

Gary Bennett
at JAHROC GALLERIES



UNIQUE DESIGNS
Gary Bennett's Jahroc creations are collected by art lovers around the world.



successfully around the world and won many awards over the years. With a global client base, Gary's work turns up all around the world.

"One day I'd like to take a tour around the planet to visit our creations," he says. "There would be so many exotic locations that have a piece of our Margaret River design in them, I think that would be a real blast."

YMRR Tell us about the kind of timber you love to work with. What makes it special?

Gary Bennett: I love working with our native hardwoods. We are very lucky to have timbers such as jarrah, marri, sheoak, blackbutt and karri at our fingertips here in Margs. The durability of these timbers is very high but what is really special are the thoroughly unique grain patterns that they yield. I think it's because of the harsh conditions they have to survive in this ancient land of extremes where we live. From fire and heatwaves, to floods and gale force winds they have to endure the trees must twist, turn and recover, which creates masses of spectacular grain patterns and shapes ideal for the creation of artistic furniture.

YMRR What techniques do you use to bring out the special properties of the timber?

GB I use design as a key tool to make the most of the special shapes and grain patterns. I either work with the shape and grain of the timber as a lead for the design or when I have a specific

design in mind I search our stockpile to find a suitable piece to complement the design. When working in my home studio I like to use oil finishes to bring out the spectacular colour and grain by hand sanding to grits as fine as 4,000. This technique is a lot of work but it produces a really beautiful lustre that is difficult to obtain with lacquers and gives the finished piece a wonderful natural feel.

YMRR What makes the timber of the Margaret River region particularly beautiful for your type of work?

GB I think it's the environment in which the timbers grow. Margaret River and the region between the Capes is such a diverse area from the rich karri loam soils of the heavily wooded forests to the sandy, limestone soil of the coastal heath which seem to produce a range of colours and shapes in the timbers, which are astounding. I consider myself very lucky to have materials like this to work with as it makes my job of creating artworks from timber much easier. Nature does a lot of the work for me. There always seems to be a tree coming down in a storm or taken down as part of development or road clearing etc, which means we pretty much only use salvaged timber. This is great as conservation of our environment is very

important to us.

YMRR What are you working on at the moment and what has been the most memorable piece you've worked on to date?

GB I am currently working on a groovy bar that I am making from a spectacular jarrah burl that we cut from a heavily burnt "dead" log. It incorporates some stainless steel on a geometric fiddle back jarrah base which will juxtapose against the organic shape of the burl. When complete, it will become a contemporary feature piece to sit around and enjoy some of the big beautiful reds that our Margaret River wine-makers create down here. The most memorable piece is a tough one. Over 28 years we have made so many great pieces of furniture from such amazing pieces of timber that I don't think I could pin it down to one. I love the Surf inspired pieces, the West Kimberley/Abrolhos projects were also great as were Silhouettes and the Cape to Cape Margaret River project (see our "Jahroc Collaborations" book). We have also designed and made some fantastic commissions such as the Sue's Chaise, the Roo Silhouette rocker and I recently finished some really great commissions for a very special bar area that included a 2.8m Malibu-style timber

surf board light over a pool table, bar stools and some funky surf-inspired guitar stands and racks. Commissions can be very challenging, but also hugely rewarding.

YMRR How would you describe a typical Gary Bennett piece?

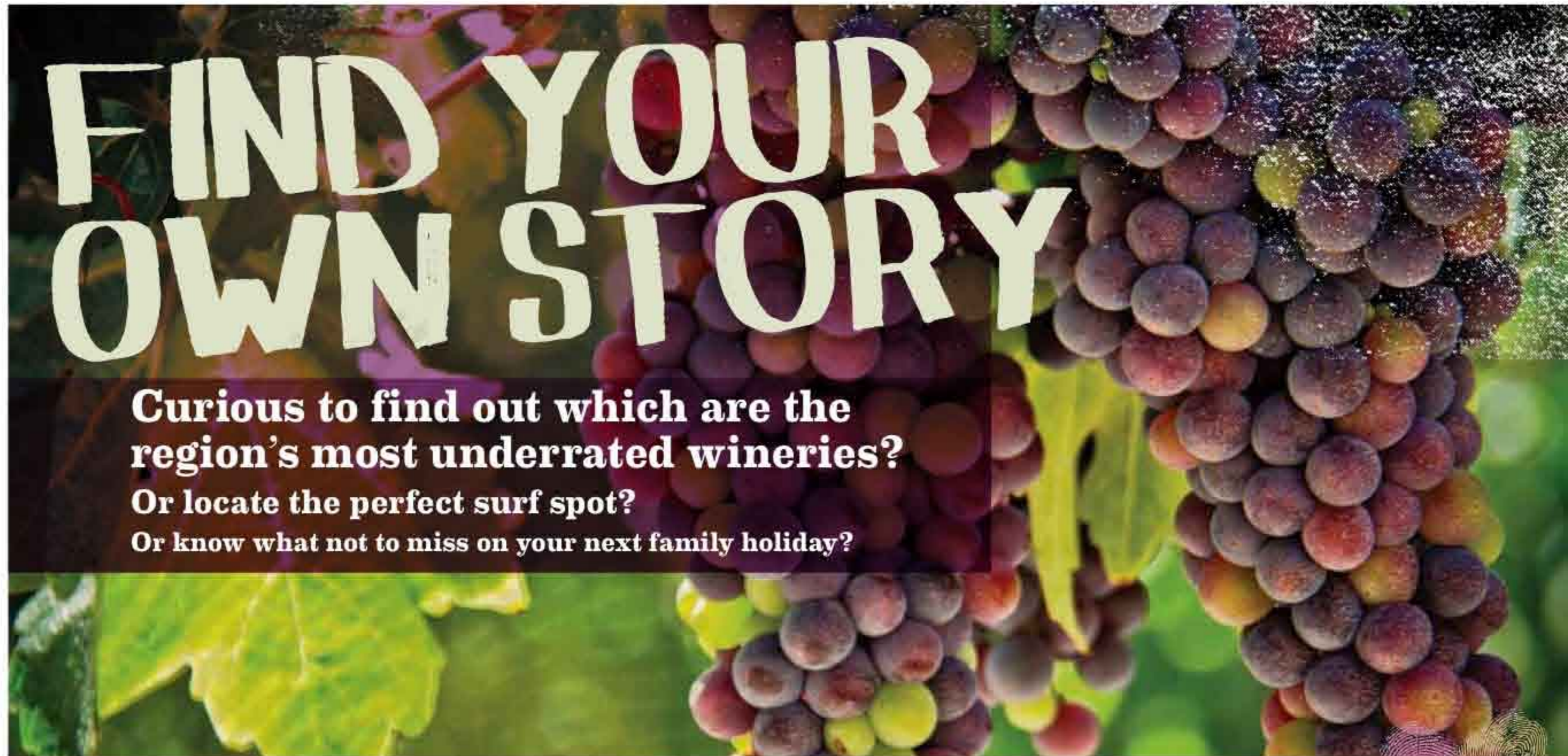
GB I'm not really sure how to describe my work except to say I love simple clean lines that flow and balance to complement the timbers I'm working with. I don't like to interrupt the grain patterns and shapes too much by overdoing inlay work as I prefer to let nature do most of the talking. I also like to mix materials such as stone, wood, steel and glass.

YMRR Have you ever found the perfect piece of timber?

GB I find the perfect piece pretty much every time I design and make something. Nature never ceases to amaze me in what it can produce. Sometimes it takes a bit longer to find the right piece, but that's one of the challenges that makes being a furniture designer/ maker so rewarding

When I get it right it sends a chill up my spine and that's what keeps me going. I love that chill/ thrill and I'm always chasing it.

Find Gary's designs at **Jahroc Galleries**, 83 Bussell Highway, Margaret River. Call 08 9758 7200 or email info@jahroc.com.au. Visit jahroc.com.au.



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