

# COLORADO

*expression*

**DEVIL'S  
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OLSEN**  
CELEBRITY  
PORTRAITS

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**AMBASSADOR  
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HILL**



APRIL/MAY 2013  
FOUR DOLLARS

## Furnishings

### COWGIRL SOUL

Andrea Wendel of Andi-Le creates sophisticated, mountain contemporary furniture with the spirit of the West

By Kimberly Field



PHOTO: DAVID MARLOW

A painter might be said to coax art from a blank canvas. For furniture designer Andrea Wendel of Andi-Le, that blank canvas is a plank of wood. In many ways, the raw wood tells Wendel what it wants to be. It informs her and directs her. "I love it when there is a knot or line in the plank," she says. "I incorporate that into my design."

In her studio near Aspen, Wendel creates custom furniture and one-of-a-kind pieces, small tables and accessory seating she calls Aspen Seats. "I use old, old logs in their organic shapes. I sometimes add a more contemporary aspect to these found pieces," she explains. One table design, dubbed "odd leg out" features a fourth leg of wood in its natural form. "I love working in wood because it's soft enough to create different feelings. It's fun for me as an artist to juxtapose different materials such as hard steel or glass." Stones are a design element in Wendel's sculptural furniture designs. "Sometimes I inlay river rock and semi-precious stones into a piece," she says. It's all about adding layers of texture and context. Her artistic use of those organic materials creates a unique look and feel that expresses the natural beauty of the Colorado mountains and rivers that inspire her work.

Wendel traces her artistic journey from a childhood love of all things cowgirl—even though she grew up in the decidedly uncowgirl Pennsylvania. "I've always loved horses and the West.

Artist Andrea Wendel in her studio with a collection of unfinished Aspen Seats

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Detail of the Chinle console, hand-carved with wrapped leather

PHOTO: ANDREA WENDEL



Dining room table detail, with curused white oak and a stainless steel leg

PHOTO: ANDREA WENDEL



An Aspen-log Aspen Seat, torch carved with a semi-gloss finish

PHOTO: CHRIS COUNCIL AND EMILY CHAPLIN



Hand-carved corner writing desk, with steel drawer pull and legs

PHOTO: HOWARD FREEMAN

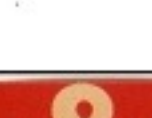


PHOTO: BOB PARR

Andrea Wendel uses a variety of wood-working tools in her studio

Her work is best described as "beefy" due to its substance and create. "I like the simplicity of large objects, but I also like to create a jewel-like component within that. My pieces are big, and there is nothing easy about working with them," she says. Her artistic process calls to mind the image of a slim woman wrestling with iron and rough logs. While she may secure her planks from lumber mills, she also takes her chainsaw into the mountains near her Roaring Fork Valley home to harvest dead, fallen Aspen logs for her one-of-a-kind pieces. The work is hardly glamorous. "Take a man," she quips. "I spend the day rolling logs down the hill and loading them into my pickup truck." The next step is to dry the wood for up to a year before she tears into it with a variety of tools. She "fries" the wood with her welding torch to burn the inside of cracks and call out natural design. Then, she uses a router to carve white designs into the blackened background. "This gives my furniture an artful, soulful feel that comes from an artist's perspective."

Andi-Le furniture expresses a pure, mountain contemporary vibe imbued with a subtle nod to the natural beauty of the Rocky Mountains without feeling like a kitschy souvenir from a dude ranch. "My furniture is not rustic, but the interchange of textures found in wood along with leather, steel, stone or even acrylic, gives it a new energy," Wendel says. Her furniture integrates seamlessly into a sleek modern interior in South Beach as well as into an Aspen retreat. All pieces are customized with the client's choice of materials, textures and stains. Her touches such as a whimsical shag carpet seat cover or strategically placed cowhide, give a unique feel and context that allows Wendel's furniture to blend into anyone's decor.

Wendel works primarily with designers crafting pieces customized for each client. Andi-Le one-of-a-kind pieces can be found at select retailers in Aspen, Sun Valley and Menlo Park. In Denver, her furniture is carried at HW Home. Wendel herself can be found with her husband and teenage stepson reveling in her mountain paradise. This cowgirl has finally found her way home. 🐾

For more information, visit [www.andi-le.com](http://www.andi-le.com).

FREQUENT ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN OF THE WEST CONTRIBUTOR KIMBERLY FIELD WOULD LOVE TO BE A COWGIRL, BUT SHE'S SCARED OF COWS.

Nobody knows where that came from," she marvels. She began her artistic career studying illustration. After college, she created murals in hotels across the country, especially in the Southwest and South Florida. She also painted fabric and furniture, and created large sculptures that echo African totemic images; her fine art is in collections across the country. "I wanted to get into three-dimensional objects." She even studied welding. "It was me and a bunch of air conditioning guys," she laughs.

While she created furniture all along, in the past 15 years it has become her specialty; she launched Andi-Le in 2011. The Andi-Le portfolio concentrates on tables, benches and seating—forms that lend themselves to a larger scale. She uses all the creative skills she picked up along the way in her Andi-Le work, and also uses the horse trailer she needs for hauling her cutting horses (Chiquita, Tango and Milie, now retired) from her cowgirl days. After all, you can cram a lot of wood into a horse trailer.

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