it flat as well as support it—the difficult part of the design process was still ahead. To make the novel concept functional in solid wood, he had to devise a joinery system that combined splines, slip tenons, and a segmented sliding dovetail (see p. 90 for details). But working out the conundrums of one-of-a-kind woodworking is what he relishes these days. Lewis, who is the lead instructor for the Nine-Month Program at the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine, was raised on a sheep farm in Wales and spent many years in high-end commercial cabinet shops in England, "laying acres and acres of veneer" while cranking out hundreds of pieces for universities, banks, and corporations. Since opening his own small shop a decade ago, he's been building pieces one at a time, focusing solely on designs from his own sketchbook, having as little as possible to do with flakeboard and veneer.

—Jonathan Binzen
led Lewis designed radically different joinery for the two pairs of legs on his “Wish Desk” (see the back cover). The outside legs, which function like breadboard ends, are attached to the desk with eight floating tenons. He glued the tenons at the edge of the desk to both the desktop and the leg; he left the inner tenons unglued in the oversize mortises in the desktop so the top could move with the seasons. To attach the inner pair of legs to the underside of the desktop, Lewis combined a segmented sliding dovetail with a pair of slip tenons. The slip tenons lock the legs in place, while the sliding dovetail—which is glued to the leg but not the desktop—supports the top and keeps it flat without restricting its movement. To assemble the table, Lewis started with the inner legs, gluing them to their rail and then gluing in the slip tenons and sliding dovetails. The outer legs came next, and Lewis glued the legs to the desktop and the rail in one operation.