



## Pete E. Michelinie

Museum Quality Furniture

### **Interacting with the client, letting them know who you are**

Pete E. Michelinie is a Furniture Maker based out of South Pomfret VT. “My business is a single man operation,” said Michelinie. “I build solid wood furniture on commission, which is how I’ve been making a living for 12 years. My commissions come from a combination of word of mouth or from my website and the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers. It’s really just a small amount of people that I need to keep me employed throughout the year. For example, I have only twenty projects this year.

Since Michelinie works by himself, he wasn’t forced to close during the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic. “Honestly this has been the busiest I’ve ever been in my life,” said Michelinie. “I’ve gotten a lot of serious inquiries for big projects since Covid, including my biggest ever right in March, and soon after that I had an even larger order. A sideboard, stools, 2 sets of tables and chairs, all for one person. I’ve been doing just fine. I was happy to give away the \$1200 stimulus check when it was sent to me. I didn’t feel like it was meant for me. People are at home looking at their furniture and thinking of ways to improve it.”

Michelinie’s focus is on making heritage quality furniture, not in producing large amounts each year. “I don’t want to be a large business as much as I just want to make quality furniture,” said Michelinie. “I’d rather just continue making things that are interesting and will be cherished for a long time. The nice thing about that is that it means that I can be more selective in the projects that I take on so that I can create what I want to see in the world. I’m just grateful for the momentum that I have going on right now, and I hope that it stays going. If any of these orders from the pandemic end up being repeat customers, that will be huge for me.

While Michelinie had worries over supply chain issues from the pandemic, they never came to fruition. “At first I panic bought cherry, because I was worried the lumber yards would close,” said Michelinie. “And they did. But they’ve since re-opened and prices for hardwoods haven’t really changed in price so I’m happy about that.”

While Michelinie typically has online sales, he cautions clients that it’s not similar to ordering from a large dealer or commercial website. “Right now I’m booked out a year and a half,” said Michelinie. “Commissioning a furniture maker is not like buying a product on Amazon. “It’s not like you click a button and get the thing in the mail. There’s a lot of interaction and emails back

and forth. I want to give them a story and be more than just a click and ship purchase. I want to interact with the client and make sure they know who I am, and I want to get to know who they are. That's part of the process for me. I enjoy doing custom work somewhat quickly and affordably considering I'm a one-man operation."

Michelinie joined the Vermont Wood Works Council after hearing about the organization through a meetup with the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers. "I thought it was a good idea and thought I would try it out and see if it was worth it," said Michelinie "I'm two years in now. I like being part of a Vermont organization. You get to know some of your neighbors and fellow wood business owners. I think the number one benefit is the sense of community of being among other furniture people."