

Cattail Bed

BY PAUL SCHÜRCH



Sleeping in nature. The author's bed, which drew inspiration from ponds near his home, is inlaid with a butterfly on the headboard and cattails on the footboard.

*m*y idea for this set of beds was inspired by ponds close to where I live. This bed design also has somewhat of a neo-oriental feel to it, with the cattails on one corner of the footboard offset by the butterfly, which spirits your dreams away on the headboard. I made three versions of this bed: one in a mahogany frame, which

A sturdy connection. The solid mortise-and-tenon joint between the rail and headboard is buttressed by a threaded bar that cannot be seen after the boxspring is in the bedframe.



A long day's night. The author makes his limited-edition cattail bed in cherry, maple and mahogany. He calls them Morning, Twilight and Night, respectively.





A Florentine butterfly. The butterfly on the headboard is the result of an Italian stone inlay technique, *pietra dure*. It is made with lapis lazuli, marble, river rock and silver wire.

SPECIFICATIONS

DIMENSIONS

86 in. long, 67 in. wide, 42 in. high (headboard), and 31 in. high (footboard).

MATERIALS

Cherry, Chilean laurel, walnut, tulipier, imbuya, purpleheart, black pear, Medite II, lapis lazuli, marble, river rock and silver wire.

FINISH

Tung oil and conversion varnish.



I call “Night;” a maple frame titled “Twilight;” and, featured here, the cherry frame called “Morning.” When I create limited editions, I try to use different combinations of wood and stone inlays within the set to make them unique. For the butterfly on the headboard, this set uses a stone inlay called *pietra dure*.

In marquetry and inlay, I find that the process of capturing the image in wood and stone is exacting and exhilarating work, and making the furniture frame the picture becomes the challenge that ties it all together. To be truly successful for me, the designs of the marquetry and the furniture have to be well-balanced, complement each other and work as a whole.

The four posts are slightly curved to give the heavy frame grace. The arched top rail was laminated for economy and strength. All joints are mortise and tenon. The side rails are fastened onto the headboard and footboard with an all-thread insert, which is far superior in strength to any other

concealed-hardware fastener that I have ever seen (see *How They Did It*, p. 100).

A rough full-size mock-up of the posts and headboard made with tape and cardboard at the start of the drawing process insured that I was on the right track. I then worked out all joinery problems and aesthetic issues by drawing each view to scale and drawing mechanical details full-size before cutting any wood. (For information about the substrate used for the bed’s panels, see *Sources*, p. 106.) Designing in this way, I think through the entire building process and can anticipate problems before they occur. I feel the whole construction becomes more direct, less problematic, and gives me the best results. David Sims, a local furniture maker who trained with me, helped me complete the joinery and assemble the three beds. ■