

The grain man cometh

A young furniture maker from Borehamwood has been catching the eye of design experts and the national media. **JAKE RUSBY** met Oliver van der Breggen to find out what the future holds for the talented designer

OLIVER van der Breggen has spent every spare moment over the past few months preparing for his chance to show the world what he can do.

The 22-year-old, of Clarendon Road, Borehamwood, has been labouring away making a luxury writing desk from American black walnut and European cherry.

The desk, his final assessed piece of work for his studies at Rycotewood Furniture Centre, in Oxford, is being exhibited at the New Designers Exhibition in Islington this month.

Since arriving at Rycotewood three years ago, Oliver has developed into an up-and-coming furniture maker, earning high praise and a number of accolades.

Living Etc magazine named him Best New Designer at The Furniture Show, at the National Exhibition Centre, in Birmingham, earlier this year, and a bedroom cabinet earned him a commendation from the Chartered Society of Designers in 2006.

He was also awarded the Beck Award for the best business plan and portfolio at Rycotewood.

Newspapers including the Evening Standard and Daily Telegraph have featured his work.

One admirer of his craftsmanship has just commissioned him to make two bedroom cabinets, despite him only having graduated two weeks ago.

"I want my furniture to be of the very highest quality so I use the best wood," he said. "Good materials also tend to be heavier and stronger and so last a lot longer."

Four examples of his work at the recent display were a 'ribcage' lounge table, a chair with a seemingly floating seat, the luxury writing desk and a bedside cabinet.

Both the desk and cabinet are part of a family of pieces, and show the direction his



Spruce up: Oliver van der Breggen puts the finishing touches to his 'best ever work', a luxury writing desk K15335-24

work is taking. They are based on forms from the mechanical world, and incorporate the theme of movement into their design.

Oliver was introduced to the world of furniture at a young age by his dad, Frans, an antiques dealer. He attended Dame Alice Owen's School, in Potters Bar, where he studied design technology.

"I love making stuff, so it was the best course for me," he said, "it was hands-on."

When he was 15, he was taken under the wing of

Johnny Egg, a furniture designer with a workshop in Barnet, where he worked at weekends and during school holidays.

After finishing his A-levels, he took advice from established, inspirational designers, like John Makepeace and Senior and Carmichael, and was directed to the course at Rycotewood.

And even with all the praise and interest in his work, he has a simple philosophy. "I just want to get on and make furniture for a living," he said.